Crossroads

by Aneira [archived by HPFandom_archivist]

Summary

Finding out he has an uncle isn’t the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

Eventual Dm/Hp

Notes

Note from SeparatriX, the archivist: this story was originally archived at HP Fandom, which was closed for health and financial reasons. To preserve the archive, I began manually importing its works to the AO3 as an Open Doors-approved project in August 2016. I e-mailed all creators about the move and posted announcements, but may not have reached everyone. If you are (or know) this creator, please contact me using the e-mail address on HP Fandom collection profile.
Chapter one: With love your Aunt and Uncle

This is the beta'd version. So far, my beta, the lovely Claira has completed up to chapter 5 plus chapter 13 for me :)

My story is located on my Live journal as well as Fanfiction.net and forever fandom, posted to chapter 14. I will post all of my chapters here, too, it may just take a while due to formatting and whatnot.

I hope you like it :)

Crossroads

Chapter One: With Love, Your Aunt and Uncle

When Harry returned to the Dursleys' after fifth year, never in his life did he think he'd have his cousin Dudley in complete awe of him.

Gone were the 'freak' remarks, as well as any kind of derogatory comments about Harry, his parents, his friends or his school. Dudley kept out of Harry's way when he had to do chores, and didn't mess anything up so Harry was forced to repeat it. In fact, he did pretty much nothing but watch, a somewhat thoughtful expression on his face. It wasn't a common thing for Dudley, which somewhat unnerved Harry.

Most of the time Dudley would go out and leave Harry to do as instructed, while Aunt Petunia went to do the shopping and Uncle Vernon was out at work.

Once Harry had been outside weeding the garden and returned to find a cup of tea and a few biscuits awaiting his return. He didn't know how he knew they were for him, they could have been for anyone, considering Dudley had his friends in the sitting room and were watching something on the television: something loud that had the other boy's attention locked to it.

Suspicious, this was Dudley after all, Harry took the gesture for what it was, finished the biscuits and tea, and cleaned up once he was done.

The boys in the other room barely stirred, having been around plenty of times throughout Harry's years and also having seen him doing the cleaning, while they messed it all up afterwards. So now was no different, except that they never messed anything up, and there was not one glance his way. He was sure Dudley had something to do with that, as he'd occasionally throw uneasy glances between Harry and the boys.

Uncle Vernon, Harry noticed, had been unusually quiet while around him lately, and Aunt Petunia's face appeared more pinched. The only normalcy Harry got from the entire family was the chores he was still having to do and Dudley's whining when it came to eating. He was still strictly on a diet, though he was no longer just fat, but had actually developed a muscular build. It would have been daunting for Harry, who was still shorter and much, much smaller when it came to build, but not once had Dudley threatened him or done anything that may have a cause for concern since Harry had returned from Hogwarts for the summer.

On more than one occasion, Harry had thought Dudley was actually going to say something to him,
but whatever it was, would cause the blonde to grimace and turn away with a shake of his head.

It was an enigma to Harry, Dudley being nice to him. Uncle Vernon not yelling at him and Aunt Petunia always staring at him, but with a pensive frown and not the usual sneer or bitter look she used to give him.

It was all so... different.

“You saved me,” Dudley said one day while Harry had been dusting. Startled, he dropped the duster and peered over at his cousin. Dudley stood in the door frame frowning at something before he continued “That day. With the invisible things.”

“Dementors,” Harry said automatically, bent and picked up the duster.

“Dementors,” Dudley repeated, he seemed to be gathering his courage for something monumental because his face made it look like he was constipated. Then his expression shifted and he asked, “What were they doing here? What are they?”

Harry paused, not exactly sure what to say and decided on the truth. “They were after me,” he said. “But the person who sent them didn't know I could cast a patronus... er, a type of magical shield against dementors.” He sighed and ran a hand through his near shoulder length hair. “A dementor is a dark creature, they guard the wizard prison called Azkaban and drain you of all happy thoughts until all you have left is everything sad,” he said feeling the chill that began gripping him as he let his thoughts carry his speech. “You feel incredibly cold but what's worse is it's kiss. If it kisses you, you lose your soul and all that's left is your body and nothing else. I think muggles would call it depression.”

He could see his cousin was fascinated and mildly wary of the subject, considering he had very nearly had all his happiness drained away.

“But why were they sent after you?” Dudley frowned, arms crossed over his chest.

“Someone wants me dead,” Harry said shortly and went back to his dusting. For several moments Dudley didn't move and when he did, started muttering under his breath. Even so, Harry caught the end of, ‘Not if I can help it.’

For the rest of that day, Harry caught Dudley glancing at him thoughtfully, Aunt Petunia warily, and Uncle Vernon not at all. It was as though the man thought that even looking in Harry's direction might give him some kind of abnormal virus, not that Harry minded in the least. The longer his uncle ignored him, the better.

For once he had been allowed the majority of his school supplies, meaning when he had time, he could study or write the required summer essays for his classes. Sadly, Potions had required the most homework and Harry had been forced to concentrate on his books carefully. He didn't know why he was bothering as he wasn't even sure if he had passed the class yet.

Letters came frequently from his friends. All asking how he was and how the 'stupid muggles' were treating him, if he was being fed properly, and a few care packages to ensure he didn't starve. He received The Daily Prophet, and had lately found that Fudge had been forced to resign and in his place stepped Rufus Scrimgeour, a retired Auror. He looked like a lion but Harry already had his misgivings about the man. He looked to be the exact opposite of Fudge, but he gave Harry the impression that he was a bully and someone to be avoided.

Peering down at an article clipping, Harry frowned. It had been just last summer that people had
been against him. Sla(ng mud at his and Dumbledore's name. Claiming Harry to being crazy or attention seeking, and now he was the media's darling again. Merlin, they made him sick! But, people without an opinion of their own were fickle and would follow the Shepherd with the loudest horn like faithful sheep.

Briefly, he wondered how long it would last and how long he'd stay in the public's good graces this time.

Harry removed his glasses, rubbing at the bridge of his nose before lifting his hands to his temples. He could feel a headache coming on. He had been getting a lot of headaches lately; things in front of him would go temporarily fuzzy, and he'd get a headache. He probably needed a new prescription for his glasses or something.

He sighed, he didn't really feel like having to get a new pair of glasses. He'd have to wait until he met up with Ron and them when they went to Diagon Alley to pick up their new school gear. Unless he went to the Burrow first and talked someone into taking him. Now there's an idea...

Harry set his papers down, capping his ink, he put everything under his bed in a tidy pile. He didn't want to mess up his essays after all.

The vacuuming had to be done before his aunt got home from visiting. He was sure she was just waiting for him to do something wrong so she could complain to his uncle. Dudley certainly hadn't been complaining, and Harry had been especially careful around the two adults.

As he reached the top of the stairs, he heard the loud voices of Dudley's friends below. Not really caring about them in the least, he made his way down the stairs and into the cupboard to get the vacuum cleaner but stopped when he heard Piers, "You know, I haven't seen Potter about the whole time we've been here. I heard your mother mentioning him, but I haven't seen him. Been hiding has he?"

Dudley gave a noncommittal grunt.

"Hmm," Piers continued. "You know, Jonathan here still hasn't met him yet. Isn't it about time for introductions? Potter was our favourite pass time growing up." He gave a wheezy chuckle.

"Who's Potter?" An unknown voice asked. Harry assumed he was Jonathan.

"Big D's wimpy cousin," chortled Piers.

"Lay off Harry, all right?" Dudley said, making Harry freeze. Dudley just defended him against his best friend. The world had finally gone mad.

He had been expecting something along the lines for a while now, truth be told. With the resurrection of Voldemort, the various 'freakish' disasters that were happening all around the world. The Durleys' treating him... well Dudley being helpful and even being curious when it came to magic.

There was a long silence followed by what Harry deemed was a muttered acceptance.

The moment was killed by the long ring of the phone.

"I'll get it!" Dudley bellowed, but Harry was closest and answered anyway.

"Hello, Dursley residence."

Dudley came through the door paused when he saw Harry and glanced nervously back at his friends
in the other room. “It’s for you,” Harry passed the phone over just as Piers walked through the door and froze, as did Dudley, who was looking at Piers while the boys gaze was transfixed upon Harry.

The latter found himself both unnerved and annoyed.

He crossed his arms over his chest indignantly and stared back, hoping to annoy the other as much as he was.

Piers turned to Dudley, phone long forgotten. “You’ve got to be kidding me!” Piers said, shooting Harry another look. “Now I think I know why you’re so protective of him.”

“What’s going on here?” All three turned to the new comer.

“Meet Potter,” Piers said.

Harry looked at the room's newest addition. He appeared to Harry like a stretched out crow. Black hair cut short and spiked, eyes a deep obsidian and a horrid beak of a nose.

Harry really didn’t like the way the other was sizing him up.

“Potter,” the crow-like boy said, hand out stretched to shake his.

It was an odd time to think of Draco Malfoy, but the memory of when Malfoy had done almost the exact same thing back in first year flashed through Harry's mind quickly. He shrugged the thought away and peered back as almost the exact same events panned out.

“Peters,” the boy said. “Jonathan Peters.”

Piers chuckled and intoned. “Bond. James bond. You've got to be kidding me.”

Jonathan snarled something unintelligible at Piers and Harry decided maybe vacuuming just now was a very bad idea. He then quickly made his way upstairs with the intent on writing to Hermione to see how she was doing.

Later that night found Harry lying on his bed going over his Transfigurations essays. He wasn't sure if it would be enough, considering this was McGonagall's essay. He wondered if he may have went on a bit much when it came to concentration and will. He thought he may have, but it was needed to get those few extra inches to complete his parchment.

He frowned down at it as the words blurred together and squirmed. He shut his eyes to ignore the movement.

There was also an annoying tapping against the glass pane of his window that had nothing to do with visiting owls, growing irritated with it, he stood and opened it only to have to peer down into the yard below where Jonathan stood, gazing up at him.

When it appeared no explanation was forthcoming Harry asked the obvious, “What do you want?”

“Why you, of course.”

Harry was thrown off kilter for a moment. He glared down at the other boy. “No, seriously. It's late. Go home. Do you want Dudley or something?”
“Just you.”

“What do you bloody mean?” Harry asked, growing annoyed and more than a little freaked out. He almost thought he knew what the other boy was saying, but it seemed so odd to him. Unless, he was a wizard... but if that were the case he would have known about Harry as soon as his name was mentioned. As nothing of the sort happened, Harry figured the boy was a muggle.

“I thought it kind of obvious,” Jonathan said. “Come down here and talk to me.” He waved a rose through the air. “I'll give you this if you do.”

An odd thought struck Harry then. He was sure he had seen something like this in a muggle movie once. A boy had been trying to get his girlfriend to talk to him so threw small stones at her window until she answered the incessant tapping...

Oh bloody hell no.

“Go home, Jonathan.”

“You know my name!” He practically crowed. There was a rustle and Piers tumbled from the nearby hydrangea bush. Aunt Petunia was going to have a field day when she saw her beloved plant was ruined, and Harry was probably going to have to clean it up.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Piers asked Jonathan through gritted teeth.

“Same as you, evidently.” Jonathan replied, gesturing to the rose in Piers' hand pointedly. The latter crossed his arms in a huff, hiding the flower. “Harry was just about to come down and talk to me.”

“I bet you he wasn't,” Piers argued. “He doesn't know you and so wouldn't listen to you. Me on the other hand, have known him for years.”

“Oh yes, and let us remember what you did to him for many of those years,” Jonathan tossed back. “I believe it was called 'Harry Hunting'? It has it's appeals, I must admit, but for quite a different reason.” He leered up at Harry.

Having had enough, Harry closed his window just as Dudley left the house and confronted his two friends. This was turning out to be a weird day, but he reminded himself that only a few more days until his birthday, and then he'd likely be going to the Burrow and most of the madness would end.

Oh how wrong he was.

-jade.requiem-

Harry had to admit, Dudley was doing his best to now keep his friends away from home. For the days leading up until Harry's birthday, Dudley had made a point of it to be out of the house with his friends. When he'd get home, it would be close to dinner, his friends were ordered to go to their own home and, despite their various protests, acquiesced to Dudley's order.

Uncle Vernon moved about the house, practically ignoring Harry, something Harry was finding to be a blessing. His Aunt Petunia, he found to be frowning an awful lot, though it was always in a
thoughtful way when she was looking at him. When she caught him glancing at her, she would turn away and pretend that she hadn't noticed him at all.

The worst of everything though, had to be Harry himself.

He'd often wake up to sore and complaining muscles, much like he would if he had over worked while training for Quidditch, and his face would ache like he had tripped and hit the ground face first. His jaw by far hurt the worst.

The pain generally went away within the first five minutes of waking, and he would occasionally get twinges during the day but that was all and it could easily be ignored, so that was what he did.

A few times he had contemplated confiding in Hermione about the strange goings on: the Dursleys' behaviour, his growing pains, or rather waking-up pains, and his headaches, which he attributed to his changing eyesight. He never did though, as she would likely jump to some insane conclusion. He wondered if it may be due to his hereditas. All wizarding children went through it, a sort of puberty, in which a wizarding child would come into their powers. Different families had different skills or powers that were kept within the family.

Those Harry had already seen go through their hereditas had only really had a power increase. For muggleborns, such as Hermione, this was the case, having no background steeped in magic like Ron's family or Harry's. Ron himself had had a rather large increase to his power, and something else Harry just couldn't put his finger on.

Often, Harry had wondered how hereditas would affect him. He was sure to have a magical increase, and he was looking forward to whatever else he received from his magical blood. He only hoped it wasn't something really noticeable, like something that would draw the attention of everyone one once he stepped into a room, it was bad enough at the moment as it was.

Pondering these thoughts, he bumped into Dudley leaving his room. The bigger boy paused and handed Harry something he had noticed the other was carrying. "The guys and me will be out all day tomorrow," Dudley said, shrugged uncomfortably and returned to his room. The door closing with a click.

It occurred to Harry that Dudley had been intent on leaving his room for the sole purpose of giving him... whatever was wrapped in the paper. Nor was it lost on Harry that the next day was his birthday and the wrapped thing was likely a present from his cousin.

Blinking the surrealism away, Harry slipped into his own room, and sat carefully on the bed.

It wasn't late and Harry could still clearly hear the television blurring loudly down stairs. Occasionally, he caught his uncle Vernon's loud bark of a laugh as well as his aunt's ridiculous little titter which joined her husbands. The usual sounds that came from the sitting room, well it would have been the usual had Dudley been down there joining them.

Harry's attention shifting back to the gift. It was poorly wrapped, but then Harry didn't think Dudley was really one to actually wrap something. It was bemusing to say the least, but also made Harry smile a little. The wrapping itself looked like it had been used before, and it was two different types one was crimson, almost the same as Gryffindor red and the other was silver.

Turning out the light, Harry just lay staring at his ceiling waiting for his aunt and uncle to return to their room, for his friends parcels to arrive and of course, midnight. The window he left open for a cool breeze to circulate in his otherwise stuffy bedroom and for Hedwig's easy access to come and go as she pleased.
Hedwig had returned from her hunt, was perched on the stand in her cage peering with what Harry could only deem as concern in her intelligent amber eyes. She hooted softly when she noticed he was looking back at her and swept over to him on the bed.

It was as though she could sense his feelings, or rather, lack thereof. For the most part of his summer holidays he'd just felt nothing. It was almost like he was living as a shell of his former self. He had feelings of course, and grew annoyed or angry, but for the most part, he felt absolutely nothing.

He supposed he was still in shock or something about Sirius’ death. Both Ron and Hermione hadn't once mentioned the deceased man's name in fears of possibly upsetting Harry more. Though, in truth, he wasn't sure what to feel about it now. Upset, yes. Sirius, after all, the last person he could really consider family, was dead. Well aside from Dudley who was being halfway decent to him for once.

The Weasleys were always there, and he considered them family, but it just wasn't the same somehow. Ron he considered almost a brother, he knew the feeling was mutual. Mrs Weasley had felt he was like one of her own, and Mr Weasley was along the same lines, he even supposed their children felt similarly, except for Ginny. He still wasn't sure where he stood with her exactly.

Harry sighed and pet Hedwig soothingly as she tipped and pulled at his hair. “It's all right girl,” he said reassuringly. “I was just thinking.”

She peered at him in a way that suggested that was what she had been worried about, causing Harry to chuckle. Hedwig just ruffled her feathers, appearing indignant.

“How was your hunting?” He asked and sat up. She hooted softly in reply and puffed herself up to show how proud she was of her achievement. “Ahh.”

Suddenly, outside his window darkened. Startled by the sudden eclipse of light, Harry whipped out his wand. Logically, he knew nothing evil could touch him while he resided at the Dursley's and called it home but that didn't stop him from seizing the only protection he had against whatever it was that was outside.

To his great relief and annoyance however, his would-be assailant was nothing more than a rather large and majestic midnight colour owl. It was huge, almost twice the size of Hedwig and in its large claws it contained an expensive looking black envelope.

It held it's leg out to Harry, never tearing its piercing black gaze from the boy. The fact that it almost took up a whole window pane did nothing to ease Harry's anxieties of the creature, but he took the envelope anyway.

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“Do you want something to eat or drink before you leave?” Harry enquired unsurely. “Or to rest?”

The large owl looked mildly indignant of the last request, but ducked it's head politely and returned to the darkness from which it appeared.

Leery of the letter, Harry handled it with care. He knew no one but those close to him knew of his residency within the muggle home, but still, years had taught him caution was often a good thing when it came to anything magical. As much as that fireplaces were magical portals, cups could be made into travel devices and cars could be made to fly.

“What do you think, girl?” Harry asked, glancing at his faithful pet.

She peered at the envelope in his grasp, tilting her head this way and that, as though studying the object carefully. Then she hooted again and landed on his shoulder.
Harry smiled. “If I go you go, right?” He questioned her, easily deducting her motives. Another soft hoot answered him and he turned the parchment to read the front.

While the envelope was a thick, very expensive looking paper and of the deepest obsidian. The elegant and flowing script on the front was a luscious, blood red and easily drew his attention. The words it bore were simple,

_Harry,_

_To be opened on your birthday._

_Well, _Harry thought catching a glance of his clock. The vivid red digits easily seen in the darkness. _I won't have long to wait._

It was already 11:35 now, and he could easily make out the shapes of two approaching owls that a shared bundle between them. The pair glided in with Pig in the lead and manoeuvring to ensure Errol didn't knock himself out as they came through the window.

Offering both something to eat and drink (In Errol's case, somewhere to rest) Harry set all his gifts aside and waited for the time to tick down.

There was an odd silence that struck mere seconds before the red digits flicked over to 12, and Harry's world was flooded with deafening noise as he was swallowed by a deep, overwhelming darkness.

That night he dreamt of eternal darkness and two barely lit paths that wound off in separate directions.

-jade.requiem-

It was to a loud shriek and horribly pounding head that Harry woke to the next morning. He didn't know why his Aunt was screaming, just that it was somewhere close and he could almost sense her... distress.

Wanting to move but feeling heavily weighed down, he managed to roll a little and peered out at her through his oddly red sheet. “Aunt Petunia?”

Merlin, was that _his _voice?

It sounded so _weird, _almost hypnotic, and now that his conscious was gradually seeping back into his sore body, he could feel that something was different. The air was heavy, suffocating and infused with the coppery smell of blood verging on the scent of dried eggs. It was disgusting, and his stomach flipped with the unpleasant scent. He could feel the air brushing across his skin in gentle gusts, not usual unless a breeze was blowing, which it wasn't. There was also the fact that he could hear his aunt's thundering heart.

Sitting up fluidly and ignoring the twinges his muscles would give every other movement, Harry gazed into his aunt's terrified face. She looked dead with her lack of colouring and her eyes were wide.

Harry's sight blurred for a moment before settling again and he went to adjust his glasses only to find he wasn't wearing them. Looking down he found them shattered a foot from the bed and lying in a large puddle of something that looked suspiciously like blood... His sight was beyond perfect.

As Harry dared, he glanced around and discovered why his aunt looked so scared.
The once bland and pale painted room was splashed with red. His bed was covered in it as was the floor. It looked like a few people had given their life so he could use their blood as a grotesques paintjob.

Harry felt sick. He grabbed for his waste bin hurriedly and threw up.

He noticed absently that all three owls were gone and his window had been shut. He felt, sticky and hungry.

“**I'll do the cleaning today,**” his aunt said and hastily left.

Wondering how he was going to explain this, or even clean it, he grabbed a fresh change of clothes and slipped out to the bathroom. That could all wait, for now he'd have a shower and worry about the mess once he didn't feel like a walking corpse.

Having thoroughly showered, Harry set about brushing his teeth and froze when his reflection peered back at him through a partially steam covered mirror.

Of course he had known his features would change slowly through out his life, it wasn't noticeable unless you saw a picture of him as a small child and compared it to when he was older and that had continued happening, though a little more rapidly since his fifteenth but this... this was unexplainable even if it had something to do with his hereditas.

He now stood around 5'9, while not tall nor was he short besides, he still had time to grow. His hair had remained the same near shoulder length and curled around his neck looking sexily tousled. His build had remained slight and he had lost his tan, making him ivory coloured and as pale as the Malfoys. His face, while still containing his mother's and father's features, had been refined to perfection and no longer did he have any flaws. He looked... Abnormally striking.

*There is no possible way I can explain this,* he mused to himself. *Certainly not to the Dursleys.*

He was rather sure he wouldn't be able to explain this new change to anyone at all. Hermione would dig for answers, certainly and when he had none to give she would look for them. Ron would likely just sit aside and try his best to fathom what was going on and would be the ever faithful friend, letting Harry do his thing and offering silent support whenever Harry needed it.

Gods did he need help.

Luckily, his clothes were still too big and so he had no difficulties with them. Changing into them, he slipped back into his room with a bucket of soapy water, a mop and many cleaning cloths, he set to work trying to get the blood from the room.

It was sometime after 12 when he emerged from his room, having gotten the majority of the blood from the walls, ceiling and floor. He had scrubbed his sheets and blankets but decided they were a lost cause. There was no way he could get all the blood out of those. It was just a waste of time.

His aunt obviously thought the same as she said nothing when he brought them downstairs to be disposed of.

“**Eat something,**” she said stiffly. “**I hear that you'll need it.**”

Puzzled, Harry glanced at her questioningly.

“I was informed that a... change might happen on your birthday,” she informed him and quickly strolled away, not looking at him once. Which may have been all for the best considering she had
been holding her favourite vase.

Complying, Harry quickly threw together a sandwich, grabbed a glass of juice and ran back up the stairs to his room.

It still stank of blood and he couldn't rid the smell of it from the room or his nose, despite leaving the windows open wide and spraying with air freshener. The combined odour was far worse than the original stink.

It was while chewing on his sandwich that he noticed the multi-coloured wrapping of Dudley's gift and remembered he still hadn't opened his birthday presents. He set his food and glass aside and pulled his presents out.

How they had managed to avoid one spatter of blood, was beyond Harry. Choosing to open Dudley's present first, Harry careful peeled back the two different wrappings and was surprised to find an ornamental dagger. It was small, slender with an ebony and silver hilt. A faux emerald capped the end. The blade itself appeared to be of two different mentals. The upper half a sharp, reflective silver while the bottom was a dull, almost purple shade.

Harry rewrapped it carefully, for no other reason than if his aunt or uncle saw it that's think he was about to commit a ritual murder or something.

From Hermione he received a few different books on advanced defensive spells as well as offensive and a small photo album she had compiled of all their year mates since they were first years. There were also letters from their school mates wishing him a happy sixteenth. The album itself was a red-brown with golden borders, and the words on it's spine. ‘Memories’.

Ron had gotten Harry Chocolate Frogs and Berty Botts' Every Flavor Beans as well as a subscription for Quidditch Weekly, something which must have cost him an arm and a leg.

The twins and Ginny sent a large sample of the newest products from Weasley Wizard Wheezes and the Weasley family in general sent Harry a large care package, followed by the yearly jumper of crimson and gold wool. Hagrid sent Harry some rock cakes and a small moke pouch, which prevented anyone but the wearer to know it was there, and Remus gave Harry a book on magical creatures as well as the Black family signet ring and a note saying that Sirius had intended to give it to Harry himself on his sixteenth.

It was while Harry sat staring glumly at the Black heir's ring that he saw the black envelope he had received. Looking at it pensively, he grabbed it and tore the blood-red seal open. Vaguely noting the dragon it bore, he pulled the thick cream parchment out and began to read.

Dearest Harry,

Happy sixteenth! I hope this letter finds you well and not in too much pain after your hereditas. I am sorry I could not be there with you personally for your transition, as it would have been much smoother for you.

I am also deeply regretful that until now I have not contact ed as it would also have helped you with your adjustment period. However, it was deemed the best that I stay away until it was a certainty that you would come into your rightful hereditas, and, as such has occurred, I would like to meet with you.

I dare not speak openly despite my faithful messenger, as we both know there are many eyes and ears that may intercept us, but what I must speak with you is of utmost importance. I know that you
will not trust me easily, considering the events that surrounded your growing up, but if you can, would you be willing to meet me the evening of your birthday? I will arrive around eleven in the evening.

Until then, take care.

With love, your Aunt and Uncle.

Like it? Loath it? I've been debating over whether I should include sex scenes in this... I had originally wanted to but after all the effort I put into crafting their characters I didn't want to ruin it all by having graphic sex scenes... Meh, I don't know. I guess I'll leave it up to that point I guess and see how things go from there :)

Chapter Two: Seeing Is Believing; A Lesson In History

To say Harry was intrigued was an understatement; but he also held a healthy amount of caution when it came to these new people. How was it possible he even had another aunt and uncle? His mother he knew had only his Aunt Petunia as a sibling, and his father was an only child. So it was impossible, wasn't it?

And whoever was coming was to meet him at the Dursley's around eleven in the evening. He was worried about that. His instincts told him all would be fine, that he should trust these people. Another part of him, however, refused outright to listen, and so he found himself in a bit of a stalemate. Not able to move forward until one of his instincts came up on top.

He desperately wanted to meet these people who claimed to be his aunt and uncle, but with Sirius' death still clear in his mind, it was hard to come to a decision on the matter. This was mainly because he didn't want to make another stupid mistake like that ever again.

Of course, Harry had noticed that there was never a mention of whether Harry could bring others with him or not, or a warning to tell no one else. For some reason though, Harry didn't want to let the Order know of the events. Logically, he knew he should, just in case it was a trap. But if it was, the person wouldn't be able to harm him... right? With his mother's blood magic still in place, he should be safe.

There were just so many different factors to take into consideration, and his already befuddled brain couldn't work with the little information he had at his disposal.

Forcing himself to calm, he went over what he knew: what he knew, was that most, if not all, of Voldemort's forces would be aware of Sirius' death. It was entirely possible that they thought now would be the perfect time to strike by trying to gain Harry's trust in the guise of being a long lost relative, only to hand him over to Voldemort.

That also brought the thought of that if that was true, his location was now known by Voldemort. However, if this was correct, than Dumbledore should also know, since Snape was apparently one of Voldemort's most trusted. Not to mention, of course, that the old wizard wasn't likely to leave Harry in a place that he would be in danger if he ever left the property, which happened a lot, as he was often sent to the local dairy.

Harry wasn't sure about that though, seeing as he hadn't yet left the Dursley property this summer. Although, now that it had been pointed out to him, he really wasn't willing to test the theory.

Well, he had until eleven to make up his mind, and he could also send word to Dumbledore, asking
whether Voldemort knew of his location. Stupid as the idea was, it would likely draw the ancient wizard's attention to him, and since he wasn't even sure of what had happened to himself (let alone the circumstances around his new possible family), he didn't think he wanted Dumbledore to know just yet.

Not that he thought that was possible right now, seeing as Hedwig, Pig, and Errol had all vanished, having yet to reappear.

He sighed as finished his sandwich and juice, still contemplating what he was going to do. He rubbed his eyes as he thought, not even noticing that he was doing so by putting his fingers right through the frames of his glasses. Harry had pushed the lenses out of his frames shortly after he had awoken on his birthday to try and help hide the fact he had changed. This meant that he was still wearing his spectacles, albeit glassless, around the house.

-jade.requiem-

The afternoon flew by until it was nearly dinner. Harry assisted in setting the table, while his Aunt Petunia finished off the cooking. She was just dishing everything out when Uncle Vernon and Dudley came through the door.

His uncle, as was common lately, ignored Harry as he seated himself at his place on the table. Dudley was looking at Harry oddly, like he was trying to figure out what was wrong with him.

“We're having a few guests over tomorrow night, Petunia,” uncle Vernon announced as he cut into his peppered beef. He took a bite of his food and glanced at Harry, pointing his fork at him as he continued “and you boy, will be dressed nicely, and will welcome them in.”

Harry strongly disliked the way his uncle was looking at him: it was rather like a much coveted jewel that could earn him a lot of money.

“Yes, Uncle Vernon,” Harry replied. Sighing, he realized that he had no idea how he was going to look nice. The only clothes that fit him properly were his underwear and school robes, which were likely too short on him now anyway.

Aunt Petunia was obviously thinking the same thing. “I'll find something suitable for you tomorrow,” she said, surprising Harry slightly.

The rest of dinner consisted of ignoring Harry, except for Dudley, who would peer between his parents and then back at his cousin, looking for all the world like he was trying to put together a complex puzzle. Particularly one in which he did not have all the pieces for.

Time was gradually slipping by as Harry stood and helped with the dishes. He had been debating with himself over telling his aunt that a guest was expected to arrive shortly. Not wanting whoever it was to just turn up on the door step or anything, enraging his uncle and upset his aunt, he decided it was likely best if he did inform them.

“Aunt Petunia,” he began, “I received word earlier today that someone was going to come by and see me...” He glanced over at his aunt, who wore a pinched look. When she didn't say anything he continued carefully, “I'm warning you because I'm unsure who they are, or if they're safe. I also thought it would be best if I answered the door. You know, just in case...”
“I'll inform Vernon of your...visitor.” She said this stiffly, clearly not pleased with the announcement, and turned to go back to what she had been doing prior to Harry's interruption.

“Aunt Petunia,” he said again. She turned looking thoroughly annoyed, but also wary.

“Yes?”

“If anything goes wrong... could you get this to Dumbledore? It's important.”

She eyed the sealed parchment that he handed her carefully before accepting it with a brisk nod. With that done, Harry left the room and returned to his bedroom, awaiting his new arrival.

-Harry gazed out his open bedroom window. None of the owls had returned since vanishing, and he was feeling more than a little disturbed by that.

Night had well and truly fallen, the only sources of light were the soft glow of the crescent moon, which was partially hidden behind wisps of cloud, surrounded by tiny pinpricks that were the the stars, and the flickering streetlamp that was in front of Number 4.

A faint scent of something caught Harry's attention not long later at the same time that his eyes fixed on something strolling steadily towards his house in the shadows. Even at his this distance, Harry could distinguish that the figure was a man, darkly clad, not in robes, but in a business suit. From what Harry could tell, it looked expensive.

As he drew closer, Harry easily made out the man's features, and was almost too shocked to react when he looked up at Harry and smiled.

He looked more like Harry now than his own father did. Though the new comers was more angular, their resemblance was uncanny. His hair, dark like Harry's, was sleek as opposed to Harry's wavy locks, and his eyes were an amberish gold, giving Harry the idea that the man wasn't entirely human.

Harry backed away from the window, running for the door just as it started to ring. No one said a word. Instead, they remained in their places in the sitting room, pretending to watch the television and not hear what was going on with Harry.

He opened the door to the strange man, feeling an odd wave of warmth flood him as he gazed upon the other who stared at him with obvious affection.

“Harry!” the man greeted in an odd accent. “It's such a pleasure to finally meet you, after all these years.” He was looking at Harry's face like he could never get enough. “I am your uncle, your fathers older twin brother.”

-Twin?

The man's expression was wistful, and his gaze turned pained as he looked upon Harry. “I always thought you looked so much like James. However, I can see the change has made you look more like me now, more like our bloodline. Not difficult really, given the trait you've managed to pick up from us when your father didn't.” He chortled somewhat bitterly.
Harry didn't know what to say to that, so he settled for “Do you want to come in?”

His uncle looked thoughtful, then nodded. “It's probably wisest,” he conceded before following Harry over the threshold and into the house. Harry lead the man through to the sitting room to where the Dursleys were seated and heard his aunt gasp.

Harry wasn't entirely sure where the thought came from; perhaps it was just the manners that had been ingrained into him from his relatives, though he almost felt like kicking himself for his stupidity. True, the man had made it past the wards around the property, showing he couldn't very well be a Death Eater, but that still left a large amount of possibilities.

Forcing the dark thoughts away, Harry tried to focus on the good things, like the fact that the man didn't feel evil, and, while it was odd for Harry to contemplate, didn't smell evil either.

“Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia, Dudley this is...” Harry trailed off in his introductions, realising he didn't even know his supposed uncle's name.


Harry shot him a quizzical look.

“I'm Harry's uncle. Twin brother of his father.”

“Oh no you don't!” Uncle Vernon snapped suddenly. “You can't just show now after all these year and take him away! Not when we fed and clothed him out of the goodness of our hearts! And especially now that I can use him for extra money!”

“Goodness of your hearts?” Harry muttered darkly.

“Use him for extra money?” Dudley questioned loudly, but was ignored.

“As a matter of fact, I do intend to take Harry away with me, should he wish to come.” Demetrius stated calmly. He then turned to Harry and ignored everyone else. “Will you come stay with your aunt Selene and I? You've just come into your new powers, and need someone who will be able to help you with them. Now, I know that I've given you no reason to trust me, and I could certainly be someone trying to trick you, but surely you've noticed the differences in you're own body and the way you see your surroundings?”

Harry nodded, the only thing he was currently able to do without embarrassing himself.

“Harry,” Demetrius dropped his voice so only Harry could hear it, “our bloodline, which was strangely dormant in your father, has awoken in you. Tell me Harry, have you ever heard of the Nikolais?”

“Sorry, but no.”

Demetrius nodded, as though it was to be expected. “We are the last of a clan of vampire hunters. A century or so ago we were almost completely wiped out, so we went into hiding. Unfortunately, our number decreased further for unknown reasons, leaving so very few of us. Also, seeing as I am unable to have children with your aunt, the title of Heir passes to you once I die.”

Unsure what to say, Harry stared back dumbly. So was he meant to believe he wasn't really a Potter but a Nikolai, not to mention the Heir? And they were supposedly vampire hunters? This was all pretty farfetched.
“So... I'm not a Potter but a Nikolai. How, I'm unsure, and I'm also from a clan of vampire hunters?”
He asked, somewhat sceptically.

The man sighed. “You don't believe me.” He stated.

During the whole conversation, not once had Harry's sneakoscope reacted. This meant that either it was broken or this man was telling the truth.

“I had hoped that this was not necessary, but if you do not come with me, someone who can help train you in your awakening powers, we may find ourselves in more trouble than is worth.” he sighed and Harry tensed. “Would Dumbledore be better at convincing you to accompany me?”

“Dumbledore?” Harry asked, now even more confused.

“Not that ruddy man!” Vernon exploded, drawing all attention to him.

“What does Dumbledore have to do with this?” Harry pushed, wanting to understand.

“Nothing,” Demetrius answered simply. “Although I am aware of his part in ensuring your safety all these years, and if I must inform him of the circumstances, then I must do what I must.”

He sounded incredibly sad about that, and Harry, to his great alarm, felt it too.

“You don't have to decide now,” Demetrius reassured Harry. “Take as long as you need, but if you would prefer we go through Dumbledore, so be it.”

Harry considered that carefully. Did he really want Dumbledore's interference? He knew the man was looking out for Harry's best interests, but what could possibly happen if he caught wind of this? Harry knew he'd have to tell him eventually, but did he have to now? No, he didn't, but what if the entire thing was a trap?

His instincts were yelling at him to stop being an idiot and trust the man, but his rational brain was vehemently against the idea.

Gathering all his blind courage, Harry nodded his head. “I'll go with you. If you'll have me,” he decided.

Demetrius looked mildly startled. “I had thought you'd think about the situation more,” he chuckled. “but of course you'll be welcome. As I said earlier, I have no child of my own and my wife would just adore lavishing you in all the affection should we have had our own child. In fact, she had wanted to come with me.”

He glanced fondly upon Harry then turned his attention back to the Dursleys. “It was nice meeting you.” He bowed gracefully and returned his eye back to Harry. “I'll return tomorrow to pick you up. You can still change your mind, just know that whether you stay here or not, I must train you.”

Harry nodded and followed his uncle out into the hall.

“Oh,” Demetrius said, slipping his hand into the pocket of his blazer, withdrawing a small package. He enlarged and examined the carefully wrapped package before handing it to Harry. “Part of you're birthday present,” he explained. “A lesson in history. I'd suggest making a start on it before I return tomorrow.” He paused at the door, looking like he wanted to do something, but smiled instead. “I'll be back earlier tomorrow. Happy birthday by the way. When you move in with us, we can celebrate properly.”
Then he was gone. Vanishing into the shadows as suddenly as he had appeared.

Hurrying, Harry ran into his room and closed the door. When glancing out onto the street revealed nothing of his uncle, Harry seated himself on his bed and tore open the expensive looking silver paper that concealed his gift.

Within the paper was a large ancient looking tome. It was bound in black leather with intricate silver borders and bore the name ‘THE Nikolai FAMILY’ in large bold print across the front as well as down the spine.

From what Harry could gather of it, the book was self adding and continued to add more pages for of the descendants as they came into being. Apparently, the Nikolais came into being by someone called Draconis. It wasn't very detailed. In fact, the whole start of the Nikolai family was somewhat vague, but Harry's attention came to the pages near the end of the book, where he found Demetrius Nikolai listed, as well as his father, James Harold Potter. The most recent name was his own, Harry James Potter, current owner of the book.

As he watched, an elegant script filled out the rest of the details.

*Harry James Potter, July 31st 1980.*
Only known survivor of the killing curse that took the lives of both parents, James and Lily Potter, on the 31st October 1981. Heir to the Nikolai legacy, he came into his hereditas on his sixteenth birthday, 31 July 1996. Last known Angelus to be born.
Current bearer of the book.

“Angelus?” Harry asked himself aloud, wondering what the book was talking about.

He continued to peer down at the book of his family. It could quite possibly be forged. That wouldn't be hard to accomplish. However, the tome emanated ancient magic. It almost felt like Hogwarts, the magical aura that came off the book in waves. He trusted it, and something made him feel extremely protective of it. It was his family history he was holding. Well, half of his family history.

He wondered if it was a wise move of Demetrius to give him such a valuable and important piece of history. What if it was lost, or burnt? Pushing the idea aside, he flipped through the page until he got back to his father's name and read:

*James Harold Potter, March 27th 1960 – October 31st 1981*
Was killed by the curse, Avada Kedavra.
Married muggleborn witch Lily Evans.
Sole child, by Lily Potter is Harry Potter.

He flipped back a few more pages until he got to his grandparents, and where everything seemed to begin.

*Emmanuel Mikhail Nikolai born January 21st 1893 – March 19th 1978*
Mated to Dorea Potter who was already married to Charlus Potter.
children, twin sons by Dorea Potter: Demetrius and James.
While Demetrius was a born Angelus, James was not and so was raised by Dorea and her husband Charlus. Until her death, Dorea was unaware she had another child...
The script went on.

Lovely, his grandmother was an adulterer. He frowned when he read over the lines about her not being aware of Demetrius, and again at the phrase about Angelus. He wondered if Emmanuel had made her forget about her first son or something along the lines, not to mention what on earth the book had meant by mated?

Reading on about Emmanuel's life, Harry was able to gauge the fact that he was a very sad man. Depressed for most of his life until he died suddenly. Harry assumed it was of heart break, as it was clear that Emmanuel loved Harry's grandmother very much.

His eyes caught sight of another book, it wasn't quite as old as the first, but looked worse for wear, the pages practically falling apart. Gingerly, he opened the book and peered down at the pages that were yellow with age.

It was on vampires, more importantly Angelus.

Harry froze. Isn't that what his family history had called him and Demetrius? Not wanting to leap to conclusions just yet, Harry decided to read before he actually decided on anything.

**The Angelus Clan: The Hunters.**

*Named of the Angels, nicknamed ‘The Fallen’ for their angelic appearance but dark natures. Their beauty is unmatched and often described as other-worldly and ethereal. Apart from this, there are scant few ways to detect an Angelus as for the most part they appear and act quite human.*

*Like humans and the clan of Invidians, they are warm blooded and very much alive. They lack the usual allergies to silver, sunlight, and garlic. The difference between humans and Angelus being their retractable fangs, nails and glossy dark feathered wings, as well as their need for blood every so often.*

*It is in fact believed that the Dark Veela were derived from an Angelus and Veela relationship. Though this cannot be proven, it is highly possible. (See page 442 for some examples of this recording.)*

*Along with an Angelus' breathtaking appearances, it is known to be a hunter of it's own kind. It is said that Angelus tend to hunt in packs of two of more, killing other vampire clans they come across. However, it isn't unheard of for a Angelus to hunt alone and do just as well. Once they have set a target they will stop at nothing until they have it. It is for this reason that they are also highly valuable assassins and spies.*

*At a time, it was the Angelus that were used as Vampire Hunters to track down and exterminate troublesome vampires. It is believed that it was because of this that a majority of the Angelus were wiped out, their royalty going into hiding.*

Harry blinked, trying to absorb all the information properly. If what he read was true, then he was a vampire. One of the Angelus and vampire hunter. He allowed the thought to tumble over and over in his mind.

Demetrius had never said anything about being a vampire, but, from what Harry gathered, his clan were an exception in terms of regular vampires. His kind hunted other vampires, and killed them...

Harry shuddered, hoping that was all they did. He didn't feel entirely too happy with the fact that he may eat other vampires. He mused on that point a moment. *Is that really so bad?* He thought, *I'd only drink from them wouldn't I? How very different would that be from drinking human blood?*
Strangely, or maybe not, considering his new affliction, the thought of drinking human blood wasn’t as disturbing as his thoughts of drinking the blood of another vampire. Maybe it was because he was no longer human and to drink the blood of another of his kind would be cannibalism? Or maybe it was because he was closer to humans...?

He closed his eyes and massaged his temples, trying to stave off the oncoming headache. He shouldn’t even be considering drinking human blood, and yet he had accepted it almost without thought. That disturbed him greatly.

So, he was a vampire, but killed other vampires from different clans? He wondered if that was just being hypocritical or perhaps prejudiced. Then there was the fact that he was abruptly quite accepting of the fact he may find his fellow dorm-mates rather tasty milkshakes.

This just seemed so very wrong.

Harry almost wished he had left with Demetrius, he at least could answer all the questions that had popped up now in his absence. Like how anyone failed to miss the fact his grandmother was missing a son. How Charlus Potter didn't seem to know his son wasn't his own, but the offspring of another's... What kind of powers was Harry bound to have now that his supposed vampiric tendencies had awoken? How would he feed, and how often would he need to?

The not so quiet snick of the door opening drew his attention to uncle Vernon standing in the frame. He didn't say anything, just stood looking at Harry for a long time before sneering and slamming the door as he exited.

Flopping back onto his bed, Harry stared fixatedly at the ceiling. His family was losing it.

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Harry hated formal dinners. He hated them even more so when he was partaking in it. At least in the past he had only had to stay in his room and be silent, but now, now he was actually having to play along with his aunt’s stiff little act.

The guests, two men in their late thirties or early forties sat around on the opposite side of the table. The tallest, a fair haired man with an easy smile and crinkles at the corners of his eyes, wore a dark grey suit, while his companion, wore a black one. The shorter man was slightly wider, and had cinnamon coloured hair and darker eyes that seemed to glitter like they held a secret the man wasn’t willing to share.

Both had unnerved Harry upon arrival, staring at him unabashedly as they had and were, but Harry had quickly discovered ignoring their obvious problem was better than pissing off his aunt and uncle.

He had been dressed up in a ridiculous suit, force fed proper dining etiquette, and made to smile an abnormal amount. Dudley looked nervous, as he tended to do lately. He was eying the man in the dark grey suit with unease. Harry noticed this of course. It was hard not too when the man was practically burning a hole through his head with the intensity of his stare.

“So you're Harry,” the black suited man said conversationally, like it wasn't obvious that he wasn't the Dursley’s child, “your uncle has told nothing but wonderful things about you.”

“I'm sure he has,” Harry said, trying to keep the sarcasm from his voice. It ended up that he was
either successful, or the man ignored it.

“Harry,” the other proceeded, “how would you feel about modelling for us?”

“Modelling?”

“That's right. We're scouts, looking for up and coming young adults to model our newest designs. You would be perfect! Just imagine, being the role model for all those other teens out there when it comes to fashion. You'd be a guru!”

Oh, Harry knew all about being a role model, just not the type they were talking about. “I still attend school,” he said, trying to break their enthusiasm.

“We are aware,” the grey clad man said, as if it were a great misfortune.

“You can do shoots on weekends,” the other said.

“I attend a boarding school,” Harry pushed. “In Scotland.”

He watched as both men seemed to deflate a little at that comment but just as quickly, they were up and eagerly throwing more idea's his way.

“We could come to your school...”

“There should be a nearby studio we could use temporarily.”

Harry observed as his uncle grew steadily redder at the men's continual suggestions and Harry's retorts, until he was that horrible puce colour he'd sometimes turn when extremely angry. It appeared now was one of those times.

However, whatever was about to happen was interrupted by a knock on the front door.

“Excuse me,” Harry said politely as he could manage as he stood to open the door. He placed his napkin down carefully as he had been instructed earlier and fled the room.

Demetrius awaited him on the other side, a smile on his face. He was wearing yet another black suit.

“Come in,” Harry said, glad for the interruption. “My stuff's all upstairs, I'll go get it.”

“I can help,” Demetrius offered.

“It's fine,” Harry stated and raced to his room. His things had all been stored away already, his trunks packed. The only thing wrong was that Hedwig was still missing. He wasn't concerned about her not being able to find him, as she seemed to know where he was instinctually, but he was worried about her absence all the same.

Lugging his trunks and empty cage down the stairs, Harry came to a stop when he heard all the excessive noise from the kitchen, and groaned loudly. Abandoning his things temporarily, he went in search of his missing uncle.

“You look so alike!” the grey suited man was saying as Harry re-entered the room.

“Consider our offer,” the second said.

Demetrius was glancing between the pair with obvious amusement. “I think not and I must be off now. Harry say your farewells.”
All attention turned to Harry. It was evident that uncle Vernon wanted Harry to stay but, unable to voice his opinions too loudly in the present company, remained silent, if angrily so.

It wasn't a wise thing to burn one bridges, or so Harry'd been informed once, and bid his family goodbye. It wasn't as heart warming as it could have been, he didn't want to pretend they were a happy family, but he didn't want to look indifferent either. Dudley had been nice enough to him over the last few weeks, Aunt Petunia too, in her odd way. Uncle Vernon, despite thinking of it for his owns means, had even tried to get Harry an occupation.

All in all, not a terribly bad summer.

Outside and awaiting them was a black Rolls Royce. It sat stationed right next to the footpath, even so Harry asked for Demetrius to cast a disillusionment charm on him so he could slip into the vehicle in case he was being watched by Order members.

Demetrius acquiesced, and, fairly quickly, the pair were tearing through the muggle streets unnoticed.

“I couldn’t use a portkey,” Demertius explained, seeming to read Harry’s thoughts. “there are wards active around Privet Drive that would have alerted Dumbledore. I assume I will soon need to apply for guardianship of you, as it won't take long for him to know that you are missing.”

Harry nodded slowly, still not quite sure why he was going along with all of this. He glanced around the magically enhanced interior of the car. It was huge, more like a limo, he deemed. Furnished in leather with odds and ends he’d love to touch but was afraid he’d break accidentally.

The white of the leather was bright but surprisingly pleasant, it kind of reminded him of the hospital wing. Sterile. And all the silver of the car's extra fittings was polished until you could use it as a mirror.

Now Harry could see the countryside racing by, much like he would had he been on the Hogwart's express. This caused him to pause, would he even be able to attend the school now, considering he may view his fellow students as potential happy meals?

“Demetrius—” Harry began, deciding to ask. The aforementioned turned as his given name was spoken and frowned over at Harry quizzically.

“Call me ‘Uncle’, Harry,” he instructed. “You are my nephew, after all.” He appeared incredibly pleased with that, if his beaming face was anything to go by.

“Uncle,” Harry started again, “can you tell me why you waited to make sure I had gone through hereditas before making any attempts to contact me?”

The light in his uncle's eyes vanished for a moment before it was back in place. “I’ll answer all your questions as soon as everything's settled. I promise, but first I want you to look out your window and get the first glimpse of your new home, the home you'll inherit when I'm gone.”

That perhaps wasn't the best thing for him to say, but Harry turned and found himself gaping at the structure before his eyes.

It was an immensely grand building, only just falling short of what Harry would call a castle. A large manor of a sort, which appeared to be influenced a little in Victorian tastes, making it look somewhat gothic, but somehow not. The most brilliant feature to it, however, was the way it nestled neatly within the cliffs that surrounded it, offering a natural protection all around.
Harry was able to do nothing but stare in awe as the car drove through the outer wall of manor and into it's well protected courtyard where his journey ended.

“Come along now, Harry,” his uncle said in barely concealed enthusiasm. “Your aunt so wants to meet you.”

With the words barely out of his mouth, the large double doors of the atrium burst open and out stepped a woman regally.

She was delicate, and beautiful, clad in a pale icy blue robes that were cut to emphasise her form. She had waist length waves of black hair as dense as Harry's and sharp eyes a haunting violet. She froze in her movements as she caught sight of Harry, standing next to Demetrius before losing all pretence of nobility and running over and pulling Harry into a deep hug. “He's gorgeous!”

“Let him breathe,” Demetrius murmured, sounding like he wanted to laugh, and also a little embarrassed.

The woman glared momentarily at her husband, then turned her attentions back to Harry. “My name is Selene, Demetrius' wife but you can call me ‘Aunty.'” She said in a voice that too was lilted and beamed at Harry. “Your chambers have been set up in the Western Wing...” Selene began as she continued to walk away, leading a bemused Harry behind her.

“You're going to get sick of all the attention,” Demetrius muttered, quietly so only Harry could hear. His ploy didn't quite work though, and Selene spun to gaze sternly at Demetrius.

“I heard that.”

Immediately Demetrius forced a look of utmost innocence.

The three passed through the atrium and up the grand stair case, with Harry barely able to really appreciate what he was seeing.

They stopped however, in front of an ancient looking and very large tapestry. It bore a woman who looked a great deal like Selene, though her hair was a pale blonde, and her eyes the colour of amber. At her side stood a very stoic looking man, his features were similar to Harry's own, though sharper more like Demetrius'. His hair was long, black and sleek. His eyes were a cool grey.

At their feet sat three children. The smallest was a girl who had her father's dark hair but her mother's eyes, while the brother on her left was a near carbon copy of their father. The other had their mother's hair and eyes.

It was then that Harry noticed the diadem hanging at the older woman's brows and a thin golden band threaded around the oldest male's hair.

“The King and Queen of the Angelus,” Demetrius said, pride infusing his words. “Mikhail and Yulia Nikolai.”

What? Mikhail Nikolai... but did that mean? Demetrius turned to Harry, smiling. “That's right, Harry. You're royalty.”

--xXx--
Chapter Three: The Issues of a Fledgling

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

This chapter has been beta'd by the wonderful Claira. Thank-you~! :) 

Harry had been left alone after that. "To adjust." Demetrius had said, thinking that he was probably too shocked to really take much else in.

So Harry took his advice, and lay in his large new bed, peering up at the canopy.

His bedroom wasn't so much a bedroom, but more of a large and expensively decorated chamber. It consisted of a huge bed that could easily fit six others stretched out and none would touch another person. It was covered in pillows and cushions and throws, and was set in the middle of a dais. There was one large, fluted pillar located at each corner of the platform to support transparent drapes of a light colour as well as thicker velvet ones that acted as a kind of curtain for the bed.

The cool marble floor was covered in thick Peruvian rugs, and a large fireplace fitted snugly into the wall. Harry had the suspicion it was linked to a floo network, making him able to use it if he chose. The mantle was ornately carved, as was every other piece of furniture that adorned the room.

The large French doors had been left open, allowing the last of the sun's light to cascade through and warm his face. It's presence was something familiar in a place of so much change and difference. It was calming.

Hedwig, oddly enough, or perhaps not, was already there and waiting upon arrival and was now perched atop the bookcase, peering down at him worriedly.

A shiver ran down Harry's spine, something that had nothing to do with the weather.

He had accepted the word of a stranger and been taken to some strange place, Merlin knew where, and was actually at ease. In fact, he was probably more settled and comfortable already at his new home than he had ever been anywhere before, including Hogwarts, and that was really saying something. He knew that he should have been concerned about how accepting he was of his circumstances, but didn't seem to be able to muster the ability to.

It was odd the amount of trust he had already placed in this stranger and his wife, both whom insisted he was family and he call them such. He felt it too; the bond that lay between them already. Nothing like he had felt with any other being before, and much as Harry didn't want to think on it, he realized that it was already stronger than what he ever felt with Sirius.

Another thought skittered through his mind: he was no longer human.

From what had happened so far, there hadn't been any radical changes. He didn't crave blood like he thought he would, but then again, it hadn't even been a full day. It was still possible. He had heightened senses, but that was the only thing beside his altered appearance that revealed any sort of change.
As if a flood had been released, Harry's magical powers abruptly surged from his body in wave upon wave of tangible colour and sound. The hues were a mixture that could shame the most beautiful rainbow, musical tones were that which could drown out the most wonderful of songs. All of it was so stunning it was painful, and tore around Harry's room in a destructive force before Harry, too drained to do anything else, collapsed in a heap on his floor.

The resulting mess of splintered wood and broken glass was cleared away as Harry slept on in exhaustion, by his personal house elf, Raeda and as he slept, he failed to see Demetrius peering into his room with a sad expression on his face.

This time, Harry dreamt of falling. When he stopped, he was back at the split paths, surrounded by darkness although there were echoes of something missing humming through the air.

Consciousness came much too soon in Harry's opinion, as his heavy eyelids fluttered open and he glared over at the small being peering nervously back at him.

The little elf, small even by house-elf standards, and clad in an expensive looking pillowcase and tea towel stood just out of reach bearing a large silver platter, that looked as if it should have crushed her where she stood.

"Is master Harry wanting anything to eat?" She squeaked. "Master has informed Raeda that the young master has not eaten since his arrival."

Despite his current throbbing head and obviously hungry body, he declined the offer politely. "Er... No thanks, Raeda?" It isn't the house elf's fault she was ordered to feed me... As his slowly waking mind tried to grasp a certain concept he heard himself say. "How long have I been asleep?"

"Since you arrived, three evenings ago," his uncle announced from the door. He moved to the elf, and, relieving her of the burden she held, ordered her away. "Sorry if I'm intruding, but I was alerted to your state of consciousness." Demetrius said, focussing on Harry once more.

"Three?" Harry asked, shocked.

Demetrius shrugged with an elegant roll of his shoulders as he approached the boy still secured by his blankets. Setting the tray aside on the bedside table he said, "You finally accepted your transformation, and with it came a large magical surge. I'm sure at least half of the magical community felt you awaken. I'm just relieved our home is so well warded, otherwise we'd likely have more company than I've prepared for."

"Company?" Harry frowned. "What kind of company?" He couldn't help but feel suspicious. He may trust his uncle for whatever reasons, but even his trust could only be extended so far.

"All in good time," Demetrius said dismissively. "For now, I must teach you the basics of your new powers. How much have you read of those books I gave you?"

"Not all that much," Harry answered honestly. "Most of what I read was on our clan as well as a brief history on how I'm really a Nikolai and not a Potter."
The elder nodded, a frown marring his brow. “You read nothing else then?” He asked slowly in confirmation.

“No,” Harry answered, just as carefully.

“Hmm.”

For long moments the two just stared at each other, Demetrius with a thoughtful countenance while Harry was filled with curiosity. He had been waiting to ask Demetrius questions about his lineage, and now that he had that time he didn't have any questions... Well, not any off the top of his head, at least.

Then suddenly, “what did it mean by Dorea Potter was mated to Emmanuel Nikolai?”

“Well,” Demetrius said carefully, the frown back on his face as he thought about what he was saying, “it meant they were soul mates, though Dorea had already married and was very much in love with her husband.” The bitterness in his voice couldn't be hidden. Harry listened intently, “Father met her when she was close to fifty years old, she was beautiful still, and young looking. He knew she was married so never did anything that would jeopardise Mother's relationship with Charlus.

“But watching her for years grew unbearable, and he decided he had to have her, at least once before he vowed that he would vanish and never follow her again. In the guise of her husband Charlus, he got his wish but with the union came James and me.

“Father was forced to return and take me when it became apparent I’d be like him, while James would be like our mother. Once I was born, he modified the memories of those who knew of me before taking me back to Russia where I was raised. The heavily edited version of our story is in our history book I gave you.”

So grandmother wasn't an adulterer... Well, not knowingly. Harry frowned, was there any real difference in that?

“So we have soul mates?” Somehow the subject had totally missed Harry, and now that he knew about it, he was feeling uneasy. From what he understood, their mates weren't needed like like Veela mates were. Coveted, yes, but not to the point of actually dying if they were without them. “So... I have a mate out there somewhere, but won't necessarily need her, and could actually go on living with whoever else I wanted to?” he queried, wanting to have his theory confirmed.

“That's right,” his uncle answered, “you don't need whoever he or she is, as it is a rarity for mates to meet to begin with, but when you do, you won't want to be without them. It was fortunate that your aunt is my soul mate. She completes me in every sense of the word.”

“How do you know who your mate is if you see them? Or do we smell them out?” Harry asked, thinking about Veela.

“Nothing as degrading as that,” Demetrius muttered with a twist of his lips. “That kind of thing is for animals. No, you'll be drawn to them much like a moth to flame. It will grow the more you come into contact with the other; when in their presence you'll become almost drunk on their magic, and until you are able to bond, this will grow worse.”

Harry grimaced inwardly, not at all wanting to speak about bonding with his uncle. Demetrius, however, apparently had the same thoughts because he cleared his throat and quickly changed the subject.
“I’m sure you have questions you’re wanting answered.”

“Actually, yeah,” Harry agreed, eagerly latching on to the new subject. “Why are you both titled ‘Lord and Lady’ instead of ‘King and Queen’? Wouldn’t that cause a slight identity issue while dealing with the other Lords and Ladies?”

Chuckling, Demetrius answered: “That was my father's doing,” he admitted, “Emmanuel Nikolai was an... interesting man. He cared not for titles and all that rubbish. He was proud of his noble blood yes, but to him actions spoke much clearer than anything else. Having a title alone meant nothing to him. You had to earn your worth, he believed.

“It was his idea to have the titled altered. And no, it doesn't cause too much problems as we are The Lord and Lady.”

Harry nodded. His family history book never mentioned any of this, so he assumed it was a safety precaution should the ancient tome fall into the wrong hands and be used against his family. Though he had yet to actually really read through the entire book.

“You and Selene look a lot like the King and Queen,” Harry blurted out suddenly.

Demetrius smirked. It looked remarkably like Lucius Malfoy's, and Harry couldn't help but inwardly cringe at the display.

“We were merely blessed with the looks of our long past ancestors,” the oldest Nikolai conceded. “Yes, Selene and I are relations. Though distantly so, as you have possibly picked up already, she is of a noble French family, whereas my family has stayed of Russian origins. But enough of that, we can continue discussions and training after you've eaten and changed,” he said, finishing abruptly and striding from the room leaving Harry to himself and his thoughts.

---jade.requiem---

It was a curious, well fed, and cleaned Harry who emerged from his rooms some time later. Having not been shown around, he entered his uncle's impressive study in absolute awe.

As he hadn't had any real time to appreciate the home for what it was on his arrival, he made sure to take his time and marvel at the elegance of it's structure and tasteful art that lined it's walls and filled it's niches.

“There you are! And here I had thought you'd gotten lost,” Aunt Selene said upon Harry's entrance. Instantly she was next to Harry and was tending to his robes. “I had thought you'd be a little bigger,” she frowned down at him, then glanced to her husband who was a full head and a bit taller than his nephew, and little less than half a head taller than her. She shook her head, “We'll need to get you some new things. This won't do. It won't do at all.”

He didn't really know what was wrong with the robes they had left for him to wear. He thought they were rather nice. Of a brilliant cut, if a little too big. But only a little, at least he wasn't swimming in these unlike, Dudley's old cast-offs.

“I don't mind,” he tried to say.

“Nonsense,” his aunt Selene cut in. “You are a prince, and as such will be treated like one. Which
means clothes that are tailored to fit your body, and to show off your lineage proudly.”

She was really beginning to remind Harry of Lucius Malfoy... Though a much warmer version of the cold hearted man.

Harry shuddered despite himself.

“You forget Selene, Harry doesn't know the first thing when it comes acting like a prince, let alone showing off his lineage. These will be taught to him, but first he must know how to control his new powers, or the Silver Court will have a field day. Let alone the council of elders. Circe forbid they catch wind of this before he's ready for court.”

Selene grimaced and relented, standing off to the side, now merely watching the things going on.

“Most of this will be instinctual,” Demetrius started calmly, “all I'm going to do is aid you in the right instinct and train it so it won't get out of hand. We can't have you suddenly tearing your robes to pieces if you're startled and your wings come out in defence.

“Your fangs, too, will be much like that and your eyes will change colour to gold. It's easy to will them that colour as well, all you need is a little practise and you're set.

“Now, I want you to extract your teeth. Once you know how to do that, we'll apply the same technique to your wings. Despite what other people may tell you, it's done exactly the same way.” He gestured at Harry.

Time flew by as Harry practised under his uncle's tutelage.

It didn't take long for him to have mastered his fangs movement, and move on to his wings. This exercise required he remove his robe however and left him standing in his uncle's study wearing only his trousers.

“Good,” Demetrius encouraged as he observed Harry's painstakingly slow progress of unfurling his wings. Once the large feathered limbs were free and outstretched he peered at them carefully. “You went through a full transformation on your birthday?”

“I don't know, I was kinda passed out due to all the pain,” Harry said wryly.

“Ahh, yes,” the other agreed, Selene winced in sympathy. “But what I'm seeing here suggests that your wings have already been exposed to the air. I had thought that only the beginnings of this would have happened, and hoped that you being here and my guidance would ease them into the world. I imagine that if you did have those appear while you were by yourself that it would have been most painful.”

“How would your presence have eased the pain any?” he said aloud.

“How would your presence have eased the pain any?” Harry asked, confused.

“Another clan thing.” Demetrius chuckled, “While I'm not your Sire, I am the closest person you have to one. That's the tie that makes us both trust and protective of each other, especially the older members of the fledglings, it's a kind of clan bonding thing. This way the fledgling feels protected in it's time of great vulnerability.” He sounded incredibly guilty. “Fledglings usually have to have a parental unit with them during this time. It can be detrimental to their well being otherwise.”

Brilliant, Harry thought sourly. I had to go and be an over-achiever in the bizarre, again!

“Detrimental, how?” he said aloud.
“It could effect your acceptance of us as your clan; as family members. Your development in vampiric terms could be stunted. Mentally, it could damage you. Though from everything I've seen so far, you are a completely normal fledgling. Slightly faster than the usual, but by no means is that a cause for worry. From what I've heard, that's normal for you.”

The man gave a cheeky grin.

“Now,” he said. “I want you to lift your wings out slowly.”

Harry did as he was instructed, glancing at the magnificent darkly feathered protrusions with a fierce pride. Those were his wings.

“They will be too weak to be able to support you yet. Like a baby bird, you'll have to wait until they've strengthened. By the look of them, that will take a month at the very most.” Demetrius circled around the smaller male, gauging the strength of the wings then stopped when he was standing before Harry again. “Maybe a little sooner, they've already started developing flight feathers.”

“Good, I can't wait to try them out.”

“Yes, it is good they are almost fully developed. You'll have more ground to back you with a set of adult wings when you are to face the Council of Elders. The Silver Court won't be so hard to handle, the elders though, they can be a right pain when you really want to do something.”

Harry thought about that. His uncle had mentioned the ‘Elders’ before as well as the ‘Silver Court’, both he knew had something to do with his new status as heir and prince. He assumed the ‘Silver Court’ was more of an immediate group, probably high ranking members of his clan and he assumed the ‘Elders’ where passed Court members who meddled with everyone else's lives.

It certainly sounded that way. And somehow, having his flight wings while being presented to them was a good thing.

Apparently, Demetrius was able to determine Harry's inquisitive look because he supplied, “Full flight wings in our clan are what we use to establish adults from fledglings. The sooner you're accepted as an adult, the better for you freedom wise. Though, I'll still treat you as my protégé until you are able to stand on your own. But that is not here nor there, and you still have many things to learn before we'll even start on the topic of the court and council.”

Harry nodded and stretched out his wings, silently thinking over what he had heard. He thought the Council sounded something like the Wizengamot. Not a bunch of people he liked terribly well, if at all really. Already he could imagine how his meeting with them would go, and it wasn't well.

Not at all.

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Chapter Four: Trials, Tribulations and Shocking Discoveries

Days passed by in a blur for Harry as his practise and training continued. Within little time he found that he was able to command his bodies reactions with ease. He had no problems with his fangs, and his wings were completely developed, all he needed was room to actually practise his flying to be sure if they could yet support his weight. Harry assumed they could, strong as the already were.

Not even quite three weeks after waking at his new home, Harry found himself being bundled up and disguised for his trip to Diagon Alley. When he asked his uncle about it, he had been informed that it was because he didn't need all the attention his new appearance was bound to cause. It made perfect sense.

So, with their features dulled down, and their hair and eye colours changed, the family flooed into the Leaky Cauldron without a spot marring their handsome robes.

The usual hustle and bustle of the place brought an absent cheer to Harry, who hadn't known he had missed the noise of so many others. He pegged it up to having to live with a dorm full of boys and suddenly being placed somewhere that was almost sterile in it's silence.

As the party made it's way around the crowds, Harry could easily pick out those who were classmates and friends in the cluster of bodies, though obviously none recognised him. Being so close to school they were likely doing their shopping for their up and coming classes. Then a thought struck Harry; he had no idea what he had achieved in his OWLs.

He had heard nothing from anyone since his relocation, and he had to question whether his friends were able to locate him where he was or not. Except for Hedwig or course, but then again, she always seemed the exception to that rule.

"Have I had any mail?" Harry asked suddenly, while the trio strolled leisurely down the crowded street.

"No," his uncle blinked, "were you expecting something?"

"My OWLs," Harry answered.

"Ahh, don't fret," she said in acknowledgement before forcing him to straighten his posture, "you'll get wrinkles and it's very unbecoming in such a young age."

"Now," she continued, "first we are going to have you measured at Madame Malkins and some suitable clothing made for you. You are a Nikolai, prince of the Angelus; you should be proud of who you are and not..."

She continued on in this way and Harry found he didn't have the heart to say anything against her. Mostly because he had seen his uncle on the receiving end of one of her tongue lashings. While not loud, the sight wasn't pretty and Harry felt no desire to have such a thing directed solely at him.
Besides, mothering Harry was what he was sure Selene's new favourite pastime was, as she could be found wherever he was or not far from him. She wasn't overly vocal or extreme in her thoughts or actions though, not like Mrs Weasley. While Harry was adjusting to her affection toward him, he was still trying to fathom his feelings toward his uncle.

Often, Harry would catch the other looking at him in an almost wistful manner, and at times Harry got the impression that Demetrius wanted to do or say something but refrained from it. It was almost like he was afraid to overstep a boundary, so instead he kept Harry at arms length. While Harry had respected that initially, he was slowly growing tired of it and just wanted to know his uncle and see where things went from there.

“What are you thinking about?” Demetrius cut in quietly, observing his nephew.

“What are you thinking about?” Demetrius cut in quietly, observing his nephew.

“Everything and nothing.” Harry answered.

Demetrius opened his mouth to speak but was interrupted by his wife who motioned Harry into the robe store and followed shortly after.

Madame Malkin, the squat proprietor immediately set about measuring Harry at Selene's request and brought out many different types of fabric and colours. It was difficult for Harry to stand around as the two woman started chatting about different colour combinations and styles for him, more so because Selene was trying to buy things that would suit Harry without his disguise while Madame Malkin was doing the exact same thing for the person she was seeing before her.

Over an hour or so later, bored and stiff, Harry followed his aunt and uncle from the store and back into the busy streets of Diagon Alley.

Sunlight! Harry internally hissed with glee. The irony not lost on him as he practically bloomed after standing on the same spot in a store for an extended amount of time. The light was absolute heaven.

“You look... lively,” Demetrius observed.

“I dislike being confined in dark places,” Harry answered without thought. He mentally slapped himself when his uncle frowned and looked like he was about to ask. Harry needn't have worried though, because almost instantly his gaze was drawn back to Selene as she said something.

Out of nowhere, it was though Harry had had ice tipped down his robes and it was all he could do not to shiver at the odd feeling. The sensation was gone almost as soon as it had come but left Harry feeling unnerved. More so when he was sure he felt the heavy gaze of someone or thing settled on him.

Selene, it appeared was the only one to notice his unease. She glanced at him worriedly and sent Demetrius ahead. “Is everything all right, Harry?” she asked, her voice soothing and infused with a bone deep concern, “You look like you met a grim.”

“I thought I had, actually,” he said, laughing nervously. This only worried Selene more as her brows drew down and she peered deeply into his temporary malt coloured eyes. “It wasn't really. It was someone else...”

Selene nodded slowly, drawing back only a little. “Do you want to return home? We can finish our excursion at a later date. When you're not feeling so under the weather?”

“I'm fine,” Harry reassured. Feeling his trade mark statement slip from his mouth. Not appearing at all convinced, Selene nodded regardless, allowing the subject to drop. Seeming
even more troubled, she continued, “We had best catch up with your uncle before he believes we have abandoned him.” She smiled softly and led Harry through a large cluster of people, casting her eyes over her shoulder as she went.

Harry merely followed, relieved as the weight from his back vanished as he himself did in the crowd.

Shopping continued in a more subdued manner than earlier. Even though Selene had said nothing to Demetrius of her and Harry's conversation after... whatever the incident was, the older male Nikolai had read them both, having easily deciphered Harry's wavering feelings and his wife's alert and concerned ones.

The group had split up to gather different items off their inventory to make the journey faster, although both adults weren't keen on leaving their fledgling unattended, especially after his upset and still so close since his change. Harry, however, had reasoned that he was technically really no longer a fledgling as he had his flight feathers and they supported his weight for the required testing period.

As Harry meandered back toward the Leaky Cauldron, loaded down with his new school books, he thought in annoyance that even with his disguise firmly in place he had snagged the attention of more than a few people.

Dulled down as his appearance was and with no remarkably striking features, such as his mother's vivid green eyes, he was still far from being unattractive. Or even remotely mediocre. This caused him to seriously wonder how he was going to explain his sudden change when he got to school. They'd know it was his hereditas, but what then? They'd likely want to know what exactly happened and how would they react to finding out their saviour-to-be was a vampire? Even if he was apparently the kind that had a tendency to kill off the other kinds, there would still be a lot of prejudice involved. He could see it now: 'POTTER, SAVIOUR OR MONSTER?' splashed out onto the front page of the Daily Prophet. The media would have a field day.

It was with these dark thoughts that Harry collided with a warm wall he was sure hadn't been there earlier and promptly lost his footing. Before he had a chance to land on his rear however, a hand shot out and steadied him on his feet.

Extremely grateful, Harry opened his mouth to thank the person who had helped him and was met with something he was certain he would never see: the arm supporting him belonged to Draco Malfoy.

But at the same time it wasn't Draco Malfoy. Not the pointy, pale kid he'd met back in Madame Malkin's five years ago. Not even really the one he had seen a few short weeks before the end of last term. This Draco Malfoy had changed and grown.

A lot.

Draco was very nearly as tall as his own father now, only shorter by an inch or so at most, putting him roughly at the same height as Demetrius. While still lithely built, Draco's shoulders had broadened just a bit, giving him more of an actual shape. The air he gave off was one of a predator, especially the glint of his eyes. His face had sharpened dramatically, giving him a finely chiselled look which held a mixture of both his parents features, his icily beautiful mother and arrogantly handsome father.

He looked rather... good, and, were it not for the fact it was Draco Harry was thinking about, he would have admitted that his long time rival was nothing short of stunning. But Harry didn't think that; in fact, he refused to.
Harry stood, inwardly cringing at his own train of thought.

Both boys froze momentarily and Draco dropped Harry's arm slowly, almost like he didn't want to let Harry's arm go, but was terrified of holding on longer. Meanwhile, Harry was having his own mental debate: should he stay and play it calm, or run for it the moment he was given a decent chance at fleeing? It wasn't that Harry was scared per se, he was just worried that Draco had somehow seen through the glamour he had worn. It wasn't impossible. For one, Moody's magical eyes saw through pretty much anything, and Harry had been told that certain magical beings and creatures were the same, Harry's own clan included if the person was strong enough.

He himself could partially see through his aunt and uncles' glamours, a feat that hadn't surprised either in the least. Selene had explained that in time he'd see through any they cast and suggested he practise.

Trying not to grimace, Harry pulled himself together to deliver the words of gratitude he had originally planned for, having decided fleeing would be cowardice. “Thank you,” he murmured, his words infused with all the sincerity he could gather at that moment. How he managed to keep the bitterness from his expression was beyond him.

The blonde frowned as he studied Harry in what the latter could only deem as something akin to confusion. “Do I know you?”

His voice had deepened, too. Not all that much just enough to be noticeable in his husky yet cultured tones.

“Possibly,” Harry shrugged nonchalantly, not wanting to lie even if it was to Draco. Something told him that lying would be an infinitely bad thing and that the other would pick up on it immediately.

But Draco wasn't finished and pushed, “Do you go to Hogwarts then? You can't if you don't know me.” He was studying Harry intently, much like he would at school when he thought no one was paying attention. “I'm sure I know you,” Draco pressed, “I just can't think of where.”

“Perhaps at certain gatherings?” Harry offered, then wanted to kick himself when he saw the other's eyes spark. Now Draco was eying him warily.

“Perhaps,” he offered and looked like he was about to say more when the impromptu conversation was stopped, and Harry saw his uncle standing by watching their interactions with an unnaturally blank expression.

The man quickly called out to him, “Come James,” he said and strolled away. None of the statement was lost on Harry. The curt command nor the use of his middle name as opposed to his first one.

“Excuse me,” he said and hurried off after Demetrius, leaving Draco behind where he stood rooted to the spot. Oblivious to the fact that Draco's sharp grey eyes never left his form as he retreated into the crowd.

“How well do you know him?” The older man asked, surreptitiously looking at the other when the pair were far enough away.

“You mean Malfoy?” Harry asked, perplexed. “Not well. He's in my year, rival house and Seeker on the Quidditch team. His father's tried to kill me before. Death Eater, you know?” He paused not really liking the way his uncle's eyes had begun to shine in that disturbing way.

“Really, now?” the man asked, looking ridiculously amused, if not a touch saddened. This was certainly not something Harry had expected from his new guardian, and it unnerved him greatly.
“Well, he helped.” Harry justified. His eyes narrowed before he slowly asked, "Is there something you're not telling me?"

Demetrius stopped short and spun to look upon Harry, his face now sombre but there was no denying the damned sparkle in his eyes. “There is much that we need to discuss, Harry,” he said to the boy. “But you'll understand soon enough and then perhaps you'll appreciate the humour a little better.”

But Harry couldn't see anything remotely funny about the situation.

“In any case, you are to stay away from Draco Malfoy,” Demetrius warned. “It's important that you do.”

“It's not like I go looking for him! He usually comes looking for me. He's been trying to have me expelled from Hogwarts for years.”

“I'm sure he has,” Demetrius murmured, an odd tone in his voice.

Harry's eyes narrowed further but he said nothing.

Not ten minutes later found all three Nikolais back at their cliffside manor unpacking their shopping and Harry being forced to model all of his new robes.

His Aunt Selene was dreadful, she really was, using him as her own personal dress up doll. He had been mildly surprised to find that among the robes he had made for him were also muggle garments such as jeans and fitted trousers and shorts, shirts and a variety of other clothes.

By the end of it, Harry was feeling extremely exhausted and wanted nothing more than a hot soak in his bath and then take a much needed rest. He proceeded to do just that, eying his overly bright looking aunt and uncle warily. They were up to something, he could tell. He just wasn't sure exactly what they were up to.

Settled on his large bed in his room, Harry's eyes slid close and was on the verge of sleep when the thought of Draco Malfoy soundly woke him.

It wasn't so abnormal for him really, more inconvenient that his thought processes would derail when something Draco did to piss him off would suddenly sprout in his psyche. This time though, it wasn't out of annoyance, anger or vengeance that the thought revolved around. No, it was simply seeing him that day not being a total bastard. Not entirely something that he had expected.

It had been almost like when they had first met, though this time the blonde hadn't said anything to offend. Well not really, except for the assumption that any and all who attended Hogwarts would automatically know him... that theory though wasn't entirely unfounded... if at all. As anyone who knew Harry would surely know Draco, if for no other reason than their legendary rivalry since first year.

Not that the blonde wasn't well known at the school in his own right. He was a Malfoy, a pureblood supremacist, heir to a hell of a lot of galleons and son of well known Death Eater. He was the second best seeker right after Harry, he had top grades in class and was usually a good and studious student in all classes except Care of Magical Creatures, something Harry was sure was only the case due to who taught the class.
No, Draco wasn't one to like a half-breed.

Harry paused at that, he himself wasn't even a halfblood anymore. No he was a pureblood vampire, something that should be so much worse but it wasn't.

He'd been reading up on his own kind, had listened as his aunt and uncle explained the finer points of the situation to him; though he was certain there was so much more that he would need to learn.

His vampirism had been a dominant-recessive gene which required certain conditions to take effect in order for his change. Unlike his uncle, who had a fullblooded vampire father and a witch mother, he had been a born vampire while James had taken only the vampiric gene from his father and passed it on to Harry.

Harry, while not a born vampire, not in the way his uncle was, had the potential to be which was why during his hereditas a certain magic was triggered to bring about the change. He had been informed that it was possible that he could have had his first transformation at the age of 11 when he was sent his letter for Hogwarts. Why that hadn't happened was something the family puzzled over but came to the conclusion that there had to be a reason for it, much like the reason he hadn't been a 'technically' born vampire.

And he certainly wasn't a changeling. As no Angelus or Invidian could be created by an infected bite. A reason why the Angelus clan were so few in number, while the Clanless, the vampires that the Angelus hunted, sprouted like weeds.

Then there was just magic in general. All Angelus and Invidians possessed magic like any normal witches or wizards, which also helped in their deceit to everyone else in the magical community.

In pretty much most aspects, members of both day-walking vampire clans could be considered normal witches and wizards, mostly; if you discounted the wings, fangs and claws that popped out. *The heightened sense too*, he reflected. As well as the other things that some normal wizards possessed, like telepathy, and it's minor flaw such as only being able to use it with fellow family members and bonded mates...

And Harry really didn't want to think about mates. Nor bonding.

Sighing, Harry rolled over, wondering if his life would ever be normal. He didn't think it was possible, and could no longer quite fathom what exactly 'normal' was.

It was then Harry felt a warmth flood him in the most intriguing way. It was followed quickly by a large stab of pain and he unwillingly let out a ear-splitting shriek. It was not ignored either, for soon after both his aunt and uncle had flown through the door looking ready to kill.

Both stilled not far from the door frame before Selene said softly, “It's starting. Demetrius you bring the supply, I imagine he'll be thirsty.” She stepped cautiously toward the bed, her hand extended as though to soothe a frightened animal.

“Harry, can you hear me?”

Despite all, Harry could hear her soft voice clearly through the vicious pounding of blood through his ears. “Yes,” he whimpered, unable to stop himself. His blood vessels felt as though they were on fire and his nerve endings like he'd been zapped with a heavy dose of high voltage. He was also well aware that his feathered appendages had made an appearance to protect him from whatever his body had deemed a threat.

“Harry,” she soothed. “Are you thirsty?”
That certainly did it. Once the statement had left the woman's mouth he felt himself become incredibly thirsty. His throat almost parched and Merlin how his stomach ached. “Mmm,” he answered as best he could.

Selene nodded her head, though Harry wasn't able to see, and said to him, “We had hoped this could be done with the proper ritual surrounding it but it looks like your accelerated progress in both wings includes that of your thirst.

“Can I approach you?”

*Of all bloody stupid questions...*

“Yes,” he cried, frustrated with how heavy his limbs had become as he tried to reach for her. However, she pulled back a bit, evidently unsure of the situation which only drew a long whimper from Harry. That settled it though, and Selene eased herself onto his large bed and dragged him over to her and held him tight.

“I've got it,” called Demetrius from the doorway, and in quick strides he was standing over the pair situated on the bed.

Instantly Harry's nose perked up at the intoxicating scent that emanated from the smoking chalice his uncle held. Had Harry been in a more stable state of mind, he would have admired the cup for it's undeniable beauty, but instead he reached for it blindly, whimpering as he was denied.

“Harry, calm down and sit up slowly.” The voice held an authority that Harry found was hard to disobey, not that he wanted to as he was sure that if he listened then he would be given that chalice as his reward.

Struggling, Harry raised himself up and gazed blearily at his uncle, the chalice still out of reach. He was vaguely aware that Selene was still supporting him a little, that both adults were talking quickly amongst themselves, and that soon their talk turned into something that sounded almost like a chant. All this was quickly forgotten as the chalice was urged into his eagerly awaiting hands.

“Drink, Harry.” was the soft command.

Not needing to be told what to do, Harry downed the entire goblet in one go. Sighing in pleasure as the velvety warmth soothed his pain and the most exquisite of tastes flowed into his mouth and exploded on his tongue.

He collapsed boneless to his bed, completely sated and a smile that many would mistake as the kind that followed mind-blowing sex.

Harry fell asleep shortly after, missing the whispered conversation still going on in his room and around his head. He didn't however, miss when a soft hand eased his sweat soddened fringe from his brow, or the feathery light kiss placed there. Nor would he remember any of it when he awoke the next day from his bloodlust crazed mind.

- -jade.requiem-

When Harry finally woke it was morning, and sunlight flowed freely into his face blinding him and only adding to the throbbing headache to which he was now suffering. He felt awful, worse than the few times he had had a hangover from drinking far too much Firewhiskey. It was as though some evil little creature had taken up residency in his skull and was renovating it with sledgehammers.
The feeling was thoroughly unwelcome.

What did surprised Harry though, was that Selene and Demetrius had seated themselves on either side of his bed, which he noticed had been shrunken down to something more resembling a single, no doubt so each could easily be within reach of him if he so needed it. He also noticed that both adults looked remarkably tired.

“That was bloodlust.” Demetrius began as though an invisible switch had been turned, “We had been expecting it, but hoping it would be held off for a little until the usual rituals were completed.

“It does not matter now, though how it will effect things when you are presented to the court or council, I cannot say.”

“How does this change anything?” Harry asked, surprised by the his voice yet again. Husky, yet smooth and honeyed all at once. “I thought... How much more of these...” he cast about searching for an appropriate word, “stages' will I go through until I won't go through anymore? I had thought that there was only the transformation. I had no idea I'd go through anything else.”

He tried to clear his throat.

Here Selene intervened by offering Harry the same chalice from the previous night. He took it and sipped this time from it's depths, absently aware of the vividness of it's hue and it's syrup-like consistency. In the depths of his mind he was fully aware of what he was drinking, however, his instincts had dulled those thoughts and just forced him to act.

“This changes a great deal Harry,” Selene said, sounding worried, “it can't be hidden any longer, the other's would have felt you fully awaken into your self and will wish to call court as soon as possible. It cannot be delayed any further, at most they will allow a week for your recovery and then contact us to arrange a meeting.

“You have not been raised to the conduct of the court and so it leaves us with little time to train you in their ways. It will be hard. Despite you being crown Prince, the court will try to bully you but you mustn't allow that. They will see weakness if you submit, they will look for weakness in you. It is something I wish you could avoid, but it that seems time is against us...

“The only thing that works for us is that you have your wings, and you lived through your first bloodlust. Even if it did give your condition away to all the other of our clan, it has also helped secure your position.”

Demetrius nodded in accordance with his wife but seeing the bemused expression on Harry's face, decided to elaborate further.

“Those who come into their bloodlust without ritual usually die, Harry. That you survived it and your hereditas alone with only the mild help from Selene and myself speaks highly in your favour.

“As for your other question; there are four stages to your transformation. Arguably five, though the next are painless.”

Nodding numbly, Harry's eyes slipped to his chalice allowing his eyes to drink in the sight of the liquid it held as well as the fine cup itself. He examined it for a while, pouring over what he had been told and knew that soon he would be forced to meet people he was likely going to despise.

Swilling the almost wine-like liquid in his chalice he took a large gulp and finished it off. “And what might this be called?”
“That would be Resémier,” Selene offered with a warm smile. “The finest and richest of wines that our kind has to offer.”

“And the reason you're giving me more alcohol when I already suffer a killer headache?”

Selene blinked once then replied, “Resémier may be a wine, but it has no lasting effects after it is consumed. Such as hangovers. Your headache is but a mere warning that your thirst is not completely sated.”

She took the empty chalice from Harry's fingers easily and poured him another drink before handing the container back to him. “This one should be sufficient,” she said.

Harry nodded slowly a took another gulp of his wine. He had to contemplate whether it was normal for his kind to always drink blood-wine. True, he hadn't seen either of his relatives touch any of it before he himself first got a drink. That didn't matter though now when it was like soothing balm on the pounding nerve endings in his head. He sighed in relief.

“It's certainly... potent,” Harry said after a while.

Demetrius smirked. “Indeed.”

Harry sat on his window seat wedged in between his large, ebony framed windows and stacks of cushions, gazing absently down at the massive pile of letters his friends had sent him.

Understandably, both had become worried when Errol and Pig had returned to the Burrow sprayed in blood and when he had failed to return letters. They had immediately informed Dumbledore and had been supplied with an answer which evidently quelled most if not all of their anxieties but left Harry remotely bitter.

It had crossed his mind that, perhaps Dumbledore already knew of what had happened and was actually allowing it. The letters for Harry which had continued to pile up only seemed to confirm this theory of his, even so didn't Harry deserve something from Dumbledore himself in explanation?

Heaving a heavy sigh, Harry unstopped his ink bottle—a brand new and overly decorative one, that in Harry's opinion was far more suited to be a girls' perfume bottle with most of it's crystalline form and silver, ivory and jade pieces fit into it—and began his letter back to his friends. He knew he couldn't write much about what had happened but promised that as soon as he saw them that he'd tell them everything.

Ron and Hermione,

I'm sorry to have worried you. I've been busy with someone I'm dying for you to meet. He's brilliant and so is his wife. Both are great and yes, they feed me and treat be better than the Dursleys' ever did.

A lot has happened over the past month and I can't really go into detail about it, just that I will tell you as soon as I see you both at school. There is nothing to worry about Hermione, and yes I have had a chance to do all my school work.

The reason why I haven't answered your letters until now is actually because I only just received them. I'm unsure where I am exactly, I'm not with muggles nor am I in danger of any kind. From what I can tell, the only reason I even got these letters was because I sent Hedwig to the Dursleys' in hopes of picking up any stray post that may had been sent there. Apparently where I live is warded
heavily and only she can find where I am.

I don't need to go to Diagon Alley, I've already been but thanks for asking Ron.

Tell everyone I love the gifts. They were brilliant.

Harry.

The letter was fairly short, but highlighted most of what their questions had been. It was obvious that at a point the pair had been almost hysterical over his disappearance. He hoped his letter would help settle the little Dumbledore was unable to.

Harry could almost imagine how Hermione would be acting. She believed the answer to everything was in a book or with an adult while Ron... well Ron was Ron.

Calling Hedwig over, Harry tied the parchment to her leg with a piece of string. "Take that to Hermione and Ron, both should still be at the Burrow."

Hedwig blinked her large amber eyes in understanding and, hooting once softly, took flight. Harry watched her go until even he could no longer make out her form on the distant horizon. He then proceeded to sit once more on the window seat, leg bouncing in the nervous manner he had been trying to get himself out of. When he realized what he was doing, he stopped bouncing his leg and settled for biting his lip.

It was a few days until school now. His meeting with the court was that evening around midnight, and, in all honesty, he had never been so nervous in all of his life, not even having to stand trial for his under age magic the previous year.

But that wasn't the only thing happening that night, he wasn't meeting with only his clan. No, apparently the Silver Court consisted of one other clan as well; that of the Invidians. Not so unlike the Angelus, or so Harry had read, the Invidians job was to protect while Harry's was to kill. The thing being, they were meant to protect the Angelus. In one passage Harry had come to the conclusion that there had to be a sort of bond between the two. Perhaps it was a blood bond, that ensured the absolute loyalty of the Invidians to the Angelus.

From what Harry had seen, few things were stronger than that of a blood bond. Though it was possible that it was just instinct that kept the two from killing each other and instead focusing on their clanless cousins.

Slowly, Harry pondered over the information he had on the Invidians. Their appearance came second to only the Angelus, and by the ignorant could occasionally mistaken as such, though it was more often Dark Veela. While they too had wings resembling an Angelus, the slight difference was that theirs' also had glittering scales, a throwback to Draconis himself.

Harry reflected on that a while before pulling his thoughts back together and contemplating all the different possibilities of something going wrong. He was also interested to see how everyone interacted with the other.

Night fell gradually as Harry prepared for his meeting, thinking constantly about what could happen. He knew how he was to act; how his aunt and uncle were to act. Everything had been practised until he could recite every single gesture and court etiquette forwards and backwards, even as he slept.

The most unnerving thought though, was that he'd have to meet his own personal 'body guard' of
sorts. The thought was irritating. Never had Harry thought he'd have his own guard to trail him every waking day, and it unsettled him no end. Surely his uncle wouldn't force that on him? But he already knew the answer; yes, he would. It was a necessity. Well maybe not a necessity but it was ‘proper court protocol’. That and the fact that there was no possibility of there being an heir until Harry, the crown Prince of the Angelus, settled down with someone, he was trapped with a constant shadow.

At Harry's queries of why Demetrius didn't have his own warder, the elder Nikolai had simply informed Harry that he no longer needed one and refused further comment. Instead, he had made Harry study the blood bonds that would be required of him to form with his warder, once selected.

The bonding ceremony was something surrounded heavily by ritual, even if the bonding itself was as simple as a few words and drinking from the other's wrist. He knew this because he'd been forced to memorize it all as well as the magical theory behind this type of blood-bond.

The bond itself was a simple one, much like the bonding process. It allowed the location of both bonded to know exactly where the other was as well as emotional and physical status; as long as the bond remained opened or not interfered with, that is.

This was going to be one hell of a night.

Sighing as he forced his chaotic feelings to settle, Harry studying himself carefully in his full length mirror. He adjusted his collar and settled the elegant clasp of his cloak as he had been shown. It was essential that it be over his left shoulder until he was informed to remove the hood of his cloak and reveal himself to the court. There had been another gathering about a month earlier, but Harry had missed it as it had been around the time of his own birthday.

“You look fine.” Selene said from Harry's door way as she slowly made her way over to him. “There is no need to be nervous, just remember what we've taught you.” She fiddled with his deep green cloak, so dark it appeared black, and eased out any remaining wrinkles. “Remember, don't allow anyone to talk you down. Hold your head high. Most of all, remember that while you may grow bored of the ceremony, at least pretend to be attentive. First impressions last, but I'm sure you'll make one hell of a wave.”

Harry blinked. Never had Selene said anything remotely vulgar in his presence.

Apparently reading his thoughts, she smirked in a very Slytherin-like manner. “Let us go, your uncle is awaiting our arrival in the main travel chamber.”

Following apprehensively, Harry was within the main travel chamber in little time and, as expected, Demetrius was indeed waiting. All Nikolais had dressed in their traditional robes that were a green so dark it was mistaken for black. Both males' were high collared and embroidered in thick bronze scrolling opened to reveal their chests and held closed at the waist by carefully detailed belts of white-gold and various precious jewels. The robe finished just above the knee and had two splits to the waist on their side revealing the form fitting trousers both wore beneath and the dark, knee high boots. The only difference between them, that Demetrius wore a white-gold band in his hair.

Selene's garments were similar, though feminine. Her robes form fitting but not overly revealing and whisked along the ground as she walked. The slashes up the sides of her outer robes revealed the pale bronze inner robes, which was also visible through the large opening up the front of her robes. The bronze was edged with a cream lace and went straight across the front, only a little lower than her collar. Her dark hair was pulled up into an elegant bun with loose strands framing her face and her diadem hanging at her brow.

“You look lovely, as always,” Demetrius murmured, taking his wife's hand and kissing it; a fleeting
press of his lips to her knuckles. Then he looked at Harry, “And you, my nephew, look very handsome.”

Harry nearly scoffed. He knew handsome wasn’t quite the word he’d use on himself. Fer from it, actually. He sighed and raised his hood to ensure his face was completely shadowed and followed as the older vampires stepped into the family sized fireplace.

“You'll do just fine,” Demetrius murmured, “Remember; no fear, it—”

“has the strongest scent,” Harry quoted back, softly.

Demetrius nodded once in acknowledgement before calling their destination. Harry was at once lost in a whirl of bright green flame.

The family arrived in a small nondescript chamber with four guards at the door. They immediately bowed to the family and stepped around the new comers as a guard of honour. The chamber they entered next looked like it was out of some muggle fairy tale. It was huge and circular in shape. From what Harry knew of the place, he was sure that this was the court he had been informed of.

There were high walls supporting balcony upon balcony at almost strategic intervals. The walls were panelled with the same ivory that the fluted columns were made of, as were the balconies and what appeared to be all else except for the green hangings of ivy that broke the paleness of the place every so often or the scatterings of different strongly scented flowers as well as the soft cerulean pools that were filled by the small cascading waterfalls. The entire place was filled with a soft unnatural light shining from everywhere and nowhere all at once and the scent that the night blooms filled the air with was positively intoxicating.

As planned, Harry and his family were the last to arrive and everyone else had already taken their seats. Demetrius again took Selene’s hand and led her up the worn glittering stairs to his throne. Harry followed a step behind as he was taught and took the empty seat on his uncle’s left.

Immediately all sound ceased, allowing Harry to assess everyone. He noted with an almost morbid amusement that everyone was rather nice to look at. It almost looked like they were a society of mega-supermodels or something. Though, Harry could still easily pick out the few in the crowd that were surreal in their appearance.

Tilting his head inquisitively, he saw that the other royal family had remained hooded, seated opposite them on the other side of the court. A sign of great respect, or so he’d been told before. They wouldn't remove their hoods until Harry himself had taken his down.

“Brothers, sisters,” exclaimed an old steward, whose long grey hair fell to his back. He stood in the very centre of the court and waved his arms about in an all encompassing gesture, “we gather here today to welcome the Nikolai heir into his inheritance.” He then turned to Harry. “Rise.”

And Harry did.

He stood and sauntered toward the man cloaked in the icy hauteur his family were well known for, stopping only the required three feet away; this kept him at a distance that showed he was unafraid of what could happen to him, but not cocky enough to invade the other's personal space.

“As you request, I do come.” he intoned, inwardly marvelling at how his voice had developed an arrogant lilt.

The steward smiled, and it wasn't entirely pleasant. Bastard.
“As we all are well aware, he is to be crowned today in accordance with our law, his birthright and his standing as an adult. Let it be known that he came into his full hereditas alone and unaided; that he survived his first bloodlust without ritual.”

There were murmurs among those in attendance. Harry could only guess at what was going through their minds.

“As decreed by the laws of our forefathers of blood, magic and ash, any brother or sister here may speak up against the chosen Heir’s rights. Any here, may speak against his claims. Who here wishes to speak against his claims?”

Everything when deathly silent as a person from his own clan stood and approached. “I do,” he said, trying to peer into Harry’s cloak and see his face.

Behind him Harry heard Demetrius hiss, “Vulcan!” And Harry understood.

Vulcan was a distant relation but could still take the throne if he fought for it. Harry knew it would come to that too, if Vulcan was unable to intimidate him into surrendering the throne in his stead and Vulcan had had years to learn his powers while Harry had little less than a month.

The steward glanced nervously between the two, Vulcan was a great deal bigger than Harry and likely that much stronger as well.

“State your name,” the old man said to the taller vampire.

“I am Vulcan Aieris Mosiev, son of Ileda Aieris and Yuri Mosiev, I claim his right and state he stand down or fight for his throne.”

There was an immediate uproar; no one had done this kind of thing in years. Centuries even. But of course it had to happen to Harry. He was actually expecting something like this when he'd discovered it was possible.

The steward nodded once and turned back to Harry who was silently trying to burn a hole in Vulcan's head.

“What say you to his challenge?”

“I accept,” Harry said without thought and glared menacingly at the taller vampire before him. He knew the other couldn't see what he was doing, but he hoped like hell he could feel it in some way.

“I wish to fight in his stead,” yelled a loyalist to his uncle. The man looked around the same age as Vulcan and glared at the latter with utter hatred and distaste.

“I shall fight in his place!” Called someone else and this started an argument over who was to fight for Harry but all went silent as one of the hooded figures from the Invidian royalty stood and proclaimed, “I will fight in his place.”

Unsure why, but that voice rang a bell in Harry's memory. He quickly brushed it away when he saw the other was about to approach. Harry had to do this, he didn't want his family being indebted to another regardless of their loyalty to his, also this would be seen as a weakness and he couldn't have that. Not if he wished to keep the people sided with him, no one would follow a weak ruler. Which was why Demetrius hadn't stepped in. His support was shown by accepting Harry was able to handle the duel by himself.

“No,” Harry said, quietly but effectively capturing everyone's attention. He had noted with interest
how Vulcan had actually paled as the other royal had announced he would fight but a smirk flitted across his face at Harry’s words.

“I proclaim a duel to the death.”

“No!” Selene cried all façades dropped. Harry turned to her and, ignoring all else, he walked up to his family, Demetrius was stone faced and glaring death at Vulcan while Selene was evidently struggling to hold in her tears. “Take it back,” she pleaded softly so no one else but Harry would hear. “There is no dishonour in allowing another more learned to take your stead. You’ll die, Harry.”

That wasn't exactly encouraging but Harry guessed she was just worried for him.

“I promise I won’t,” Harry said offering his aunt a small smile, she kissed him on both cheeks and pressed a lingering one to his forehead. He turned to look at his uncle, who clapped him on the shoulder, his face was like carved ice.

“Make sure you don’t,” Demetrius said sternly. “I don't think I could stand your aunt, afterwards.” It was a feebly made joke but Harry appreciated the gesture.

Silently, he made his way back to Vulcan who had tossed his cloak aside and was looking at Harry in a predatory way. Harry knew now that what he had done was incredibly stupid but there was nothing to be done for it. If he died he would have damaged his family name, but that wasn't all. If he died now, the world would be at the mercy of Voldemort. He couldn't let that happen.

Unclipping his cloak, Harry tossed it aside revealing his face to all. Understandably, everyone gasped. Even Vulcan's confidence appeared to wane while staring 'Harry Potter' down.

“That can't be,” someone murmured.

“Is that Harry Potter?”

“Don't be daft, that's not the boy hero.”

“Course it's not, isn't he shorter?”

“He looks better than his photo's that's for sure!”

“That's Potter, all right.”

“But how is he a Nikolai?”

“SILENCE!” Vulcan roared.

Harry's lips quirked upward into a smirk, seemingly of their own volition. “A little tense, are we?” He asked, adopting the tone Draco often used on him to draw some sort of reaction. “There are ways of dealing with that, you know.”

Disturbingly, his opponent smiled.

Then he lunged, but Harry had been hoping the other would and deftly leapt aside, parrying as he went. The only thing he likely had on his side was his agility. Vulcan was bigger and stronger but likely more clumsy and, hopefully, if Harry got him angry enough he wouldn't think properly, causing him to do something monumentally stupid.

Vulcan lunged forward again.
Dodging easily away, Harry clipped Vulcan as he went by. The latter spun faster than the human eye could see and tried again, but again missed.

“Having trouble?” Harry taunted and continued to dance expertly out of reach as the other attempted to strike him, landing a few blows every so often but not anything too serious to even really wound.

Merlin was he lucky his uncle had insisted he take lessons in defence and offence beside the magical type.

Absently he wondered why they hadn't yet progressed to magic, his question was answered when a head sized flaming something was hurled at him. He dodged it again, just barely missing the searing ball and leapt into the sky as his wings tore through his robes. The air was his element, he had felt that way even on a broom and now he had his own wings, knew how to use them.

Soon Vulcan too was airborne, though not as graceful and attempted to knock Harry out of the sky physically then magically.

Harry himself was shooting off different spells, the and trying to avoid the ones sent at him. For those on the ground watching, it must have looked like some kind of absurd air ballet with fireworks.

“Stupify!” His attack was dodged and countered with what looked like a strong severing hex.

Harry rolled and dipped as he spun around in the air, dodging and throwing hexes at unpredictable intervals. It felt invigorating, to be flying the way he was. Air was blowing through his robes, caressing his skin and playing with his hair; Harry had never felt so alive as he did then. Strangely, not even the fact that he was fighting for his life mattered for those few moments of unadulterated bliss.

He was snapped out of his thoughts when ‘Imperio' was cast at him, Harry dove and spun missing the unforgivable by mere inches. So the other Angelus wasn't above using Unforgivables, was he? Well Harry wasn't about to sink to his level and countered with something a little different. In rapid succession, he called, “serpensortia! engorgio! Wingardium leviosa!”

A cobra flew from his wand tip, was enlarged and flung toward Vulcan, viciously hissing as it soared through the air. “Bite him!” Harry hissed to his conjured serpent, he watched with great pleasure as Vulcan's eyes widened at Harry before the large snake lashed out and sunk it's fangs into Vulcan's shoulder.

Vulcan ripped the snake off ruthlessly and hurtled it toward the ground. Immediately Harry vanished his creation. It was a mistake.

A jet of purple light flew at him.

“Protego!” The shield wasn't strong enough to take the full force of the curse and it clipped Harry, sending him hurtling back some metres through the air. When he stopped, he was breathing heavily, like his airway was closing up or something and his limbs felt heavy, including his wings which treaded the air feebly.

He wondered why Vulcan didn't appear to suffer from the snake's poisonous bite. He knew that Vampire's in general had a natural tolerance to most poisons and while it wouldn't kill them could still make them rather ill.

“I applaud your efforts, Nikolai,” Vulcan hissed maliciously. “But you obviously don't know much about our kind. Did you honestly think your little trick would work? The only thing painful about your little pet was it's bite, just to share a little something so you won't make such a stupid mistake
“I'm immune to all poison, a trait I picked up in my childhood, thankfully. Not that you really need to know that, seeing as I plan on killing you now anyway. You've survived alone thus far on sheer dumb luck.”

“And Voldemort?” Harry threw back. He wasn't surprised to see the other wince. “I guess he was sheer dumb luck too?” He dodged a curse and spiralled down in his own winged version of the Wronski feint. Vulcan followed.

“What?” The older hissed, throwing some nasty looking curse. Harry dodged and missed it but wasn't fast enough to avoid the next that came hurtling at him and seared his leg. “Well, would you look at that? He bleeds!”

There was an unmistakable gleam of madness in his eyes as he leered at Harry.

“Reducto!” Harry hissed, spinning back upwards as he flew to avoid the attacks Vulcan was sending. He shot back his own and was pleased when one clipped the other's wing. This victory was short lived however, as Vulcan put on a sudden burst of speed that Harry was not expecting and he was seized in a very painful hold that also prevented his wings and arms any movement.

“Yes, you bleed,” Vulcan said almost conversationally, he leaned closer to Harry. “But that's not the only thing you're going to do.”

Harry could only imagine.

He knew this wasn't good, that he was high up and if Vulcan did what Harry assumed he was about to, that he was not going to survive the fall to earth. Not entirely thinking straight, Harry called out the first spell that came to mind, never mind he was still learning wandless magic, or that his arm was secured to his side still holding his wand, he threw all his will into the spell.

“Sectumsempra!”

It wasn't the best idea perhaps, given how close they were together. Vulcan's arm was cut severely as a part of his wing was too but then, Harry had also sliced his own hand open and was really wishing he had chosen a different spell.

Both landed metres apart, panting and dripping blood as they stood. Harry from his hand and his leg, Vulcan from his wings and his arm.

It quickly became apparent to Harry he should have stayed airborne though, as he noticed how much his leg now hindered his movements, as Vulcan quite easily landed some heavy knocks to Harry's body.

Retaliating, Harry shot off a close range curse and tried to flee into the sky but was almost immediately seized by the ankle and yanked back down with a ‘thud' and lay sprawled out on the ground, panting. He was so sure he had just shattered his left arm. I'm so screwed. His chest hurt from all the hits, his leg ached something fierce as did his injured arm and hand. Dying would be easy, all he'd have to do was take it.

“You know,” Vulcan said suddenly, his head tilted as he studied Harry. “I had just planned to kill you.”

“Aren't you still?” Harry panted, confused. His breathing laboured.
“No,” Vulcan answered and stood on Harry's right hand causing him to cry out. Well, there goes the other hand.

“No,” Vulcan repeated sinking down in front of Harry and peering at him. He smiled an incredibly dark smile and lowered his voice. “I think I'll keep you alive. Even among our kind you are exquisite and powerful, if a little obnoxious.” He reached forward to caress Harry's face but pulled back when Harry's teeth snapped at him. “You'd make a pleasant pet too, once you're properly broken in. The best jewel anyone could hope for in their treasury.”

“Not interested,” Harry hissed, eyes flashing menacingly.

“But I think you will be, Harry,” Vulcan reasoned. “If you don't, I'll take your lovely aunt Selene instead. I'd much rather have you, but I wouldn't mind her, either. It was her I was initially after, anyway.”

Harry was suddenly horrified. He tried to look at his family but was unable to. “You wouldn't,” he whispered.

“But I would.” Vulcan smiled that blasted smile again. “So, what will it be Harry?”

**Incarcerous!** Harry thought desperately, willing the wandless, wordless spell to work. His hope shattered as the ropes materialised but totally missed the target.

Vulcan grabbed Harry's head and slammed it painfully into the slate beneath him. “Now, Harry that wasn't very nice,” he chided mockingly. “And definitely not the answer I was hoping for, but since I'm feeling generous I'll give you one more chance, I advise that you choose wisely. I won't give you another.” He caressed Harry's face before slamming the boy's head into the ground once more.

Biting his lip, Harry closed his eyes against the pain in his body and the throb of his head, it felt like it had been split open. Oh he was in so much shit. There was no way he could see of getting out of this mess, not with his thoughts so scattered and fixed on how much everything hurt. Then his mind ticked over on a thought, Vulcan apparently wanted him, which was why he was offering an exchange, there was still a possibility he could get out of this...

But what did he mean? Did he want Harry, *that* way or just as a pet? A trophy to show the world that he possessed the boy-who-lived?

Opening his eyes, Harry was met with Vulcan's face hovering mere centimetres from his own and had his question answered. Forcing all his bravery to the fore, Harry rose up enough allowing his lips to close the gap and kiss Vulcan. The latter's reaction was instantaneous, he moved to straddle Harry while holding his shoulder and began to kiss him back hungrily. Harry could suddenly hear the people around him again, but he wasn't sure what they were doing. He himself was feeling really light headed, through loss of blood or lack of oxygen was anybody's guess. Though even through his dazed mind he could feel the hand that Vulcan had crushed and was surprised it wasn't too badly damaged. Or had healed faster than he had anticipated.

This could work.

*It's for the best.*

He drew back enough to look into Vulcan's eyes, clear blue he realised and whispered, “I'm sorry to end your little fantasy.” Vulcan looked confused as he peered back at Harry, eyeing the blood coating the boy's lips.

“There's...” Vulcan said, unable to finish as his eyes began dimming and he slumped over onto
Harry, unmoving.

Shuddering Harry let out a breath and retracted his wand hand from the other's ruined ribcage, extracting his dead heart. For long moments, or maybe that was just how long it seemed for Harry, he just lay beneath the other's cooling body. Cradling him between his legs, blood staining their clothes and mind absolutely blank.

He closed his eyes and lay back completely.

It was probably better that way. He wasn't entirely sure he wanted to move and Vulcan was heavy and crushing him.

“Harry!” Someone nearby cried, then Vulcan was removed and breathing was made that much easier. Then more difficult as he was crushed in a hug. “I thought you'd died,” someone sobbed. Harry thought it sounded like Aunt Selene.

“I promised I wouldn't.”

“Selene, you're crushing the poor boy. It can't be helping with his breathing.” That definitely sounded like Demetrius.

“Is the young prince all right?” Asked another female voice.

“He'll be fine,” Demetrius answered. “We thank you for your attempted intervention.”

“It is our duty to do so,” replied a different male, sincerely. “But we cannot take the credit for this one, as it was our son alone who decided he wished to fight for your prince.”

“Harry? Harry? Do you think you can open you eyes for me?”

“I'd rather not,” he grumbled and felt like the axis of the world had suddenly tilted and was trying to throw him. He rolled with the movement and heaved once he was done, bringing up all the blood he had somehow swallowed while kissing Vulcan. “Disgusting.”

“Drink this,” Selene said and pressed a cool vial of something to Harry’s lips. He downed the contents, and slowly sat up though his body was protesting the movement and peered around. Vulcan was being carted off. Likely to be burnt. Many of the people who had gathered were being cleared away by the guards. Selene was kneeling with him on the ground, Demetrius was standing to her side and there...

His eyes widened in absolute horror before he shot back a few feet, snatched up his wand and threw up a large protective shield. “Get away from me!”

“He recognises us,” drawled Lucius Malfoy, looking terribly amused.

“You really shouldn't be teasing him while he's still upset,” Narcissa Malfoy frowned, she also had a look of concern on her face. What unnerved Harry more was that the concern was directed at him.

Slowly his gaze flicked to the other person who had remained silent throughout the interaction and landed on Draco.

He... well he looked uncommonly pissed off. No, incensed seemed a safer word to describe him, and Harry wasn't entirely sure what the blonde was pissed off about, though he had a fair idea. It stood to reason Draco would be rather put out at watching Harry somehow survive certain death, yet again. After all, he knew Draco wanted nothing more to than to see him die a horrible death.
“Harry, it's all right they won't hurt you,” Selene said soothingly.

“Oh I beg to differ,” he argued and tried to stand. He toppled over almost instantly and glared at everything and anything.

“Really Harry,” Narcissa said, lowering herself to his level. “We are sworn to protect you. It's in our blood.”

“Yes well, explain that to Mr Wand-Happy over there!” Harry paused, blinked and frowned up at Lucius. “How did you get out of Azkaban? Scratch that, I'm going home. Hedwig! Hedwig where are you?”

Hobbling, Harry stood and wandered off toward the room he had arrived in.


“I think it's just us,” Lucius smirked.

“Lucius!” Narcissa reprimanded.

“I'll go after him,” Demetrius sighed. “He needs to have his injuries seen to before wandering around in territory he knows nothing of, with possible assassins around every corner.”

Demetrius followed the spotty blood trail and found Harry sitting in the fireplace, his good leg drawn up to his chest while the other lay stretched out in front of him. For a moment Demetrius had thought Harry had fallen asleep but that assumption was quickly banished as soon he saw Harry's green eyes fixed on nothing in particular, and tears spilling down his cheeks.

“I killed him,” Harry said, he blinked and looked up at his uncle. “I've killed someone.”

“It was you or him, Harry,” Demetrius said.

“No,” Harry murmured, head lowering. “It's was me or Aunt Selene. I couldn't let that happen. Not to her.”

“What do you mean?”

“I was willing to die. I thought I already was but he said,” Harry swallowed thickly and looked back up. “He said I had a choice. That I submit to him and he'd leave Aunty Selene alone in favour of me or if not... he'd take her.”

Suddenly, understanding dawned in Demetrius' eyes. “You made him think you gave into him, killing him afterword, and now you feel guilty?”

“No, but shouldn't I?” Harry shot back. “Or perhaps I should be more disgusted with myself for the dirty tactics I used, even if it didn't go far. I was practically offering him my body as a bargaining tool. Who does that? But I don't feel anything. Not for killing Vulcan or for how I managed to do it. But shouldn't I?”

“Harry you did what you thought was best and worked with what you had,” Demetrius pointed out carefully. “You saved your aunt from some unknown fate. Don't regret what you've done to protect her. Or think that you should be feeling that way. Remember, our clan feel nothing for those we are not attached to.

“Vulcan was no one to you, so you feel nothing for his death. No guilt or regret. You will not come
to feel anything either, not if your hunting instincts start kicking in. Which they have. The only thing that will hold you back and give you grief is yourself. Trying to force yourself into feeling something that is unnatural for us.”

Harry couldn’t quite understand though. He'd read up on it yes, but from what he'd seen when in private with his family, they weren't as heartless as the books made his clan out to be, but then it was only in private. He hadn't seen them interact with anyone else to really come to any conclusions on. Then there were his own feelings; he still felt strongly about a great many things, it was just Vulcan’s death that had no effect on him whatsoever. It scared him to be so detached...

Abruptly Harry's eyes narrowed. “What are the Malfoy's doing here? You warned me yourself to avoid Draco at all costs and now you bring me to a place that not only has him but his mother and father? Fresh out of Azkaban!”

“Now Harry, calm down.” Demetrius lowered himself next to him, obviously thrown by the sudden change of topic. “The Malfoy’s are the ruling Invidian royalty. They are of the other clan who are meant to protect us and the reason why I told you to avoid the younger Malfoy was because you couldn’t meet him before you’d been introduced at court. That and it’s quite possible he may be able to see through our glamours or, at the very least, partially. Like you.”

“But Lucius is a supporter of Voldemort!” Harry hissed, his head was beginning to throb worse then before, if that was possible.

Surprisingly, Demetrius didn't flinch.

“Not by choice.” Demetrius murmured, sounding sad. “It was voted by the Council that someone of great influence should join Voldemort. It so happens poor dear Lucius drew the thin end of the wand, otherwise it would have been me in that situation.

“He isn't the only one of our clans either, though they all join as wizards for Voldemort mustn't know we are vampires and that the clanless would love nothing more than to get a hold of us and tear us limb from limb. Understandably they are jealous of us; that we can walk in the light while they are forced to sulk in shadows.

“As for Lucius' release, technically he never went to Azkaban, someone else did in his stead. But no one needs to know that, certainly not Voldemort as it will cause a great many more issues than there need be.”

“And when Voldemort goes to break Lucius and his other followers out of Azkaban?” Harry prompted. “What then?”

“We'll catch that snitch when it comes,” Demetrius replied.

“What about Draco and his mum?” Harry pressed, unwilling to give up his fight so soon. “Won't Voldemort be wanting to punish Lucius by using them? Recruiting Draco as a Death Eater perhaps?”

“No, Harry,” Demetrius responded. “Narcissa has played her role well and no one suspects her even capable of such. Draco I believe has managed to evade Voldemort in much the same way.”

“How is that possible? What about Bellatrix?” Harry hissed, suddenly seething with the thought of her. Then there was Narcissa who was also a part of Sirius' death and Harry began to hate the woman all over again. How dare she make nice with him after what she did? Two-faced bitch.

Apparently, he had voiced his thoughts aloud because Demetrius cleared his throat.
“I assume you're talking about the fiasco which had Lucius caught and almost imprisoned?” The oldest asked.

“Yeah,” Harry replied curtly.

Demetrius nodded. “Narcissa had no part in any of that. It was merely in her home that the treachery took place. As for Bellatrix, she is not an Invidian nor is Andromeda. Neither know anything about us, obviously, as it would be unsafe.

“I understand you don't trust them, Harry, but you must in the end. I'm not forcing you to like them immediately of course, as I'm sure there is still bad blood between you. At least on your side, as their instincts would have already overridden any mistrust or dislike of you. The Malfoys are our greatest allies and us theirs. Our clans were created perfectly to balance the other out. You can trust them. Actually, you can trust them more than some members of our own clan.” Demetrius chortled without humour.

Harry's lip curled in an absent sneer reminiscent of Draco Malfoy. He should have known there would be a bloody catch to his life. He had known it was too good to be true when he'd discovered he had other living relatives that wanted him, an almost perfect family that just happened to be friends or acquaintances, rather, of his long time rival's family.

He trusted his uncle and aunt with all of his heart and loved them fiercely, but he wasn't sure even he could quite take the step of accepting the Malfoys whole-heartedly. Perhaps it would take time for him to do so, but somehow he knew that time wasn't really on his side. In fact, it never was. Harry couldn't do this; it was too much too accept in too small an amount of time, but he knew he had to do it.

Sighing, Harry allowed his eyes to shut. His stomach may not have been heaving anymore, but his head threatened to split open, making it hard to really think even though he needed to. He'd come to a compromise then; he'd reserve judgement for another day but, until then, he had another pressing matter at hand.

“There's one more thing,” he said, staring back at his uncle. “My crowning won't be today obviously, with everyone being cleared off. So how's that going to work then?”

Demetrius shook his head a small smile making itself known. “Leave that to me. No one will have any qualms with your ascent to the thrown. You've proven your worth and if anyone did want to, they couldn't now anyway. Your duel to the death ensured that, but won't stop assassins should there be any.

“Now, to what I was really coming here to see you about.” He pulled out his own wand and various potions.

“Am I to assume this is the ‘humour' you were talking about earlier?”

Demetrius paused a moment, wand raised. “Yes,” he said.

Harry nodded. “I still don't see how it's funny.”

- j-a-d-e. r-e-q-u-i-e-m-

It was a grim and only mildly injured Harry who emerged from the room some time later, trailing behind his uncle and back out to the court where the rest of the royals awaited.

“I can't believe you talked me into this,” Harry muttered sullenly.
“Come now, Harry. Don't be like that.”

“I'd much rather have finished this off another day,” Harry argued. “You know, when I can think clearly. Because right now, everything is still scrambled.”

“Nice to see you're healing, Harry,” Narcissa said with a smile. It made Harry want to shudder. Not that it was a mean smile or anything, it was just that he was not used to having Malfoys being nice to him. From what he'd seen of her, Narcissa was an icy bitch who thought little of everyone, Lucius was a sadistic bastard and Draco a pampered brat with a father complex, and yes, here were all Malfoys apparently wanting to make nice with him. Warily, he eyed the sky. Surely it was about to fall?

But it didn't happen.

“My Lady,” he intoned after a long awkward pause, and took her hand gently to press a chaste kiss to it's back. Then he offered both Lucius and Draco a fluid bow. “If we can get this over with?” He suggested eagerly. “I really want to leave.”

Lucius chuckled. “Wanting to be rid of us so soon?”

Harry's eyes snapped to the blonde's face and he smiled, revealing his sharp fangs. “I'm thirsty,” he replied, feeling his anger sharply rise.

“So soon?” Lucius repeated, his brow quirked.

To this, Harry snarled. “You try having some freak's tongue down your throat! Coupled with that I nearly drowned in his sickening blood, I'm certain you'd want to get rid of the taste too!”

Draco growled, something which caught everyone's attention.

*Testy,* Harry thought. Giving him an odd look, Harry went on with his issues, deciding to ignore him. “But that's beside the point. Aren't I meant to pick out someone to guard me or whatever?”

He knew now that all decorum had flown out the door and wasn't too bothered either. His head hurt, not in any real physical pain, not now, but more with the fact that he was having trouble thinking. He was thirsty, incredibly so and wanted to get rid of the taste of Vulcan's blood still in his mouth.

“The Invidian royals pick the best and you have the final say,” Selene answered, standing proudly off to his side. Harry looked at her then back at Lucius, eyeing the blonde guardedly. “Ok.”

It was a delighted smirk that lit the grown blondes stunning face. A look Harry grew instantly wary of. “It has been long decided, that Draco was to be your guard.”

Spluttering, Harry took many steps back. “That's a joke, right?”

Demetrius and Selene shared a look then glanced at their opposites, their faces unreadable.

“It is no joke,” Draco interjected. Harry's eyes immediately fixed on his. “I've been trained in this for years. It will be an honour to serve where many of my people have failed over the years. It would be an honour to serve you.”

“You must really be hating this,” Harry muttered, then he looked to the elder Malfoys in a plea. “You don't have to embarrass us both, just choose some random that I can order around and abandon
when it becomes a necessity. Because how will this be explained if Voldemort discovers? Your cover will be blown, for one,” he tried to reason.

“We had considered that,” Narcissa answered, obviously the ‘nicer’ of the two Malfoy adults. She looked to be choosing her words carefully.

“How about we finish this discussion at a later time?” Demetrius suggested before the Invidian Queen could voice her thoughts any further. Inwardly, Harry was cheering.

“I think that's splendid,” Narcissa nodded in agreement. “Until then you may stay with us at the manor.”

“That's sounds like a great idea.”

“What?” Harry gasped. “No!”

Regardless, he was dragged along anyway.
Chapter Five: Continual Trials

Malfoy Manor wasn't so very different from the Nikolais' current residence, that of Loiresvale, excluding the fact it wasn't cliff-side situated but surrounded by plains and forest with a beautiful river running through it, as opposed to the waterfall Loiresvale had.

The Invidian Royalties' Manor was tranquil and soothing. Not something Harry could picture a Death Eater living in... But then Lucius wasn't really a Death Eater, was he? That though, was beside the point as another valid one made itself known abruptly. The young Angelus turned to his uncle, whom was closest to him. “I assume the wards have been adjusted to keep unwanted intruders out?”

“Naturally,” Demetrius returned. “With Lucius free and wandering about, they can't have unexpected company dropping in on them. It wouldn't be appropriate.”

Harry let the conversation drop.

The small group were currently traversing the well lit walls, having already been shown to their rooms and, in Harry's case, allowed to make themselves more presentable. The lighting was supplied by gilded mirror-lamps set at equal intervals to supply more than sufficient illumination. The place was filled with exquisite fittings, furniture and ornaments, all slanting more towards the French side of things.

“You have a lovely home, Lady Malfoy.” Harry commented, knowing it was expected of him but also that it was far easier to address her than the two male Malfoys.

“You are very kind, but please, call me Narcissa,” she insisted.

Harry gave her an odd look but nodded in acquiesce. “Narcissa it is then.”

Trying not to be pulled into any more conversation with the Malfoys, Harry fell back into step with his aunt. She appeared far more understanding of his situation than his uncle, who had the audacity to grin like a fool at Harry when no one else was watching. It somewhat complimented Lucius' constant smirk.

Blasted nobility. The lot of them. Harry pouted, turning it on his Aunt Selene who he knew was a complete sucker for his ‘kicked puppy’ look.

“Harry, dear. It isn't all that bad,” she reassured him softly.
Harry loved his aunt, he really did. She was a true blessing sent to ease his suffering by the hands of the cruel fates. She had even produced a replacement robe somewhere from her own and gave it to Harry as soon as the opportunity presented itself. Selene hadn't said anything as she pressed the clothing into his hands but then, she didn't have to, he had read her thoughts almost like she had projected it into his mind telepathically, 'You must always be prepared.'

Selene had sent him a small, secret smile, and the rest of the group continued oblivious to the exchange.

Harry got the feeling she was a lady of many surprises.

The replacement robe looked exactly like the torn one he had still been wearing and once he was left to his own devices while the others were shown to their rooms a little further down the hall. He had had a quick wash, ensuring he was no longer cover in blood or sweat and donned the new robe over his hastily charmed clean trousers.

“I had thought we would return home,” Harry spoke softly, loud enough for his voice to carry only to his aunt.

“Alas no, mon étoile du matin. It would be rude to decline an offer and we don't want to be seen as rude, do we? Though I can understand this is all very hard on you, having grown up knowing nothing of us or of them, and you've been through so much in such a short time already, but you must understand how important this is. For you, for us,” she swept an arm around Harry and peered into his eyes, ceasing their movement. “I'm sure you have realised by now there is much more at stake than just connections.

“I can tell you, with all honesty, that you have nothing to fear from the Malfoys. It is your own you must be fearful of. Very few of our kind can be trusted at all; anyone who has no more than three generations worth of your blood shared in their veins must earn their trust in some way we deem worthy.

“That is why so few were presented for your crowning tonight. A mere quarter of the Angelus Court. No one else could be trusted and yet, the entire Invidian court was present. I'm sure you noticed this?

“You are safe with the Invidians, safer with them than anyone except your uncle and I.”

This made sense but also confused Harry. “This bond we share with the Invidians, is it tied only with that of the reigning Angelus royals or to all Angelus in general?”

“Their bond is with all of the Angelus. However, it is held strongest with us; if given a choice to save any Angelus and one of our family, the Invidian would protect us and leave the other Angelus to fend for themself.”

Selene released Harry then, smiling encouragingly. Both continued down the corridor once more in a companionable silence until another question that begged to be asked came to mind.


“Books are only as correct as their author is of it's knowledge,” Selene murmured. “While that book was published by our kind, it was done some time ago, when duels were accepted by all Angelus court members. That has since been altered slightly though, preventing any of those not loyal to the reigning parties from showing at court. One reason why our number was so small. This is also why you had so many trying to fight in your place. What Vulcan did was a dishonour to all the families
present on our clan's behalf. Had he lived, all those present would have turned on him and killed him eventually. It would only be a matter of time, which is why it is so baffling that he would attempt something so senseless."

Harry's eyes had gone impossibly wide. That explained so much. Well, at least now Harry knew why there had been such an uproar to Vulcan's challenge. It had been more than a simple try at usurping Harry's place as heir: it was a damnable betrayal.

Gods, this political crap was doing his head in and he had just had a potion for the headaches...

Harry sighed. Things were so much simpler when he was Harry. Just Harry. Not the-Boy-Who-Lived, or Harrison James Nikolai, heir of the Nikolais and Crown Prince of the Angelus, but he couldn't give up now. Not when he'd come so far, or had a family backing him up for once. He couldn't let them down.

“How will this help me though?” He asked, glancing at the two eldest Malfoys upfront and the younger who was lagging a little behind. “I mean besides the 'lets play nicely together routine.' As it's been mentioned a few times, shouldn't I avoid contact with anyone else as much as possible until I've acclimatised myself to my changes?” Harry reasoned, shooting dirty looks at his uncle.

Selene halted her steps and glanced at Harry uncertainly; this had obviously crossed her mind. It was no wonder then that he felt closer to her at this moment than he did his own uncle.

“How is this true?” She asked, carefully studying him. Her face was unreadable.

Harry considered her question seriously. Was he truly so badly effected by being around so many others? More than one of Harry's books had been adamant in their views on not allowing a 'New-Blood'—or Angelus who had just come into their blood-lust—around others for extended periods or time. They were to be left in confinement with only the closest of family around constantly. It was to help the bond already there to form and become far stronger. In the same way, it allowed others to form a strong bond with him which was why usually it had to be avoided.

Still, Harry couldn't see himself forming a bond with any of the Malfoys, so he guessed it was safe to say so.

“Well, not really. But I don't particularly enjoy this situation any, unlike dearest uncle Demetrius,” Harry muttered, feeling extremely resentful.

He soon became aware of another set of eyes on him and glanced up to find Demetrius and the elder Malfoys absent but the youngest standing a respectable distance away watching, evidently awaiting them.

“We can finish this talk later,” Selene said quietly and nudged him gently forward, toward the awaiting blonde boy. Grudgingly, Harry complied.

-The end-
“Do you really resent this situation so much?” Came the huskily cultured voice of Draco at his side.

“Wouldn't you?” Harry snapped, angrily and not a little annoyed at the honeyed tone his own voice had taken. Much like it sounded after he drank Resémier. Harry chose to ignore it. Draco's eyes however, had widened and gone slightly glazed.

Harry responded with a glare.

“I don't know the entire situation from your point of view,” Draco replied once he had snapped out of his trance, his eyes narrowed again. “But from what I do know, if I were you, I'd be pleased that I had unexpected allies. Wouldn't you agree? I mean, you're own inside source of information instead of listening to that dottery old coot with a sweet fetish.”

The boy had a point, as much as Harry loathed to admit. Still, Harry didn't like that the blonde was belittling Dumbledore, for all the man's failures he had done what he believed to be the best for Harry in the long run. Also, he may appear like some senile old man but he was far from it; he was a master manipulator, probably one of the best.

Harry eyed the Slytherin appraisingly. “Do you really believe that?” He countered, referring to Dumbledore.

For long moments, Draco just peered calmly back into Harry's eyes. “You'd make a decent Slytherin,” the blonde instead replied. Draco reached out and took one of the crystal goblets that had appeared on the table before them and took a sip of the rich red liquid, he had a thoughtful expression.

Harry rolled his eyes and muttered, “You wouldn't be the first who said that.”

“What was that?”

“Nothing,” Harry answered.

“You still haven't answered my question,” Draco pressed, leaning forward as he placed his chalice aside. Harry suspected it was to make him more opposing and, despite the noticeable size difference, Harry wasn't cowed at all. Instead, he stared hard at Draco and replied.

“Nor did you answer mine.” Before the blonde was able to respond or prod further, Harry glanced around pointedly at the excess of food scattered about the table, then glanced over at the Slytherin with a frown. “Is there a reason you have enough here to feed a small army?” He decided to ask the blonde, since he was being so talkative.

The blonde look slightly put out with having their previous discussion ceased, still with a small quirk to the corner of his lip he answered, “As a matter of fact, we've invited part of the Invidian court to attend.”

“Lovely,” Harry groaned sarcastically, and observed as said court entered. “And do you often have functions like these at such an ungodly hour?” It was moving on to something like two in the morning. His question went unanswered however, as a Slytherin boy from his year seated himself on his left. He knew the boy's name, just couldn't remember what it was.

He was incredibly good looking, too. His skin was a dark bronze in sharp contrast to Harry's own alabaster complexion. With dark cinnamon hair, cut short and sharp, high cheekbones that accentuated his intense dark, slanted eyes.

“My Lord,” the boy said and shot Harry a charming smile. Immediately Harry choked on the mulled
Harry felt a glare on his back and was surprised to find it wasn't aimed at him for once, but at the new comer. “Zabini,” Draco hissed menacingly. “Careful where you tread and you may just continue to breathe.”

The darker boy shrivelled under the blonde's glare and not so subtle threat.

“Sorry my Lord,” Blaise murmured, looking and sounding perfectly contrite.

“Yeah,” Harry interrupted, “Zabini, is it?” He waited for the boy's nod. “Lay off on the whole ‘Lord’ thing, I'd rather not be called Lord. It sounds so... formal and reminds me of Voldemort—” Harry ignored both boys' wince. “Just continue calling me ‘Potter' or ‘Nikolai’ now as the case is.” He pondered that silently a moment and gave a nod. Then a thought came to him. “Oh and don’t... Don't start acting like a house elf, bowing and scrapping when around me. It gets on my nerves. Just treat me... like you would any other person your age.”

Blaise nodded, looking immensely grateful and smiled. “Yes my Lo... Potter.”

Harry offered Blaise a small smile, hoping he annoyed Draco with his lack of proper decorum when it came to the people below him. He would show the blonde that even if he was royalty, it wouldn't change him nor would he let it go to his head. Hopefully in the process, he'd teach Draco to follow by his example.

He shot the blonde a smirk.

As Harry had been dreading, all conversation had turned towards who his new shadow was to be when all he wanted to do was sleep. The discussion quickly turned into an argument and Harry was convinced it would evolve into a full out war if nothing was decided within the next few minutes.

All the Malfoys were acting exactly as he had known them to act. Lucius stood, his presence commanding and cold and just this side of vicious. Narcissa sat at his side haughtily, with a look of such distain as she glanced at those assembled. Though none of her glances were ever at any of the Nikolais. Draco sat off a little to the side, alone but the embodiment of arrogance and wearing an overly smug expression.

Harry sat farthest from all three, inconspicuous and partially hidden from their view behind the bigger members of those attending.

He caught sight of Blaise, lounging off to the side and came up with a suggestion before Lucius was able to reach out and throttle Lord... er whoever the Eagle-like man was, as the blonde King's fingers twitched absent in preparation for the assault. How the Lord stayed oblivious to his imminent death was beyond Harry, who thought it rather obvious. Certainly with the light pink tint Lucius' face was gradually colouring.

“Why not Zabini?” Harry suggested, nodding toward the boy in question. All attention snapped to him then Blaise “He attends school, is in my year and has never done anything to me. I assume he is ‘neutral’?”

“He is,” beamed who Harry assumed was Blaise's mother. By all accounts she was an incredibly stunning witch. While she had the genes of an Invidian, they weren't dominant unlike Blaise's and was just a witch and not a vampire. Still, she could quite easily pass as an Invidian on her looks alone.
“Well, there you have it,” Harry said, as though it was all sorted, and to him it was. “Now we won't have anything else to worry about.”

It hadn't escaped his notice that while those present had tried to argue their points, none had once brought up the situation with Voldemort. Harry thought it wise considering that there were some present who weren't bound by Invidian ties and could very possibly turn traitor on the entire court. It still begged the question that whether those in attendance would keep their mouths shut about the situation of Harry's inheritance.

He rather wondered if there were discreet charms in place to modify memories or else lock them in place. It sounded like something a Slytherin would do and Draco had always been Slytherin's poster boy.

“It would be a mark to our name to allow him that,” Lucius said, seriously.

“Why?” Harry asked, head tilted to the side questioningly. “I thought any Invidian could do it, so long as they met your approval. From what I've seen, all you've offered is him,” he nodded toward Draco.

“It doesn't quite work that way,” Selene murmured softly. Harry could tell she was just itching to brush the loose strands of hair from his face but refrained. “They always offer the best protection they can provide. In strength, cunning, intelligence. They have chosen the young prince for a reason. He is their only candidate and obviously the best option.”

Harry severely doubted that, but held his thoughts and, more importantly, his tongue, in check. Instead, he slouched down in his chair as an indication as to how tired he really was. Selene eyed him once, but said nothing of his poor posture.

The discussion continued on until Harry had had enough and, somehow, managed to slip from his chair and away from the others unnoticed. Or, so he had thought. Apparently though, he hadn't been quite as stealthy as he had believed and caught the attention of Blaise. Cursing inwardly, Harry shook his head when he saw the other about to join him and shot his gaze back to where Draco was seated, ensuring he hadn't seen Harry's departure, as he had developed an annoying habit that night of catching Harry doing things he shouldn't, or keeping an eye on Blaise for some reason.

Idly, Harry wondered if the two were lovers and that was why Draco was so against Blaise going anywhere near Harry. It would have made sense if Harry hadn't believed the pair to be strictly into girls—Draco didn't come off as the gay sort and neither did Blaise.

It may also have been the fact that as Invidians, and at Harry's suggestion, they were both rivals to act as his ‘guard.’ Still, whenever Harry or Blaise had interacted with each other—and as the blonde couldn't very well take his anger out on Harry now—he'd compromise by venting his rage on Blaise. Which he did. Repetitively, saying something snide or viciously cutting about the other Slytherin.

With friends or lovers like that, who needed enemies?

It was insights like that that Harry really had to wonder how the blonde Slytherin had managed to keep any of his friends at all.

If they were true friends, that was.

Grimacing, Harry pushed the disturbing image away of Draco and Blaise together in something more than friendship and slipped down the hall, thanking all the deities in existence that he didn't come upon anyone as he traversed the darkened halls of the manor and made his way to the guest room he
had been shown to earlier.

Entering his room, Harry warded the door in the way his uncle had shown and stomped over to his bed in a childish fit, flopping down.

The room was exquisite, nothing short of perfect. Dark, panelled walls of some heavenly scented wood. Dark, polished marble floors and intricately detailed furniture, mantelpiece and fittings. The colour scheme was that of beiges, creams, silvers and cobalt. His large, mahogany four poster set into the corner of the room allowed the moonlight to spill through the ebony paned, French doors and onto his bed unhindered.

Up until now Harry had been trying to ignore everything. He'd come to terms that yes, he was a kind of vampire. That he was crown prince of said vampires. He very possibly had a mate out there that he did not necessarily need but may want. Harry was adjusting to the fact that he had killed another of his kind and was still surprised that he didn't feel anything at all for it. Not repentant or horrible or... or anything. Sure, after getting over the initial shock of knowing he had taken a life, another side of him had justified it as survival and a need to protect those of his family.

Now, Harry knew this justification was wrong in it's logic. A life was a life and shouldn't be taken so lightly. It was hard, Harry knew trying to grapple with what remained of his humanity. The side of him that should feel something at the fact he had killed so easily. Or that he had tricked the other.

That thought didn't really bother Harry as much as he thought it should. Actually, a good many things didn't seem to bother him at all.

*There must have been something in the Resémier,* Harry reflected gloomily, thinking about the lightly warmed blood-wine he'd drank earlier that evening.

He mused that point as he snatched up a silk robe from the guest drawers and headed for his en suite, a pure white marbled room with a large mirror occupying an entire wall which Harry found disturbing. Casting all the detection spells he knew on it, he discovered it was just a mirror and concealed no hidden room where he was being secretly observed. Harry silently thanked his uncle's paranoia about having surveillance charms in place and having all the spells thoroughly drilled into him.

Allowing the hot water to pour over his skin, Harry tried to clear his mind and instead think of more important, and current matters. That of his supposed protector, he clearly remembered what happened back in first year when he and Draco had been in the Forbidden Forest and how the blonde had fled and abandoned Harry to his fate. If the Malfoys thought Harry would even consider him after that little stunt, they were bonkers.

Ok, so that had been years ago but still, he couldn't picture Draco not being the prissy little rich boy who was more likely to cry because he had ruined a nail. That image made Harry shudder and he forced it away as he rinsed the shampoo from his hair.

The problem with the entire situation though was that Harry knew nothing of any possible Invidians besides Blaise who could take Draco's place. If they wanted to keep Harry's condition a secret they would need a student and one who had come into their inheritance to be at full strength, so someone 16 and up. Someone neutral in the war or...

Giving a frustrated groan, Harry rinsed the remaining soap from his body then abandoned his shower, dried himself quickly with one of the fluffy towels provided and shrugged on his night robe. It looked more like a dress to him, with it's intricate and beautiful patterns climbing the hem that trailed the ground...
Figures, Harry mused darkly, eyeing the robe and thinking for a moment before snapping out of his reverie. *I'm meant to be worrying about potential warders not my sleeping robes!*

It was official, his stress was beginning to get to him.

Re-entering his room, Harry found a silver tray, steaming bottle of what he assumed was Resémier and a chaste crystal goblet. The scent drew his attention immediately and he felt his teeth elongate accordingly but he wouldn't need them. Not now. So instead he tapped the empty goblet, confirming there was nothing that could harm him in or cast upon it, he moved on to the bottled blood. When that too came away clear he wasted no time in pouring a glass and drinking of the crimson elixir deeply.

It tasted different... Not bad but it was definitely not Resémier. But it was richer, fuller somehow.

He felt mildly contrite for thinking that the Malfoys were out to kill him, poisoning was the usual method of death by older families. Then Harry figured he was just being paranoid of the whole situation, then reasoned he *should* be paranoid given the circumstances.

With his mind going full circle he huffed and, with his emptied goblet and bottle set aside, flopped back on his bed. *I'll worry about it in the morning. Everything can bloody well wait until the morning.*

That night his dreams were filled with a peculiar, if pretty little girl. She had hair the same colour as Draco's and eyes a pale icy green. Her expression was sad, nostalgic. Beyond her the rain continued to fall and lightning struck, illuminating two separate paths that led to the distant beyond.

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Wow I'm tired... Coding all this is actually really tiring :P
So I'm done for the day. I may post another 5 tomorrow if I have time to convert the wordfile..
Chapter six: A forced Subservience

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

For anyone interested in knowing what the traditional Nikolai and Malfoy robes look like, I drew an image and have it posted here on my Livejournal.

Oh, and the next chapters are unbeta'd. So excuse my mistakes...

Chapter six: A forced Subservience

It was too much loud banging that Harry was rudely awoken the next morning. He glared up at the door muttering under his breath and banished the wards with a flick of his wand, the act admitted one Blaise Zabini who then sprawled on to the floor in an undignified heap.

Blaise returned the glare.

“What has you in such a strop this early in the morning?” He asked and stood, dusting off imaginary lint.

“Gee, I don't know,” Harry shot back sarcastically. “Could it be the fact that it is so early in the morning? Or that maybe, we didn't get to sleep until a few hours ago. It isn't normal for people to function on little more than two hours sleep!”


Harry's glare darkened.

“You shouldn't frown,” Blaise suddenly said, his eyes flickering from Harry's lips then back to his eyes so quickly it was barely noticeable. Still, Harry caught it and narrowed his eyes further still.

“Why?” he asked.

“You just shouldn't,” Blaise said hurriedly and turned away. “I'm here to inform you that your presence has been requested at breakfast. Everyone's waiting for you.”

“Why didn't someone tell me sooner?” Harry murmured darkly, his argument with Blaise about being woken early totally forgotten. He really wanted to shower first and it wasn't like he could change into any suitable clothing either. His scowl deepened.

Blaise was now over by the door, about to step out. “Actually an elf was sent to wake you over an hour ago but wasn't able to get in. I came by and found it scorched and unconscious at your door and have been trying to wake you ever since.” He sounded really quite amused. “Oh and here,” he grabbed a small trunk from outside the door and left it at the base of the bed. “These have been brought from your home. I can buy you a little time, but do hurry up.”

And he left.
“Thanks,” Harry murmured to his empty room, when he opened the his trunk, he was amused to find his clothes leaping out and arranging themselves into ensembles he knew were prearranged by Selene.

Selecting one of the less fanciful sets of clothing—and coincidently less revealing—Harry rushed through his morning ablutions before he hastily made his way back down the halls he had travelled earlier that morning. Absently he hoped Raeda didn't give Hedwig any more mince for breakfast, or she'd fast become a fat house-owl and unable to deliver his messages. He pushed the rather inane thought away as he came skidding to a halt before the doors of the dining hall.

When he entered it was empty.

Harry blinked, confused by the turn of events and was about to go back to his room—the only other room he had a decent knowledge of—when Blaise came flying through a door on the other side of the hall.

“Sorry,” he said, looking remarkably sheepish. “I forgot to tell you that they were eating in the summer parlour. If you'd follow me?”

The journey to the summer parlour was mostly silent, with Blaise trying to draw Harry into a conversation instead of having the boy answer in monosyllables. Or worse—sounds that could be taken as negatives or affirmatives. But Harry outright refused to speak to the other boy, he was too tired and too busy trying to determine how fate was going to play out and not the boy at his side.

The room he was eventually led to was pleasant and homely, a complete contrast to what he had known of the Malfoys to be before, but then he had already seen how very different they could be. Warm, lightly panelled walls with a few artful pieces scattered about. Large comfortably looking sofas. Handsome rugs and furniture finished the room.

A moderate sized table was set before the open French doors and windows, letting the sunlight flood through and upon those in attendance as well as the food. The spread was a variation of fruits, muesli, yoghurt and hot breakfasts, like what was served at Hogwarts as well as things like French toast and light fruit tarts with whipped cream and other things Harry would have considered more as a desert before living with the Nikolais.

Harry was going to help himself to the Belgium waffles... once the morning pleasantries were exchanged.

“Good morning,” he offered amiable enough.

Everyone gave him their own greetings and inquiries as to how he had slept before they set about eating their breakfast, while Harry observed in amusement as those around him tucked into their food eagerly.

“Bonjour, my angel,” Selene greeted quietly. “Sleep well?”

“As well as can be expected,” Harry answered and kissed her on the cheek, as it had become customary in the morning.

The young Angelus sat between his uncle and aunt, who were comforting after being in a place he knew little of with people until a few short hours prior, he had considered enemies. He still wasn't sure what to make of the blonde aristocrats. Harry had hoped with sleep his brain may function better in the morning. Sadly, as he had had very little sleep, his thought processes hadn't improved at all. Which meant, of course, that he wasn't up for most conversation and was snappish at best when it
was forced upon him.

After the initial interest of his dining companions interest in him and trying to get him to talk wore off, he was left to himself to eat and ignore everyone else. Or that's what he pretended, really though he was listening in on everyone's conversations trying to pick out anything important as he had been advised by Demetrius for situations such as those.

The small group consisted of the Nikolais, the Malfoys, both Zabinis and a few others Harry knew by face only vaguely, even so, Harry listened intently.

The Malfoys spoke little of anything important, mostly just about Draco's finer points, while Ms Zabini did the same but in promotion of her own son but in a way which praised Draco at the same time so not to upset the Malfoys. Some of the other guests weren't quite so kind towards their hosts and were rather rude about everything. Though some were more direct than others.

The Nikolais remained silent throughout.

“He is barely a fledgling himself! How can you select him to honour our entire clan by protecting the young Nikolai heir? Especially with You-Know-Who after him?” The eagle-like lord protested hotly.

“He has proven himself,” Ms Zabini intervened. “He has great skill in the deceptive arts, as is my Blaise.”

“So you wish to allow another more practised but lacking in skill to bond to Prince Harrison?” Lucius retorted, glaring at the other proud lord.

“That's exactly—”

“Are you still insisting that the prince bond to that renegade, Lord Parish?” Lucius spoke suddenly soft. From experience with Snape, Harry knew this didn't look good for the Eagle-like lord. In fact, Harry just about expected to see the death eater whip out his wand and hex the other man where he stood.

As it happened, nothing of the sort occurred. But much more petty squabbling did. The noise did nothing for Harry's rapidly growing headache due to lack of sleep and his concentration began to wane.

Harry stomached the discussion as much as possible, devouring foods high in sugar to hopefully help his lethargy but as soon as the opportunity presented itself, he left the room as graciously as he could and vanished outside and into one of the gardens and up a tree. No one noticed his leaving, at least that was his thoughts until his aunt and uncle turned up beneath his tree little less than fifteen minutes later.

“The Invidian affairs are far worse off than I had believed,” Demetrius conceded.

“They didn't try to hide it either,” Selene pointed out. “They invited us here and allowed this to happen. I cannot say whether the entire thing was meant to happen like this, either way, they have shown a lot of trust to show us freely the dissent amongst them.”

“Agreed,” Demetrius nodded. “What did you learn in there, Harry?”

“That the entire lot of them are insane,” Harry replied succinctly.

“Now Harry, we mustn't speak ill of our hosts,” Selene chided gently.
“Fine,” Harry huffed and crossed his arms. “Lucius and Narcissa are pushing to have Draco bonded to me as a warder, while Ms Zabini wants Blaise as my warder. That guy that reminds me of an eagle was trying to draw my attention to some unknown and the lady with the large sapphire earrings? She seemed more interested in talking about her niece's various assets.”

Demetrius looked mildly disappointed.


“Lady Katherine was trying to fish for a possible betrothal,” the older Nikolai corrected. “She wasn't the only one.”

“I wondered about that,” Harry said thoughtfully.

“What are your thoughts on arranged marriages?”

Harry stared down at his uncle. He couldn't be serious, could he? It was just an innocent question, surely. Demetrius didn't seem the type to enforce arranged marriages and as far as Harry knew, his uncle's hadn't been one. Still, the boy decided to treat the question with caution.

“I don't much like the idea,” Harry answered honestly.

Selene smiled softly, Demetrius merely nodded.

“We want you to think on it though, Harry. You may change your mind later when you meet some of the girls,” Selene said, though toward the end her sentence lilted into something that sounded like a question.

The Gryffindor shrugged. “About the whole warder-charge thing, why is it last night Lucius was quite willing to offer up Draco as my warder and yet it is now obvious that the others in the Invidian court aren't pleased by his suggestion? I had thought that it was an unanimous decision to decide among them before I was presented with the choices of who I could pick, except in this case I was given only one choice,” he said.

Demetrius looked thoughtful. “This wouldn't be the first time the royals tried to have their way without the approval of their own court members. I believe Lucius probably thought that he would be able to talk them around after you were bonded to Draco. I admit the methods aren't the best to use as any number of things can go wrong with them...

“What other lessons have you learnt today?”

Sighing Harry replied. “That we aren't all powerful, even in our position. We rely on the strength of our court to ensure we don't crumble. We are nothing if not for those below that support us. Dissention is something we cannot afford in our court as it is weakness and any weakness of an Angelus will be targeted by an enemy.”

“Very good,” Demetrius nodded. “There were more lessons but that is enough for now.”

Harry nodded. “Why couldn't I have Blaise as a warder? He seems almost perfect.”

“Almost, being the key word,” Demetrius replied.

“Harry he isn't strong enough for you,” Selene said. “He may appear perfect for you, or almost but he isn't. We can sense it eventually you'd walk all over him. Oh, everything may start off fine but eventually you'd loose all respect for him because you wouldn't see him as an equal.”
“And I see Draco as an equal?”

It was Demetrius who answered this time. “You wouldn't have been rivals all these years if that wasn't the case.”

Harry was silent for a long time, unsure what to say in response. Did he really consider himself an equal to Draco? Was that what their rivalry was truly about? He'd never thought on it that way before. He had figured that his rivalry with the blonde was just so each could always try and best the other but now that his uncle had pointed out that information out to him, he figured it was right. It had always been Draco that he was worried about looking like a fool in front of.

“How long did you intend us to stay?” He finally asked.

“Until a resolution is found,” Demetrius answered simply.

Harry was under the impression that his uncle meant more than just the warder situation, but he remained quiet on the subject. The two elder Nikolais sat with Harry for a bit longer before wandering off to explore the gardens which they hadn't seen in a few years, leaving Harry alone to ponder the ongoing obstacles his life kept throwing at him.

Selene came back some time later, and seated herself primly on one of the large roots that emerged from the soil and acted as a natural bench.

“Your uncle has gone to speak with Dumbledore,” she said. “He shouldn't be back for some time.”

This news had Harry jerking up and glancing down at his aunt. “Why didn't he tell me?”

“I suspect it was so you wouldn't worry. It is also time that he do so however. It is better if we get these things sorted out before your return to school, you would be better protected if Dumbledore was to know. Mistakes happen when someone is ignorant of all the facts. Much as we dislike the situation, he needs to know who we are. Though we shan't give away our position in the Angelus Hierarchy.”

“Still...” Harry said. “What if Dumbledore—”

“Do not fret,” Selene said, gazing up at him from her position at the tree's roots, “all will be fine. We will see to it that everything goes well.” Her words were kind and filled with warmth for him, but Harry detected the sharp emotion beneath her silken sentence. It didn't bode well for anyone who stood in her way.

Harry was just relieved that he wasn't up against her.

“Now, mon étoile du matin, I think we need to review our lessons, hmm?”

Harry groaned, but complied. He knew it was much needed. Even if certain things had been drilled into him, there were other things that he needed more practise on.

Most of the morning passed this way, with Harry repeating something or answering a question his aunt asked. He knew what was coming by the end of their quizzing session, he was going to be made to read another book and memorise it's text. The lessons ended then, with Selene saying she would have someone fetched Harry something to eat for lunch.

As promised, a small basket filled with sandwiches and various fruits, sweets and a flask of pumpkin juice was brought to him by a small house-elf not twenty minutes later.
“You know, lions aren't meant to climb trees.”

It was much later that day, that Harry's temporary peace was disturbed by the young blonde Slytherin. He had even been able to drift off to sleep for a little while sheltered from the sun and elements as he was.

He peered down from his reclining position.

“Neither are snakes, but we both know how untrue that is.”

“Touché.”

“What do you want, Malfoy?”

The blonde appeared pensive for a moment before his customary smirk appeared on his face. “Why, taking a stroll in the gardens, of course.”

“Of course,” Harry repeated, rolling his eyes. “A stroll in the garden, off the path and under my tree to wake me from my nap.”

“Your tree?” Draco queried in a low drawl, his brow arched.

“Yes my tree,” Harry snapped and flopped back into the sheltering branches. He glared at the blonde. “As it is the tree I'm currently in.”

“I'll have you know, that that tree you claim as yours is mine,” Draco argued back. “Not only is it property of the Malfoys', it's my personal favourite.”

Knowing it was an incredibly childish argument, but not wanting to give it up anyway, the Gryffindor ploughed on. “Is not. You're just being your charming self, claiming it as yours 'cause I'm in it!” Harry scoffed.

Draco's smirk widened. “Oh no,” he said with a shake of his head. “I even have my name carved into it.”

“So?”

“Do not,” Harry argued, even so, surreptitiously he was scanning the bark for anything that read 'Property of Draco Malfoy.' He was severely disappointed when he found it, though it said ‘Draco Malfoy's spot’ in a rather childish scrawl. Evidently from Draco's younger years. Groaning in annoyance and defeat, the emerald-eyed boy rolled from his place and dropped to the ground a few feet away from the Slytherin. “It's all yours,” he said and started off toward the manor.

“Potter, where are you going? Not going to stay and fight for it?”

Harry shot a perplexed and disbelieving glance over his shoulder. “You say that like we're fighting for the honour of the tree.”

“We both want it,” Draco continued, following Harry up some invisible path.

“Malfoy, it's a tree,” Harry pointed out slowly and carefully, like he was trying to explain something to a terribly dim-witted child. “And your name's on it.”

“So?”

“So? Malfoy... You can have your tree. Go on, take it.” Harry cried, exasperatedly and hurried his
pace. He didn't bother glancing back over his shoulder at the boy behind him. He didn't need to with the amount of noise he was making which in return, was only causing Harry to grow further frustrated. The supposedly intelligent Slytherin managed to not get the hint or was perhaps choosing to ignore Harry's warnings as he usually did, Draco trailed him, not letting up.

“C’mon, Potter.”

“Malfoy…” Harry growled, growing extremely irritated with the Slytherin. He knew this was over far more than just the tree now, the blonde wanted him to admit his defeat. Or forfeit rather. He didn't want to say anything but if it made the blonde boy leave him alone... maybe it wouldn't be so bad. “I conceded, all right?”

“No,” Draco said, sounding exceedingly disappointed and unbelieving. It didn't last long though, as quite suddenly he sneered “I didn't figure you'd be one to give up so easily, Potter.”

“It's called knowing which battles to fight and from which to run, Malfoy,” Harry returned tonelessly, his pace had slowed considerably. He glanced over at the blonde to find him staring with narrowed eyes.

“Not everything is as black and white as you seem to believe,” he said then left Harry alone to mull over those words.

-D-jade.requiem-

Dinner that night was a pretty subdued affair, which took place in the main dining hall once more with those present from the first meeting in attendance. It seemed everyone had been drained from their earlier battles and by the many defeated looks on those present, a victor, from them at least, had been decided.

Harry sipped from his chalice as he listened to those present speaking quietly amongst themselves. He was seated next to Selene and Blaise tonight, which provided for much better conversation than the previous night. However, Draco was seated directly across from him which proved an irritant for Harry, as he was unwilling to glance up and look at the other. For the most part, Harry tried his best to ignore him. A difficult feat when said blonde was spouting what sounded to Harry like utter nonsense and trying to get Harry to speak his views on it.

“Why do you detest the young Malfoy heir, so?”

Harry turned to his aunt and looked at her archly, “What's not to detest? He is quite clearly mad. My younger self obviously had the right idea in not befriending him all those years ago,” he replied.

“Is that so?”

She wore an almost duplicate expression of the one Demetrius had worn when Harry informed him of the ongoing rivalry between himself and Draco. The young Angelus questioned if it was a ‘mates' thing.

“He's annoying, all right?” Harry conceded, he turned back to the chalice before him and ran a finger around the rim absently. “He lives to be a thorn in my side and it's not like we can just drop the hostility that's been between us all these years. It's unrealistic.”

“Are you so sure it was hostility?” Selene pressed, her face had become neutral.

Harry turned to his aunt, the supposed pillar he leant on when he needed support, and gave her a look of total disbelief. “I'm quite sure,” he answered slowly. “We are rivals at school and have been
since first year. I've told all this to uncle Demetrius.”

Selene nodded thoughtfully. No more was spoken on the topic.

“So what are your thoughts about being bonded to someone emotionally and physically?” Blaise abruptly inquired from Harry's other side.

The question really struck Harry. That was what the bond would be but he hadn't exactly thought about it in that context. He suddenly felt so much worse than he had earlier when reflecting on the exact same thing.

“Harry, are you feeling all right?”

Lying was out of the question, Harry knew and didn't deny the fact he wasn't feeling at his best. Nor did he want to.

Demetrius who had returned shortly before dinner turned to look at Harry from Selene's other side at the question. He looked worried, an expression his uncle hadn't shown in a while which wasn't exactly helpful, either.

“I think I just need to lie down,” Harry said. “I'm sure it's just the lack of sleep.”

Selene nodded then turned to her hosts. “Please excuse us, Harry is feeling unwell, though we thank you for the beautiful meal.”

It was entirely beside the point that neither Malfoys cooked it themselves.

All three of the Invidian royalty rose simultaneously, Narcissa looking as worried as Selene, her hands fluttering about her almost nervously. “That is fine,” she said. “See to the young princes needs and perhaps we could converse later?”

Selene nodded once and swept an arm around Harry and steered him away, Demetrius followed hot on their tail.

“This isn't necessary,” Harry argued feebly. His mind was still reeling from Blaise's little comment and he was incredibly drained and exhausted despite the short nap he took that afternoon.

“No Harry,” Demetrius said. He came up on Harry's other side as silent support. “You had to fight for your life not even quite twenty-four hours ago. It was presumptuous of us to assume you would have recovered enough to be able to function correctly. You are drained because your body needs rest in order to heal, more so when you're an Angelus because our healing is far more rapid than what generally occurs for a normal wizards' body. Add to that the stresses of everything else you've been through and the lack of sleep, really, I'd probably have fallen on my face long ago.

“Now, to bed with you.”

The trio entered Harry's designated rooms. The latter had a quick shower and returned to find his aunt and uncle still sitting around his bed. Selene answered his unasked question. “We'll stay until you fall asleep. It will help calm you further.”

Not questioning it, Harry climbed into his covers and promptly fell asleep feeling content and warm and knowing without a doubt that he was loved.
It wasn't yet morning, that could be easily discerned by the moonlight having moved scantly from it's place when he had been awake, but the noise that woke him couldn't be ignored and despite being remarkably miffed at the intrusion upon his sleep, he found himself curious as well.

Gliding easily from the rumpled bedding, Harry swept from the room and didn't have far to go before he found the source of the noise and rather wished he hadn't, as not too far down the hall was a girl pinned to the wall as a youth had his way with her and she didn't seem too upset about it either, if anything, the sounds she was making implied she rather enjoyed the experience. It was loud and the scent of sex permeated the air and clung to Harry nose. It crinkled at the smell.

If Harry had thought about what he was doing, he would have turned around and gone back to bed but his brain was still sleep mussed and he was peeved to have been woken only to find those two going at it like the energizer bunny on crack.

"Would you go away?" Harry called, annoyance heavy in his voice.

Immediately, the pair stopped and stared at him.

The girl squealed, hurriedly adjusted her garments and rushed away down the hall, leaving her companion with Harry who just glared.

Lazily the abandoned young vampire, rearranged his rumpled robes and redid his tight trousers before he fixed his translucent icy green eyes on Harry. He was attractive as all Invidians were, and had silk moonlight for hair that fell to his waist, his form was mildly tanned and lithely built but more muscular than Harry had seen any of the other Invidians ever being. He smirked as he stalked toward Harry, in a way that would make normal people flee.

For a moment, Harry considered going into his room, closing and warding the door as he went but quickly thought better of it.

"And who might you be?" The vampire purred, though he had kept his eyes on Harry's face the entire time, Harry could almost read the silent, 'and as you have interrupted me, you had better be offering yourself in return.'

Strangely, that was the last thing to really registered in Harry's mind, for the first one was that he hadn't met the boy before with the other Invidians, meaning he wasn't a part of the Silver Court nor the Council. But if that were the case, what was he doing there? Although he may not be of the court or council, he was still an Invidian, that much was certain by the air and scent he gave off.

A slight pause ensured as Harry considered the other's question and lying, then deciding against the idea, held his head high and answered. "Harrison James Nikolai," he replied, knowing he had to give his formal name, even if it was yet to be formally given at his crowning.

The reaction to this was immediate, the youth took a step back and his predatory look dropped a notch or two but by no means lessened entirely. "The Angelus crown Prince, it is an honour to meet you. I am Pandarius Torrez." He bowed fluidly and rose. "But you may call me Pan.

A slight pause ensured as Harry considered the other's question and lying, then deciding against the idea, held his head high and answered. "Harrison James Nikolai," he replied, knowing he had to give his formal name, even if it was yet to be formally given at his crowning.

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"I was aware that there was a gathering to welcome a fledgling into the ranks, I was however kept in the dark about this turn of events. Tell me my prince, has your warder been chosen already?"

Harry wasn't sure why, but the boy appeared incredibly bitter of the subject and Harry wasn't about to divulge something so important to a near complete stranger. He felt nothing bad from the other just an odd sort of acceptance, even so he wasn't going to give away anything that could cause a problem
in the future. Or so he hoped.

“I left the others to deal with it.”

Pan nodded his head almost absently, Harry could practically see the invisible cogs whirling furiously as he pondered that one sentence. Definitely Slytherin material perhaps Ravenclaw, though the boy obviously didn't attend Hogwarts.

“Now, if we're done for the night?” Harry queried, with as much of an authoritative tone he could manage. Pan appeared like he wanted to say more but acquiesced with another respectful bow.

“Goodnight, fair prince. I shall certainly like to meet with you again.”

Nodding politely, Harry closed and warded his door. Heavily. Shrugging off the odd feeling of eyes on his back, he slid back into his still warm bed and banished all thoughts until morning.

-Jade.Requiem-

Harry was late.

Having been roused from sleep by Blaise yet again and hurrying his morning routine, Harry was interrupted when Pan sauntered in like he owned the place and threw Harry a dazzling smile. It was lost on the scowling Gryffindor however, as he was too engaged in trying to get his robes done up right. He did offer the newcomer a glare when he saw him though.

“What are you doing in my rooms?” Harry queried, aghast by the boy's manners. They weren't friends, barely knew each other, and here Pan was lounging on Harry's bed like he owned it.

“I came to wish you a pleasant morning, of course. How was my sweet prince's sleep? Well, I hope.”

“Decent,” Harry replied curtly. “Look, would you just go? I'm already late enough as it is and I don't need anymore help in that department.”

“And you need help in another department?”

Harry growled. “Just go!”

Pan sighed. “I could help you, you know.”

Harry deliberated a moment. “If you would,” he said tightly, he tried to gesture but somehow, the silken cloth had become tangled around his limbs and snagged in his hair. All in all, it was a tragic display.

“Certainly!” Pan grinned mischievously, as he bounded up with all enthusiasm immediately and hurried toward Harry, where he proceeded to try pulling Harry's robes back off.

“That's not what I meant!” Harry hissed as he struggled to right his robes once more. He shot Pan a scathing glare. “I meant you could help me put them on. I have no idea these things are meant to be worn.”

“They aren't,” Pan smirked. “These were designed to adorn the bedroom floor while me and you play a little one on one Quidditch in your—”

“Out!” Harry yelled, eyes narrowed on Pan murderously.

“Oh fine,” Pan murmured with a sulky pout, he plopped back on Harry's bed and crossed his arms
over his chest. “I'll play good.”

He was quiet for the total of a minute before he spoke again.

“How do you say that like it will mean your death?” Pan answered honestly, he shrugged while gazing back at Harry. “We can argue all you like another time but now we had best hurry up before they send a search party and find me here.”

That certainly gained Harry's full attention, he fixed his piercing emerald eyes on Pan who began fidgeting uncomfortably. “Why do you say that like it will mean your death?”

“Because it very likely will,” Pan answered honestly, he shrugged while gazing back at Harry. “I'm not the most well liked of people here. In fact, I'd say I was ranking right down there with Moldy-warts.”

Harry choked on his unexpected laughter. “You mean Voldemort, right?” He had to confirm.

“Who else?” Pan asked, sounding repulsed. His face was twisted in a sneer at the very memory of the insane wizard.

“You don't flinch when I say his name,” Harry murmured, more to himself but Pan replied regardless.

“That's ridiculous,” the Invidian said and crossed his arms. “Ever heard of ‘Fear in a name’ and all that rot? Voldemort isn't a name to be feared or worshipped, it's a name to be laughed at. He is nothing more than a deluded wizard who thinks himself better than others. I think the fact he was defeated by a mere child speaks volumes of his so called power. Don't you?”

Harry agreed with the first but knew the reason Voldemort fell when it came to killing him, decided to remain silent on the subject. “You were going to go, remember?” He said instead.

Pan nodded, offered a soft smile and backed from the room.

The sable-haired boy let out a deep breath, counted to fifty then proceeded to jog down the halls. He was down in the dining hall not fifteen minutes later. The only people in attendance this time were the Malfoys, the Nikolais, Blaise and Pan. The latter who upon Harry's arrival shot him a winning smile.

Harry pretended not to notice and murmuring his good mornings and his apologies for being late, took the only empty seat, which was again, next to Draco. Either the fates or the Malfoys were conspiring against him and he wasn't entirely convinced that the two weren't working together.
“Prince Harry, this is Pandarius,” Lucius said, introducing the youth. He didn't bother talking to the white-haired boy at all and all Malfoys appeared abnormally tense. Even for them.

“Oh, we've already met,” Pan murmured, licking his lips in an entirely inappropriate manner. If at all possible, the Malfoys tensed further.

“Is that so?” Lucius queried, his voice and eyes icy.

“Oh yes,” Pan smirked lecherously. “It was quite the meeting, wasn't it my sweet prince?”

It appeared everyone was shocked into stillness. Lucius looked truly disgusted and ready to kill Pan, surprisingly, Draco wasn't far behind his father. Demetrius looked shocked yet partially curious, Narcissa glared in disapproval and perhaps a touch scandalised, Selene was staring at Pan with utmost pity and Blaise's face had reddened to the point of being able to out-rival a tomato.

Harry, too, was shocked speechless for a moment. Hadn't Pan just earlier said that being caught in Harry's bedchambers was the equivalent of a quick death and yet now he was announcing their previous meeting the evening before and exaggerating it horribly. Harry had to wonder what the hell the other was thinking. Then again, perhaps this was all some elaborate plot to drive Harry insane.

Narrowing his eyes on Pan, Harry announce to the room, “Yes well, all I can say is this; next time choose another hall for you and your conquests so that I may sleep in peace.”

It was amazing how his simple words had effected the entire room as easily as Pans, except that his words unlike the trouble maker, had calmed them all. Well mostly as Lucius still looked like he wanted nothing more than to tear the watery-green eyed boy apart. Limb from limb.

The prospect held a certain appeal for Harry at the moment, as well.

“My prince, you're no fun,” Pan pouted.

Harry shrugged his pout away indifferently and took a bite from his strawberry. “You really shouldn't imply things that are bound to cause problems then, should you Pandarius?”

“And you don't?”

Thinking that over a minute, Harry settled for, “I really don't see how this has anything to do with me. We were talking about you, and you really got a kick out of what you just did, admit it.”

“Never,” Pan grinned wolfishly.

Rolling his eyes, Harry set about gathering more summer fruits from one of the platters before him and ignoring the snowy-haired boy. The boy was infuriating one moment and then making Harry laugh the next, that couldn't be healthy.

He noticed, his aunt was nibbling from a dainty little fork one of the light fruit tarts with a dusting of icing sugar and a dollop of cream. He wondered how good it tasted and considered getting one for himself. Silently, the boy contemplated increasing his breakfast choices by adding a small tart to his own plate. This deliberation was cut short when a swift and accurate kick to the shin had Harry's head rising and glaring at Blaise, who again was seated to his other side. But as things turned out, Blaise was only trying to point to Draco without seeming to or earning anyone else's attention.

Apparently the blonde had been trying to draw Harry into a conversation, but as he hadn't been paying attention to anything had missed what the other was saying.
“Sorry, would you repeat that?” Harry asked Draco, because that was the only safe way to start speaking with him given that the emerald-eyed boy was unsure how he was meant to address Draco. They were pretty much on the same level now and both knew it.

Equals.

For a moment it appeared Draco was mildly dumbstruck but he quickly caught himself and managed to cover it. “You say you ran into Torrez last night? I imagine you must have received quite a shock.”

It was an odd conversation to be having with Draco, but he appeared honest enough in his curiosity, though somewhat awkward. Almost like the other day Harry had ran into him while at Diagon Alley. Absently Harry wondered if it would all change once they were at school. Likely it would, if they were to continue playing their parts. It could still be some elaborate plot to trick him, for Draco to get important information out of him and use it against him but that would make his aunt and uncle wrong about the Malfoys and as much as Harry still felt weary about them, he couldn't say he hated them any longer.

Harry and his family had slept at the Malfoys' two nights, in which their hosts could have done anything to them and yet nothing happened. The Malfoys' had been extremely hospitable. To the point in which at times, Harry had almost felt smothered by it. And there was also times when Harry saw the Malfoys' he had known not that long ago in their welcoming faces...

His thoughts kept churning around and around, not helping him any with his decision. Even after a night's rest his instincts had gone quiet, as though wanting him to figure it out on his own.

Though Harry didn't get the impression that the other was being anything but sincere, he nodded his head and answered, “It was a shock but I was more annoyed with being woken, to be quite honest.”

“Did he attempt anything? Inappropriate, I mean.”

Harry turned away from his breakfast once more to peer at the blonde, he narrowed his eyes and observed the other warily. “That would depend on what your definition of ‘inappropriate’ is, but no. He didn't attempt anything. He was almost the perfect gentleman.” Last night, he added mentally. Wondering if Draco really could tell he wasn't telling the full true.

“Almost?” Blaise asked, listening in as well.

Harry turned to him. “Yeah,” he said and shrugged. “It's not like I could call him one after what I caught him doing out in the hall, now can I?”

The rest of their stilted conversation drifted off their as the three boy's continued to eat. For a while Harry just picked at his fruit and yoghurt but looked up as he felt a gaze boring into his head and found Pan staring at him intently. He was eating in carefully exaggerated motions. Which somehow felt bizarrely obscene.

“What's his problem?” Harry asked Blaise and subtly pointed out Pan.

It was Draco however who turned to answer. Letting his gaze drift from Harry to Pan, he gave a disgusted look and said, “Everything. Just ignore him, he loves an audience.”

Sounds like someone else I know, Harry mused and shot Draco a sidelong glance.

His attention however, was snagged once more by Pan's obscene eating habits. He was lapping at the cream covered strawberry and sucking on it. The whole thing seemed rather personal to Harry,
like some bizarre show put on just for him. Like Pan was imagining...

“It's rather revolting, isn't it?” Blaise asked.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed, absently unable to stop watching the scene with morbid fascination. Then something occurred to him. “Has he always had cannibalistic tendencies?” He asked then yelped and leapt from his seat, expecting to see hands beneath the table but there were none.

“Are you all right?” Selene asked.

“Yeah,” Harry answered bewildered. “I just thought I felt something crawling up my leg is all. Nothing to worry about.” Of course he was worried, from the almost innocent look on Pan's face, Harry was assuming the stunt was something he had pulled and the more important thing was that the feeling hadn't stayed on his leg but had moved up to his inner thigh and incredibly close to something he didn't want Pan to touch.

No matter what he said though, the Malfoys had all looked over at Pan in varying states of shock, anger and disgust.

“Pandarius, control yourself!” Lucius drawled icily, his eyes as sharp and chilling as his tone of voice. Pan though, ignored his warning and offered an infuriating smile to the Invidian King.

And still, the snowy-haired vampire persisted and rather foolishly at that. “Am I to assume that Draconis is to be my prince's new escort?” Pan queried blithely.

*Draconis?* Harry mused, perplexed.

The table stilled at once. Tension thickening in the air to the point in which Harry expected he would no longer be able to breathe, quickly he reigned in his own feelings before someone read them and inwardly groaned.

Trust this new and evidently irritating individual to press a matter that he didn't want to deal with right now. Harry wanted more time to think of or look into his possible guardians but by the look of Pan, he was wanting a way in.

Draco was tense beside Harry, and was almost sparking. Whether Harry liked it or not he knew there was no more time for him to decide. He knew the Malfoys still wanted Draco as his warder and after listening to last night's conversation among the other Invidians, they had all agreed, although it was quite obvious some of them were still rather bitter about it and it was a reluctant agreement at best.

And Harry, he really wasn't willing to be emotional bound to Draco or Pan. Even if there was no bad history between him and the latter, there was far more between the Gryffindor and Slytherin, Harry still knew Draco better or didn't quite know him better, but even that was a start.

But not good enough.

He didn't want to be a slave to the bond and he knew that's what would eventually come to pass. Technically, there was no superior in the bond, Harry would have no hold over Draco nor Draco him, or so theory stated, even so Harry couldn't help but feel he had somehow lost out. Again. He couldn't help but feel cornered, collared and chained. The Nikolai heir knew it was going to happen sometime—it was practically promised—but had hoped not so soon and definitely not to either of them.

He should have stuck with Blaise. Even if eventually he'd come to dislike him.
Harry's eyes slid to both his relatives, he took in Selene's countenance, where he glimpsed feelings which almost reflected his own as and Demetrius held nothing but understanding and pity. Though oddly enough, Harry didn't feel the pity was for him.

There was no escaping it, then. Opening the channel of his thoughts, Harry slid easily into Demetrius and Selene's awaiting minds.

*I'll accept the Malfoy's proposal of Draco,* he thought into both minds.

*I assumed this would happen,* Selene agreed. Giving a mental nod. *I do not know why you denied him for so long. It is quite obvious he was interested.* There was something in her thought that unnerved him about that brief conversation but he ignored it as Demetrius spoke back to them.

*I shall speak up then.*

“It was indeed decided that prince Draco was to be our Harry's guard,” Demetrius said and took a sip from his lightly frosted Sanguisé, a drink Harry himself had come to love with its sugar rimmed sides and lightly spiced flavour.

The tension on the air shifted and lessened. Pan's gaze shifted back to Harry questioningly.

“I was under the impression you hadn't yet accepted,” he said. “Last night you had said you left others to deal with it.”

“And I did,” Harry nodded and slipped a spoonful of whipped cream and berries into his mouth with a soft moan of delight. “And I am perfectly happy with the arrangements and have accepted Lord and Lady Malfoy's choice,” he lied easily and obviously, Draco felt it.

“And if I were to challenge my dear cousin to take his place?” Pan pressed softly.

Wait,** Harry blinked. Did he just say cousin?**

There was a sharp intake of breath from Narcissa and Lucius erupted.

“You insolent whelp! Going so far as to challenge us when we have decided on who was to be the Angelus heir's guardian. Stand down Pandarius or I shall invoke the rites and have you banished to the clanless!”

Lucius was standing, hands splayed out on the table in front of him. For all the good it did him. Pan looked a little unsettled by the threat but he was still staring fixatedly at Harry, as though willing him to accept such a proposal.

“Stop, Pan,” Harry murmured, his eyes rising and staring back at the other, who looked for all the world like Harry had just slaughtered his favourite puppy before him and desecrated the remains. Harry just averted his gaze back to his plate and unfinished breakfast.

He knew he had been forced into a corner and wasn't particularly pleased about it at all. The other boy had no right to look at Harry that way after forcing Harry's hand. He sighed inaudibly.

Then there was the court and council to worry about. Neither groups would be pleased with the turn of events. Everything being so bloody steeped in ritual and all their blasted ideals on how everything had to be done. He'd have to risk their fury at doing something as sacred as a blood-bond at the breakfast table.

Reaching out to both his family member's once more with their telepathy Harry stated, *I need*
Draco's full name.

*Draconis Lucien Malfoy,* Demetrius answered at once.

*He is named Draconis?* Harry asked.

*I heard the stars of Draco shone brightly on the night of his birth. A good omen for one of our kind. A strong name to be blessed with. I'm sure he would make the original bearer of the name proud,* Selene added with warmth.

Harry gave a mental nod and slipped back from their minds and focused on the blood bonds he had been forced to memorise.

Remembering the words carefully, Harry incited the rite that would settle the matter once and for all. “I, Harrison James Nikolai do hereby accept the candidate, Draconis Lucien Malfoy as my warden and so do offer my blood willingly.”

He closed his eyes and bid his freedom farewell.

Without thought, he slashed his wrist with his nail, not deeply but enough to draw blood and offered it up to the blonde at his side. The other boy didn't think twice before latching on to it and suckling. The sensation had Harry squirming in his chair, it tickled a lot and also felt undeniably good. He'd think on that later though, because he was trying desperately not to do reveal exactly how much he liked the feeling.

He'd have to remember that for future reference and investigation.

Then Draco withdrew and cut his own wrist, blood collecting in little crimson beads.

“I Draconis Lucien Malfoy accept the privilege of both status and gift from the Nikolai heir, Harrison James Nikolai as well as offer my own blood in exchange,” the blonde said and held his wrist out for Harry. Lowering his head, Harry lapped at the offering before latching on and sucking deeply. Beneath his lips and tongue he could feel Draco's pulse flutter erratically and wondered if his own had done that.

When he pulled back, there was a little trickle of blood dribbling from the side of his mouth but he quickly licked it clean and waited for Draco to compose himself enough to speak.

“Blood of my blood,” Draco murmured, voice huskier than usual.

“As accepted and witnessed our bond is now complete,” Harry said, closing the ritual.

And upon these finishing words, a warmth erupted in Harry abruptly. It was difficult to explain the softness yet also sharpness that surged through his veins like molten fire yet froze them all at once. The feeling passed quickly but left him panting and disorientated.

When he glanced up at Pan, he was no longer looking hurt but glaring hatefully at Draco who had recovered much more quickly than Harry himself.

“Well,” Selene murmured, breaking the tension. “I'm sure you won't mind if we see to Harry?” She asked her hosts. Abruptly they stood too.

“Not at all,” Narcissa replied, eyeing both newly bonded boys.

“By your leave,” Demetrius said and inclined his head respectfully and with Selene's help, guided a
dazed Harry back to his rooms.
Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But how can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

Ok so I was asked if I have this post on Fanfiction.net. And I do, it currently posted to chapter 14 (All I've written so far.) Here are the links Fanfiction.net and my site jade-requiem@lj.com

Chapter seven: Adjustments of school life

“Harry, you cannot stay in here forever.”

Which was true enough. Harry didn't want to stay at the Malfoys' home any longer than strictly necessary but he didn't want to leave his current room at present, either. If he left that, he'd have to face the Malfoys, more importantly Draco, which wasn't something that Harry felt terribly inclined to do. Quite the opposite.

Having slept off the post-bond effects, namely lethargy, a very mild headache and disorientation, Harry felt the full strength of his decision weighing heavily upon him. And having a little piece of Draco in him—a tiny little bundle of thoughts and presence—at the very back of his mind was extremely disconcerting, even after reading up on the full impact of what a warder-bond was and everything that entailed, Harry still felt incredibly weird about the whole thing. Especially when Draco would every so often give him the mental equivalent of a nudge. All Harry wanted to do was forget about the other which given the circumstances, was more than a little difficult.

“I don't feel like moving,” Harry muttered, hoping if he feigned illness he'd be left alone for a bit longer.

“Come now, Harry,” his uncle prodded him in the shoulder gently. “The longer you try to avoid this, the longer it will take for you to adjust.”

“I despise Pan,” Harry muttered instead, he rolled over and buried his face in his pillow. “If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be in this mess. I think I should find a way to torture him slowly as pay back.”

Selene actually giggled a little.

“Pan is already suffering greatly for what has happened,” Demetrius tried to reason. “He wanted to be the holder of your bond. He wasn't wanting this to happen any more than you did. I bet at this very moment he is beating himself up about it.”

But Harry wasn't appeased.

“I hope you mean that literally.”

“Harry,” Selene sighed, she sank down onto the bed beside the upset boy and began stroking his hair soothingly. “We know how much you hate this and how much you've already been through and know there is still much more for you to get through. It may not happen straight away but eventually
you'll grow to accept that Draco is bound to you. Remember what we talked about yesterday? Lucius choose Draco for a reason and it wasn't so he could humiliate you.”

“Your aunt's right, Harry,” Demetrius stated, gazing fondly, yet sadly down upon his upset nephew. Not that he saw. “There is no higher honour for an Invidian than being bound to you and it's not a job taken lightly, the fact that you were rivals will make it harder for you to accept, but Draco is the best choice...” He paused, seemed to consider something and then ploughed on. “If given the decision of who you'd bond to, your aunt and I would choose Draco.”

Harry sat up suddenly with a growl and dislodged Selene's hand. “You mean given the choice of the entire Invidian clan, you'd still choose Draco?”

Both adult Angelus paused at the question. “Yes,” Demetrius replied slowly. “I'd still choose Draco because I have perfect faith in Lucius' choice. He would never allow someone he thought even remotely unfit for the station to act as your guard. I believe the actual reason he had such a hard time convincing the Invidian court was just because he is younger than them. Were it not for that fact, I'm certain they would have jumped at any choice he made, but as they deem him to be younger and so not as wise and inexperienced they fought him all the way.”

The young Angelus had to wonder if Demetrius was referring to Harry's own situation as it certainly seemed that way.

His shoulders slumped as he felt all the fight leave him, this was just another of those things that he'd have to accept and much as he hated the idea of being bound to Draco in any way besides rivalry, he knew his uncle was right. He had to accept his circumstances and move onward, sulking about it wouldn't help anyone, least of all himself. At least he had been granted the small mercy of not being bound to Pan.

It didn't even help make him feel much better.

Besides, there was less than a week left before he left for school. How hard could it be?

- jade.requiem -

Flipping through his text, Harry tried to mute out the infuriating white-haired boy seated across from him and rambling about something that Harry had no intention of trying to figure out. It certainly didn't help that Pan wasn't even attempting to reign in his feelings and appeared to very nearly be broadcasting his thoughts.

Harry gave a delicate shudder and tried to focus on something else. Something that wasn't Pandarius. But the rambling wouldn't stop and nor did Pan's flirting. Harry snapped.

“Sod off!”

Pan blinked and stopped mid sentence. He blinked once more. “Harry...”

“No!” Harry interrupted, his eyes blazing green fire. “I don't think you understand. I want to be left alone. I need to study and you're not helping!”

“I could be of help,” Pan said, perking up. “What do you need help with?”

“What do you not understand about the word ‘alone’?” Harry asked, enraged and exasperated beyond all measure. “I need to do this alone! No, I want to be left alone. So you can go and annoy Malfoy or Zabini.”
“My cousin isn't too pleased with me,” Pan said thoughtfully. “As for Zabini, that one tends to be a little on the jumpy side. I try to avoid him as much as possible.”

Harry frowned. He hadn't notice Blaise being jumpy, from what Harry could tell the boy was well, he couldn't very well say 'normal' as he didn't really know him, but all the times Harry had been around him he had seemed quite fine, slightly down trodden being the only real effect Harry had witnessed and that was entirely Draco's fault.

“What do you mean by 'jumpy'?” Harry asked curiously, forgetting completely about trying to get rid of his nuisance and not trying to be dragged into a conversation with him.

“Haven't you noticed?” Pan asked. “It's almost like the boy's on something. He can be quite normal but then it's like he's paranoid or something. I'm not sure, he's fine enough with you from what I've seen and he's all right with Draconis and his parents but he... There's just something about him I can't quite get.”

Nodding, Harry pondered over that information. He felt perfectly fine with Blaise, it was almost scary how easily Harry had accepted him into his life while Harry still tried desperately to keep boundaries in place between himself, Pan and Draco. Yet the two, especially Pan, was trying his hardest to breach those shields.

He sighed, realising he had allowed himself to be distracted by the other boy. Glancing up at him and said firmly. “All right, now would you please leave me for an hour at least? I really need to get this research done.”

“What kind?” Pan asked and snatched the book from Harry's hands causing the latter to growl in mounting frustration.

“Persistent little bugger, isn't he?” Drawled Draco from absolutely nowhere.

He was good at that, Harry noticed. Sneaking up on people and scaring the daylights out of them. Even Harry with his hypersensitive hearing and smell hadn't picked up on his approach. The bond he shared with the Slytherin didn't help any, either. In fact it was proving to be an entire waste of time and energy aside from Draco's still occasional prods and the swift flow of his constantly shifting emotions. Most of which Harry was unable to define.

“Must run in the family,” Harry muttered.

Draco's eyes slanted over to him from where they had been fixed glaring at Pan to instead narrow on Harry. “I heard that, you know.”

“Wasn't trying to hide it,” the Angelus heir retorted.

Rolling his eyes, the blonde plonked himself down next to his cousin, shoving him aside so he was positioned directly across from Harry at his table.

Inwardly Harry was screaming. He wanted alone time, not being ‘suffocated by Malfoy and his cousin' time. This was all horrible. All that Harry needed to top his cake would be a bikini clad Voldemort doing the hula.

The conjured imagery promptly made Harry throw up.

-The end-

The rest of Harry's time up until he left for Kings Cross was spent at the Malfoys' home and mostly
in the company of with Draco, Blaise and Pan (Much to Harry's dismay.) Though Pan was more often than not dragged away by Lucius. The time spent with the two Slytherins wasn't quite as bad as Harry had initially dreaded but was actually rather... different. Blaise was a real comedian in his observations, while Draco's witty remarks were refreshing. If still rather insulting.

And more importantly, Harry had discovered a way to cloak the bond between Draco and himself, meaning he could almost turn it on and off or filter it so Draco couldn't get a reading from him or he could ignore Draco's little nudges.

Life was looking up.

It had been decided that Draco would remain as he always had been at school but Blaise, as a neutral of the war could be the go between. Harry didn't mind so much, that would be normal, besides he wasn't sure how Ron would take the news. He'd likely die of heart failure. Not that he wouldn't when he saw the changes in Harry.

Gnawing his lower lip, Harry strode along behind Selene and Demetrius through the mass of people surging around the platform that the great scarlet train rested at, small puffs of smoke gliding from it's chimney.

Both Selene and Demetrius were heavily charmed to look different and had their hoods up regardless. Harry too wore a deeply hooded cloak pulled up around his face.

“I'm going to miss you,” Selene said, tears filling her now blue eyes. She lunged forward and crushed Harry to her in an almost punishing embrace. “But you are going to write to us at least once a week and we might even come visit if we're able. How does that sound to you?

“Oh and Christmas! You must have Christmas with us and we can finally show you Shiresford Quay, the Nikolai estate near Russia.”

“That sounds brilliant,” Harry smiled at her fondly. He stepped back as she did and allowed himself to be pulled up against his uncle in a quick hug.

“Also, I would advise reviewing your court etiquette, your crowning has been organised for the winter Solstice. We have been able to convince the Court that your bonding to Draconis was a necessity and so that will no longer be a major issue. Though this we cannot know for sure.”

Demetrius sighed, dropping his 'strict' voice.

“I know you'll make us all proud,” Demetrius said seriously. “Now off you go and remember, if you need anything let us know and we'll be there.”

Feeling a warmth flood him, Harry smiled brilliantly at his uncle and murmured a heartfelt, “Thanks.”


With one last smile and wave, Harry dashed off toward the entrance to the train and after locating an empty compartment, tossed all his luggage into the storage racks above his head and awaited his friends to come looking for him.

“Harry mate! Where've you been? We were looking for you on the platform.”

He didn't have that long to wait either, as Ron came crashing through his compartment door not even five minutes after Harry had settled, Hermione strolled in at a more leisurely pace. Upon their immediate arrival the young Angelus locked and warded the door against eavesdropping, flinging the
curtains closed Harry turned to his friends.

It didn't once occur to him that his friends shouldn't have been able to locate him so soon, especially given he was still hooded and his luggage was in sleek black trunks the only thing remaining the same being his cage for Hedwig who he'd told to fly ahead—but it just felt right that they should know where he was.

Hermione rose a brow enquiringly at the precautionary measures he had taken to ensure whatever was to be discussed remained secret.

“I came into my hereditas,” Harry murmured, watching curiously as his friends eyes widened at his slightly altered voice.

Ron's brows drew down a moment, “It can't be all that bad, mate. The Potters were a powerful family. You're hereditas I thought would grant you a large amount of power, sure you're not overreacting?”

“Promise not to do anything,” Harry begged instead, scared his two best friends would reject him immediately after he removed his hood.

“Sure mate,” Ron agreed easily.

“We're both with you, Harry,” Hermione said reassuringly and patted his hand.

Breathing deeply, Harry dropped his hooded cloak and watched the look on his friends faces as their expressions warped from friendly and accepting into stunned amazement. They both gaped openly.

“Harry you're... wow.” Hermione covered uncomfortably and immediately turned pink. She cleared her throat carefully and then proceeded in a slower manner. “No offence Harry, but.. I believe you are going to have issues this year regarding your er... appearance.”

She must have truly be thrown for a loop if she was stating the obvious... then again, sometimes Harry wasn't the most perceptive of people. In fact, for the most part he seemed somewhat oblivious to a great many things.

“What, were your family descendants of angels or something?” Ron asked dumbly, blunt as ever. He didn't look envious of Harry at all. In fact he looked more sympathetic than anything if still a little awed.

“Erm, kind of,” Harry responded.

Hermione looked suspiciously at him but wasn't able to say a thing as Ron leaned forward and said, “So you said the Dursleys were nicer this time?”

That wasn't exactly what Harry expected to be asked about so soon after his revelation and it left him slightly off kilter. Still, that meant that the change wasn't something big to them, at least that's what Harry hoped.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “Dudley even got me a birthday gift. Some kind of dagger, it's pretty but.”

“A dagger?” Hermione queried, perplexed. “Why on earth-?”

The Angelus shrugged, mostly unsure himself. “I suspect it's for protection. A ‘Thanks for saving me from the happiness-sucking-things' I'm sure.”
Hermione nodded slowly, as though she was examining that explanation carefully while Ron looked on in bemusement. “Right,” he said. “Sure you're family wasn't replaced while you weren't looking or something?”

That question actually gave Harry a moment's pause in consideration before dismissing the idea and another valid point came to his attention.

Harry had thought over telling his friends about his new living situation and after much debate had come to the conclusion that he had to tell them. He had even gotten permission from Demetrius to share the information with them. Unfortunately or perhaps fortunately, Dumbledore had been informed of the situation as well as Harry's gift. Draco's however, was to remain unknown. As was Blaise's.

“But,” Harry started, “after I came into my inheritance, I've been staying with my father's brother.”

He waited a whole two seconds before anything more was said.

“What?” It was Hermione. “Your father's brother? Harry, your dad was an only child, remember? He doesn't have a brother.”

Harry smiled and withdrew the photos of him and his new family. “Uncle Demetrius and aunty Selene,” he said pointing out the pair as they stood beaming back at him, pulling the picture-Harry closer to them as they did. “Dumbledore knows about them now, and he's all right with the living situation. He even informed uncle Demetrius I could go back to them for Christmas.”

Hermione's brows furrowed upon hearing that and she remained silent.

“So you're not coming back to the Burrow with us, then?” Ron sounded incredibly disappointed.

“I could always ask if you guys can come stay with us. I'm sure they won't mind.” Despite the statement, Harry wasn't so sure. His family were vampires after all and would likely want alone time with Harry to make up for all the past Christmases that went uncelebrated as well as slip in some extra training.

“It's all right, mate,” Ron reassured with a sigh. “But I want to hear about everything.”

With a smile, Harry launched into the tale of his last few weeks and the Nikolais as well as his own predicament, carefully avoiding anything to do with him being the Crown Prince of the Angelus and having Draco Malfoy as his warder and shoved his books at Hermione before she could say anything about his sort of vampirism. He did however, keep his family's history book hidden from view and by the time he had finished answering most of his friends questions and Hermione had skimmed through one of his books, the compartment door opened and in strode said Warder with Crabbe and Goyle in tow.

“Well looky here, if it isn't Saint Potty and his little disciples,” Draco drawled with his trademark sneer in place.

Harry absently chewed on his bottom lip when he saw Hermione scrutinising the Malfoy heir. It was all Harry could do but pray she didn't figure out that he too was a vampire and of the kind that was meant to be a protector of Harry. The latter narrowed his eyes, surely she hadn't read that page yet. More likely, she was bound to think he was an Angelus.

Crossing his arms, Harry glared up at the blonde unimpressed and didn't react further. Ron however didn't appear to like the way Crabbe and Goyle were eying Harry and leapt to his feet with a snarl, “Bugger off, Malfoy!”
“No thank-you,” Draco sneered maliciously. “I'll leave the buggering to you, Weasel.”

Ron's face immediately blazed red and his body began to shake.

“Malfoy!” Hermione warned, jumping into the fray.

The sudden glare Harry fixed on Draco would be enough to cut pure diamonds and both freeze and sear the blood in his veins. The blonde seemed to know this and ignored Harry, though his taunts were toned down.

A little.

“Oh look, goody-good Granger jumping in for her boyfriend. I must say, I didn't realise you were into bestiality, though I suppose that would be the only way Weasel here would ever get shagged.”

Hermione's face flamed, though whether in embarrassment or anger, Harry wasn't sure. He himself was having trouble trying to keep his eyes their usual emerald hue instead of flashing gold in his ire.

“Fuck off, Malfoy!” Ron roared

“Why should I, Weasel?” Draco growled stepping closer to the redhead. He was doing a brilliant job of looming despite being about the same height as Ron.

“Malfoy,” Harry hissed, barely able to keep his rage in check. His voice shook with restraint and came out an odd and cutting pitch, everyone winced at the sound. Even the room seemed to drop in temperature and the windows sounded like they were about to crack. It was unsure exactly who that was, whether Draco or Harry neither was to know.

“Boys!” Hermione interrupted, before anything got too out of hand. “We have a prefects meeting we have to go to anyway. Go on, Malfoy.”

Looking mutinous, Draco skulked out of the compartment with both his lackeys, Ron following. Hermione though turned a worried glance on Harry but quickly left when she heard Draco and Ron continuing their argument outside.

Harry knew what she was worried about though, she was concerned with how much Draco may have heard, as even Harry failed to hear the lock opening. He was going to have to ask Blaise about that later. He would ask Draco if he thought the boy would answer honestly.

Alone now in his compartment, Harry rewove the wardings on his door. One that even Draco would have trouble trying to open.

-jade.requiem-

It wasn't even quite a whole day of classes yet and Harry was dreading his school year. Now Harry knew how Fleur must have felt, although he didn't think she had members of her own sex propositioning her. Harry on the other hand did.

He had long ago slunk off and hidden himself deep within the forest of shelves and books of the library, having found a suitably dark and apparently long forgotten cubby hole somewhere near the very far back. It was surrounded on all sides by stacked books and shelves and set in such a way you had to glimpse it just right to be able to figure out it was a small room.

As for what he was doing, he was currently trying to see how far his mind was able to sense out others' thoughts. Attempting this on his own family was difficult of course. They always had their
shields up. The Malfoys, all three were just as adept as Harry. Pan had been an open book whenever he strayed into Harry's presence, but then Harry assumed that Pan had wanted him to read his desires.

Abruptly, Harry shivered. He always considered Pan a little on the exhibitionist side of things. Sexual frustrated definitely, but Harry could practically see what Pan's every dream. Suffice it to say, Harry was disturbed for a long time.

Dropping his concentration on the students he had been trying to read, the Gryffindor flicked through another book he had been reading up on. That of Animagi.

Harry himself wasn't far now from achieving his animal form. Another task Demetrius had set him along with a great many other things as well as much revision work. In all honesty, Harry didn't know why he bothered going to school anymore beside getting 'proper' qualifications, as all the extra work he was set would keep him preoccupied for the rest of his school year if not take up some of that time, too.

In one of the private lessons Harry had with Demetrius, he had been able to hold his transformation for a few minutes before he reverted back. He had been concerned about what his animal was, considering he had never seen this animal form ever but Demetrius had eased any of Harry's worries by explaining simply that, 'it's a vampire thing,' and had left it at that.

His thoughts snapped from his quiet reflection at the swift change in atmosphere and a familiar citrus scent caught Harry's nose, he turned to the entrance of his little alcove and rose a brow as Blaise Zabini sauntered into sight.

"Looking into animagi, Potter?" He asked, studying the book before Harry and took a seat in front of the boy. "So you know, I've already obtained my animal form."

Which was safe to say Draco likely had as well.

"And what might that be?" Harry asked curiously, leaning forward eagerly.

"Now that would be telling," Blaise responded haughtily and crossed his arms over his chest, lifting a brow as he gazed evenly over at Harry. It was a move often used by Draco.

Huffing, Harry leaned back in his chair. "Yes, that is generally what happens when you ask a question."

Blaise snorted and grinned. "If I show you mine, promise to show me yours?"

"Trade off to see who has the biggest?" Draco inquired, voice colder than winter's heart, appearing in the doorway. The light from outside making him look like an oddly angelic silhouette.

Blaise jumped. "Malfoy—"

"Zabini," the blonde replied with a sneer. "Now what was this I interrupted?"

Harry reddened at Draco's implications but glared up at the blonde who was now standing to the side, viewing the goings on carefully. The Gryffindor eyed Blaise a moment asking silently whether to reveal the truth of not. He was well aware that Draco could tell if he lied or not but didn't care. Blaise though, gave a minute nod leaving Harry to answer the blonde's question.

"Animagi," Harry answered, pushing his book toward the blonde. "We were discussing our animal forms."
“Ah, a little game of show and tell,” Draco muttered bitterly. For a moment Harry felt something sharp surge through his shared bond with the grey-eyed Slytherin before it was sealed promptly away.

Cocking his head to the side inquisitively Harry studied the blonde boy carefully, turned to Blaise for a moment then fixed his emerald eyes on Draco and said, “Something like that. What about you, Malfoy, are you up for a little ‘show and tell’?”

Shock flashed through the blonde's eyes before he was able to control his reaction. “I am if you are,” he drawled arrogantly.

A smirk formed on Harry's face. “Fine,” he said. “Saturday, 11 at night down by the whomping willow, sound good to you two?”

Draco nodded immediately looking extremely smug, while Blaise took his time to respond with a nod of his own. He didn't appear all too comfortable about the the reveal. In fact, his face had paled a little.

“Oh by the way, I've been relocated to the small tower near Gryffindor common room. The entrance is kept by a mirror,” Harry said, watching the two. He pulled a parchment of rough directions from his robes and handed it to Draco and a copy to Blaise. “The other entrance is linked with the Gryffindor boys' dorms.”

Hesitating a second or so, Draco took the proffered parchment then offered Harry one of his own. “My room's entrance is in an alcove and guarded by a statue of Circe,” Draco explained. “Down in the Slytherin part of the dungeons.”

Nodding Harry rose, pulling his books toward him started loaded them into his bags.

“Going already?” Blaise asked, sounding disappointed.

“I've been hiding long enough,” Harry shrugged, stepped around Draco and stopped once within the alcove's entrance. “My new fans will be worried about my absence. I can't keep them waiting, now can I?” He asked sarcastically and rolled his eyes. “Besides, I can't be caught with both of you too often. You know that.” With an absent wave he left the two behind.

Harry couldn't believe what he'd just done. He was fine with both boys knowing where he slept, because it was linked back to his dorms anyway and they didn't know his password. What had Harry wanting to kick himself was his sudden contest to reveal their animal forms. Sure he knew he was close to accomplishing it, but Blaise already had his and Draco likely would as well, meaning Harry had pretty much put a deadline on his own transformation and he had to achieve it.

Thinking over his stupid and impulsive proposal, the sable-haired Gryffindor made his way down the halls towards his common room.

The halls were mostly clear as he meandered aimlessly down them. Bumping into one or two people on the way but he paid very little attention to what was going on around him, mostly he was just trying to adjust to the large magical vibrations on the air. He had felt them as a normal wizard, certainly but as a vampire the feeling was so much more intense. The residual magic from the students hummed along the walls and sung up in the rafters. The pure magic of the school itself was like a lover's touch. Harry could almost see the palpitations of the magical melody.

“Harry,” a voice suddenly purred. “You're looking better lately. How have you been?”

The boy was dressed in Ravenclaw robes, and had dirty blonde hair and hazel eyes but an otherwise
plain looking face. Harry thought he might know the boy in passing and then recalled the boy was one of his old students from DA. Off to the side was another boy who reminded Harry vaguely of someone. He was tall, almost lanky with dark hair and eyes. The DA member waved the other off, leaving him and Harry alone.

“Hey Chris,” Harry said, hoping he had the DA student's name right.

Chris beamed brilliantly. “Where are you going? Want to hang out? last time I asked you were too busy trying to hex Malfoy. I believe in the end you made him a slug.”

Harry grinned at the memory but was forced to deny the Ravenclaw's offer. “I can't, promised Hermione I'd help her with something,” Harry lied smoothly, while drawing up his most remorseful face he was able to fake.

“Ah,” Chris murmured looking completely crestfallen, then he perked up. “Later, perhaps?” He suggested eagerly.

“I'm not sure how long we'll be,” Harry countered with a shrug.

Giving up momentarily Chris waved him off. “Ok fine. Another day when you're not so busy,” he said.

Harry couldn't escape the other boy fast enough.

“Oi mate, where have you been?” Ron called from his seat once Harry entered the Gryffindor common room. It was full of people chattering away to their friends about their school holidays. Everything came to a standstill at Ron's exclamation.

“Studying. You know,” Harry said carefully.

“Studying? You?” Seamus chortled, and gave Harry a companionable clap on the shoulder as he smiled brightly at the boy. “I don't believe it.

“What's so hard to believe?” Hermione, who was seated across from Ron, rose her eyes to meet Harry's. “Have any luck?” She asked quickly latching on to what Harry was really talking about, as he had informed both his friends about trying to achieve his animagus form. “Come on, I need your notes to compare them with mine. Ron, yours too. You have attempted it, right?’ She asked threateningly.

“Right,” Ron nodded, clearly not entirely sure what he was agreeing to.

“What's this?” Katie Bell asked, frowning at the trio thoughtfully. “You've got an assignment already?”

“It's a follow on from the end of last year,” Hermione said. “Extra credit. Harry and Ron are just helping me with some aspects of it. Unfortunately I can't do it alone.” She grimaced convincingly and shot a disgruntled look at both Harry and Ron.

“Can we get this over with?” Harry muttered in annoyance. “The sooner this is done the better. Hey Ron want to go out flying later?”

“Sure,” Ron agreed and followed his two friends up into Harry's new dorm, which was warded and silenced carefully.

Turning to Harry sharply, Hermione demanded, “Now. You've made progress then? How far are
“Not far. I can almost make it and keep it for about a minute before I have to let it go.”

Hermione nodded briskly. “It shouldn't be too long now, Harry. Keep at it. All you have to do is practise.”

“Practise,” Harry nodded dejectedly. “Great.”

It wasn't until the Thursday evening that Harry was summoned to Dumbledore's office for the first time that year, which was something given the man usually did so on the second day at the very latest. But no, he had waited for five days and it left Harry feeling more than mildly uneasy.

He also felt incredibly guilty having trashed the old man's office at the end of last year and wasn't sure how he'd be received by the older wizard. He was fairly certain the reception would be a warm one, but he couldn't be sure.

After much thought and many tears, Harry had come to the conclusion that Sirius' death could only be blamed partly on Dumbledore and that a fair share of it remained with Harry himself and even Sirius for being there to die. It didn't lessen the pain of having lost him though, only time could do that and many distractions to keep his mind busy.

So far, Harry didn't have to worry about the lack of distractions.

The journey to Dumbledore's office was the usual, a gradual trek to the statue of a gargoyle which kept the spiral staircase and the Professor's sweet fetish providing an interesting list of passwords.

“Care for a slug, Harry?” Dumbledore asked upon the boy's arrival and offered a platter of large, sugar coated jellies that resembled and moved about like slugs. If slightly frosted slugs.

“No thanks, Professor,” Harry replied courteously, while he eyed the moving candy.

“I think you know why you've been called here, Harry,” Dumbledore began as he placed the slug covered platter back upon his desk. Fixing Harry with a kind smile he continued. “I have to ask you how you're feeling about this whole situation.”

Bemused, Harry answered, “Fine.”

Dumbledore nodded. “You are probably wondering why I never came looking for you during the holidays, correct?”

The thought had crossed Harry's mind more times than he could count, sure. Before he had been informed that Demetrius was going to speak with Dumbledore, that was.

He nodded.

“That is because I already knew of the situation before your uncle even informed me of it. Do you recall giving your aunt Petunia this?” Harry nodded slowly as he caught sight of the familiar parchment he had written earlier and given to his aunt in case Demetrius had been a fraud. But she had sent it anyway?

“Your aunt was concerned about how fast you and Mr Nikolai bonded. She assumed it was a spell and sent this to me immediately. I was able to determine the authenticity of both your letter, as well
“As you know,” Dumbledore said, abruptly changing the subject, “I’ve been informed of your status and that you may on occasion need to withdraw from others and be left to yourself. How is your new accommodation to your liking?”

“It’s fine. Really, sir. I assume you also know of my charmed cup?” Harry inquired, speaking about his blood-chalice which filled with blood whenever he needed to drink from it. From what Harry knew, both Blaise and Draco had something like it too.

Dumbledore nodded. “I was informed of it, yes. Have you yet found your other half?”

Harry frowned. “No... I haven't exactly been looking,” he pointed out.

The old man heaved a heavy sigh and looked sadly back at Harry. “That is a shame but I’m sure you'll find whoever it is eventually. Now back to what I called you here for. Amongst other things, it has been brought to my attention that your appearances has caused quite the stir among the students and thought it might be wise to give you this—”

Carefully, Dumbledore withdrew a dull-silver looking charm that resembled a four-leaf clover and was lacquered in green. “It’s a port-key, Harry. Should the need arise all you need to do is call out ‘portus fawkes’ and you’ll be deposited in my office. It must be used carefully though as you don't want others knowing of this information.” He handed the small charm to Harry. “Except those you trust.”

“Thank-you,” Harry murmured, accepting the gift. “And sir, I'm sor—”

“No need my boy,” Dumbledore said with a smile, waving his hand dismissively. “I thought we had quite sorted this matter out earlier.

“A few more things before you go, firstly, Sirius left everything to you in his will and I was just wanting to know whether you would continue allowing the Order to use it as headquarters?”

“Of course, sir,” Harry replied without pause. It wasn't like he wanted a constant reminder of how terribly depressed Sirius became being confined to the house. At least one thing could be said, Sirius died a hero and not in the place he hated most.

Harry felt a sudden overwhelming sadness.

Dumbledore nodded, seeming to understand Harry's thoughts. “All monies and properties have been turned over to you as Sirius' name has been cleared, the ministry released everything. The key has been placed in your personal Gringotts account for whenever you wish to access the Black accounts.

“Secondly, I have decided that you resume Occlumency lessons with me this year. I am aware that in your new state, you will have a natural ability in this, however I fear it may not be enough. I will call upon you for your lessons.

“Now, if you don't mind me, I have a rather annoyed potions master that I must see to.”

Knowing a dismissal when he heard one, Harry got up and left the office, pondering over his newest
addition in charms. He'd attach it to a necklace or something. Something that wouldn't be noticed easily. He wondered what Hermione would say about it. Whether she'd be for or against it. The charm was illegal after all. That much was a given.

Harry carefully pocketed the charm as he descended the steps to Dumbledore's office, ready to be assaulted by Ron and Hermione's questions once he got back to his dorm.

He didn't quite make it however, as he instead collided with a frantic looking Blaise and ended up sprawled over the cold stone floor. Immediately Blaise made sure no one else was around and quickly helped Harry to his feet. “Sorry,” he apologised then muttered quietly, “I'll meet with you in the alcove in half an hour.” Then he hurried away while trying to look unhurried and calm.

It may have worked had Harry not read the spikes of anxiety wafting from his aura and scent.

Resolved to inform his friends about the charm later, Harry drifted toward the library at a sedate pace. Due to the time, close to curfew, it was mostly empty and so Harry had little trouble losing himself in the stacks of books and slipping into his usual isolated alcove, which left him with a large amount of time to consider why Blaise was so panicked and anxious to speak with him.

It could be anything. From plot within Slytherin to do something to him to darker plots involving Voldemort. Or, Merlin forbid, someone out to steal his virtue.

True, none of those sounded particularly appealing.

Then Harry really thought for a moment. What if some intelligent student worked out what he was? It couldn't be so hard. Though from what he read it was more likely that he be a dark Veela but problems arose from that as well. Harry knew it was safer if someone mistook him for a dark Veela, he did have some of their powers after all.

He was considering this when Blaise appeared and plopped down gracelessly in front of him.

“There's a rumour going around Slytherin about your hereditas,” Blaise murmured.

“I had considered that as why you were here.”

“Most think you're a dark Veela or at least, part,” Blaise continued, validating Harry's earlier musings. If this was the case, Harry was safe from anyone possibly coming to the right conclusion, that of him being a vampire, in addition an Angelus and crown prince to boot. “Some claim you to be part Succubus or Incubus.”

“So for the moment my secret is safe.”

“For the moment,” Blaise conceded. He didn't look too relieved.

“Anything else?” Harry prompted, knowing there was something else more important because that rumour wasn't enough to warrant a full out panic attack from the usually cool Slytherin.

“The dark lord has been informed of your changes and has recruited some of the seventh years to report back to him with any information possible. Just, be careful, all right Potter? Oh and don't accept anything to eat or drink unless you trust the person or know it's source, Malfoy and I've been intercepting different plans to get you into bed.

“I would also advise, having a friend with you at all times.”

“Thanks for the warning,” Harry murmured and rolled his eyes. “Is that all?”
“No,” Blaise answered slowly. “I have something else I need to tell you and I'm not sure whether we should inform Malfoy or just let everything pan out.”

“Yes?” Harry said, gesturing for the Slytherin to proceed.

“I received this from his majesty,” he pulled out a parchment, it's seal broken but still recognisable as the Malfoy coat of arms. “It's about his least favourite nephew running away and the likelihood of him turning up at Hogwarts. One of the potions was missing, so Dumbledore won't be able to pick him up,” Blaise explained, he passed the letter to Harry but the Gryffindor didn't read it.

Closing his eyes, Harry groaned.

The potion Blaise referred to masked the traces of vampirism. It was incredibly hard to come by. Requiring many highly illegal and expensive ingredients and if made wrong could be fatal to a vampire.

This wasn't good.

“So Malfoy doesn't know?” Harry needed to confirm.

“No. Not yet anyway. I assume I was informed to help lessen the shock. Salazar knows Malfoy is going to be extraordinarily pissed,” he stood up and started to pace. “But should I tell him? I wasn't told not to but then nor was I told to.”

This would explain Blaise's earlier unrest.

“What do you think we should do?” Blaise asked turning to Harry. “He is your warder, after all. Maybe if you broke it to him?”

“And inform him what? That his own messenger advised me before himself? I can't imagine he'd be too pleased with you then.” Harry frowned a moment. “In all honesty, he'd likely be very miffed. By the way, does that letter of yours happen to say when we should be expecting his royal disturbance?”

“Next Monday at the very latest,” the other replied, pulling at his hair.

“Lovely,” Harry murmured sarcastically. He looked upward as though asking for some divine intervention. His prayers went unanswered.

Groaning in frustration, Blaise too glared up at the ceiling of the alcove.

“All right, I'm going to tell him,” he muttered. “Wish me luck.”

“Good luck,” Harry smirked. “Do you want me around to help with any possible fall out?” He asked seriously.

“Nah,” Blaise said and waved it away dismissively. “It'll look too obvious.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

Abruptly the library was plunged into darkness.

“Guess that means we missed curfew,” Blaise chortled, he started to make his way to the alcove entrance then stopped and turned back to Harry. “Want me to walk you?”

Harry rolled his eyes and rose from his seat. “It's ok, Zabini,” he said, with an amused expression gracing his angelic features. “It's not too far to Gryffindor tower. Besides I'm not some girl who
needs a keeper for her own protection.” Harry really wished he hadn't said that when he saw Blaise's expression turn smug and knowing. “Well I'm not a girl,” Harry amended, then scowled.

“No you're definitely not a girl but—”

“Don't say it!” Harry cut in sharply. “Not one more word.”

Slowly the pair navigated the library with their acute night vision. It just appeared as though there was a soft bluish light instead of the usual. Harry returned the letter to Blaise's hands.

“Are you sure you won't take up my offer?” Blaise inquired again once they both exited the large chamber. This time he sounded serious and almost concerned.

“I'll be fine, Zabini,” Harry replied and offering a smile turned away towards Gryffindor tower.

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Chapter eight: Two cats and a canine

Harry easily navigated his way through the darkened halls of the school. Following one of his usual paths back to his dorm, conveniently avoiding Filch's usual haunts as well as his demon cat. He was nearly back at the Tower when a noise which seemed entirely out of place was heard.

It was a soft murmuring. Almost like someone singing only to have all of their song then snatched up by the wind and scattered before his ears could hear their words. Even without the words though, Harry could tell it was far from happy.

He paused, head tilted as he strained his hearing and senses further to try and determine exactly what he was hearing. But almost as suddenly as he heard the sounds they vanished and Harry was abruptly struck with a sense of déjà vu, as he recalled something of the same nature back in his second year. He also recalled with painful clarity that even in the wizarding world, to hear voices was a bad thing.

Not something he should ask Hermione about a second time then. Especially since he doubted greatly that there was another large serpent sneaking about the castle through the pipeline.

Warily, the young Prince turned away from where he thought the sounds had originated and strode the final steps forward towards the tower's entrance. After muttering the Gryffindor password to a slightly cranky portrait, he disappeared within his house's safety.

And was immediately accosted by something that resembled brown fluff.

“Harry! Where have you been? You were meant to be back ages ago!” It was Hermione and she sounded relieved but mostly just angry.

Harry pried the girl from him and glanced around her hair to see where his backup was. Ron, it appeared, had nodded off on one of the comfy sofas and was sleeping rather soundly. He let out a soft snore. Hermione glared over at the sleeping redhead, picked up a cushion and walloped him over the head. He woke with a start and muffled exclamation of ‘Harry!’ Which quickly turned into an outraged cry of ‘Hermione!’ when he discovered his missing friend standing before him and a somewhat irate Hermione Granger. “What the bloody hell was that for?”

His question was ignored as the aforementioned female turned back to the new arrival of the room. “What took you so long?” She asked, voice crisp and eerily reminiscent of professor McGonagall.

“The professor had a lot of things to discuss,” Harry replied slowly, partly annoyed but also resigned to his situation. He had foreseen this after all.

He roused his vampire senses to ensure the trio were indeed alone before he motioned his closest friend toward him and withdrew the charm Dumbledore had given him. “A portkey to his office, should an emergency arise,” the sable-haired boy explained, causing both Ron and Hermione's eyes
to widen.

“This must be serious!” Hermione muttered, apparently to herself. “He's made an illegal portkey for you to use and it takes you directly into his office? Is that even safe? I mean, what would happen if that fell into the wrong hands? Hogwarts could be compromised.”

Harry hadn’t actually thought about it like that, he supposed that was rather worrying now it had been pointed out to him. Ron, it appeared, seemed to consider this as well. But if Dumbledore was willing to take that risk, the situation was far more dire than Harry had originally believed.

“He also wants to meet me to have private lessons,” Harry said, “to help with my dreams.”

The intellectual of the three nodded but it was clear she was only partly listening. Obviously her mind was elsewhere. “Your ring, Harry,” she said suddenly, causing both of the room's other occupants to give a start. Hermione turned to the emerald-eyed boy. “Where's the signet ring?”

After a moment's pause, Harry fished the Black family signet ring from it's comfy home deep within his robe pocket and handed it to Hermione. She nodded once and muttered quickly, “I'll be right back.”

Bemused, both Ron and Harry watched her vanish up the stairs to the girl's dorms.

“I stand by what I said all those years before,” Ron muttered. “Bloody mental, that one.”

Harry frowned but didn't say a thing and soon Hermione had returned, a small black velvet case clutched in her hand. “I had hoped to give you this for Christmas this year, but oh well,” she said and for a terrifying few seconds, Harry was scared that she was about to propose to him. But then she turned to Ron. “You'll have to wait for yours,” she said.

The box held a simple silver chain which went shockingly well with the signet ring and charm threaded on it. Hermione gave a smug smile.


Hermione gave the him a disgruntled glare. “I figured Harry would suit this better,” she shrugged. “Doesn't matter, I'm just glad it came in handy. It's lightly charmed so it won't be easy to break but that doesn't mean that it won't,” the girl warned sternly, patting the two small objects now hanging from Harry's neck.

“Thanks, Hermione,” Harry murmured, a small smile gracing his lips.

She gave a nod and dragged both boys over to the seats set around the slowly dying embers of the fireplace. “Now, I want to hear everything professor Dumbledore told you.”

And so started a very interesting conversation that lasted well into the night.

--jade.requiem--

Saturday came finally and with it much anticipation on Harry's behalf, having managed to achieve his animal form after agonising hours of practise, he'd finally pulled off the transformation the previous night. As a result he was exhausted the next morning and skipped breakfast, not bothering to emerge from his rooms until sometime after lunch.
Upon entering the great hall for dinner that evening, he found Draco as well as Blaise's eyes locked on his form as though trying to determine what had kept him. He shrugged off their looks and swept over to his house table and was immediately swamped by his fellow house mates—much to his chagrin.

It had taken a full week and much teasing—or flirting as the case most often was—but now his house accepted his changes they guarded his back against the many unwanted advances of other students. Not that many of them didn't want a chance themselves, but he was 'Harry.' *Their* Harry and so the entire house had banded together to protect him from outsiders. It didn't, however, stop them from admiring his other worldly looks or their graphic imaginations from running wild. Nor did this entirely stop the occasional pushy girl from throwing herself bodily at him.

“Harry, what kept you mate?” Seamus asked snagging a plate of steak and offering it to Harry politely. “You missed both breakfast and lunch.”

“Slept in,” Harry answered truthfully as he eyed the rare steak he'd chosen with approval, “then I went and flew a bit with Ron, like I promised. By the way where is Ron and Hermione?” He asked, realising the two were absent from the dinner table. Something had to be wrong for Ron to miss a meal. He went to stand but was pulled back down by Seamus whose touch lingered a little longer than necessary, but Harry let it slide.

“Nothing's wrong,” Neville, who was seated across from Harry, reassured. “Hermione forced Ron to help carry her books for the research she was doing. They shouldn't be too far away.” He offered Harry an uncertain smile, the Angelus responded in kind.

As if on que, the pair came through the doors, Ron almost running while Hermione strolled sedately behind, a fond sort of smile adorning her face. They both squeezed into a space on either side of Harry, much to the disappointment and numerous muttering of other house mates.

“Hey mate,” Ron greeted cheerfully as he loaded his plate.

“Hey,” Harry answered, eying his friends askance. Hermione, catching the look shook her head and motioned for Harry to go back to his own dinner. He was starving having eaten nothing but a chocolate frog the entire day, so he happily complied.

Dinner continued in its usual way, with of the clinks of cutlery on china and small conversations around each table. Harry was dragged into many such conversations at his own and tried to answer as best he could given his mouth was usually full. Then came dessert, berry-cheese cake, chocolate éclairs and ice cream. Harry helped himself to a large portion and went on to devour it all slowly, until it came to his attention that he felt a strong surge of irritation that didn't belong to him and glanced up to see various people watching him eat.

He wasn't the only one having the problem though, apparently so was Draco and Blaise. Though the latter was either ignoring it or oblivious and Draco was too busy glaring alternatively at Pansy Parkinson and Seamus. The entire situation was too ridiculous to comprehend, as well as a little eerie.

There was absolute silence.

Harry glanced over at Hermione and Ron, both of whom were looking at him as well. Ron with a bewildered expression and Hermione expectantly. Harry was under the impression he had missed something vital.

Slowly, he lowered his spoon. “What?”
Whatever spell had been cast dispersed and most went back to eating their own pudding, except the few curious students nearby who wanted to listen in on the impending conversation but they too turned away under Hermione's threatening glare.

After a few moments she sighed and shook her head. “It's nothing Harry.”

The boy arched a brow at her in almost perfect imitation of Draco. Hermione peered back at Harry with an odd expression. “You know, Harry,” the girl said lowly. “If I didn't know any better, I'd say that you got that look from Malfoy.”

Harry very nearly choked. Luckily for him, he didn't have anything in his mouth to choke on. Even so, he spluttered indignantly—at least he hoped it looked like indignant spluttering because in all honesty he was rather worried that Hermione already had enough leads to connect the dots and produce the right picture.

“I did not pull a Malfoy expression!” Harry hissed, having gotten the spluttering under control. “I've just been around my uncle too long.”

_That's right, lead her astray_, Harry thought hoping it worked.

Hermione's countenance turned pensive. Ron though was staring at Harry oddly as well. “She is right though, Harry,” Ron said slowly. “It did look very reminiscent of Malfoy. It was actually quite creepy.”

Harry shot the boy a betrayed look. One very similar to the one he had mastered for use on his uncle when trying to get out of studying. It never failed to work.

And this one didn't fail either.

“Ah jeez,” Ron muttered and dropped his dessert spoon in his bowl. “No need to look like the world ended. If it makes you feel any better, you suit the expression more than that stupid poncy git Malfoy.”

Harry was torn between laughter and indignation.

He settled for laughter and was just ceasing his chuckles when he became rather self-conscious of the fact that Hermione was studying him carefully. She frowned, opened her mouth to say something then shut it again with a shake of her head.

The Angelus eyed Ron askance but received a shrug from the redhead.

No longer feeling so hungry, Harry played with his dessert. Ron had started back into his but Hermione still appeared to be thinking something over. Harry's own thoughts drifted off from food and towards more important things, such as his animagus form. Or more importantly, not stuffing up and looking like a complete berk.

Having decided that managing to transform once or twice wasn't enough and he needed more practise, Harry stood from the table in preparation to leave. “I'm done for the night,” he declared to his best friends but abruptly had the entire table's eyes locked on his form.

“But you haven't finished!” Romilda Vane, a fourth year exclaimed suddenly, drawing everyone's attention. Ginny glared at her heatedly.

“Maybe he would have continued if people weren't always staring at him,” the fiery haired girl stated. “Merlin, I don't know how he puts up with it all. I know I'd be sick of it all by now. Can't you
leave him alone?”

Harry glanced from one girl to the other confused. That had been furthest from his mind. In fact, his mind had been preoccupied with the thoughts of how his meeting with Draco and Blaise was going to go.

He opened his mouth to intervene.

“What's the matter?” Romilda sneered confidently. “Hate it that you now have competition?”

Ginny's face suddenly flamed and she whipped out her wand, prompting McGonagall to stand from the head table. Romilda wasn't looking so confident anymore, her face had paled dramatically and her eyes had widened but stupidly, she didn't shut her mouth. “Don't think I haven't seen you still lusting after him. Anyone with a set of eyes can see that. Doesn't your boyfriend keep your interest? Not good enough in be–”

Harry's eyes darted to Dean and found the boy looking rather red himself.

“That's enough,” Harry said gaze drifting between the pair warily. He didn't think watching the pair get into a catfight would be the best of ideas, as entertaining as it may have been to observe—he was certain Romilda would be slaughtered by Ginny. It would also lose Gryffindor house points, if Snape's almost eager expression was anything to go on.

Turning back to the warring parties, Harry felt a chill ripple down his spine to find both girls' eyes fixed on him in near utter adoration, if rather vacant.

At a loss for what to do or how to fix this new problem, Harry looked beseechingly at Hermione who took the hint.

“C'mon Ginny,” Harry heard his friend saying to the still dazed red-head. “And Romilda, I suggest you come with me. I'm not against taking points from our house if you do anything that would justify me doing so.”

Then she was shepherding the dark haired girl away and to the opposite end of the table without a problem.

This had to be his enthrallment, Harry concluded. Did that mean he was thirsty again? He'd been advised on numerous occasions to drink from his chalice whenever he was feeling light-headed or felt a headache coming on, otherwise his body would seek out a solution to his problem itself. But he hadn't felt anything. Not a twinge in his head, or anything, well perhaps a little tired still, but that was easily explained away.

When was the last time he had drunk from his cup? Wednesday? Thursday? He wasn't so dependant on the stuff that he had to drink from it everyday. Something that would change until he would only need it every month or so, since his body was sustained on regular food as well as the occasional Piotte to ensure his bloodlust stayed in check.

Trying to figure out why his enthrallment decided to make itself known, Harry slowly made his way toward the Great hall's door. He'd need to ask someone about it and Blaise was always a good source of information for the new born vampire.

“Harry,” Ron said standing up, Hermione was just beginning to return from the other end of the table. Romilda appeared to have roused from the spell Harry had unwillingly woven upon her and was staring fixatedly on her glass of pumpkin juice, her face was bright red with embarrassment and Ginny's expression was no better.
“It's ok, Ron,” Harry reassured, eying the red-head's pudding pointedly. “I know you're not finished and if you both don't mind, I'd rather be by myself for a bit. Stuff to think over, yeah?”

“Right,” Ron said, looking a little unsure.

Wanting to amend what he'd unintentionally inflected, Harry quickly said, “If I'm still up when you get in, we could play a game or two of chess, if you'd like?”

“Yeah,” Ron said, smiling this time.

“Great,” Harry smiled in return, unaware of how devastating it was and it's effects on the everyone watching. He retired to his private room quickly and practised his animagus transformation a few more times to ensure he was able to perform the change when he really needed it. Nothing would be more embarrassing than failing his change in front of Draco. Even if they weren't exactly rivals any longer, they weren't friends either.

Ron and Hermione appeared about an hour or so later, loaded down with books for studying. Well, Hermione started studying, Harry kept his word and had a game of chess with Ron before he decided he wanted to at least have a chance of winning and challenged the red-head to a few games of exploding snap instead.

“That's two games to you one to me. First to three?” Ron asked.

Hermione tsked from her position at Harry's desk and closed the book she was revising. “I'm heading to bed, Ronald you should too. Harry needs his rest. Goodnight boys.”

She disappeared out the door leaving a large pile of books she had brought into the room.

Ron rolled his eyes skyward but stood as well. “Might as well go. We can continue this tomorrow.”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed, having checked his watch and discovered it was twenty to eleven. He waited a few minutes after Ron had left before he grabbed his invisibility cloak and tossed it over himself, warding his room as he slipped out the mirror passage and into the darkened hallway.

Brushing his fingers over the concealed charm and ring hung from his neck, confidently Harry made his way to the whomping willow.

He was on time but both Slytherin's were already waiting and having a conversation quietly between them. Well mostly it sounded like an argument. Harry slipped his cloak off and shrunk it to fit in his pocket comfortably before he revealed himself to the other boys.

“You're late, Potter,” Draco drawled.

“I am not. You're early,” Harry retorted.

“Yes well, now we're all here should we get started?” Blaise enquired, voice shaking a little. His aura was as blank as his face, however his dark eyes shone with an unidentifiable emotion.

“Not here, there is still the possibility someone will see us,” Draco said. Harry nodded, he had been thinking the same thing and only wanted to use the tree as a meeting point. “I think we should used the forbidden forest.”


“Sure,” Blaise said, sounding weary.
“Then it's settled. Lead the way Malfoy,” Harry said and gestured toward Draco. The blonde rolled his eyes but did as was suggested and led the group carefully toward the tree line and into the forest, keeping to the shadows so that no one was able to see them.

“All right, Zabini you're first,” Draco insisted, once the group were safely ensconced in a small twisted thicket not too far in.

“Why me?” Blaise asked. “Why not you or Potter, for that matter?”

“Because I said you. Now do it.”

“Fine,” Blaise muttered resignedly.

The Gryffindor opened his mouth to argue against the blonde boy but snapped his mouth shut with a sharp click of his teeth. It wasn't his place, really, to discuss the workings of how the Invidians did things. He could only lead by example which so far, wasn't working as well as planned but he had hope that Draco would catch on one day. Harry only hoped that when Draco married he didn't treat his wife as badly as he did Blaise, he doubted anyone would put up with that for long.

Perhaps sensing Harry’s eyes on him, Draco glanced over with an arched brow in question. Harry shook his head. “It's nothing,” he said and turned his eyes to Blaise.

Harry watched, transfixed as if someone had pressed fast forward on a video and Blaise dropped back onto all fours rapidly changing shape. Once the Slytherin was complete, Harry strolled around him eagerly taking in the difference.

“Brilliant,” Harry murmured. “But what exactly are you?”

For the most part, Blaise resembled what Harry thought was a wolf. A very large, mottled grey coloured wolf but he was slashed with dense black stripes and had three tails.

“He's a Silexis,” Draco answered as he slowly circled the near mid-waist height creature. “Fiercely loyal, pack animals. The magical equivalent to a wolf.” He stopped when he was directly in front of the wolf. “Change back,” he ordered. Quickly, Blaise complied.

“Interesting form,” Harry observed.

“Thanks. Now who's up next?” Blaise queried. Both Harry and Draco stared at each other before Harry concluded he might as well go second.

Focusing on his animal, on it's wants and it's form, appearance and magic, Harry mentally reached out to accept the creature and surrendered himself to the change. Seemingly slowly, Harry sank to all fours and then blinked his now feline-like almond eyes, then twitched his down cast ears, adjusting them.

A grin broke out on Draco's face as did one on Blaise's. “I should have known you'd be a minx ,” the latter smirked and was rewarded with a clawed leg from Harry.

'Serves you right,' Harry hissed threateningly as his nose was abruptly assaulted by the sweet scent of blood. He didn't want to smell Blaise's blood, it was wrong, even if it was only from a scratch or so. The minx turned away and tried to focus on something else. It was easy enough considering their location.

Blaise cursed quietly and Draco chuckled darkly.
Before Harry could react, Draco was across from him in his own animal form, cautiously approaching Harry. He was a Nixie, that the Gryffindor knew because originally it was thought that his animagus form was that of the fox-like feline, though it had a longer and more pointed muzzle and large pert ears as opposed to Harry's flattened ones. Also, the Nixie's coat wasn't as sleek as Harry's own but slightly more rugged, though it had the same almond shaped eyes and black eye markings as Harry did. The tail too, was far bushier than Harry's and while Harry's coat was that of a creamish-silver with a belly of charcoal, Draco's was a silver-white with charcoal tipped tail.

Harry backed up as Draco proceeded to get closer, Blaise watched the goings on quietly. In one fluid motion Harry leapt up and lodged himself into a nearby tree and proceeded to glare down at the two Slytherins now looking up at him.

“Is Potter scared?” Blaise taunted, though jokingly.

Harry's eyes narrowed further. ‘I'm not scared. It's called caution.’ He instinctively began scanning the immediate area from his vantage point but the forest was too dense to be able to make out that much at a distance.

‘Something you usually lack,’ Draco supplied, having slipped up the tree behind him and was perched watching Harry's tail as it swished back and forth in annoyance. Harry spun around and growling at Draco from his branch, launched himself to the forest floor then up and into Blaise's strong arms, causing the latter to gasp in surprise and stumble a little.

Harry would never admit it, but Draco was kind of scaring him. It wasn't entirely anything to do with their animals, either. Nixies and Minxes were relatively close cousins. Though it wasn't unheard of for the two to get into territorial fights and such, but it generally didn't happen and the two could often co-exist together quite happily.

Now though, Harry felt incredibly uneasy about him. It was kind of like before Quidditch-match jitters but he had noted there was something else swirling around in his stomach unpleasantly. Something he knew by instinct but was unable to fully comprehend. He had a feeling Draco was simply acting on these instincts.

Maybe Draco considered him dinner?

‘How about a little race, Malfoy?’ Harry suggested, trying desperately to push the sick feeling away and completely forgetting that nothing brought out hunting skills more than a good chase.

‘You're on,’ Draco answered in a smug voice.

“You know,” Blaise interrupted the pair, his hands absently stroking Harry's sleek creamy fur, causing the cat to let out an unwilling pur. “I can't understand a word you're saying. You know that, right?”

Draco gave the other Slytherin a look which said, ‘Does it look like I care?’

Slipping from Blaise's arms, Harry sat himself down before Blaise and peered at him expectantly as he tried to ignore Draco, who Harry felt was entirely too close for comfort now he too was out of the tree.

“Do you want me to follow you?” Blaise asked.

Harry rolled his eyes and chanced a glance at Draco. ‘Is he always this slow to catch on?’ He enquired.
‘No,’ Draco purred softly, ‘I think he's being intentionally obtuse.’

‘Would you quit that!’ Harry snapped, having had enough of Draco brushing against his sides for no reason at all. He reared back and took a threatening swipe at the other cat. The nixie gave what could only be interpreted as an evil smirk, but obliged.

“Oh,” Blaise said in sudden understanding. “You want me to change.”

Harry huffed.

‘Think he’ll understand us?’

‘Not likely,’ Draco returned, sounding unconcerned. ‘We’re felines. Cousins. Zabini is an entirely different species of animal. If you haven’t notice, even we sound different to each other but still sound similar enough to be able to communicate.’

‘I should have been a canine,’ Harry muttered sulkily.

‘What was that?’

‘Nothing.’

The pair didn't have to wait long before Blaise dropped to the ground and sniffed at them. He was a little smaller than Draco and only a little bigger than Harry. The fact that both boys were still bigger than him was irritating to Harry but he knew his animagus’ strengths and knew that while they were both bigger and possibly stronger, he was the fastest and most nimble.

‘What did you want to do?’ Blaise asked.

Harry slowly turned and gave Draco a smug, if cattish, smile. ‘Won’t understand, eh? Well there goes your theory.’ He ignored Draco when he started muttering about stupid Gryffindors and some other things that didn't entirely make sense.

There was one thing Draco had got right though, it was their accents. Blaises sounded more like a gravelled bark than an actual tone or accent and Draco's voice had deepened as well and his words more drewled. Harry's own now had the effect of liquid silk or honey. Thick and smooth but with his original boyish lilt still present.

‘We’re going to have a little race,’ Harry said. ‘Ready?’

‘I’m built more for strength and stamina than what you propose to do, Potter,’

‘Quit your whining. Are you in or aren’t you?’ Draco snapped, sounding annoyed.

‘Very well, your highness,’ Blaise murmured. To Harry he said, ‘Potter, next time we go out can we leave him behind?’

‘You can try,’ Draco answered, offering Blaise a menacing look.

‘Sure. Whatever,’ Harry said, not listening to a word the other said. ‘All right. Get set. Go!’

And he was racing through the forests undergrowth, totally uncaring that he may stumble upon something that could possibly kill him. All he felt was his freedom and a strong urge to just run until his legs hurt. Actually, his strongest urge was to skim the tops of the canopy but seeing as this was his first time outdoors in this form, he figured that wasn’t a wise idea.
‘Potter!’ He heard Draco's displeased voice call through the half light. ‘You cheated! Get back here, I want a rematch!’ It was followed by much cursing and a lot of noise. Too much noise.

Abruptly Harry stopped, head cocked to the side and pricking his usually flattened ears out to listen. He realised then that the forest was unnaturally quiet, except for the sounds Draco was making and who he assumed was Blaise lagging somewhere behind in their trail.

Harry lowered himself into the under bush, ears flickering frantically to make out any sound besides that of his companions. Oh how he wished he hadn't come up with the idea for a romp in the middle of the forest. Even if he was a predatory animal, he had only Draco and Blaise as back up and he had lost them. It became apparent to Harry then, that he could hear the noise of something else. Something that wasn't Draco or Blaise and it was gliding closer.

His alarm must have crept through their shared bond because abruptly Draco was silent and Harry wasn't able to hear Blaise either. Harry could roughly sense Draco's direction but their bond was still too new for an exact location.

Then tumbling into the twilight lit forest came an abnormally large wolf. It was mangy and obviously flea ridden and was absolutely rancid. It smelt of old blood and death and insanity and Harry’s Minx instincts drew a clear image. Danger. Almost completely overwhelmed by the feeling, Harry froze up as the beast came closer, sniffing him out.

It was all Harry could do but remain still. He didn't want to alert the thing to his presence nor draw Draco and Blaise into the fight. Harry knew without a doubt that if he were to get into a fight with that, he would be lucky to win. Any other wolf he could easily kill, that wolf however, smelt clever. Almost human in it's scent.

Harry blinked and inwardly groaned at his own stupidity. No wonder the wolf smelt and looked the way it did. The beast was a bloody werewolf, he had forgotten that night was to be a full moon. But surely Draco or Blaise would have known?

His thoughts derailed when he remembered how odd Blaise had been acting when they had met up at the whomping willow and now Harry really reflected on it, he could say that Blaise had been scared. But why hadn't the boy said anything?

His musings were cut short when a low growl erupted from the old werewolf. Thinking irrationally, Harry sprung into the tree faster than the wolf could react. ‘Run!’ He yelled and hoped the other boys would listen. He knew he could escape the wolf and Draco as well but he wasn't entirely certain about Blaise and really wasn't willing to find out. He also didn't want to give too much away in case the wolf understood what he was saying. ‘You guys run! I've got a werewolf on my tail!’

Well more like at the base of his tree, trying to get him down.

‘Where are you?’ Came Draco's voice. He sounded almost frantic.

‘Safe enough,’ Harry answered. ‘You guys go. I'll catch up. I can outrun it, I'm not so sure about... your friend.’

‘My friend,’ Draco said, sounding both mildly amused and worried. At least he understood what Harry was getting at, or so Harry hoped. The use of names would give them away if the werewolf were to recall anything after that night. If it understood that was. ‘You do recall that we're immune to them?’
Actually, Harry didn't know that but he wasn't going to inform Draco of that either.

‘That's beside the point,’ Harry replied, glaring and hissing at the werewolf below him. It had progress into hitting the tree, causing it to sway. ‘I want to get away without having to fight or kill it.’

The wolf rose on it's hind legs, bringing it's jaws that much closer to Harry. Still, there was a long way for it to go before it managed to reach him.

‘And if I want to fight and kill it?’

‘Why would you want to fight it? Suicidal tendencies anyone?,’ Harry quipped, feeling as Draco got closer instead of retreating as he had been told. ‘Can't you bloody listen to orders?’

‘Since when have I ever listened to anything you've told me to do?’

‘And you have the audacity to call me a suicidal Gryffindor! What will this make you?’

Draco arrived then, darting up into his own tree, though with less grace than Harry's climb and into a tree that clearly wouldn't hold his weight for very long. Harry could see his nose was twitching with the horrid scent filling his nostrils. 'I see what you mean,' he said. 'This might be a little more difficult than I thought. Unless we want to change back.'

‘And risk our identities possibly being revealed?’ Blaise answered, appearing a little ways off and definitely not in a tree.

‘You idiot!’ Harry yelled horrified, just as the werewolf turned and lunged toward Blaise. The silexis was evidently faster than the other wolf but he was still much smaller and his strength and speed couldn't compete with the other's sheer madness.

Leaping from his tree, Harry darted toward the wolf and latched on to it's thick neck with his claws and tried to get his teeth in an effective choke-hold. Draco was with him, a flash of white trying for a grip beneath the throat.

‘What were you thinking?’ Harry growled around the thick fur and flesh in his mouth. His jaw began to slip so he quickly readjusted his grip.

Blaise looked over at Harry, eyes blazing in the dark light. ‘We're a pack,’ Blaise returned as though this explained everything.

The rabid wolf rolled over, loosening and crushing Harry as it went, in the process Blaise was flung away and hit a tree stump but immediately started forwards and Draco leapt back ready to find another hold. The wolf however, deciding it was better to kill the smallest first, charged forward snapping it's sharp jaws at Harry.

Since Harry was the fastest, he bounded away then back and sunk his claws back into the beasts fur and his teeth into it's tender throat and viciously shook. The wolf snarled angrily and rolled again, managing to get a hold of one of Harry's hind legs.

With a pained yowl, Harry released his own grip and was viciously shaken. Draco abruptly charged from the side, and smacked hard into the wolf's head loosening it's painful hold on Harry, causing the latter to fall to the ground. Blaise growled lowly and leapt on the wolf's back, trying to bring the bigger animal down as well as temporarily distracting it.

‘You all right?’ Draco queried panting. He was clearly more focused on Harry than the wolf they were trying to incapacitate, despite having clawed the large canine across the face resulting in a
surprising amount of blood.

‘Fine.’ Harry replied tersely and leapt back into the fight. He dove beneath and clamped his teeth down on the large beast's throat, fore paws wrapped around the other's neck and savagely trying to snap it. Draco then latched on the wolf's throat and Harry darted forward and tore at the canine's foreleg while Blaise leapt on the back and tried to drag the bigger animal down.

After manoeuvring the large wolf around carefully, the trio pulled the other down and with the satisfying crunch of Draco's teeth through cartilage, finally got in the kill they worked for together.

Harry stumbled away from the corpse and collapsed against a nearby tree. Its roots acting as the prefect cradle to hold the minxes weary form. He was soon joined by Blaise and Draco, although the nixie appeared to be continuously scanning the area as though expecting more werewolves at any moment.

This, Harry decided, would be brilliant for training. Even if he did hurt all over from bites and gashes and having stretched muscles he wasn't aware he had.

‘Well that was...’ Blaise started.

‘Brilliant,’ Draco breathed, looking like the cat who got the cream. The effect however was ruined by the fact his white coat was streaked in blood.

‘Not quite the word I was aiming for.’

Harry, still panting softly, looked over at the lifeless form of the large wolf. He could feel where every cut and bite was. Could smell the heavy scent of blood and death hanging on the air and could practically feel it too. His paw twinged, but it was a distant sort of pain, like the shadows at the edge of vision. He was going to need a long soak after this, he could feel the blood, sweat and drool on his usually beautiful coat.

‘Let's get out of here.’

Not wanting to be around the corpse any longer, Harry dislodged himself from his companions and made his way back toward the school in silence. That was the second being he had killed now and all he could really think about was, 'Thank Merlin it wasn't Malfoy or Zabini.'

Surprisingly, the very thought of losing either felt almost unbearable for the minx. It was like what Blaise had said, they were a pack and despite the fact their pack had only really just formed the bond there was almost rock solid. Quite evident in their teamwork of their shared kill. Like a real pack doing their different jobs to bring down the prey.

‘That was Greyback,’ Draco murmured, walking alongside Harry. Brushing against him with every step. This time Harry didn't mind so much. The feeling of Draco there was actually rather comforting after that ordeal.

Harry froze and turned to Draco. ‘Greyback? As in Fenrir Greyback?’

‘The one and only,’ Draco said softly, staring intently at Harry who nodded slowly. ‘He's a death eater, you know. Joined just this last year.’

This couldn't be a good thing. If Greyback was wandering around just beyond the schools wards, did that mean there were more death eaters just lurking beyond sight or was it a coincidence? Given that Blaise had warned him earlier that week that some seventh years had been recruited, was it possible that Greyback was just the in-between guy, ferrying information back and forth?
Was that even a smart decision on Voldemort’s part? Given Greyback’s history—the little of what Harry knew of it—he would never have given the man such a position or temptation, rather.

There was also the question of how this new lot of information would be received by Voldemort. Would he even care that one of his newer blood thirsty recruits had been killed? Harry doubted it, but still there was a possibility that he would be missed.

Harry wondered how long it would take until Snape was able to inform Dumbledore about the disappearance of the werewolf. If at all. Knowing he himself couldn't say a word unless he wanted to give himself away, Harry could do nothing but wait.

And he hated waiting.

Although, he supposed he could send an anonymous letter addressed to Dumbledore giving directions to the corpse... That may work, if taken seriously and if the body remained where it fell and wasn’t eaten by other animals or taken and destroyed by death eaters. He'd need to considered this a little more.

'I didn’t think your father would share such... confidential information with you,' Harry said after some time.

‘It’s hardly confidential, but he does share as much with me as possible so I can be aware of things at all times. More so now with my new position.’

‘Yes, I can imagine,’ Harry replied and gave a soft huff. He avoided the almost searching look Draco gave him, feeling uncomfortable under the other's stare, the minx turned to try and locate their wayward silexis companion. The canine wasn’t far, just trailing at a discrete distance behind and clearly deep in his own thought, so Harry decided to leave him alone for the time being.

Though to be perfectly honest, Harry was a little concerned. Not about the possibility of more death eaters running about in the forest, not really, but about himself.

He knew that it was in his instinct to be able to kill. That it was in his nature to do so and efficiently but back when they had been trying to bring down Greyback, he hadn't felt the all out need to tear it’s throat. He knew that's what he should do and acted but something about the entire situation just struck him as odd. It could be attributed to that Harry had been in his animagus form, but surely that may have brought yet more instincts into the fray?

Harry wasn't sure, but if his instincts stayed as they were, he didn't think he'd be a particularly good vampire assassin. Not, if some flea-riddled mutt could best him. Even if said, mutt wasn't entirely sane. He frowned. Was that so bad?

‘Er,’ Harry began, considering his words carefully. ‘I’m meant to be a hunter, right? Shouldn't it be an inbuilt skill to be able and want to kill?’

Draco paused while looking him over, then gave a shrug of his furred shoulder. ‘Of course. But you forget you're still little more than a fledgling. You may be considered an adult in our terms and your full power received but you are no more a first-year student just given a wand. Sure you know some things, evident in your fight with Mosiev. Though had he been truly serious when he went into his duel with you, you realise you wouldn’t have stood a chance.’

Harry had actually thought about that and didn't feel too happy having his thoughts on it confirmed by his warder.

‘That will sort itself out in time, however, you won't be able to hunt on your own for a few months
yet. Once that kicks in, you'll be off and trying to ditch us. That's the only reason I allow him – 'here
Draco gestured vaguely toward Blaise with his pointed muzzle, 'to accompany us. Even though I'm
more experienced and stronger, he went through his change some months before mine and can
control his urges.'

Harry nodded to the other as he resumed his pace, absorbing the information and oblivious to Draco
regarding him oddly. ‘That makes sense, I suppose. I was told that the change happens in stages.’

‘It does,’ Draco responded, sounding mildly annoyed. ‘The first stage for... your kind is that of the
initial transformation. Even properly born members of your clan go through this. Next is the
development of your wings, followed by your blood lust. Once those have settled, you'll start
developing your actual instincts. Slowly your human emotions and such will dim until you view
things solely in the way ...your kind would.’

Harry nodded as he listened carefully. He'd suspected as much but couldn't understand why exactly
it was taking so long for his instincts to kick in, considering he had pretty much rushed through the
other stages. Then he thought of something which had been bothering him. Draco's change seemed
to have happened before the end of term or something like that, meaning his birthday was around
that time which really only gave about a month or two for the other to have developed his powers to
the level they were currently at. Then of course, Harry could be completely wrong.

‘When is your birthday?’

‘Beginning of June,’ Draco replied after a significant pause.

Harry's eyes narrowed, feeling remarkably bitter. ‘And yet you’ve managed to undergo a full
transformation. Physically and instinctually.’ Harry said, reflecting on his earlier thoughts and
appalled at his own inability to harness something that was natural.

‘Ah, but you forget I was raised this way. Coupled with I'm a different... kind. We mature faster than
you. In both body and instinct.’ He sounded almost smug. ‘I assume it dates right back to the
beginning and our duty to your kind. Though, you're certainly faster than most of your kind as well.’

Feeling a little better about the whole thing, Harry nodded his acceptance of the explanation. But that
answer begged another question.

‘How is it you didn't go through your hereditas at school then?’ At least that was what Harry
assumed, unless of course, the Malfoy heir had been swanning around under an elaborate glamour
that Moody couldn't see through. Harry doubted that immensely.

Draco paused, ‘I took a potion that halted my physical change so it would take place over the
holidays.’

‘Lovely welcoming home present,’ Harry murmured, thinking about his own birthday surprise.

‘Quite,’ Draco agreed.

A very small shudder swept through his form. Harry could sympathise with the Slytherin. Even if for
the most part he himself was unaware of what had happened, waking to find yourself almost
swimming in you're own blood was not a pleasant experience. And Harry had done it alone and
wasn't even truly aware of what his body had just done.

The pair continued on in an amicable silence. Each lost in their own thoughts.

‘We should have nicknames,’ Blaise suggested suddenly. ‘Or codenames rather, so no one will know
who we are.'

'I already have one,' Harry replied. 'Herr, er I'm called Blitz.'

Neither Slytherins mentioned Harry's near stuff up. Besides, Harry was almost certain Draco would be infinitely happier if Harry weren't to mention either of his best friends. That thought alone was almost enough to make Harry pause. What did he care if Malfoy didn't like his best friends?

Well, besides the fact he and the blonde got on better when the other two thirds of the Golden trio weren't mentioned at all.

'It's fitting,' Draco conceded after a moment, dragging Harry's thought back to the present. 'You're certainly fast enough. I think I'll go with Ice for myself.'

'Ice?' Harry had to ask. Thinking it all rather cliché.

Blaise gave the equivalent of a canine smirk while rolling his eyes. 'That suits. Now for my name.' After a while of the trio loping leisurely back toward the castle Blaise finally came up with a suitable name. 'Alizé,' he declared proudly.

'Trade wind?' Draco asked, sounding amused.

'Fine,' Blaise muttered, petulantly. 'I'll come up with something else.'

'See that you do.'

'Lykos?' Harry suggested.

Both boys gave Harry a flat stare. 'You want to call me wolf in another language?'

'Well you weren't having any luck,' Harry huffed, giving a feline pout. 'Fine! Come up with you're own name. It was only a suggestion.' He ignored the pair entirely when they snickered at him.

Head held high, Harry sauntered away until, that is, he felt an odd tingle ripple through his body in warning. Blinking the sensation away, he thought he knew what caused it, Harry put on a burst of speed and quickly left his companions trailing far behind.

'Blitz!' Came Draco's highly aggravated voice.

Finding his way back to the thicket they transformed in earlier wasn't hard, as it was filled with their unique scent and Harry clambered back into his usual body, immediately feeling the twinges of his injuries when they begin to heal up. It was while he was studying them that he felt his wand vibrate wildly against the small of his back and bit back some colourful phrases.

Draco and Blaise appeared not a second later and upon seeing him back in human form changed back too.

"Ending out excursion so soon? I had thought you'd want to stretch your legs a bit longer than that," Draco drawled as he leaned up against the nearest tree trunk.

Harry waved the boy away. "I had but it appears I have company awaiting my arrival back in my rooms." He considered who it might be and who would be stupid enough to try and force the door. Only Dumbledore, Harry, Draco and Blaise were aware that there was another door which lead to his room. Not even Ron or Hermione were informed.

As he glanced away, Harry caught the end of Draco's dark look at Blaise.
“How do you know you have guests?” Blaise asked, sounding a touch nervous. His eyes darted to Draco before they fixed on Harry but it was too late, the Gryffindor had already caught the look.

Raising a brow at the boy, Harry answered simply, “Wards.”

“You placed wards on your room?” Blaise pressed almost breathlessly. Harry glanced sideways at Draco to see what he thought of Blaise’s suddenly odd behaviour, but it appeared he was just as genuinely curious.

Bother.

“Well yeah,” Harry replied slowly, he glanced over at Blaise once more. “It’s not exactly a smart idea leaving my room unwarded, what if a teacher wanted me? I assumed Malfoy, that you’d do the same thing.”

Blaise though shook his head. “Everyone knows that once Malfoy’s retired for the night they are to leave him alone. Anyone who even attempted to disturb him would be asking for trouble. It’s practically a death sentence.”

Despite himself, a small smirk formed on Harry’s lips. “I see.”

There was another ripple from his wand and he pulled it from the small of his back to deactivate the warning. He had a moment to glance down at it to see it’s tip glow a soft blue before it vanished and his wand stilled once more.

So, they were trying to get into his room through the common room entrance were they? Harry smiled darkly and turned to bid an almost absent goodnight to his companions.

“Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have some intruders I need to deal with.”

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*Note:*
The whole cliché thing Harry was referring to I’m sure you get as Draco, Slytherin ice prince, as well as his animal form. Nix, is another word for ‘Snow’ in latin. Hence Nix-ie (Snowy) Although, this isn’t a latin word, nivosus and niveus both translate into snowy, I prefer my semi actual word.

Silexis, is another semi-actual word. Silex can translate into flint, rock or hardstone. In my mind a ‘foundation’ of sorts, as well as consistency.

On the actual animagi themselves. I hated that I had to make them magical creatures. I really did but what I envisioned them as simply doesn’t exist in the animal kingdom at present, unless someone starts crossbreeding animals. (The Liger for example is a gorgeous animal—if sterile in the males case.) For the most part, however, my animals aren’t magical, exactly. Excluding the fact that they don’t really exist, they are mostly normal.
Chapter nine: The new ar-rival?

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

Chapter nine: The new ar-rival?

Monday morning dawned with Romilda Vane still sporting Slytherin-green hair with silver streaks. Payback from trying to break into Harry's room. She wasn't the only one with hair the dreadful shades of their rival house's, but she was the only one brave enough to show up for breakfast that morning—stupid, could also apply.

The trio of Ravenclaw's that had been in on the plot were still hiding up in their roost and the lone Hufflepuff in his den. Just desserts for those using Slytherin tactics. Even if the idea was badly planned and executed. A surprise given that most of the group had been Ravenclaws.

Harry's eyes drifted from the house's table to Romilda's face but the girl was pointedly avoiding his gaze. He had to wonder what the hell they had been thinking, although it was quite possible that the lot hadn't thought about the repercussions at all. Though given the threats Blaise had warned him of, whatever the three had planned may very well be linked to Voldemort in some way.

Then again, maybe not.

“I really don't know what possessed them to do something so stupid,” Hermione muttered, under her breath. Obviously Harry heard her, but then he assumed she was speaking so lowly for his benefit.

“I know,” Harry agreed as he sipped his pumpkin juice.

“And being predominantly Ravenclaws you'd expect something a little more, I don't know. Tactful?”

“Wouldn't tact be something a Slytherin would use?” Ron suddenly added.

Both Harry and Hermione blinked at him.

Hermione sighed, after gathering her thoughts said, “Still. I think this would suggest that the ring leader wasn't a Ravenclaw?”

“That or they weren't too fussed about how that got at Harry,” Ron said succinctly and took a bite out of his sausage. Again the other two members of the triad stared at him. “The way I see it, is that they were testing the waters first, to see how well Harry was protected and the next they'll be prepared.”

“There won't be a next time,” Hermione argued. “The password's been changed and Dumbledore's spoken with the fat lady about letting student's from other houses' into our common room.”

Ron shrugged. “There are other ways, Hermione,” he told her seriously. “We all know that.”

Strangely, Ron's words of wisdom caused a chill to run through Harry. And not one of the usual kind. But a sort of morbid eagerness. Much like when he felt that someone had been trying to get into his room on Saturday night. Or was it Sunday morning?
Hermione opened her mouth, looking about to protest but Ron forestalled her.

“Harry's a big boy, Hermione,” he said. “He can look after himself. We both know he can.”

The girl conceded for the moment with a huff and went back reading through her copy of The Daily Prophet. Although it was obvious she was quite bitter about her defeat.

Ron grinned smugly from where he sat at Harry's side, gobbling down what appeared could easily feed three men. The Angelus watched his friend devour the lot and had to wonder where it all went.

The sharp tinkle of a spoon to a goblet caught the entire school's attention and in varied degrees of attentiveness, the student body turned their gaze toward Dumbledore. The old wizard was standing at the head table, glancing around the hall serenely, though it didn't escape Harry's notice that the man didn't seem as tranquil as he was pretending.

For a moment his eyes held Harry's before they swept on to the rest of the student populous.

“I would like to make an announcement. We have a new transfer student joining the Slytherin ranks. If your would welcome Mr Pandarius Torrez.”

The great hall's doors burst open and in sauntered Pan. He didn't look very pleased, though the students had definitely taken an interest in him. The Slytherins were cool in their assessment of their newest member. The Gryffindors appeared disgruntled, though some took a keen interest in the stunning new arrival. He wasn't one of their own, so was fair game and he wasn't Malfoy, who though equally if not more attractive than Pan was Harry's rival and no Gryffindor would consider him twice. The Ravenclaws, appeared to be calculating something in a large group and having come to their conclusion shook their heads and the Hufflepuffs were plainly welcoming.

Pan's gaze swept from the Slytherin table, lingering on both Draco and Blaise before he spotted Harry and promptly made his way over to the Gryffindor table, a smirk fixed firmly to his face. The entire great hall went deathly silent.

Harry wasn't sure what he wanted to do more, hex something or board himself up in his room and not come out. He had forgotten all about Pan's arrival, having more important things to worry about and all. That said though, he would have laughed at the expression on the new Slytherin's face when he lunged for Harry and was greeted with the entirety of Gryffindor glaring, wands drawn and aimed at his heart, but Harry just couldn't muster the energy.

“We meet again my prince,” Pan smirked, his composure regained.

Harry glared at the other.

“You,” he hissed. Aware that they were being observed by everyone in the room, “go sit down, I'll talk with you later.”

“As my prince wishes. Does the Ni–” His words were cut off with Harry's hand clamped firmly over his mouth, having stood to interrupt the snowy-haired boy's words. Harry's glare intensified and he opened his mouth intent on delivering a scathing comment but hastily whipped his hand back when he felt Pan's tongue trailing lazily across it's surface. The young Prince's face coloured in disgust and rapidly growing anger.

Feeling another sharp burst of unadulterated fury, Harry halted any attempted murder that Draco was about to commit with a small flick of his hand. It was amazing Draco had seen the gesture and interpreted it correctly. Then again, Draco would have been trained to recognise small gestures. But
that wasn’t for Harry to reflect on, he had other matters to deal with first. Mainly Pan.

Narrowing his eyes, Harry grabbed Pan by the robes and proceeded to drag him from the room. The latter went willingly and the entire Great hall burst into furious murmurings, all speculating on what had just happened.

Finding the nearest alcove, Harry pushed Pan in and glared up at the other boy. He wanted nothing more than to use Pan's blood to paint the walls, however, Harry was fairly sure killing a fellow student wasn't allowed and was certain that such a deed would get him locked up in Azkaban. So instead Harry reigned in his temper and only fantasised about how pretty Pan's blood would look splattered upon the cold stone walls.

He stopped when he realised how weird that was.

“Are you intentionally trying to get me killed?” Harry asked in a low, eerily calm voice. He didn't wait for an answer but quickly scanned the area to ensure their secrecy. Even after confirming it, he lowered his voice further. “Your people are meant to protect me and the other Angelus. How is that accomplished by revealing what I am to the entire population of Hogwarts? A population slotted with the children of followers of the man who wants me dead the most? What's wrong with you!” As an afterthought Harry added, “What do you have to say for yourself?”

“I did it to get you alone.”

That certainly shut Harry up. He glared.

“Funny,” he spat and began pacing. “You had better hope no one heard much or is able to complete your sentence and piece things together. Do you realise how bad that could be?”

“You're overacting,” Pan remarked. “For most, except really old pure blood families, no one would know what an Invidian or Angelus are. Only the oldest of libraries would contain any books on it, if at all. After the Nikolais went into hiding, it was the Invidians' job to rid the world of any traces we exist...”

Harry digested all this information quickly, intent on getting more answers from Draco or Blaise later on.

“The thing is,” Harry interjected, “You've just revealed yourself as a possible source of information on me to your own house. They hate me, Pan. Meaning, they will find a way to get you to talk. Especially the ones that have ties to a death eater or more.”

Pan shrugged, unconcerned.

“Pan!” Harry growled. Who cared about school rules or that killing another student was grounds for expulsion and a life sentence in Azkaban. He'd hide the body where do one would find it. The Angelus was almost certain no one would miss Pan. Actually, perhaps he'd have an ally in Lucius? He seemed to hate the boy more than Snape loathed Harry.

“Look could we shag already? You're obviously tense and in great need of it.”

“What? No!” Harry exclaimed frustrated and horrified, all thoughts of murder temporarily pushed aside. “If you want someone to shag, pick someone else. As I keep telling everyone, I'm not interested.”

“Really? Could have fooled me,” Pan muttered, sounding unconvinced.
Snarling, Harry grabbed the white-haired boy's tie and dragged him down so his eyes were level with Harry's own blazing emeralds. “This is not a game. I'm serious. If you want to shag someone besides me, go for it. I'm sure they wouldn't turn you down.”

“And if I don't want anyone else?”

“Tough luck,” Harry snapped and stormed back into the great hall, he was vaguely aware of how livid Draco was across from him at his own table but subtly being calmed by Blaise.

Harry couldn't deal with this. He didn't want to deal with it. But hiding from a problem, he knew, wouldn't make it go away any faster if at all. And neither was Pan going to go away, much as Harry wished. Pan would be around for a while. He just knew it.

The room silenced once more as he entered and flung himself into his seat and went back to eating his breakfast. Almost sulkily, Pan wandered in not long after. Shooting many hurt looks in Harry's direction. They went unnoticed however as the fuming Harry was trying to finish off his breakfast with what little remained of his appetite.

His attempt at eating didn't last long at all.

Setting aside his breakfast glumly, Harry glanced at the Slytherin table through his dark fringe, mildly curious as to how Draco was going to handle the situation. Or would that be Blaise who was handling it?

Harry was a little surprised to find Draco's gaze fixed on him while Blaise appeared to be talking a mile an hour in his ear. A quick glance further down the table revealed Pan to be sitting with a growing crowd of Slytherin students, all of whom too were peering at Harry and not in open hostility as was to be expected from them.

This was a new development.

And had the potential to cause him more trouble than it's worth.

“How do you know him Harry?”

“How?”

“Mmm?” He queried, pretending to yawn and not look like he had been watching the Slytherins.

“How do you know that boy?”

Harry subtly made sure no one else was paying attention and sure enough no one was, before he studied his friend's face and realised she was suspicious. Well that wouldn't do. It would lead to a whole lot more trouble and Harry didn't want any more complications than there already were with his current situation. He again cursed the fact Pan had come and quickly threw together what he hoped was a plausible excuse.

“I ran into him before school started. I didn't realise so many wizards from all over the world came to Diagon Alley. I had only thought that, you know, people around here went there but...” It was incredibly misleading and Harry only hoped Hermione accepted it without him having to lie to her outright. “It didn't help that I wasn't wearing a glamour and he's taken a liking to me, it seems and came here.”

It didn't look like Hermione was going to accept the explanation.
“What school is he from?”

“Er, I'm not sure...” Harry answered. Then rather desperate for something to give the girl so she's stop questioning him, reached for the only thing he could think of, “He talks a fair bit. Actually, all he really does is talk.” And broadcast his intentions. We can't forget that.

The girl's eyes narrowed further. “He talks a lot and you don't know which school he came from?” Harry shook his head in response, feeling like he had just walked into a trap and unsure how to free himself.

“Mostly he just asked me questions.”

“Hermione stop interrogating the poor bloke,” Ron interrupted, motioning with a forkful of scrambled egg, sausage and bacon. “Why are you so over protective of him all of a sudden?” His face was curiously blank and Harry watched as some of the contents from Ron's folk fell to the table top.

“I just am and I think you should be a little more concerned for your best friend too!” She glanced around and lowered her head, instinctively the other two of the trio leaned in also. “I just find it odd that Harry meets the boy before school and suddenly this boy is so enamoured that he joins Hogwarts because Harry's here. What else did Harry tell this so-called new friend?” Hermione turned narrowed chocolate eyes on Harry.

Ron shrugged but Hermione continued. “You seem very familiar with each other. Of course I'm concerned. I just don't want to see you get hurt.”

You're too smart for you're own good, Hermione, Harry reflected, knowing what she had really meant by the sentence.

She knew. Maybe not all of it, but enough to know that Pan wasn't just your average exchange student. Possibly enough that Pan wasn't human either but Harry would not deny nor confirm it.

He gave Hermione a wan smile.

The girl returned the smile, though her face still reflected just how wary of the situation she was. Her eyes darted over to Pan for a brief moment before they settled on Harry once more. “I hope you know what you're doing,” she murmured softly.

Worrying about how Ron was taking everything, Harry turned to him. But Ron had returned quite happily to eating his breakfast, pausing only to inquire whether Harry had completed his own, “You gonna finish that, mate?”

“Help yourself,” Harry said pushing his discarded plate towards his friend. He took another sip of his juice.

“You should be eating more, Harry,” Hermione chided, dropping all thought on Pan and instead starting on Harry's lack of eating.

“I don't feel very hungry anymore,” Harry replied honestly, feeling rather out of sorts. And it wasn't just Pan, either. He blinked away the tiny spots that danced across his vision before peering dubiously into his pumpkin juice, which to him had taken on a greenish hue.

He felt... odd.

It wasn't much longer after that that Harry began having trouble keeping himself upright, feeling like
his head was filled with cottonwool and like his limbs were not longer his but under the control of some deranged puppet master. It was abruptly followed by his vision beginning to blur.

With what remained of this disjointed thoughts, and body movements, Harry lurched toward Hermione—who was closer than Ron was—and murmured hoarsely, “My room. Not feeling so good.”

*I shouldn't have gotten out of bed this morning.* Was his last coherent thought.

The hall was in a near uproar as Harry collapsed into Hermione's shoulder and was hauled up and out of the large hall and carried back into his room, not that he was aware. He had already slipped into a near sleep, oblivious to his friend's anxious mutterings.

“I'll go get Madame Pomfrey,” Hermione said, worriedly as she gazed down at Harry's prone form. She was scared for her friend and wasn't sure what to do. Ron was standing to the side, looking more than a little lost. His eyes rose to Hermione's questioningly.

“I'll get Pomfrey,” he said. “You stay here with Harry. If anything happens while I'm gone, you'll be able to help more than I could.”

Nodding her head to Ron, the latter ran from the room.

Though not even a minute later the school's nurse had appeared along with Dumbledore and McGonagall.

“What in heavens name has happened?” Madame Pomfrey asked. “He's a patient he should be in the hospital wi—”

“Now, Poppy,” Dumbledore forestalled the matron's rant, “Harry is more comfortable here. Hopefully this isn't anything too serious. Now I shall leave you to it. You two—” the headmaster said, addressing the two students as Ron appeared in the door once more, “may stay with him until he wakes. I'm sure he'd appreciate that you'd be here upon his waking.”

Even though his tone was kind, his eyes revealed how serious he was.

“Yes, Sir,” Hermione murmured, pointlessly as the old headmaster was already speaking to Gryffindor's head of house in hushed tones. He glanced back once before disappearing out the door with McGonagall in tow.

Hermione conjured a dampened flannel and placed it over Harry's brow as she watched him slip further into what she assumed was a fitful sleep and Madame Pomfrey bustle about the bed, firing off different diagnostic spells.

The prognosis was that Harry had been drugged with some unknown substance that neither Madame Pomfrey nor Professor Snape were able to completely recognise. Which was worrying and also meant Harry could no longer trust his own house mates.

It was a sad day for all of Gryffindor.

-Jade.Requiem-

Harry was annoyed. No, he was beyond annoyed now. He was infuriated and apparently, Draco was feeling the same way.

The Gryffindor couldn't believe one of his house mates had attempted to drug him, stupid idea as it
was doing so at breakfast instead of possibly dinner, which would have made more sense. He was sick and tired of being ogled relentlessly, he wondered how the Invidians tolerated being stared at like some exotic dessert that no one was allowed to touch.

And that wasn't the least of his worries.

Pan was practically his second shadow, following him around like a faithful puppy and scaring off anyone who attempted to even talk with Harry, except Ron and Hermione whom the Slytherin deemed as suitable companions.

If Harry wanted alone time with his friends he'd have to sneak away, as Pan knew where Gryffindor tower was and waited each day at the portrait for Harry to come out and would deliver him back once the day was done. Many people—girls especially—thought it all very cute but Harry felt it more as a blow to his masculinity and hated it passionately. Often Harry had demanded Pan stop, he never listened of course, carrying on as if Harry hadn't ordered him with all the power of his rank to 'cease immediately.' There was also the fact that Pan was dead set on bedding him somehow.

Then there was Draco.

Both Slytherins fought worse than what Harry and Draco had when they were rivals. It hadn't started out that way. Well, it wasn't nearly as bad but after the first Potion's class, in which Snape paired Harry and Pan together, everything seemed to go down hill.

For some reason it was sacrilege to Draco having Harry paired to any other Slytherin besides himself. He didn't state it, exactly, but he expressed it as did a few other serpents but mostly, the house was equally divided and oddly enough, Snape actually sided with Pan, which was the very beginning of what was turning out to be a very bitter feud.

Then there was the whole itching potion incident and the other potion—Harry wasn't sure he even wanted to know what that potion did—but it had made Pan's voice so shrill and girlish no one could stand it.

And now it was inevitable that one of the cousins would end up in the hospital wing whenever they were in close contact, which meant numerous times a day. It had to be stopped.

The entirely worse thing about the whole situation though, had to be Harry's now constant arguments with the prince of Slytherin. The three—prior to Pan's arrival—had been accepting of each other. Even amicable. That too had changed quite drastically and completely severed the newly formed 'pack bond' which also meant that going for a run as Blitz was a very lonely time.

As Pan was constantly being nice, if annoying and following Harry around, so was Draco but he was being a right arse about everything. Harry assumed that the confrontations between him and Draco was some form of compensation, since Pan was being... Pan, Draco was doing his best to be an absolute antagonistic bastard to make up for his cousin's lack of hostility towards Harry—he had to uphold his house's name after all—and if he wasn't fighting with Pan, which was a near constant now, he would be fighting with Harry instead.

At least that was how it worked in public but understandably, Harry was too peeved at Draco in private to listen to a word he usually said and would leave whenever he showed up or would outright ignore him.

It was barely three weeks into school and Harry wanted desperately to kill Draco or Pan and settled everything once and for all.
The only solace from any of the Slytherins was Blaise, who would do his best to keep all three away from each other or distract them with other things. It was times like that that Harry wished with all his heart he had chosen Blaise for his warder—Court approval be damned. If he had, everything would be fine and there wouldn't be a stupid three-way rivalry.

“Potter, get back to work!”

Harry glowered at his potions text as Snape snapped at him.

He'd been partnered with Pan—again, which resulted in more disasters than humanly possible. Pan, for all his talent in potions and being Snape's new pet, could not keep his hands to himself and would grope Harry whenever a chance presented itself causing Harry to either yelp, or spill what ever he was working with. It was for this reason, Harry suspected, that Snape continued to pair them together. Bitter git that he was, that and Harry also assumed that Pan requested to be paired with Harry and being Snape's pet of course he'd get his way. It didn't help, that Draco had become more vindictive and would sabotage his potions more often than not, too.

“C'mon Harry,” Pan cajoled as he set about slicing up what appeared to be a dead grindylow. “Being my potions partner isn't all that bad, surely?”

“It wouldn't be if you paid more attention to your potion than me,” Harry ground out.

Gently removing the velvet petals from the wild ebony rose he held, Harry sprinkled them into the softly simmering mixture before him. The potion was a pale lavender colour, and for once, smelt rather nice. He cast a sidelong glance at his partner—it wasn't meant to be that colour.

“But I like paying attention to you. While potions are great, I find you infinitely more interesting,” Pan purred, leaning in close to Harry, hands slipping up and on to his thighs.

“Pan,” the Gryffindor growled in warning and tried to slap the other's hands away.

There was a 'plop' and Harry's leg was released. He turned to find his potion bubbling a now murky white and looking about to blow. He had a moment to glance behind him and glare into the narrowed eyes of Draco before Professor Snape pounced.

“Potter, what is this?” He asked, voice silky.

“Err,” Harry glanced at his partner, hoping for some kind of help.

“Your incompetence, Potter, astounds me,” Snape sneered meanly. “I've asked you to complete a simple healing potion and—”

Nothing more was said as the cauldron chose then to explode, the majority of it splattered on Snape, covering his robe in what could be mistaken as bird crap, the remainder splattered on Harry and Pan's faces and the scent of cherries filled the air, making the usually rather damp smelling room more like Trelawney's with it's fruity aroma.

Harry's nose twitched at the sudden overwhelming fragrance.

“Detention, Potter!” Snape snarled, sporting now wheat coloured robes. “And twenty points from Gryffindor for your incompetence.”

“But—”

“Ten points from Gryffindor for answering back. Clean this mess up immediately and,” he stopped
and gave Harry a nasty sneer, “You are going to remake this potion, fail and I'll see to it that you
don't set foot in my class again. Mr Torrez as I know you are quite capable of making this potion,
you shan't be marked down for your partner's failure.”

“That's not fair!” Harry cried outraged.

“Another ten points from Gryffindor.”

Snape stood before Harry, his penetrating gaze fixed upon him but Harry refused to be baited further
and said nothing more. After a tense few moments the potions master moved away and on to Draco
and Lavender. He nodded in satisfaction and bottled some of the pair's concoction. “Well done, Mr
Malfoy,” he said, avoiding any mention of Lavender. “An exemplary sample as always. Perhaps
next time you should be paired with Mr Potter? Then perhaps his existence in this class wouldn't be
such a waste of air?”

Harry let out a low animalistic growl which earned him Snape's attention. “You have more to add,
Potter?” He inquired snidely.

Unable to help himself, the Angelus felt his anger build to the point where his eyes flashed gold.
Snape's usually nasty expression went blank and he retreated, cloak billowing out behind him. “Get
back to work!” He snapped at the class, as he made his way to the door.

The Gryffindor's grumbled away to themselves at the wrong done to Harry and the unfairness of all,
some were snickering about Snape's robes. A few though, were staring at him oddly. Harry however
was too preoccupied to notice as he was glaring death at Snape's retreating back while he cleaned the
mess of his and Pan's cauldron.

Pan on the other hand, was sitting at his side snickering.

“You could have been more help,” the irate Gryffindor snapped.

The snickering didn't cease. In fact, it increased in volume.

“It's not funny, Pan!” Harry hissed as he looked at his supposed potions partner. His patience now
was almost nonexistent. But the sight his eyes met had them widening.

Oh gods, I'm going to kill Malfoy, that bloody stupid interfering, no good son of a...

“What's the matter Potter?” Draco taunted lowly, so only those close could hear, drawing Harry's
attention. “The look suits you.” He reached out and swiped a finger down the side of the
Gryffindor's face, taking some of the creamy fluid with it and grinned as Harry's face darkened in ire.

Pansy, who was seated on Draco's other side tittered in a air brained fashion.

“The look suits you, Malfoy,” Harry hissed, in his peripheral vision he could see how pale his hair
had become and had to resist the urge to lunge forward and smack the other boy, or strangle him.
Strangling sounded good about now.

“But you look so pretty with blonde hair,” Draco smirked maliciously as he leered.

The nearby Slytherins chortled.

Harry was by now seriously irked. His eyes narrowed until they were mere slits and greatly
resembled jade daggers. “Call me pretty again Malfoy, and I vow the family name dies with you.”
His voice was low and darkly seductive but had a bite to it that no one missed.
“You don't have the guts to kill me Potter,” Draco breathed harshly, leaning closer.

“Who said anything about killing?”

Harry glared at Draco, eyes flashing gold and gave a pointed look down. Then he removed as much of the stuff on his face and flung it at the blonde. Surprisingly, the Slytherin didn't retaliate, though he wasn't feeling at all repentant either.

Harry ignored him for the rest of the week.

Sighing, Harry gazed out at the stars over the Quidditch pitch. He had snuck out of his room via the mirror entrance, one of the only ways he could now avoid Pan. The boy just didn't understand the word ‘No’ or thought if he were persistent enough, he would finally have his way. It wasn't happening. Ever. “Mind if I join you?” Harry didn't even bother turning to the newcomer, the citrus scent betraying his arrival long before a word was spoken. Thankfully, it was the one Slytherin he could actually tolerate at the moment and wasn't wanting to kill. “Not at all,” Harry murmured. “I know you’re stressed—” “That’s stating it mildly,” Harry interjected. “I assume you're out here for the same reason I am?” “More or less,” Blaise acknowledge slowly and seated himself near Harry. “It will settle down, you’ll see. Torrez will grow bored and move on to another conquest and Malfoy will stop verbally trying to tear you apart. Although, he's always been like that, I know lately he's been more... extreme.” “He's a brilliant actor. I'll give him that.” “...He wasn't acting, exactly.” “I know.” Blaise looked over at Harry quizzically but the Gryffindor just shook his head, a tiny smile playing about his lips. At least now Harry knew that the other boy wouldn't lie to him. Or so he hoped. But how far did Zabini's loyalty extend? “It's nothing,” he said after some time had passed, then looked to the Slytherin. “I think we need another place to meet. Pan's almost caught me three times and I think he may be on to me.” “I was thinking along the same lines. But where?” “Remember that room I used last year to teach DA, on the seventh floor?” He waited for the slow nod from Blaise before he continued. “It's known as the room of requirement. We could use it. Come up with a place for our meetings only and we should be fine. It will let you out in different locations if you need to, so we won't have to worry about who we'll run into if they're waiting for us outside.” “Brilliant,” Blaise said. “We could sort that out now, I don't have anything better to do besides avoid Pan and Malfoy.” Blaise chuckled. “Sounds like a plan.” He stood and offered his hand to Harry. The Gryffindor stared long and hard at the proffered appendage before coming to a decision. He accepted the other boy's hand and was pulled to his feet in one fluid motion. “Thanks Blaise,” he said, stretched and started towards the castle but stopped when he realised Blaise wasn't with him. “Blaise?” He questioned, a slight frown forming. Blaise looked like he'd had 'stupefy' cast on him but rapidly his countenance relaxed into it's usual. “You just called me ‘Blaise,’” the Slytherin murmured, seemingly still unable to accept such a thing. “Is that a problem?” Harry inquired carefully. “No. No... it's just.” “You can call me Harry,” the Gryffindor interrupted, seeing the other boy's expression twist strangely. “That's... great. Look can you only call me Blaise in private?” The request was an odd one but Harry understood. “It's not like I'd walk around calling you by your given name in a class full of Slytherins,” Harry stated. Did Blaise really consider him that dense? “No! No, I was meaning like with just you and me?” “Right.” Harry agreed, then tilted his head quizzically as he eyed the Slytherin. “Is there any reason why?” “Just... not yet?” The Angelus' eyes narrowed. “Does this have anything to do with Malfoy?” He asked perpectively. Blaise almost leapt out of his skin. “No,” he answered. Entirely too fast to be believable. And just when Harry thought that Blaise wouldn't lie to him. But then, Blaise had pretty much given away that his problem was something in relation to Draco. “You're an awful liar,” Harry observed. Blaise didn't say anything, just walked passed the Gryffindor forcing Harry to jog to catch up again. Harry wasn't sure if now was a great time to delve further into the mystery of Draco and Blaise's relationship but an opportunity had presented itself and he wasn't willing to miss it. “What is with you and Malfoy?” “I'd
thought you'd have figured that out already, *Harry,*” Blaise said over his shoulder. “If you haven't, well Malfy's been overestimating your intelligence all these years.” He was being defensive, that much was a given but he didn't have to be such a bastard about it. Harry decided he wasn't going to play nice then either. “Do you often have lovers’ spats and take it out on others? Because—” “I'm not gay!” Blaise cried loudly. “Really?” Harry pressed. “I never actually said anything about you being gay.” Though he wasn't sure Blaise meant anything by it but Harry had assumed the boy would defend Draco's as well as his own sexual preference and yet had only defended his own. “It was implied,” Blaise retorted after a moment. “Would that mean Malfy's a pouf?” Harry had no idea where that question had come from but it was too late to retract it. Besides, it wasn’t important whether Draco was gay or not as long as he left Harry alone. “I'm unsure of Malfoy's preference,” Blaise replied stiffly. “Perhaps you should ask him yourself and see what your answer is.” “I imagine I'll end up having bright pink hair and the teeth of a beaver,” Harry replied as Blaise snorted. “Or, he'd drown me in that potion he covered Pan with. You remember the one?” Blaise shuddered violently. “Let's not talk about it.” Harry nodded, though his eyes never strayed from Blaise who was now at his side. He was curious now. More so than he had been before. What had that potion done to Pan? Then something else caught up with his brain. “Wait, you said Malfoy thought I was intelligent?” Blaise's expression took on the look of a deer caught in the headlights. “Any Slytherin with common sense would know you're not thick,” he answered smoothly, having regained his composure. “Malfoy for all his short comings, is far from brainless.” “Thank Merlin, imagine me being bound to Crabbe or Goyle?” The Invidian snickered. Side by side with Blaise, the pair made their way back to the castle but stopped as they reached the doors. “You go in and I'll meet you in a bit.” “Sure,” Blaise agreed easily and slipped through the castle doors. Both met up just in front of the stretch of wall where the room of requirement would appear once willed to. Harry had bumped into only Colin and ordered him to make sure Pan wasn't around. Happily, Colin toddled off to complete his objective set by Harry. The room that welcomed the two was a miniature common room, complete with a large fire place set into the right wall. A large inset bookcase occupied the entire back wall of the room. Thick rugs scattered on the floor as well as sofas, armchairs and ottomans set about the fire. A moderate table was set off to the side of the fire place, and had three chairs sat around it. Harry wondered which of them put that there. The colour scheme was slate greys, white and gold. Harry wondered about that, too. “So this will be our room?” Blaise murmured as he glanced around at everything in fascination. Harry nodded taking in the entire thing then throwing himself unceremoniously onto one of the couches set around the fire place. “One thing I should warn you about,” Harry said, “this room can only be used for one purpose at a time. Meaning if anyone else wants it while we still occupy it, the door will not appear for them. That could be a problem.” Blaise nodded his understanding. “Anyway, as I had...” Harry trailed off, his brows furrowing as he felt Draco through their bond. *Is it my imagination or is he getting closer?* No he was definitely getting closer. But he shouldn’t be considering Harry always kept his end of the bond numbed, while Draco was like that most of the time, he had moments when he'd let his emotions flash through or sometimes he just couldn't control them but generally, he’d always leave the bond open to reveal his location. Harry assumed that was for him to be able to locate Draco easily if the need ever arose. “Blaise,” Harry said as he sat up and glanced over the sofa to the Slytherin. He was still standing, looking mildly bemused. “You didn't run into anyone on your way here did you? A certain Slytherin I'm currently angry at, perhaps?” The Slytherin flushed guiltily. That was all the answer Harry needed. He groaned and sank back into his sofa and threw an arm over his face. “Fine let him in. He won't ever be able to get in here if he doesn't know what he's looking for,” Harry said with a wave of his other arm. Make that all three Slytherins he was now upset with. Though he supposed Blaise was only trying to play peace-maker between warded and charge. Blaise complied and let Draco in the room, his entrance caused the fire crackling happily away to stir at the sudden draft before it settled once more and Draco strolled leisurely into the room, glancing around as he did so. Harry glared up at him from his prone position when the blonde stood near him. “I see you're still angry with me.” The Gryffindor was still angry at the blonde but not nearly as much as he had been earlier that evening and Blaise's slip up had definitely put Harry in better spirits regarding the other
boy, still there were plenty of things Harry was currently peeved at Draco about. Namely his hair, that was a sore spot that Harry was nursing, then of course there were the potion detentions—even if Draco had helped Harry with the healing potion, ensuring he wasn't kicked from the class—Harry was still upset about all the unnecessary detentions and point deductions. The Angelus' eyes narrowed further. “What do you expect? For that stunt you pulled I ended up in detention with Snape, three times. Three times, Malfoy and each time I left I was ambushed by one or more of your bloody house mates. ‘I'm lucky Pan was there or turned up and scared the absolute shite out of them, otherwise I may have given myself away. Not to mention I'm still a bloody blonde! I hate being blonde! I'm not meant to be a blonde!” Harry cried vehemently.

“Do you realise how close I came to going into a blood-rage? This much,” Harry said, demonstrating with his index and thumb, a gap of about a centimetre between the pair. “That's how close the prat came to losing his hand and possibly his head!”

Breathing deeply, Harry closed his eyes again and tried willing away his growing anger. As he had said earlier to Blaise, stress was stating it mildly. He wanted to lash out at something. He wanted so much but most of the time, couldn't make heads or tails of any of it. Harry was angry at Draco for being a prat and at Pan for making Draco worse than what he could usually tolerate. He wondered how Blaise could be so understanding. The boy seemed to have the understanding and patience of an angel, almost. It wasn't normal. When Harry opened his eyes again, Draco was smirking though their bond told Harry he was anything but happy. He was frustrated and furious but there was also a hopefulness in there that just seemed out of place. “That's not a blood-rage,” Draco smiled darkly, “those are your instincts kicking in. Your kind are extremely proud and aren't fond of being handled unless by clan or those you are close to. Soon anyone who touches you that you feel nothing particular for will find out the hard way that it's not wise to even consider it.”

Another thing Harry had not known about and would need to adjust to and he was growing sick and tired of all these 'things.' “Why aren't my uncle and aunty effected by this?”

“Don't you think they've had years to adjust and work on masking it from others. Your kind are mostly solitary, and considering their instincts this is understandable.”

“Am I to assume then, that I consider yourself, Zabini and Pan possible clan members? Seeing as I haven't had any adverse reactions to you lot?”

“Though you won't be able to tell completely until your instincts have reached maturity, you are fine with Zabini and Torrez now because they are Invidians and the partial blood bond shared by our ancestors allow that small connection.”

“What about our bond? And the one I share with all Invidians?”

“We share an actual blood bond, unlike the partial that all Invidians share with the Angelus. The only thing stronger than our blood bond would be a soul bond.”

“A soul bond, as in for soul mates?”

“Wait,” Harry said suddenly, a look of near horror dawning on his face. “This is the reason I was meant to be locked up with my own family members, isn't it? To prevent a bond forming between me and the others I'm around constantly?”

“Yes,” Draco answered with a thoughtful frown. “Though you shouldn't really worry about that. You have your own room now, so you can't possibly bond with your old dorm mates and you're mostly surrounded by large groups of people which would prevent bonds forming... it's hard to explain. The only people you are likely to bond with will be Weasley and Granger, since you're around them a lot.”

“Of course,” Harry nodded, absorbing that information. “We share an actual blood bond, unlike the partial that all Invidians share with the Angelus. The only thing stronger than our blood bond would be a soul bond.”

“Yes,” Draco replied slowly. “How much do you know? I'm beginning to think you weren't told
much at all.” “Well I pretty much have my family history down. I get the generals of my... instincts. I know about blood bonds, obviously. That as vampires we have a soul mate but can survive without them.” The statement caused both Blaise and Draco to flinch, though it went unnoticed by Harry.

“Gensvacare vampires don't have souls,” Blaise interrupted. “So they don't have soul mates.”

“Right,” Harry blinked. “There was something else that I've been wanting to ask for a while but wasn't able to. How does enthrallment work? I've tried looking it up in the books I was given but haven't been able to find anything of use.” Draco gave Harry an perplexed look. “Potter, Angelus don't have enthrallment,” he explained. “Only Invidians and the Gensvacare do.” Harry could almost see how much the blonde loathed the clanless vampires.

“That doesn't make sense...” Harry mused aloud. “I thought—” He wasn't given a chance to finish as Blaise cut in. “The Angelus have never needed enthrallment. From the very beginning, Invidians and Angelus have been linked. An Invidian needed enthrallment to ensure it's prey would submit to being fed on and as back then an Angelus was often bonded to an Invidian in one way or another and they...” Blaise stopped, looking uncomfortable and cast a glance toward Draco. The blonde shook his head in amusement. “The Angelus fed from Invidians, Potter. They didn't need enthrallment because we would go to you willingly. An Angelus didn't drink often, of course,” he said, “and as we now have our charmed cups there is no need for feeding on any others at all except for the feelings being fed from...” “There is nothing more intimate than allowing another to drink from you,” Blaise supplied Harry, upon seeing his questioning glance.

Harry tried not to squirm while recalling the sensations he had been assaulted with when Draco had fed from him during their warder bonding. His face reddened but he managed to still his limbs.

“Tha's not all,” Draco said with a foreboding smirk. “No matter how it started, the pair would end up lovers.” The blonde seemed to be deriving a dark sort of pleasure from Harry's discomfort. Something the Gryffindor greatly disliked.

Perhaps seeing Harry's growing unease, Blaise added, “Unless they found their soul mates. But since we have nothing to worry about, considering we do have our cups there's no need to drink from either Malfoy, myself or Torrez.” “Interesting that you should say that,” the emerald-eyed boy murmured after a few minutes pause. Turning, Harry focused his attention on Blaise. “You don't mind my demonstrating something on you, right? It won't hurt,” Harry quickly reassured when it looked like the boy was about to protest. Blaise nodded slowly, looking betrayed and like a man sentenced to be hung. Harry felt mildly indignant but smiled all the same.

“You say I shouldn't be able to use enthrallment, but what's the effect of enthrallment on our prey?” Harry asked Draco, though he was still watching Blaise.

“We can have them do almost whatever we want. Why?” He leant forward, observing Harry and Blaise. “What are you doing? You do realise that all vampires are immune to another's enthrallment, Potter? Even if by some chance you in fact do have it.” “Watch,” Harry answered simply then stared fixatedly at Blaise, ensuring they had eye contact. “Zabini,” he crooned softly, ensuring he had dropped all shields to his voice and allowed the melodic tone to wash upon the Slytherin full force.

“Stand up and come to me.” As instructed the boy rose and walked smoothly over to Harry, but then he dropped to his knees and placed his head in the Gryffindor's lap before nuzzling him. Harry blanched but quickly ordered Blaise back to his seat and to sleep until he was woken. The Gryffindor glanced back at Draco who had watched the proceedings with narrowed eyes. “Did you catch all of that?” Harry asked. The blonde nodded shortly and leant back in his chair. “That isn't meant to happen,” he conceded. “That was more of an hypnotic allurement than any actual vampiric enthrallment and you shouldn't have been able to get Zabini under any kind of hypnosis at all. Invidians are immune to all kinds of mind manipulations, Imperius included. It shouldn't be possible.” He sounded worried which only left Harry more concerned. “I tried it on Pan this morning and it worked for all of five minutes before he was able to break from it. I don't think Zabini would though, I couldn't feel any struggle from him at all.” “Try it on me.” “What?” Harry blinked. “You can't be serious.” “I am. It's just to see whether I'd be able to break out of your hypnosis.” “Wouldn't you be immune, considering you're blood-bound to me and all. Shouldn't that naturally make you immune to that power of mine?” Harry queried. “It could work the other way too, and make me a mindless zombie,” Draco reasoned. “Fine,” Harry said, rolling his eyes before fixing them on Draco and once again allowing the natural draw of his voice to ensnare the blonde. “Malfoy,” he murmured
softly, and watched as the blonde turned into another Blaise, his grey eyes devoid of intelligence. The sight was actually an upsetting one for Harry. It was disturbing to see his eyes so dull and lifeless, they appeared more like the glass eyes of a doll. Pushing the unsettling thoughts and feelings aside, Harry considered the situation and not wanting a repeated of what Blaise did, ordered something far simpler. “Malfoy, stand up.” Harry tried to see if there was any struggle at all within his spell and found nothing. Just like Blaise, although this nothingness with Draco was different. The blonde stood as Harry ordered. He pondered what he could of the situation, glancing over at the other unconscious Slytherin. Harry was startled from his reverie when he found himself trapped within the arms of Draco and the couch. The blonde had leaned down and had his arms locked on either side of Harry's head and was leaning incredibly close. “Malfoy, go sit by Zabini,” Harry ordered, trying to keep his voice calm and leaning back as far as he could. The order was ignored. “Malfoy go over—” He stopped as Draco's face dropped lower and Harry leaned the other way. He then felt the blonde's lips brush against the side of his neck and screwed his eyes shut. He wanted to push the Slytherin away but at the same didn't want to touch him at all. It was just so wrong. More so that it actually felt pretty good but he wasn't about to let the blonde know that. Harshly, Harry clamped down firmly on their bond. “Malfoy!” Harry growled as the blonde's lips did more than merely brush his neck. He decided then to screw the consequences and pushed the blonde away, though he overestimated the other and ended up knocking him off the couch and onto the carpeted floor, where he ended up sprawled on top of the other boy. “I had no idea you felt this way about me, Potter.” Harry peered down from his half-prone half sitting position and into the sparkling eyes of Draco. “You-you—” Try as he might, no actual words could quite articulate what he was feeling. The blonde rose up with a smirk, still partially trapped beneath Harry and chuckled to himself. “That was too easy,” he said smugly and observed as Harry rapidly removed himself from his lap. Draco then stood and sat back in his chair. Harry ran a hand down his face, certain it was red. He'd get Draco back for that. One day. “That wasn't funny,” Harry said after a long silence, refusing to look Draco in the face. The whole scenario had honestly freaked him out. He had been on the verge of panicking but the most mortifying was that he had enjoyed it a little, too. It certainly felt good... had it not been Malfoy who was the one doing it. Harry's gaze drifted from one Slytherin to the other and noticed the faint pink tinge colouring Draco's cheeks. “Crabbe is an idiot,” the blonde growled, scowling at nothing in particular. “And is unable to follow basic instructions like 'Do. Not. Touch.'” The Angelus heir continued to

Harry was stunned by the overwhelming affection and gratefulness that filled him with that one sentence. Not that he'd been terribly worried but it made him feel all that much better regardless. “So you're immune then.” “Apparently,” the blonde replied, with a shrug of his shoulders. “At least you know that no one would ever be able to influence my actions. Unlike Zabini.” Harry glanced over at the aforementioned upon hearing Draco's harsh tone. Harry had always thought the two had gotten on fairly well, until that first day where Harry's identity was revealed. Then he assumed they were lovers but that didn't appear the case either and Harry just didn't understand Draco's hostility towards the other boy. Against Pan, it was almost understandable, but Blaise? And with recent events Harry had assumed everything had resolved itself between the Invidian Prince and Blaise. Until their little talk out at the Quidditch stands. There had to be something there that he was missing. Determined to see whether he'd be able to coax the information from Blaise without him realising, Harry stood and waved his arm vaguely in Blaise's direction. “Wake up,” he called. “Potter.” Harry returned his gaze to Draco and caught the small vial that was tossed to him automatically. “For your hair,” Draco said as he sunk further into his chair. “You drink it and don't you dare throw that out, because I'm not making another lot and you'll just have to wait until the potion wears off.” Harry gave the vial a dubious look then cast his gaze over to the resting Slytherin. Blaise blinked, slowly adjusting to the events going on around him. He glanced over at Harry and Draco respectively before looking at the small glass container Harry was studying. “So that's what that was,” Blaise said. “I wondered what you were being so secretive about and then when you hexed Crabbe for nearly knocking over your cauldron—again.” He was rambling to himself. Harry's gaze drifted from one Slytherin to the other and noticed the faint pink tinge colouring Draco's cheeks. “Crabbe is an idiot,” the blonde growled, scowling at nothing in particular. “And is unable to follow basic instructions like 'Do. Not. Touch.'” The Angelus heir continued to
examine the glass container warily. He was almost certain he could trust Draco, he was bound to him after all. Still, he wasn't sure trusting the boy entirely was a brilliant idea. True, the Slytherin hadn't done anything too serious to warrant him to be overly cautious but Draco had done a fair amount of things to Harry which was reason enough for him to be sceptical of the blonde's intentions. Then of course there was his uncle and aunt who had absolute faith in both Draco and Lucius. Harry doubted they would allow him to be bound to a potential health threat. Even so, Harry had his reservations. Coming to a rash decision, Harry unstopped the small glass container and downed its contents in one gulp, preparing for the agony that would precede his death. When nothing bad happened, Harry checked to see whether his hair was back to it's usual dense black and found that it was indeed gradually darkening once more. He sighed, grateful to be rid of the pale hair he'd been forced to endure for a week. No matter what everyone who insisted that he looked good as a blonde said, he couldn't help feeling fake with it. The blonde look simply wasn't him. “Thanks, Malfoy,” he murmured with a small smile, surprising not only the blonde but Zabini and himself as well. He'd have to file away the ‘dumbfounded Draco look.’ “You have no idea how much I hated having blonde hair.” Draco shrugged, evidently still thrown by not only the ‘thanks' but the sincere smile it came with. Not that Harry wasn't partially nonplussed himself with his own actions. “Well now our little experimentation is done,” Harry said and walked away from both boys and the couch. “Which reminds me, what happened?” Blaise asked but he was ignored as Draco queried, “Where are you going?” Harry seated himself at the table off to the side and began writing on a parchment that appeared in front of him. “Might as well do something productive while I'm here,” Harry said from his parchment. He grinned as he looked up at the two Slytherins watching him with bewilderment. “Which of you can help me with my Runes homework?”
Chapter ten: Pan's tale

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

The formatting of this site is driving me nuts... but I'm getting used to it. I think this will be the last post for today. I'll do the next four to catch up tomorrow, I think.

Enjoy :)

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Chapter ten: Pan's tale

It was bitterly cold and the darkness so dense, that Harry was unable to see anything else as he continued to fall. But he didn't mind. Even as the rain pelted him with it's icy droplets and as all around began to flash with the occasional streaks of lightning, that danced haphazardly across the sky.

Harry knew it was that dream again. It had been perhaps weeks since he'd last had it and strangely he had felt bereft with it's absence.

The Angelus landed with a minute jolt but didn't stumble, as the junction of roads appeared further into the shadow and this time, Harry could easily define each. One path was smooth and had a light at it's end, while the other was overgrown with thorns and spoke of pain and many trials to come.

The echo's of laughter and tears reverberated from the darkened path while nothing but stillness came from the light. It was easy to determine which path he should choose but before he could decide, a little girl popped into existence. The same girl as before.

She was a little older now, hair the same colour as Draco's though it had darkened and eyes an icy green, just like Pan's. Her expression was one of understanding, though still tinged with longing.

Just as Harry opened his mouth, intent on asking her name, the child smiled sadly, took a step down the ruined path and vanished once again.

“Damn it, Potter!”

The Gryffindor woke with a jolt and immediately narrowed his eyes on Draco, who it appeared, had been the one to wake him. The blonde was standing to the side of the tree that Harry had chosen as his temporary bed, looking a little annoyed but at the same time amused.

“You Gryffindors sleep like the dead,” the blonde muttered, a minute smile playing about his lips.

Harry sighed and sat up, absently taking in the shadows stretching towards the castle and the sun dipping beyond the horizon. “I take it that you've come to return me to the castle,” the dark haired boy stated simply. It was almost inevitably these days, that Harry wasn't able to have simple 'alone' time whilst outside his private room. If he wasn't being pestered by the annoyingly persistent Pan, he was almost being 'mothered' by Draco.

Almost, because Draco wasn't exactly nice in his mothering.
“Oh, very good, Potter,” Draco drawled sarcastically. “Always quick to catch on.”

Again, Harry glared at Draco.

The blonde rolled his eyes. “Come on, will you? We'll miss dinner and I don't know about you, but I'm starving.”

“Oh then why didn't you go and have dinner then?” Harry asked, crossly. He stood up gracefully and began dusting off the debris that had attached itself to his robes, his air nonchalant. “No one was stopping you.”

“I went to dinner but you weren't there, so I came looking for you,” Draco replied evenly, as both started back toward the castle. “As it turns out, where shall I find you? Sleeping beneath a tree next to the lake. I swear, it's a wonder you're still around at all. Given, I don't know, that there is a large amount of students that are hell bent on using that body of yours for devious purposes. Some of those who also work for Voldemort.

“Next time you decide to take a nap, make sure it's not out here, where anyone could have their wicked way with you.”

Harry snorted and rolled his eyes. “Malfoy, I think we've already discovered that such a thing would be almost impossible to achieve.”

“Almost impossible, Potter,” Draco cut in. “Almost still leaves a small margin of possibility and if it's all the same to you, I would rather not risk it. Even with your phenomenally blessed luck for getting out of tight scrapes.”

“Aww, I didn't know you cared Draco.”

Perhaps Harry had gone a step too far in teasing the Slytherin, as said blonde began to flush pink in anger. The emerald-eyed boy decided he should probably head off what impending explosion was about to take place.

“Look lets just go in to eat, all right? I'm actually pretty hungry too.”

Draco looked mutinous. Then the expression bled away into an inquisitive one that Harry wasn't often presented with, it put him a little on edge. “So you come out here whenever you vanish and ditch those pesky Gryffinbores?” Draco asked, conveniently ignoring the dirty look Harry shot his way for the insult to his house.

“If you must know, then yes,” Harry answered curtly. He then reminded himself that Draco had come looking for him to ensure he didn't miss eating dinner, and despite having told Ron and Hermione that he wanted to be left alone for a bit, he was actually disappointed that they hadn't gone in search of him. So really, he should be at least a little more grateful to blonde.

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “Sometimes I also go to the owlery to see how Hedwig is. But usually I sit out here,” he murmured, by away of an apology.

The Slytherin nodded once.

“Do you sleep out here often? I was serious when I said you sleep like the dead. It took me at least five minutes to even get any reaction from you. Anyone could easily capture you and you'd be none the wiser until you woke up, chained in a cell being tortured by my lovely aunt Bella.”

Harry's mood darkened visibly at the mention of Draco's mad aunt but the Gryffindor refused to take
his growing anger out on his warder. “Actually I've become an extremely light sleeper,” he told the
Slytherin. “That was the best sleep I've had in a long time, so I'm not sure why I didn't hear your
approach or when you tried to wake me up.”

But the grey-eyed boy merely shot Harry a smug look.

“What's that look for?” Harry asked with narrowed eyes, as he subtly edged away.

“Nothing you should worry yourself over,” Draco replied soothingly. He arched as brow at the
Gryffindor, clearly noting the growing distance between them and apparently finding it all amusing.

“Well then, would you stop with all the ‘I know something you don't know' looks? They're really
quite creepy,” Harry muttered.

The blonde boy shrugged casually, though the amused expression hadn't faded one bit.

“Do you have time to go for run as Blitz later on?”

“Well, not really,” Harry responded. He kicked a clot of dirt as he passed it and peered up at Draco.
“I've sorta promised Hermione that I'd at least start my essay on the properties of Belladonna and it's
use in protection magic.”

Draco looked incredulous. “Potter, that's due in this week!”

“Hence the starting,” Harry replied, with a shrug. “Maybe tomorrow if I've made a decent start on it
and Hermione doesn't nag me about it.”

The blonde shook his head. “Sure, whatever.” Then he paused a moment as though pondering over
something. “I could help you out a little on your essay. I finished mine last week.”

Harry eyed the other boy suspiciously as he silently thought it over in his head. He didn't have much
to loose at this point. Having had help from Draco and Blaise on more than one occasion when it
came to his homework these days.

He nodded slowly. “That would be great,” Harry acknowledged, “what do you want in exchange?”

“Zabini needs help with Defence,” Draco drawled out smugly, which Harry thought was extremely
odd.

“I had thought you'd have been pretty good at Defence,” Harry said, thinking over the fact that if the
boy was meant to be his warder and was useless at defending, then having Draco bound to him was
a total waste of time. Not to mention that he was meant to be the best the Invidians had to offer.

Draco eyes narrowed. “Our knowledge of Defence is mostly in Offence. To attack first or before
the opponent gets a chance to. What we do know of Defence is limited to the use of advanced and dark
spells. Zabini simply can't grasp the concepts of the more simplified light spells and what we learn in
class is far too simple. Besides, he's not too fond of my teaching technique.”

“Right,” Harry agreed, visualising Draco's ‘teaching techniques'. Oddly enough, or perhaps not,
mostly they consisted of him torturing a cowering Blaise Zabini. “Agreed. I'll help Zabini and you
can help me. Although I'm not sure how I'm going to manage teaching Zabini if a properly qualified
person can't.”

“I don't know about that,” Draco interrupted. He glanced sideways at Harry. “You did very well
with your little student army last year.”
This caused Harry to glower darkly at the Slytherin. “Oh. Yes,” he said. “And if I recall correctly it was you who landed me detentions with that toad of a woman, and her obsession with all things cute and frilly.”

“I was doing my job,” Draco drawled out. “I had to stay on her good side.”

Absently, Harry rubbed at his hand in memory of the blood quill he had been forced to use by the horrible woman. “Yes, I suppose you were.” He glanced to his hand when he realised what he was doing before looking back to the Slytherin. The boy was eying his hand suspiciously, looking like he was about to voice his suspicions.

“I'll meet you guys at the room after dinner then?” Harry asked, quick to end their discussion before Draco wanted answers Harry wasn't willing to give. The pair soon stopped before the doors that lead into the great hall, the Gryffindor looking questioningly at the blonde.

Draco gave a slow nod in acceptance.

“After dinner then but at least try to be on time, Potter,” Harry shot the blonde another dirty look, which again went ignored as the Slytherin continued. “I'll wait here and go in after you,” he said, as he gestured to the doors. “We don't want to look like we've come in together.”

Harry had a retort on the tip of tongue, but opted for peace and swallowed any argument that was all too willing to spew from his mouth. What point was there in arguing over something so trivial as stating the obvious?

With a cool shrug, Harry strolled into the hall. Completely missing the small genuine smile brightening Draco's face.

Days passed and grew into weeks and progressively things got better between Harry, Draco and Blaise. Well, mostly. Outside of class Blaise and Draco would help Harry in anything he needed and in return he offered to tutor Blaise in Defence. In class, Draco would still pick on him, but it wasn't nearly as bad as it had been. Usually, he'd vent on Pan. But presently, the trio were all venting their stresses or rather, allowing their inner animals to run wild.

Harry tumbled over Draco as he tried to pin him and ended up instead sprawled over Eclipse, Blaise in his animagus form. The Gryffindor glared at the nixie who merely returned a smug expression.

‘Let me show you how it's done,’ Draco drawled. Harry prepared himself for the attack and just as Draco pounced danced away gracefully, causing the larger cat to crash into the ground with a dull 'thud' where he stayed for a few moments, having winded himself.

‘Oh yes, Mr know-it-all, doesn't seem to know quite as much as he thought,’ Harry grinned superiorly. Blaise, who sat off to the side chuckled at the two felines' antics. Before the silexis could react, Harry had leapt over and used his head as a spring board and flew into the canopy over head, laughing as he did so.

‘You are going to pay for that Blitz!’ Blaise threatened. It was an empty threat and all three knew it. Especially given the fact that his animagus form was unable to catch Harry up in the tree tops that the minx frequented.

“Blitz!”

The feminine voice rang out through the dark forest and halted all three animagus in their steps. Her
voice was quickly accompanied by a male.

“Blitz! We know you're out here.”

‘Granger and Weasley,’ Blaise commented causing Draco to shoot him a look which declared, ‘Of course, idiot.’

Harry dropped gracefully from his perch high above his two animal companions, glancing in the direction his friends' calls had originated. ‘I wonder what's up. They never come looking for me when I'm exercising Blitz,’ he said.

‘We had best return to school then,’ Draco stated.

‘Don't go in on account of me,’ Harry replied, strolling back towards what the pack had dubbed their ‘den.’ ‘We haven't been out here that long.’

‘I've got to finish my essay for potions anyway,’ Draco responded with a bored air. Blaise, who had caught up with the pair, nodded his head in agreement.

‘That's not due until another week and a bit,’ Harry said, staring at Draco like he was some foreign being and had declared an undying love for Voldemort.

‘This would explain why your essays are absolute rubbish.’

‘Says teacher's pet,’ Harry shot back. ‘Just because I have more important things to worry about than my grades. Who'd have thought, you'd be a bookworm.’ He snickered and danced away when Draco lunged at him half-heartedly.

‘Hold on,’ Harry paused suddenly and glanced over at Draco, feline eyes narrowed suspiciously. ‘How do you know my essays are rubbish?’

‘Professor Snape wouldn't give you low marks if they weren't,’ Draco retorted after only a slight pause. ‘Snape is just a greasy git who should grow up and let past grudges go.’ Harry grumbled. ‘Besides which, that doesn't explain how you know the marks I get for my essays to begin with.’

This time the answer was a little longer in coming. ‘Your indignant expression once you get your essay back is enough of an answer,’ Draco drawled eventually.

‘I do not have a—wait a moment.’ Harry started, staring at Draco in a considering manner. ‘Ice, you are weird,’ the Gryffindor said succinctly and was forced to dodge away as Draco made another attempt to pounce on him and this time, Harry wasn't sure if Draco was joking or not.

‘Keep the play G-rated, guys,’ Blaise warned. ‘We don't want to upset the kiddies.’

‘Admitting that you're still a child, Eclipse?’ Draco questioned lowly. Fixing a smug glare on Blaise.

‘I'm referring to Blitz's pals which are still waiting for him to show up,’ Blaise pointed out calmly, promptly reminding Harry what he was supposed to be doing instead of teasing Draco. He darted
ahead and into their thicket, which now did resemble a den somewhat, since Blaise had dug a large semi tunnel beneath one of the bigger trees and Draco had put up deterrent wards to keep intruders out. Or more importantly, large, man eating spiders.

Once within the pack's den, Harry transformed back into human form, feeling immensely saddened that he hadn't been able to stay as Blitz longer but knowing that whatever he was being called for was far more important.

“Blitz!” Came the call again. Hermione sounded partially annoyed, partly worried.

Harry shot a parting look at his two still animal companions and darted off toward the call. Skirting the edge of the forest, he slipped out and started towards his best friends. “Yeah guys?” The pair of Gryffindors immediately made their way toward him as well.

“Dumbledore wanted to see you,” Hermione said without preamble, once the three were on their way back toward the castle. “I guess it's kind of fortunate that he asked you to see him before dinner.”

“Yeah he sent Collin to fetch you but well, since you were out here and all,” Ron shrugged.

Harry nodded his understanding. “Did he give an exact time?” He asked.

“Well given how long it took to locate you, about 15 minutes,” Hermione replied.

“That's cutting it a little close,” Harry murmured to himself but Ron answered all the same.

“You're telling me mate. For a while there I was worried that we wouldn't find you on time. Hermione here was about to try a summoning charm on you.”

The girl turned a mild pink as Harry's emerald gaze settled on her with an unreadable look.

“It was necessary,” she muttered quickly in defence.

The group were almost inside when Hermione stopped them, her eyes were uneasy as her gaze flickered to beyond her companions and out into the school grounds, causing Harry to look over at what had caught her attention and felt slightly apprehensive when he discovered she was watching Draco.

“I didn't see him out there before,” Hermione muttered. “Did you?”

“No,” Ron answered, his eyes narrowed as he too looked over at the blonde Slytherin. “What d'you suppose he was doing out there?”

“Not sure,” Hermione replied then turned to face Harry. “I think we're going to have to keep an eye on him. Especially if he starts showing up whenever you're out for a run with Blitz.”

Harry nodded, hoping not to give his own thoughts away. “What do you suppose Dumbledore wants?” He asked, wanting to distract his friends.

“Well I had assumed this was going to be one of those lessons,” Hermione said, then frowned. “But then I overheard him talking with Professor Snape about something, he sounded quite worried.”

“I wonder what it could be,” Harry said, though in reality, he wasn't sure he really wanted the answer to his question.

Unsure what to expect exactly, Harry entered the headmaster's office not long after. Snape was there,
attempting to blend into the shadows and looking as irritable as ever but resigned to the fact that Harry would be sharing his air for a while longer yet. This also made Harry wonder whether their discussion was going to being a ‘hereditas-safe’ one, since Harry wasn't sure who exactly knew about his complete change on the school's staff.

Madame Pomfrey, for one, didn't know the full extent of his ‘change’ having only been informed that Harry healed faster than normal wizards. His wings, claws and fangs, while internal didn't show up in any scans. His blood though, that was something else to explain entirely. He was only grateful that that little problem had so far been avoided, otherwise when his blood was tested for the foreign substance which had drugged him, he would have given his secret away.

And then there was Snape.

Snape though, he was another matter altogether. And Harry wasn't sure it would be safe if he knew of Harry's condition, regardless of Dumbledore's trust in the man.

“Harry, my dear boy sit down,” the jovial old headmaster requested and despite his better judgement, Harry did so. In the chair furthest from Snape, understandably. “Malteaser?”

The Gryffindor blinked at the proffered muggle candy but was forced to decline politely. “Er... no thank-you Professor. What was it that you called me here for?” Snape, Harry heard, snorted from his dark corner.

“Ah yes,” Dumbledore started, “aside from your lessons I've called you here because I've heard some rather unsettling things floating about the school.”

Things? He felt suddenly rather wary of these ‘things’ and was almost scared of what was to follow. “Yes?” Harry prompted, leaning forward as though interested.

“This concerns a rather small group of students leaving their dorms after hours and sneaking out of school grounds, while this in itself it not uncommon what they get up to once they leave is a worry. Especially for you, so I'm afraid that I must reinforce the fact that you be in your dorm at curfew and no late night wanderings.”

The old man's sky-blue eyes held none of their usual sparkle. Instead, they were dead serious. Harry knew all this information of course, having heard from Blaise some time ago but if Harry was being warned, did this mean things were far more serious than what they previously were or did this just mean that Dumbledore had decided to inform him of the situation now? Harry was unable to decide but latched onto the idea.

“So he's recruited some of the students. Do you know which ones yet?”

If either Dumbledore or Snape were surprised by Harry's abrupt question, neither let on.

“We have our suspicions,” the oldest wizard replied vaguely.

“But surely,” Harry pressed, his eyes drifted over to where Snape stood stoically off to the side of the room. It was almost as though he was trying to be forgotten. “Surely you have—”

“You've been told all you can be, Potter,” the potions master snapped suddenly.

“Severus,” Dumbledore said mildly, facing the glowering man. He turned back to Harry. “The main reason I summoned you here was to warn you of Fenrir Greyback.”

Harry blinked, having temporarily forgotten about the werewolf. More to the point, having been a
part of killing him. “The werewolf who bit Remus, what about him?”

“He was last seen scouting the forbidden forest for weak points into the school grounds and has gone missing. I'm sure I needn't remind you of the school rules in which to avoid the forest at all costs but it is possible that he may try luring students out to him and thought it wise to warn you ahead of time given your change of heart towards Voldemort's dark creatures.”

It didn't go unnoticed that Dumbledore was being vague about Harry's change, confirming his suspicions that Snape wasn't fully aware of what had happened to him. This was for the best, Harry knew, this way if Voldemort were to ask the potions' professor he could honestly claim not knowing much about it. Even so, how would Harry's hereditas effect anything? Well, how would that affect his actions in regards to a werewolf when his dislike was meant to be for Gensvacare?

Deciding he couldn't get that answer now, Harry slotted the question aside and nodded.

“How is Mister Torrez doing?”

The question was so unexpected that Harry stared for many moments before his thoughts processed the words carefully. “Er fine, I guess. Why, what has he done now?”

“Nothing, Harry. I was merely curious,” Dumbledore assured, his eyes had gained his twinkle back and that in itself made Harry remarkably wary. “If what Severus tells me is correct, and I'm certain it is, it would seem the boy has taken a great liking to you.”

Harry heard Shape mutter something darkly to himself but was unable to catch the words exactly. He had a feeling it wasn't anything pleasant. Anything Snape said about Harry or anything generally link to him never was.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed somewhat nervously. He wasn't exactly liking where this conversation was headed. Nor was he enjoying the scowl Snape had fixed on him.

Dumbledore nodded once. “An interesting boy.”

There was a pregnant pause. One which had Harry wanting to leave rather badly despite his eagerness earlier that year. He had thought having private lessons with someone he looked up to and admired would be brilliant, now however he was beginning to see flaws.

“Er... Professor?”

The headmaster blinked. “Oh, sorry, Harry,” he chuckled to himself.

“My lessons, sir?” Harry asked, his eyes sliding over to Snape who for the most part, had done nothing but scowl in Harry's direction and mutter to himself like a nut job. Why was he even there?

Dumbledore nodded and turned to Snape who glided from the room without a word.

Odd.

Hogwart's old headmaster turned and watched him go, his face held something close to sorrow before the expression was wiped and the usual twinkling in his eyes returned, brightening his face. Harry couldn't help but notice the transition from one to the other. The one which depicted the worn old man who had lived his life and was tired, then the mask he hid behind. Harry had to wonder how long he had suffered to be able to perfect his outward image. What horrors may actually lie in his past.
“Harry, my boy,” Dumbledore smiled, causing Harry to start from his musings. “Your lessons with me will not be for your Occlumency, but something far more important. An adventure, if you will, that I started some years ago and hope to end very soon.

“What do you say about us taking a little trip down memory lane?”¹

“-jade.requiem-

“They're what?”

“Horcruxes,” Hermione murmured in a harsh whisper. “Ron, do keep up.” The girl leaned forward from her seat, which was at Harry's desk. She looked to be trying to process all the information Harry had told them. Then she peered back at Harry, her face paling significantly from it's usual pale olive. “He's immortal?”

“No, not for very much longer,” Harry replied as he sank into his soft bed. “Dumbledore's already well on his way in destroying every last trace of—”

“But how can someone do that?” The girl asked. Harry wasn't sure whether the question was rhetorical or not, so he shrugged.

“Hermione, I wouldn't say the guy's immortal exactly,” Harry tried to reason out and was struggling feebly. “I'd say all he's really done is stretched out his life a little more. Like a cat is meant to have nine...”

“Except you-know-who has six,” Ron supplied helpfully.

Harry nodded in agreement. “Exactly!” Then he frowned. “Well, he only really has two now. His body excluded,” Harry said, quickly going over everything he’d learned that night. And all that remained of the murderer's horcruxes was Nagini and another unknown remnant to one of the four founders. If Nagini was indeed a horcrux and Dumbledore was almost completely certain that she was. Harry was rather impressed by what the old headmaster had achieved in just one summer.

He was fairly sure it outranked even his own.

“And he wants you to join the hunt,” Hermione remarked. Almost blandly.

Harry blinked at her. “Yes,” he replied just as neutral.

The girl nodded once then looked to Ron. The redhead was seated at the foot of Harry's bed, peering between the pair. “This sounds dangerous, Harry,” Hermione murmured with a furrowed brow.

The boy gave her a wry grin. “How's this different from any other year?”

“Cursed artefacts with some madman's soul stuck in them, well I can't say you've dealt with that kind of thing every year, mate,” Ron said thoughtfully. “Although, I suppose second year kind of counts...”

“But Dumbledore has asked Harry to help him.”

“Doesn't that mean that it should be safer?” Ron asked the flustered female of their trio. “He'll be with Dumbledore.”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded, confused with his turn of events, as he had been certain that it would be Hermione who backed up Dumbledore completely and Ron who'd be a little unsure but it was the
reverse. “I thought you'd support Dumbledore on this?”

“I do, Harry,” Hermione was quick to assure. “I'm just still worried about—”

“The ‘unknowns' while dealing with these horcruxes?” Ron queried perceptively. Hermione and Harry both gave Ron an odd look. The redhead flushed. “What?”

Harry shook his head. “It's nothing, Ron.”

Hermione, though was looking at the redhead appraisingly.

“So, who's this Slughorn bloke, then?” Ron asked, oblivious to the witches stare.

“He was the potions teacher before Professor Snape,” Hermione supplied easily. “Brilliant too apparently, with loads of connections to famous people. Though he tended to drop those with any affiliation to dark magic.”

The Angelus stared hard at Hermione. “Do I even need to ask where you got that information from?”

“I think we all know the answer to that one,” Ron replied causing both himself and Harry to snicker to themselves and Hermione to glower darkly.

“You asked a question and I answer it. See if I ever help you again!” She cried hotly and gathering up her books, stalked out the door. Ron was immediately up and running out after her, his voice pleading.

“Oh c'mon Hermione! It was a joke!”

Harry chuckled to himself as he flopped lazily back on his bed. Ron's voice could still be heard faintly through his door, as could Hermione's now. While Harry gazed up into the crimson of his canopy bed, his mind ticked over the hunt he had been asked to join. It derailed a little when the image of an irate Draco popped up and began berating Harry for not informing the him of the assignment.

“Sorry, Malfoy,” Harry said softly, to himself. “But this task is mine, not your's.”

With Ron and Hermione's voice's still echoing throughout his head, Harry allowed his thoughts to carry him slowing into the land of sleep.

*They'd be perfect for each other, if only they'd finally wake up and see what's in plain sight.*

-jade.requiem-

The day had started out as a fairly pleasant one. It may have had something to do with it being a Friday and that he had received a bigger than normal parcel from home that could outrival Draco's own, or quite possibly that the next day was a Hogsmead weekend day. Thus a day filled with fun things to do with his best friends Ron and Hermione, who Harry felt he had been neglecting a tad.

“So did your aunt pack any of those raspberry filled fairy cakes?” Ron asked as he leant over Harry to inspect the package the prince had received.

“Um, yeah,” Harry answered and battered Ron's hands away so he could reach in and pull them out. “I told her you liked those. Which is why she packed twice as many.”

“Your aunt's an angel.” Ron murmured around the small cake, Harry had generously supplied him.
Harry's lip quirked into an almost smirk. “That she is,” he said.

“Harry,” Hermione murmured, capturing his full attention as she brought out a large and beautiful flask. “What's this?”

“Ack!” Harry hissed and snagged the flask from his friend's hands and slipped it back into the box it had been removed from. He glanced around to see who had seen the flask but it appeared only Pan was aware of it. Still, Harry lowered his voice.

“That was a flask of Sanguisé,” he said lowly, his hands still caressing the flask in an absent manner. “A lightly spiced blood drink—Ron!”

But the redhead had already sprayed this pumpkin juice all over his and Harry's breakfast. It was a blessing Harry's rations from home were well charmed to expel any kind of liquid while still in its wrapping.

Ron's ears tinted a slight red. “Sorry mate, but can you give a bit of warning first? I'm still not used to the whole blood thing.”

“Sure,” Harry said with a dismissive wave. “Anyway—wait Ron—Sanguisé is a lightly spiced blood drink and before you ask Hermione, it is different to what my blood-chalice produces, which is just blood though is named Piotte, ‘One does not refer to one's dinner as blood in polite company,’” he quoted his aunt Selene with a smile.

“How did she manage to make you remember all this stuff?” Hermione queried sounding both awed and perplexed. “Especially in so little time when I find it difficult making you study for your exams.”

Harry shrugged his shoulders elegantly. Almost all of his actions were becoming elegant and graceful, Harry suspected that too was an instinct.

“We've got charms first right?” Ron asked, bacon in mouth and another tiny cake in hand.

“Right,” Harry answered and frowned down at the letter he'd received with his parcel. Done in what Harry had come to recognise as his aunt Selene's beautiful and flowing hand, a little over the top in its fanciful loops and such but still a piece of art.

_Our Dearest Harry_, it read,

_We hope this letter finds you and your friends well and content._

_I am quite glad your young friend finds my baking so enjoyable. I daresay I'd like very much to meet him and young Hermione sometime in the near future. They do so sound like a lovely pair and to have been your friend for so long and through so much, they are held in my high regards. I have spoken with your uncle and he has consented most willingly to have them stay with us over Yule, their families willing, of course._

_It has come to your uncle's attention that your attendance of school has caused the large stir I had predicted but we hear things seem to be settling down and that you now have a tutor to help in the areas where you need guidance. It is a shame that we cannot be of much assistance at this point but your current guide seems to be doing well._

_Tell me, is he up to your standards? He is a worldly boy, I suggest going to him if in need of anything at all. I'm sure he would appreciate your openness._

_As for your uncle, he has business elsewhere that takes him across the country, though I know he is_
proud of your rapid progress and as I, is greatly looking forward to your arrival at Yule. It was also announced that we are to have a celebration with all our cousins. It should be quite an interesting affair, I am already looking into the decorations and colour scheme.

Are there any dishes that you would prefer? We are to have an assortment or course, I just want to be sure we do not miss something that you like. You do not need to worry about the treacle tarts however, I added those to the top of the desserts list.

Anyway, I must let you get back to studies now but if you could owl me as soon as possible, I need to give Mairy the list of dishes for her to buy the required items. You know how pedantic she can be when it comes to serving large amounts of people. As amusing as we find it, I think the poor thing suffers.

Be well mon étoile du matin,

Love always, your Aunt and Uncle.

“What's it say?” Ron asked.

“The usual,” Harry replied as his frown deepened. The statement wasn't a lie exactly, it did state the usual but held an undercurrent of disquiet hidden well within the wording. He wasn't sure what was wrong just that something was.

His insides seemed to freeze.

What if his family had been discovered? He knew that they should be safe where they were. Like the Malfoy estate, the lands were unplottable and unless you knew the location and had the wards adjusted to you, there was no way to get in. Nothing short of the fidelius charm itself was any stronger.

But was it enough?

He mulled that over for a moment, until recently, his family had been well hidden and secret for a very long time. Right back to when his great grandfather's great, great grandfather was ruler of the clan, some hundreds of years previous and now with the revealing of Harry as heir, they had possibly been exposed.

If such was the case however, wouldn't they have appeared and whisked him away into hiding—prophecy aside—kept Harry hidden until there was an heir to carry on in his stead once he was gone?

Or perhaps this was merely a subtle warning of a kind?

He reread the letter quickly. All his aunt's letters spoke highly of Draco. He wondered what she saw in him. True, Harry knew the boy was intelligent. It was evident in his grades but his wasn't just as bookish knowledge, it was *worldly* as his aunt had put it.

Harry frowned as he thought about that. From his interpretation of his aunt's words, she had advised seeing Draco, possibly about this letter. Why else would she state so blatantly to go to him for help not long after the passage in which it spoke of the disturbance that Harry caused?

Again it was quite possible that he was reading too much into the situation.
Another possibility snagged his attention at openness. Did Selene know that Harry kept his side of the shared bond between Draco and himself on such a tight leash that Draco felt nothing from Harry at all, little more than a vague direction of his location at any given time?

That too was entirely possible and begged the question how on earth she knew if that was the case. He didn't think Draco would be the type to go crying to Harry's family because Harry refused to let Draco read him like an open book. Then again, he may have complained to his father about the situation which in turn would have gotten back to Harry's own family.

Sighing, Harry carefully folded and pocketed his letter then picked up his package.

“Grab whatever you want now, because I'm going to put the rest in my room,” he said, mostly to Ron.

As suggested, Ron whipped out three more fairy-cakes and a block of Cremes triple cream fudge. Hermione shook her head disapprovingly of the scene and declined Harry's offer for her to take something.

With a shrug, Harry picked up his parcel and headed for the doors to leave the hall. He became instantly aware that he wasn't alone. And wasn't at all surprised by it.

“Don't even try it,” he warned lowly, “I can smell you quite clearly.”

“And I just had a shower,” Pan whined dramatically.

“Which is probably why you smell so strongly,” Harry said even as he passed the other boy and continued on. Idly he wondered if Pan had even eaten anything at breakfast. Just as quickly as the thought came, Harry dismissed it as unimportant and carried on as though Pan wasn't there at all.

“Would you prefer I didn't shower?”

“Not now, Pan,” Harry said, growing steadily more irritated.

Harry heard as the other boy paused in his following but didn't cease his own forward momentum. “Look,” Pan sighed as he jogged to catch up with Harry's long strides. “I'm only out here to ensure you get around safely. My darling cousin is preoccupied at present and let's face it, his little messenger boy? He couldn't fend off a Granny and her walking cane.”

Harry growled, feeling the need to defend the Slytherin from Pan's attack.

Pan quirked a brow. “I know you like him, but really, you know what I said is true. In the event of an attack on you, you'd be trying to protect him not the other way around. So what good it that to you? You need to get over your crush on Zabini and accept the fact he isn't strong enough for you.”

The Gryffindor stopped and spun to face the Slytherin. “I do not have a crush on Zabini!” Harry very nearly screeched. He lowered his voice at the horrifying pitch and fixed a firm and paralysing glare on Pan, who for once looked intimidated. “I do not fancy Zabini in any way. He would be a decent friend, yes but that is all I see him as. Nothing more. Merlin, I'm not even into blokes!”

He was positively horrified by the very thought of him being attracted to Blaise. Not that he had anything against him. He was extremely attractive, Harry had always known that but he was a boy, Blaise was a boy and more importantly he was... Blaise and somehow that just seemed so very wrong to him.

Pan looked doubtful. “Harry. You do fancy Zabini. Even Draconis has noticed that you tend to
favour him more than even him—"

The glare Harry turned on the Invidian was nearly enough to shred flesh, break bone and sear blood. “I'm not in the mood for your jokes,” he said, voice low and harsh.

The Slytherin took a step back. “Scary,” he muttered.

There was a long drawn out pause where neither blinked and finally, Harry turned away. Taking the blonde's silence as acquiescence.

“Still, I'm coming with you,” Pan insisted.

Harry sighed in frustration. He had won a battle but the war was far from over. “Fine,” he said. “I don't know why you're even doing this. I mean, it's nowhere near to curfew yet. So it's not like someone would try anything now. If they had any sense they'd do it at night.”

“And the attempted drugging?”

Heated emeralds were fixed on Pan so fast and furious that Pan took another step back in retreat. Harry mentally noted that he would have to remember how to do that. Getting Pan to backup twice within a five minute time span had to be a record.

“We aren't going to discuss this again,” Harry murmured angrily, not wanting to think about his house's betrayal.

The Slytherin opened his mouth to object but was stopped as Harry's voice lowered further still and adopted the silken quality it often did after he drank blood.

“No Pan.” Was the soft but firm command. “We won't speak of this again.”

Unsurprisingly, Pan obliged and Harry mentally congratulated himself on a job well done. He'd been practicing the voice on Ron and Hermione and occasionally Blaise—if the boy would allow him. Harry hadn't quite mastered it yet, but more often than not his targets had acquiesced to his requests without fighting back. It could also have been that they had been willing participants in the first place. Harry had yet to really try the voice on anyone who wouldn't be willing.

Hermione had named it ‘compulsion’ and had protested against Harry using it on anyone at the beginning, as she saw it as no better than using Imperius. She had warmed up to the idea though when Harry had pointed out that there were limitations to compulsion. Such as the fact that he had to be near his target and that the effects weren't long lasting and that if he managed to get it to work properly they would be Pan-free more often. The down side to this power, of course, was that it often made the target into love-struck zombies—for the duration of the spell anyway.

Warily, Harry eyed the other but seeing that there weren't going to be any further objections continued on his way back to Gryffindor Tower. Pan moved along silently at his side. Anyone who saw them passing would think it the usual, but if they noticed they would see Pan's vacant gaze.

It didn't last for long though, not even seven minutes later and Harry could feel Pan's entire being struggling against Harry's control once more.

A minute later he broke the connection.

“What did you just use on me?” Pan asked, as he glanced about bemused by their location which was some way away from where Harry had put Pan under his compulsion. “What spell was that? I didn't hear you cast anything on me.”
“I don't know what you're talking about,” Harry replied calmly. “I didn't use any spell on you.”

The Invidian looked uncertain and perhaps a little dazed still and Harry found he couldn't control his sudden curiosity. “Pan,” he said, wandering back to his common room with Pan trailing along silently, for once, at his side. “Why are you really here?”

The boy eyed Harry askance. “What do you mean?”

Harry sighed. “You know exactly what I mean. Why are you here? To add me to the list of your conquests? Surely that can't be your only reason for the sudden transfer. Especially after the threat of being declined.”

Harry watched with a sort of satisfaction as Pan winced. Still the larger boy replied with an even voice, full of determination. “He can threaten me with that all he likes. I will not back down from my role as your protector. It's my duty to do so.”

He studiously ignored Harry’s protest of, “It's not your duty!”

“Were it not for Draconis, I'd hold your bond. You know that don't you?” He turned to Harry, eyes filled with a fevered light, bordering almost obsessive. Despite wanting to back away from the Invidian, something in Harry refused that he show fear and his own gaze hardened a fraction. “Draconis is unworthy and only prejudice kept me from claiming my right by your side. Zabini is even further down, why can't you see that?”

Harry felt himself growing angrier by the moment as Pan continued to insult Draco and Blaise. Even if Draco wasn't a friend, he was Harry's warder and they already had the very beginnings of what could become a friendship and Blaise was already secretly Harry's friend anyway. So Pan's insulting them was seriously fraying Harry's nerves.

Still, Harry persevered and forced his anger down. He would get more information out of Pan that way, he reminded himself. Besides, Pan for all his annoying qualities, which were many, he was very observant and could supply insight to things Harry himself may have missed somehow.

“Be careful what you say and where you say it or do you want us being over heard?” Harry warned.

“I don't want us being over heard but I knew we were alone,” Pan replied with a soft smile. “Don't worry my sweet prince, I wouldn't do anything that would have you harmed. Unlike that loser Zabini or the self absorbed cousin of mine.”

“What is with you and your rivalry Malfoy and you have?” Harry asked, somewhat confused by the question that sprung from his mouth of it's own accord. He was fairly certain the cousin's hatred was somewhat exaggerated. Sure, the two fought a lot. Far more than even Draco and Ron did and far more violent but to Harry, it seemed to lack any really spark of hatred. It was more of a dislike, albeit a rather odd one. There was, something about it that Harry just couldn't quite grasp. Even so, he hadn't meant to ask that, even if he had been thinking it.

For a long time Pan didn't speak and Harry just figured he wasn't willing to talk about it, but apparently the Slytherin had just been trying to word it carefully.

“We weren't always like this,” Pan said quietly. “When we were younger we were almost inseparable. The sibling the other always wanted but then school started and he went to Hogwarts and I was sent to Durmstrang—father's last wish.”

“I don't remember you coming in my fourth year,” Harry said with a pensive frown.
“And you wouldn't,” Pan nodded in agreement. “I was kept locked up the entire year. My mother, Uncle Lucy's sister, attempted to kill Draconis during the summer holidays to ensure my place as successor to the throne. Aunt Cissy can't have anymore children, you see. If she couldn't have anymore children and had no heir of their own the throne passes to me once uncle Lucy dies, as I am the closest next blood relation.”

Harry grimaced at Pan's pet name from Lucius, certain the man would have hated being dubbed such a girlish name but what struck him the most, was Pan's willingness to discuss something so intensely private and had to seriously consider whether the boy was telling the truth or whether it was some elaborate lie to make Harry feel sorry for him.

“It didn't work out though. The plot was discovered, my mother was killed for treason and I, unfortunately, was tarred with the same brush. However, my age saved me from her fate exactly but I'm watched carefully and not trusted by anyone. Least of all by uncle and aunt.

“I don't think Draconis really hates me, at least I'm certain that he didn't. Now though, I'm not so sure,” he sighed sounding incredibly tired. “Ah well, that's karma for you. I must have been a very bad person in my past life. That, or I'm the favourite playthings for the fates.”

“Why are you here?” Harry asked again, suddenly.

Pan froze and peered into the Gryffindor's clear green eyes before his own shied away from the intensity of Harry's stare. “I'm needed here,” Pan replied simply. “I like you, I think I've made that rather obvious and I don't want to see you get hurt nor do I want to see Draconis getting killed, which was one of the reasons I wanted to be your warder. Being close to you almost always means death for our kind. Why do you think I am fatherless and King Demetrius without a warder of his own?”

Harry's eyes widened then immediately narrowed. “Your father was my uncle's warder?”

This was beginning to explain so much. If it was indeed truth and not some finely spun lie to snare him in it's web.

“That he was,” Pan smiled sadly and glanced back at Harry, then away once more. “I had hoped to carry on the tradition. You know, follow in my father's footsteps but I should have known I would never get the chance. No one trusts me so why would they allow me such an important task as to being your protector? The reason I'm here is as backup for Draconis, whether he knows it or not he will need me here in the future and hopefully then I'll be able to make amends for past mistakes.”

The statement struck a chord with Harry for some unknown reason. He was almost certain that Pan wasn't merely talking about his mother's past transgressions.

“I still can't believe what mother did, or rather tried to do and I still can't really fathom the reasoning for it. I don't want too either. I assume she believed that what she was doing was done in my best interests and didn't consider the fallout it would have if her plan were to go so horribly wrong. Even so, I still love her. Can you fault me for that?”

He turned to Harry.

The Angelus wasn't sure what he was meant to say to a question like that but found himself answering nonetheless. “No,” Harry answered slowly. “Not at all. I'm sure if she knew all the trouble she caused you and the family she wouldn't have done what she did.”

But Harry wasn't so sure. He didn't know the woman at all and could only base his answer on what
Pan had offered of her which really wasn't much. She could have been an absolute nut job for all he knew but then she could have been a concerned mother only wanting the best for her child.

But to murder her own nephew?

Pan smiled at Harry warmly, though it was still tinged in sadness. “You always seem to believe the best of people. Don't ever change.”

Harry offered Pan a weak smile, knowing full well he didn't believe the best of all people. Snape was a prime example of this. Though, at one point Harry had thought Voldemort was good, although that could all be down to the fact that Harry didn't know Tom was Voldemort, so perhaps that didn't count.

The Angelus considered Pan's words before his musings were disturbed by said Slytherin.

“I wish I was your bonded,” he said again. “That is the main reason for Draconis and me fighting. After my mother's disgrace and before you came, he just ignored me. I believe he is afraid that even with the bond in place I'll somehow take his place. Despite his whole superior act, I think he's really quite insecure but it must be nice for him to be surrounded by your warming presence wherever he goes. It would be calming I imagine.”


The Slytherin laughed. Harry had never heard him laugh before and thought that he should do it more often. He even told the other boy so.

Pan's smile turned into a smirk. “If I did, would you let me shag you?”

“No!” Harry exclaimed.

“Ah well,” Pan murmured and shrugged nonchalantly. “Can't blame me for trying but I guess I'll just have to settle for this then, eh?”

“For wha—”

In hindsight Harry really should have seen it coming.

But his speech was cut off when a hot mouth descended on his own and a tongue slipped into his parted lips, mapping his mouth in quick, talented sweeps. It took a moment for sense to return to Harry's confused mind and he shoved the other boy up against the wall roughly.

“That was all a lie to get me to drop my guard, wasn't it?” Harry fumed, lowly. He still had Pan pinned to the wall and was about beat the snowy-haired boy's head against said wall.

“Was it?” Pan queried, his voice too was low and sultry. He swept down and kissed Harry again, just as quickly as the first but with much more enthusiasm. Just as the Angelus heir was about to punch Pan soundly in the jaw, he was released and turned to the noise that had caught both boys' attention.

There down the other end of the hall was Blaise Zabini, standing transfixed with a sort of horrified expression. It quickly morphed into something else and he turned on his heel quickly and vanished back down the hall.

Pan's next comment pretty much summed everything up.
“Well shit.”

Harry couldn't agree more.

Notes

“What do you say about us taking a little trip down memory lane?”

I didn't want to go into detail on the horcruxes, trying to maintain this story as DH spoiler free as possible and all. It definitely won't contain anything on the hallows, for rather obvious reasons.
Chapter eleven: Embers in the grass

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

Chapter eleven: Embers in the grass

“Blaise!” Harry called after the boy.

Abandoning the snowy-crowned Slytherin, Harry chased after the dark-haired one, in hopes of intercepting him before he recounted everything he had seen to Draco and got it all wrong. Although Pan kind of deserved everything he got, Harry didn't want to be tarnished by Pan's idiocy and he just knew that Draco would take it all the wrong way. It was a given.

“Oh, so it's Blaise now?” Pan's voice echoed down the hall after him.

Harry ignored him and continued his pursuit, but the boy was far faster than Harry gave him credit. The Gryffindor found that the only way he would even have a chance of reaching the other would be to draw on his Angelus' speed, which simply wasn't safe to do. If someone saw him, and they definitely would, word would reach Voldemort of his inhuman speed and another possible advantage was lost.

He tried to focus on his voice. To soften it into that silken tone that could halt Blaise for a moment at least, or so Harry desperately hoped.

“Blaise, wait!”

Unfortunately his voice had taken on a hysterical note which screeched all around the echoing hall, the result of this was having his sensitive ears filled with the creak of glass that was about to shatter.

Further up ahead, Blaise slipped into the Great Hall and Harry deflated. He bit savagely at his lower lip, causing blood to flow into his mouth, only fuelling his anger and despondency further.

Damn it! Harry cursed inwardly. I have to fix this, somehow...

Frustrated, Harry's mind worked a mile a minute trying to figure something out. He had thought Blaise was a friend. While not close like his friendship with Ron and Hermione, nor even quite like that camaraderie that he shared with his old dorm-mates, still, he hadn't expected the boy to run back to Draco the moment something like this happened, to be a tell-tale...

Had or hadn't Blaise accepted their friendship? Or was it just that the Slytherin was trying to curry favour with Draco? Harry wasn't dim and could clearly see that Blaise was wary of Draco. And as the blonde had proved on more than one occasion concerning the darker haired Slytherin, Blaise had every reason to be.

Except in the form of Eclipse, Blaise seemed always to be treading exceedingly thin ice when it came to the Invidian prince. Although, Harry had managed to get him to be more relaxed around Draco, Harry got the sense that there was a thick wall between the two Invidians. A sort of one-way
glass—if Harry could call it that—which kept both boys from the other.

It could be the fact that Draco was the Invidian prince and was not afraid to throw his power around when it came to those under his rule, while Harry was the exact opposite. Still, friendship or dictatorship? That's how Harry viewed the pair's relationship and had to wonder whether Blaise would really throw away a growing friendship in order to gain favour with the more dominating authority figure.

A Slytherin, Blaise was, and ambition one of their renown traits. But where did that play into this skewed dance?

Maybe... Maybe Blaise thought that telling Draco was in Harry's best interests. Inwardly Harry scoffed. How would that work? It would be better if Blaise were to completely drop it, or—if the need to inform Draco was of utmost importance—to be slipped it to him gently... Though Harry knew, that once the blonde was informed of what had transpired he'd likely lose all sense of sanity and kill Pan regardless of location and repercussions. That, was actually a great cause for concern in the Gryffindor's mind.

He knew Draco took his warder bond extremely seriously, to the point in which the blonde could turn almost possessive. It never went too far though. Still, Harry had felt uncomfortable when that side of Draco emerged. More so when he was caught between Pan and Draco, feeling for all the world like the favourite toy of both.

Another thought came to mind.

Was Blaise trying to get rid of Draco? That could be it... Though Harry sorely doubted such a thing.

He sighed dejectedly and strode the final paces back to the Great hall. Opening the doors a little to peek inside the vast chamber, he spied Blaise calmly making his way back to the Slytherin table...

Where Draco stopped him.

Shit.

The two entered into what appeared a somewhat heated debate. All Harry could do was watch on helplessly, praying for anyone to intervene on his behalf and stop whatever was about to happen. His eyes shot from the ivory skinned youth to the bronze toned one, biting his already bloody lip, making it swell more.

Draco was frowning, though not in anger but with a thoughtful expression allowing Blaise to totter away, almost dazedly. Seating himself a few places away from Draco though his eyes rose to meet Harry's knowingly.

The look Blaise granted Harry was far from encouraging and his eyes were dark and unreadable, though the movements of his mouth was easy enough to read and for Harry's eyes alone, “You'll just have to trust me.”

-jade.requiem-

Harry was almost certain Blaise hadn't told Draco a thing about the... event he had happened upon that morning. The Gryffindor however, wasn't certain, how long it was going to stay that way.

It really didn't help matters any when Harry would slip-up with his and Draco's bond and occasionally let Draco feel his turbulent emotions. He was aware of said mistakes whenever a small thread of curiosity would make it's way back to him and or he'd catch Draco peering curiously at
him.

Usually Harry would quickly look away or ignore the fact he could feel the blonde's heavy gaze fixed upon him and would instead continue with what he was doing. He was also well aware of how incredibly guilty he must look.

For the entire morning, Harry was a nervous wreck—his damned Angelus instincts helped nothing when they snuck up on him causing him to do odd things at the weirdest of times. Everyone had to have seen how incredibly jumpy he had become, Snape certainly did and took great pleasure in deducting points for his unsteady hand—as he had apparently ruined his potion because he was unable to slip the caterpillars into the scolding mixture steadily.

It was a stupid reason for point deduction, but then when had Snape ever been a fair man to any Gryffindor, let alone Harry? Never. Although, for once Harry was spared Pan's company and worked as far away from the snowy-haired boy as was possible. This though, only put him closer to Draco who was seated near the back of the class. Both a curse and a blessing all wrapped in one package.

After being snapped at by Snape, Harry slunk away to clear his 'ruined' potion from his cauldron and used the distraction that was Theodore Nott's cauldron exploding, to slip Draco a note to meet him. Blaise was a little more difficult to get, as he had hidden himself in the corner farthest from both cousins but Harry eventually snuck the boy a note and prayed that he would at least meet Harry and not incinerate the note once out of his presence.

Of course the meeting requests were both separate times and places.

First Harry had to make sure Blaise didn't tell Draco, or if he did, that he at least got the story right and gave Harry enough time to warn Pan to go into hiding. As annoying as the icy-green eyed boy was, and as much as Harry really wanted to hurt him sometimes, he had helped Harry out of some rather interesting predicaments the past few months. This, in Harry's eyes allowed Pan at the very least, a head start before Draco slaughtered him. Harry thought it only fair.

After speaking with Blaise—and hoping all went well, or nicely enough—Harry had to see Draco about the letter he received that morning and hope the blonde was able to decipher it further or inform him that he was an idiot and reading far too much into the situation.

As degrading as that thought was, it was far better than the alternative.

The Angelus pondered over that a moment as he recalled Draco's reaction to receiving his message.

The blonde Slytherin had taken the note carefully and pocketed it to read at a better time and location. Though he appeared nonchalant on the outside, Harry had felt the flashes of intrigue and confusion along their bond. He was evidently wondering why the message wasn't passed along by Blaise as was usual.

For the rest of the lesson Harry was forced to sit and endure both boys staring surreptitiously at him. He was the first to vanish out the door when the bell released them from Potions for the day and after informing both of his friends about how unwell he felt, locked himself in his room until supper rolled around.

Disappointingly, his nerves hadn't settled one whit. If at all. Most importantly, neither had the near uncontrollable urge to stay away from everyone else.

Dinner that evening was absolute hell. Whenever someone touched him, he'd start shaking violently
or hiss at the offending person. He knew none of this went unnoticed by his warden either, who had been observing him intently since he'd received Harry's note. The only upside to dinner, was that Blaise had seated himself a great distance away from Draco and didn't look inclined to go anywhere near the blonde, or Pan for that matter. The latter of which was actually eating for once and not just staring at Harry. Something that the Gryffindor was extremely pleased to see.

Hermione settled a hand on his arm, Harry turned inquiringly to her unaware of everyone watching in fascination. She leant in a little and said, “Are you all right? You've been edgy all day.”

“Yeah,” Seamus cut in, evidently listening in on their private conversation. “Why is it Hermione can touch you but you almost leap from your skin if anyone else does? I think you may have traumatised poor Neville.”

It was true, Neville looked a little jumpy himself now.

Harry quickly ticked over his thoughts, pulling together what he thought was a reasonable enough answer that wouldn't lead to many more questions. “I think I may have inhaled some of the gas from that potion I botched today,” Harry lied, easily enough. “It just seems to have made me slightly jumpy and Hermione...”

He trailed off, unsure what to say.

But the group listening avidly to his explanation filled in the blanks, much to his mortification.

“You and Hermione, eh Harry?” Winked Seamus suggestively.

“Err...”

It seemed all those listening in gave a heartfelt sigh in disappointment. All except Ron who was glancing between his two best friends, growing redder by the second. Though, oddly enough, he never said anything despite Harry knowing he wanted to.

Hermione, for reasons Harry couldn't comprehend said nothing in her defence. Though she was eying Ron who was seated rather closely to Lavender. Too close, in Harry's opinion. He frowned at the picture.

Clearly, Harry had missed something while he'd been locked up for the day.

Then Hermione spoke up. “Don't be silly,” she said, quite calmly. “There is nothing going on between Harry and I. If there was, I think his little Slytherin shadow would probably throw quite a hissy fit.”

As if he knew that the pride of lions were speaking of him, Pan peered over at them.

Those in hearing of Hermione's words nodded, muttering under their breath as they went back to their dinner. Each of them had at least had some kind of run in with the white-haired boy. It was fairly hard not to considering he was indeed like Harry's shadow. Most of the time.

Harry glanced over at Hermione, feeling her gaze still settled on his face. Her expression, as what appeared a constant since the beginning of term, was worried. “I'll talk with you about it later. All right?” Hermione murmured quietly.

“Fine,” Harry agreed with a bemused expression. His eyes danced over to Ron, who was immersed
in what had to be a completely boring conversation with Lavender. Hermione, Harry observed, had caught sight of this too and the Angelus couldn't help but feel exceedingly resentful toward Lavender when the light of Hermione's eyes dimmed a little.

He wasn't sure how he was going to manage it, but Harry was going to make sure Lavender paid for hurting the girl that felt like the closest thing he had to a sister.

- jade.requiem -

Ten o'clock came fairly quickly, much to Harry's dismay. He wanted to get his confrontation with Blaise over and done with, as soon as possible but was also worried about it as well.

Freshly showered and clad in a black dress shirt with the top button's undone, a pair of his nicely fitting black jeans and dark trainers, Harry considered what he was going to say to the Slytherin. After some time of procrastination, he just decided he'd wing it and see how that went instead.

Not bothering to do anything with his hair, he didn't need to nowadays as it always looked good, he threw on one of the heavier cloaks Raeda had packed for him, as well as his invisibility cloak and slipped out his room through the enchanted mirror and into the now deserted corridors of the sleeping school.

The halls were silent except for the faint buzz of magic humming along in the air, though he was now used to the sound as he often traversed the darkened corridors by night. The sound was familiar and almost as comforting as a heartbeat.

Night had well and truly fallen outside but the lack of light didn't impede Harry's progress in the least, considering his vision was equal if not better in the dark. The sounds of evening caught his sensitive hearing. The crunch of freshly fallen autumn leaves beneath his trainers, the only thing to indicate his otherwise silent progress across the sleeping school's grounds and toward the pitch where he had talked with Blaise what seemed a life time ago, but could only be little more than a month at most.

Harry was thankful for the lack of moonlight for once as he got steadily closer to where Blaise was already waiting up in the Ravenclaw stands.

Neutral ground. It wasn't looking too bad for Harry.

“Potter,” Blaise said in greeting. He was still using their surnames. Damn. Maybe this wasn't going to go in Harry's favour after all. “Am I to assume you called this little get together in order to explain away this morning's events?”

“Quick and to the point,” Harry murmured and nodded. “Exactly.”

“Am I also to assume this is so nothing unfortunate befalls a certain someone who was the main player of said event?”

Confused by the question a moment, it took a while for Harry to register what he was being asked. “Yeah,” Harry said, drawing up closer to Blaise but still not invading his personal space. “Then you're barking,” Blaise announced and stood up. “I have to tell Malfoy. I'm obligated to do so. Now if you'll excuse me.”

“What exactly are you going to tell him?” Harry asked, and stepped forward to block Blaise's escape. “And why bother waiting this whole time only to tell me that you are obligated to inform Malfoy of it anyway? What are your obligations to me?”
Blaise stepped back and ran a hand through his short dark hair, he narrowed his eyes. “I plan on telling Malfoy exactly what I saw. What did you expect I’d do, Potter? That I’d keep this secret? Even if we were friends, which I have clearly mistaken, I would still tell Malfoy about what I saw. Torrez is a traitor and needs to be dealt with accordingly.

“As for why I didn’t go to Malfoy straight away? I wanted to see if you’d admit to doing Pan. But as I said, I’ve obviously over estimated our supposed friendship.”

“I’m not doing Pan!” Harry hissed out lowly, forcing away the cutting remark from the Slytherin. Yes, Harry considered Blaise a friend but the boy didn't have to wield his words so they stung so painfully. “You walked in on us having an argument.”

“An argument with his tongue down your throat?” Blaise asked snidely, in almost perfect imitation of Draco. “I can see how well that would go down.”

“Quit the innuendos!”

“Whatever. The point here is, you've betrayed Malfoy and he is the only one who can determine Torrez's fate and I believe he will do what is necessary to keep you safe from the traitor.”

For a moment it felt like Harry had been slapped hard across the face. It felt almost infinitely worse than Blaise's declaration that Harry felt nothing for their friendship. He hadn't betrayed Draco. At least, he was pretty sure he hadn't. Besides, how on earth had he betrayed Draco? Did this have something to do with the whole warder bond thing? Harry doubted it greatly, still he couldn't help but feel hurt and shamed by Blaise's words.

The Slytherin went to go around Harry but was stopped as the latter's small but strong hand caught him around the bicep. “I don't know what you mean by my betraying Malfoy. But there is nothing going on between Pan and me. Whatever his unhealthy interest in me, is completely him.”

Blaise gave Harry an unbelieving look. “It really didn't look that way from where I was standing.”

“Well, if you had of noticed I wasn't exactly kissing him back, was I?” Harry retorted. “I was about to beat his head against the wall when he kissed me again—”

“Again?” Blaise asked, voice eerily neutral. Inwardly Harry winced at his own slip up.

“Yeah,” Harry replied, deciding it was probably best if he didn't say too much, lest he screw himself over more than necessary and Blaise didn't look to be in such a forgiving mood at present.

“So you let Torrez kiss you, twice?”

“They were tricked out of me,” Harry snapped in annoyance. “Both of them.” He crossed his arms over his chest and huffed irritably, this though apparently earned him some points with Blaise.

“So he kissed you, against your will?”

“What do you think I've been saying all this time? Yes! Why would I even want to kiss Pan? As I've been telling him, I'm not interested in blokes! I only fancy girls and anyone who says otherwise are clearly in need of a permanent place in Saint Mungo's.”

“Are you so sure, Harry?”

The transition back to first name basis confused Harry greatly. The feeling however, was extremely short lived, because the next moment his frazzled nerves had settled and he allowed himself to be
soothed into some semblance of calm. Though, he did eye Blaise warily.

“Please don't tell me, you fancy me too. I think I've had one shock too many as it is lately, and that I think would find me an early grave,” Harry sighed.

“Oh man, me too,” Blaise acknowledge as he stared up at the sky. “I don't fancy you, Harry. So no worries there. As I told you before, I don't fancy blokes, either. You on the other hand, I think could swing both ways.”

Harry glared over at the Slytherin.

“Just stating what I observe.”

“You should stop with the inaccurate observations,” Harry muttered. “They're likely to land you in deep trouble.”

“Like your recklessness has for you?” Was Blaize's rejoinder.

The Angelus thought that over a moment. “Touché.”

The pair were quite for a moment, lost in their own thoughts, until Blaise broke the silence by voicing his musings.

“I knew you and Pan weren't really together,” He said. Harry's eyes were instantly on his, narrowing angrily. “Anyone would have seen that you were in a right murderous mood and that Pan, being his usual self had just gone along and snogged you anyway.”

Harry jerked away, staring at the darker boy unsure exactly how he should be feeling about all this. “Then why didn't you say all that earlier!?” Harry cried, deciding to go with outraged. “This morning would have been handy, you know. I've been thinking about this all day! Then you decide to play around with me when I came to speak with you about it...”

For his part, Blaise looked terribly guilty. “I didn't mean to make you worry...”

Harry gave him a look.

“Oh, maybe a little,” Blaise conceded. “But mostly it was to scare the daylights out of Torrez and admit it, he hasn't pestered you all day.”

“Probably because for the majority of it I was confined to my room!”

Now Blaise looked terribly concerned, which immediately conjured an image of Draco wearing the exact same expression. Harry shook his head, trying to dislodge the picture of the blonde.

“It's nothing,” Harry murmured quickly. “Just my instincts having fun by messing with me.”

Blaise winced, the guilty expression returning to his face. “I'm really sorry about that.”

Harry shrugged, still feeling largely resentful but still strangely at peace by the turn of events. He peered at the Slytherin, head tilted quizzically as he tried to gage the other boy's expression. “By the way, what did you mean by the ‘betraying’ Malfoy part, earlier? Is this a territorial thing amongst you Invidians?”

Blaise glanced up at the sky again. Harry's eyes narrowed as he realised the boy was intentionally ignoring his question.
“You could say that,” Blaise responded slowly. Carefully sounding out his sentence.

Harry chewed those words over while still studying Blaise. Wondering exactly what the other was holding back. But whether it was important or not, Harry couldn't discern but he was almost certain it was.

Still he couldn't force the other boy to tell him what he was wanting to know...

Abruptly, Harry realised that he could indeed do that. If he used Compulsion on Blaise, he'd could fish for all the information he wanted out of the boy but then there was the whole moral dilemma of holding that power over a supposed friend, and Blaise was indeed Harry's friend now.

The Slytherin obviously thought so. Had stated so blatantly but then he had intentionally deceived Harry. Even if the lie wasn't exactly one that had caused any real damage, it certainly had enough potential to. Still, how could Harry go and abuse something like his budding friendship with Blaise over something he would eventually weasel out of someone else?

The answer was he couldn't. It wouldn't feel right.

Inwardly he cursed his Gryffindor loyalty.

“So how did Torrez manage to trick two snogs out of you?” Blaise finally asked, his eyes sparkled deviously.

Harry shrugged and took a seat back in the stands. “Told me some sappy story and I was too busy trying to figure out whether it was a lie or not when he did it.”

Blaise nodded along as he too sat down. “So you're a sucker for that stuff are you?” Blaise asked, gleefully. “I'll have to note that down for future reference. I'm sure it'll come in handy, some day.”

Rolling his eyes at the Slytherin's excitement, Harry drawled out, “Yes I'm sure it will.” He eyed the other boy carefully, weighing the pros and cons of asking outright the reasons for Pan being detested as he was. True, his personality was enough to rub everyone the wrong way, still an irritating personality wasn't enough to warrant such animosity. Besides, Harry was curious as to know whether the boy had been lying about his past.

Despite there being far more cons, Harry's curiosity won out.

“How do you know Pan's a traitor?” Harry asked doggedly, pointedly ignoring the fact that even he himself didn't exactly believe Pan. Especially now. “Because his mother does a wrong somehow he is automatically dubbed the same? That's no better than everyone saying all dark wizards come from
Slytherin house, just because Voldemort was from Slytherin and most of his known death eaters too. How do you feel when your house's name is dragged through the mud just because of one or a few individuals who caused that? Don't you think that's unfair?"

“That's different!” Blaise retorted, his fists clenched at his sides. He shot to his feet.

“How so?” Harry threw back, as he too joined the Slytherin in standing once more. “It still looks the same to me.”

Harry was now well aware he had overstepped any boundaries and had pissed the Slytherin off quite badly. Even so, he was getting the answers he was wanting and all without using any compulsion. He just had to pray he didn't get Blaise too worked up. But apparently, he had underestimated just how volatile the subject was.

“Did Malfoy's aunt really try to kill him before our fourth year?”

“Stop it Harry,” Blaise warned, lowly.

But like all Gryffindors, Harry stubbornly refused. “Was Pan's father really uncle Demetrius' warder? Is Pan really only trying to follow his father's legacy?”

“He is nothing like his father!” Blaise cried suddenly. “Lord Caligare was an honourable man. He died for your uncle! How dare you imply that Torrez could ever match him. Torrez would be lucky to ever be half the man his father was.”

Harry blinked, temporarily thrown by the outburst.

So some of Pan's story was true at least. But exactly how much?

“We aren't talking about Pan's father,” Harry growled. “We're talking about him and the choices he wasn't given. What has he done to deserve all this? A conniving mother who wanted him on the throne as opposed to the rightful heir? How is that his fault? Did he have anything to do with it himself? Did he know what was going to happen before it did or was he as stunned by the events as the rest of you?”

Harry knew he was getting louder, and that he was standing so close to the Slytherin that it wouldn't be hard for either one to easily knock the other over but he didn't care. He was trying to get as much information out of him before the boy realised just what he was doing.

“You don't understand,” Blaise said, voice low and almost a growl. It sounded like his Silexis was close to the surface.

“Then make me!” Harry all but yelled. His hands were balled into tight fists at his side and he was glaring at Blaise. “Help me understand.”

“I'll get Malfoy to explain this to you,” Blaise said instead and moved away.

“Fine,” Harry murmured. Recognising that the boy wasn't going to say any more on the subject. “Blaise wait. I won't anger you into revealing anymore. I promise.” He blanked his face and watched the Invidian.

The Slytherin turned to Harry, his face too, unreadable. “You tricked me.”

Harry was unable to prevent his lips from twitching up into a near smirk. “Now we're even.” Harry said decisively.
“You sneaky son of... I didn't know you had it in you, Potter.” Blaise commented, not sounding too upset about being duped into revealing what Harry had wanted. Mostly, he just appeared supremely annoyed. “How very devious of you. I believe you would make a brilliant Slytherin once all the annoyingly Gryffindor bits are removed.”

That statement made Harry feel more than a little uncomfortable, hitting so close to home as it was.

“Right,” Harry said, he peered over at the other boy. “So, no hard feelings?”

Blaise sighed heavily. “I'm more annoyed at myself for failing to see such an obvious setup. I knew you were wanting to know what had happened... but had half expected you to use that weird compulsion thing on me—”

“I wouldn't—” Harry began to protest.

“And I know that, now,” Blaise nodded. “Lets go inside then. I still have to report to Malfoy about Torrez. Although, maybe I should wait until tomorrow for that. It won't do any Slytherin good to tell Malfoy tonight, or none of us would get any sleep.”

“And maybe you shouldn't report it at all?” Harry suggested.

The Slytherin's eyes widened. “Torrez needs to be put in his place!” Blaise argued. Flaring back into life. “You can't just let him get away with things like that, what happens when a simple stolen kiss turns into more? What if he forced himself on you? Do you want to be raped? Is that it!?”

Harry took a step back from the other boy, horrified at the thought. “Of course not! But I want to deal with him my way. I'm not sure how I'm going to do that, just yet, but I will. I doubt Malfoy beating sense into Pan would work. His head's too hard,” Harry tried to joke.

Blaise didn't look like he was going to budge. “I have to tell Malfoy,” he said. “I'm duty bound to do so. You seem to forget that first and foremost, I'm an Invidian. I have to protect you. It's a built in thing—”

“Then Pan would have that as well. He'd be instinctually unable to cause me any harm.”

“That totally depends on his mind's interpretation of causing you harm,” Blaise retorted. “There are many ways in which you could be harmed. He cannot be trusted. This is for the best. Besides, the fireworks this causes should be brilliant.”

Harry really wanted to argue against Blaise, but let it drop instead. The boy knew far more about this kind of thing. Or so Harry assumed.

Then his attention was caught with the quiet snap of something fairly nearby, meaning still some hundred metres away. The next thing he knew he was lying beneath Blaise who had dove across and knocked him down. Apparently taking the noise as a sudden attack, as ridiculous as that sounded.

“Blaise, get off!” Harry hissed as he tried pushing the other away. He went to reach for his wand to help defend himself. “Get off! Flattening me beneath you isn't going to help us any if we're attacked.” The Angelus pushed the other boy off violently, glowering darkly as he did so.

It was then Harry noticed that the other was flickering extremely close to changing forms. Eclipse lay simmering just beneath the surface, clearly wanting to be free and almost there.

“Stop!” Harry ordered fiercely as he lunged forward to capture the other boy. Even with the lighting as dark as it was, there were still fairly out in the open and a transformation there would have been
infinitely stupid.

He couldn't believe Blaise would be that idiotic.

“Harry, let go of me!” Protested the Invidian who was being held with surprising ease by the shorter, far more slender male.

“You need to calm down,” Harry growled out slowly. “Think! Don't bloody start panicking on me, you need to use your head!”

But the other seemed beyond his words now, so Harry did the only thing he could think of that would summon the boy from his sudden terror.

Harry slapped Blaise. Hard. Right across the face, causing him to stumble back into the stands. Unfortunately, Harry miscalculated his slap and Blaise's reaction to said act of violence and was hauled down with the Slytherin.

“Blaise!” Harry yelled as he was pulled face first towards the Invidian and fell on top to the other. It was a fairly close call, as their faces had almost crashed into the other's, but Harry slipped a little further down so collided instead with the boy's strong shoulder. This action of course, still hurt a great deal.

Both tumbled down the stands, in a jumble of limbs leaving both very sore once they finally reached the bottom.

Harry glared up at Blaise, who had ended up on the top of their sprawled mess. “You hit me first!” Blaise defended, breathing hard, but at least he wasn't panicking. He hurriedly stood and helped the still dishevelled Angelus to his feet.

“Because you were about to go into panic mode!” Harry shot back, also panting. He set about righting his garments and paused when his bruised muscles twinged at the movements. Oh just bloody brilliant, Harry thought bitterly. He rubbed at his lower back which seemed to have received the most injuries from the tumble in the stands. The Angelus heir's eyes locked on Blaise in a deadly glare, but found himself smirking when he saw Blaise was not without his own pains.

Harry's smirk died when he realised one important thing.

His wand was gone.

A dull clunk was heard further up the stands, followed by a kind of whirr and another clunk. Harry was not a very happy prince and seriously rethinking the request he put in place that kept Blaise treating him normally. Maybe it wouldn't be such a bad idea to revoke it... Though the most prominent in Harry's mind was that he was now kind of seeing what Draco and Pan had been pointing out all along.

Blaise while resourceful, wasn't exactly great to depend on in tight situations. Harry was merely lucky that there hadn't been an actual attempt on his life. Or a kidnapping. This new revelation made Harry rather resentful.

“My wand,” Harry muttered darkly as another cluck was heard. The noises growing louder and closer together. There was a long drawn out pause in which Harry could distinctly hear something falling and knew that had to be his wand.

He settled golden eyes on Blaise, who wisely took a few steps backwards. “Now since you helped lose my wand, you can help find it.”
Harry was ten minute's late to meet Draco.

When he arrived at the room of requirement, the blonde was already present and probably had been for some time. Though that was the least of the Gryffindor's worries as his main concern was his sudden lack of coordination.

The first thing Harry noticed about the room when he entered was the soft almost heavy feeling. It wasn't a bad sensation, it was just strange and there was also a strong scent filling the air. It was a musk but had spicy undertones and was actually rather intoxicating—but had the effect of making him drowsy. The room itself looked different than it did each time the three used it, except for some reason it was different. Warmer somehow. Like when he was staying at Loiresvale.

He half expected Demetrius and Selene to pop up out of nowhere.

“Sorry I'm late,” Harry said as he tried to walk straight. It was difficult with his lower back hurting the way it was.

“What kept you?” The blonde asked, there was an odd note to his voice.

“Fight,” Harry answered casually. It was true enough and he sunk down into his favourite chair next to Draco's, though the Slytherin was standing next to the fire studying him intently.

Shrugging out of his heavy cloak, Harry removed the letter he had received earlier that morning. “I got this,” he said gesturing to the letter, “this morning. I thought I should bring it to you to see what you thought of it.”

He didn't know why, but something that looked a great deal like disappointment flashed across the Slytherin's fine features.

He dismissed the idea as trickery of the light and tossed the letter to the blonde. Draco opened the letter carefully and began reading through it slowly. For some bizarre reason he coloured a light pink.

It was while watching to see the other's reaction to the letter that Harry realised that Draco had done something to his hair. He'd already stopped with the gelling back but still, there was something about it that Harry just couldn't place. Then another point made itself known. The Slytherin wasn't wearing wizards robes but casual clothing. A soft charcoal grey looking turtleneck, tailored black slacks and dress shoes. Harry had to wonder why he never bothered to dress like that before, it made him look more... normal.

Suddenly Harry snorted.

“Find something funny, do you?” Draco asked, still looking through Harry's letter.

“Sore back,” Harry replied instead, unable to lie to Draco without the blonde knowing. He lay back on his sofa and winced. That caught Draco's attention. Carefully, Harry rolled onto his stomach and propped his chin up over his forearms. “You don't have any pain relieving potions do you?”

“No,” Draco replied slowly. “What happened to your back?”

“It's from the stands,” Harry replied with a dismissive wave. He glanced up as Draco came to stand over him. “Don't worry, I gave as good as a I got. If not more,” Harry said in smug satisfaction. He was only slightly startled when Draco's hand caught his face and turned it gently trying to studying it.
Draco, he had come to understand, was a very tactile person and couldn't seem to help but touch, unlike Harry who was becoming leery of almost everyone touching him and could only abide it if he accepted the person or he was initiating the contact. He wondered how long it would take until he was exactly as Draco had said and no one would be able to touch him unless he felt connected with them in some way.

He was broken from his musings as Draco withdrew his warm hand and said, “Your lip is bleeding.”

“Again?” Harry queried as he reached up with his slender digits. They came away with a smear of crimson. He sighed, and let his head drop back to it's former resting position. “That,” Harry said as he lapped at his cut lip. “Was self inflicted.” He ran his tongue over the split again, dragging the crimson droplets of blood from his mouth, until he became aware that Draco was watching rather intensely and then he remembered that the boy was a vampire and would be transfixed by the sight of blood.

Harry stopped immediately

“Anyway, what do you think of the letter?” He asked, feeling uncomfortable under the Slytherin's piercing stare. “Am I reading too much into it?”

“You were right in that you should have come to me about it,” Draco began slowly. “She was warning you. Something isn't right although at this point I'm unsure whether it's in your clan or ours but something's happening and she wants you to stick close to me as well as your two friends, she also advises to unseal your end of our bond.”

That's what Harry had been afraid of.

“Must I?” He whined like a petulant child.

“It is what your aunt advises,” Draco replied neutrally. Though he looked extremely smug about it all.

“You might as well call her Selene,” Harry said as he sat up and winced, then lay back down. “She has taken a liking to you for some reason. Always mentioning you in some way or another in letters that she sends me.”

Draco's pink tinge returned to his cheeks.

Harry observed the odd sight and shrugged it away. He would never understand Draco so there was really no point in trying.

Then a thought came to him.

“Do you fancy my aunty Selene?”

Draco coughed. Rather loudly and with much exaggeration. “Does it matter if I fancy her? Besides, whatever gave you that idea?” The blonde asked.

Harry frowned at the blonde's clear avoidance of answering the question. He couldn't very well say it was just an assumption based on Draco's reactions to Harry's statement. The Gryffindor knew his aunt was beautiful. Even by Angelus standards Selene was exquisite, so it wasn't really surprising that many admired and coveted her. Strangely though, the thought that Draco may actually want her too brought an odd pain to Harry's heart.

Harry didn't understand it.
“It was just a question,” Harry replied with a shrug.

And winced yet again. Merlin his back hurt, he shouldn't have shrugged. In fact, moving just didn't seem like a very good idea at all.

“So.”

“So?” Harry asked and glanced up at Draco. He stood off a little to the side arms crossed and tapping a foot impatiently.

“Are you going to take your aunt's advise?”

Instead Harry replied with, “You're enjoying this, aren't you?”

“Maybe.”

“Fine,” Harry huffed quietly and released his firm hold on his bond with Draco, missing the sharp intake of breath from the blonde. Gradually, the Slytherin did the same allowing his trickle of emotions to turn into a stream. He was evidently very pleased with the way things were going.

“Potter, go back to your room. You're falling asleep on the couch,” came Draco's cool drawl after a lengthy pause. He sounded supremely annoyed. Which was no real change.

“I don't feel like moving,” Harry announced and opted to snuggled into the arm of his sofa, trying to get comfortable instead.

“Potter, you can't sleep in here,” Draco tried to reason.

“I can and I will,” Harry argued. His eye's already closing of their own accord.

“No you can't. It's not safe anyone could come in while you're asleep.”

“Only you, Zabini and me know how to get into this room exactly. No one else can unless you tell them what to look for. I'll be fine. Besides, I don't think I can move my legs.” To demonstrate, he gave said limbs a pathetic wiggle.

Amusement and annoyance danced across his bond from Draco.

“Fine,” the Slytherin conceded. “If you insist on sleeping in here where it's quite possible someone may kill you, you force me to stay and ensure that doesn't happen. I hope you appreciate the stuff I'm put through for you, Potter. I've never slept on a sofa before in my life.”

“Then sleep on the bed,” Harry murmured sleepily, he pointed in the general direction the bed should have popped into existence.

There was a long pause.

Draco swallowed audibly. “The sofa's fine.”

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Chapter Twelve: The bonds of friendship

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

Chapter Twelve: The bonds of friendship

Both boys were up early the next morning, though Draco was still awake some time before Harry even stirred and looked like he was trying to finish his homework, even if to Harry it felt more like Draco had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Well, that's what the emotions that passed into his end of the bond from Draco informed him.

As Harry made his way back toward his common room after promising to meet up with Draco to go for a run as Blitz, he couldn't help but notice that something between Draco and him had shifted subtly. Something that didn't entirely have anything to do with their bond.

Harry assumed it was probably brought about by him finally allowing Draco to read his feelings more readily. It was a matter of trust after all, even if Draco had apparently been playing some elaborate role all these years, as too his father had, Harry wasn't able to let go of past transgressions so easily. He accepted the Malfoys now, yes. He accepted that he was blood-bound to Draco and would be until one of them died or their bond severed. Harry accepted that this Draco was similar to the other Draco he knew, but that the boy was also very different.

Now all Harry had to do was accept the past.

He supposed by freeing up his end of the bond had been a start to move in the right direction and that by doing so he had revealed to Draco a part of himself that others only really saw the surface of. That he had revealed perhaps the most intimate part of himself. A move of absolute trust.

Draco had to have realised this by now, as secretive as he himself was. Even he wasn't as untrusting as Harry himself, having allowed the Gryffindor flashes of what he felt, if indeed those were intended or accidental but thinking it over, Harry knew now that those flashes couldn't have been accidents as Draco was too well practised in many things to allow something like his feelings to be revealed due to a mistake or lapse in his concentration. That would be like dropping his Occlumency shield while Voldemort was trying to probe his mind.

He was startled from his reveries when he slipped into the Gryffindor common room to find Hermione passed out on the couch evidently waiting up for him.

Oh shit, skittered through Harry's mind.

What was he going to say? He had promised he'd talk to her later that night and forgotten all about it. He felt really bad about the whole thing, he knew what she wanted to talk to him about was important. What was he going to tell her though? He was fine discussing that he considered her family or clan, as the case was and that that was the reason he could stand her touch as opposed to almost everyone else. He assumed Ron was the same but had yet to test the theory. To him Ron was a brother and so it stood to reason that Harry would be fine with Ron as he was with Hermione.

The problem lay in the excuse as to his disappearance the entire night.
He gnawed on his lips as he thought that over, reopening the cut. Maybe this worked in his favour.

“Hermione,” he murmured leaning over her and shook her gently awake. “Come on Hermione wake up. Sleeping like that must be rather painful.”

Slowly the girl's eyes opened blearily and she covered her mouth, yawning. Faster than Harry could blink she fixed intense chocolately eyes on him. “And just where were you all night?” She said, not sounding like she had been asleep in the least moments before. “What's the time?” She checked her watch and glared up at Harry. “Half five, Harry. Where were you?”

“Got into a fight,” Harry answered, not bothering to hide the wince his back caused in reminder to said confrontation.

Hermione's eyes softened. She studied his face and seeing the cut lip stood to examine him properly. “You didn't go to Madame Pomfrey for your injuries? I take it you weren't caught by a teacher then.”

“No we weren't,” Harry replied, despite the girl's words being a statement. “Do you have any potions to relieve pain? I think I may really have put my back out.”

“Turn around, Harry.”

He turned and felt as her small hands eased his shirt up his back as she gasped. “Harry what happened?” She said, running her fingers gently over the injured back. “I know you said you got into a fight but why is your back covered in bruises?”

“It's that bad?” Harry asked and tried to look over his shoulder to see. That wasn't the wisest of moves and he winced again at the twinge that shot down his spine. “It's from the stands. I fell down a few.” More like the entire set, but no need to inform Hermione of that. It was pointless anyway.

“Harry,” Hermione said slowly. “Shouldn't these have healed by now? Because of your quick healing and all?”

“I totally forgot,” Harry replied honestly. He frowned as he realised Draco should have reminded him though. But considering the blonde had wanted to get back to his dorm as soon as possible, maybe he had forgotten as well. “It's had all night to rest up, too.”

“Maybe there is something we're missing,” Hermione said with a thoughtful expression, then she waved it away. “Anyway Harry, what were you doing out there so late at night? Did you go out there just to have the fight? It could have been a trap Harry and no one would have realised until later. You're lucky only I was aware of your absence and that I knew you were safe due to the monitoring charm I placed on you.”

“Hermione!” Harry gasped, shocked that he had a charm on him that let Hermione know how he was. Then he thought it over. “If that's the case, why didn't you come looking for me when I was injured?”

The girl shook her head. “It doesn't inform me of if you're injured but if you're in danger. I imagine Dumbledore may use something like it on you also. I added it to your chain,” she confessed. Harry's hand instantly shot up to grasp the two charms his necklace bore. “I wanted to make sure you were safe and so Ron and I wouldn't worry if anything like this summer were to happen again. Don't be mad, Harry.”

“I'm not mad,” he answered honestly. He was actually kind of touched that she would do that and only partially annoyed that she had done so without informing him.
“Good,” Hermione smiled, her face quickly turned serious. She slapped his hands away from where they still clutched at his chain. “But that doesn't explain why you were out all night! I may have known you weren't in any particular danger, but that doesn't mean I didn't worry about you!”

“Actually, I kinda passed out,” Harry said. He watched as Hermione's face turned furious.

“You passed out?” The girl quoted back with an evident forced calm.

Inwardly Harry winced. It wasn't a lie, exactly. He had kinda passed out and blamed it on the excess energy he had been burning throughout the previous day while worrying over the Pan incident. Followed of course, by the verbal confrontation and minor struggle that come after that and lead to his current injury. Then, last but not least, his insightful meeting with Draco where he allowed the pleasant warmth and scent of their shared common room to drag him into the world of dreams.

“Harry!”

The boy gave a start when he realised he hadn't been listening to anything Hermione had been saying. He offered her a sheepish look.

“You're going to Madame Pomfrey.” She announced loudly, then latched on to his hands and dragged Harry, still protesting all the way to the hospital wing. “If you passed out, there may be something wrong with your head, plus I can't heal these bruises and I don't have any pain relieving potions, though why I'm even bothering with this is beyond me,” Hermione muttered. “Who were you fighting with? And why where you out at the Quidditch stands to begin with?”

“I was trying to sort some stuff out and ended up in a fight with him instead.”

“You mean Malfoy?”

Harry tilted his head and peered at Hermione. Of course she'd assume it was Draco, even with the hostility between them dying slowly.

“No, actually it was Zabini.”

“Really?” Hermione said. “I never thought I'd see him in any physical fight before. He seems too level headed for something like that.”

“Yes, well. He was actually the one who started it—” which was sort of true. Harry frowned a moment. Perhaps it wasn't.

“And what was this fight over, Harry?”

The aforementioned paused, considering what he was going to say. It made sense to tell the truth, or the partial truth, rather. As long as he stuck to as much of the truth as possible, he'd be fine.

“It was over Pan,” he answered.

“Ah your Slytherin shadow,” Hermione murmured with a nod. Then she looked to Harry, her expression somewhat guarded. “Don't you find it odd that Malfoy would rather fight another Slytherin over you?”

Harry wasn't certain which way to take that sentence, so he continued to stare back at her blandly.

Hermione sighed.

“It's just that, Malfoy is usually the one to start the fights with ... Pan and wins more often than not,
but what I'm getting at, is that haven't you noticed that he would much rather fight with Pan than he would with you? Yet you are his enemy, the one who sent his father to prison—” Harry nearly pulled a face but was able to prevent it. “—yet he appears to hate Pan far more than he ever hated you.

“Here Pan is, trying to throw himself at you—” Harry coughed uncomfortably but Hermione ploughed on regardless. “—and is around you almost constantly and from what I've managed to catch of their rows, is that it's always over you.”

Here, she peered at Harry expectantly.

And again Harry responded with a blank look.

“Honestly!” The girl huffed in what Harry felt was mounting frustration. “Don't you find that odd in the least?”

“No. Not really, Hermione,” Harry answered, baffled. “I'd have thought their interactions completely normal. Malfoy, being the Ice prince of Slytherin doesn't like the fact that one of his house mates is breaking rank and going after a Gryffindor. A Gryffindor that they should all hate. It makes perfect sense to me.

“Actually, I'm surprised that the other Slytherins haven't turned on him yet.” It was completely beside the point that Harry now had a fair amount of Slytherins in his growing fan base.

“I don't know, Harry,” Hermione continued stubbornly. “From my point of view, Malfoy just doesn't like the fact he has a rival. So is trying to put him in his place.”

Harry snorted. “He's never going to beat me, if that's what you're worried about.”

“I meant Pan.”

The Angelus frowned down at his friend. “What about Pan?”

Hermione made a sound of frustration. “Pan, Harry,” the busy haired girl said in exasperation. “Pan is Malfoy's new rival. His rival for your attention.”

There was a pregnant pause, with Hermione still staring at Harry expectantly while he continued to look at her with a uncomprehending expression. Then he burst out laughing at the absurdity of her theory. This was almost immediately followed by a realisation that laughing was a huge mistake as pain lanced up his spine.

“Hermione, that's ridiculous,” he coughed violently. He knew more to the story than she did, so also had a fair idea of why Draco disliked Pan so much. Therefore, Hermione's speculation was... actually very funny. He tried to hold in his laughter, as it would only cause his sore back to hurt more.

“Laugh it up all you like,” Hermione muttered, “but you won't be laughing about it later.”

The young Nikolai found their chosen topic extremely disturbing and shoved away the equally unsettling thoughts it invented, instead to focused on something else he was curious about. “How often have you come across those two while they're fighting?”

“At least twice a day,” Hermione responded, grudgingly. Clearly still upset that Harry had dismissed her theory to the point he thought it a great laugh. “They're often sending each other to the hospital wing. Well, Pan's in there more often than Malfoy.”
“I know,” Harry moaned, just thinking about it. “Pan loves informing me of each time Malfoy is sent to the infirmary. It's almost like a game to him. Sometimes I doubt he realises the seriousness of things.” He neglected to voice that Draco was exactly the same. Taking great pleasure in announcing that Pan was out of commission for whatever reasons and for roughly how long.

It was surprising both boys' studies hadn't suffered.

Both Gryffindors entered the hospital wing quietly, Harry with a mild limp and Hermione supporting him when he needed it.

Surprisingly, the ward's matron was bustling about already and soon had Harry all healed up and ready to Hogsmeade with his friends. Harry and Hermione made it back to Gryffindor common room and got ready for the day, still being awake earlier than the rest of the house they just sat around in their favourite chairs talking.

“What *are* your thoughts on Pan, Harry?”

The Nikolai heir blinked. That was an odd question. But then, a great many of her questions and thoughts had always been peculiar. More so that morning.

“What do you mean?”

“Just what I said. What do you think of him?”

Still thinking the question somewhat bizarre, Harry tried to think of all the things that Pan represented for him. “Annoying, persistent, turns up when I really need him, but. Somewhat childish sometimes but overall a... Actually I'm not sure.” He replied with a frown. “Why do you ask?”

“Do you fancy him?”

“What!” Harry gasped. “No. I don't fancy Pan!”

“I was just asking. You know I'd accept your preferences if you did, right Harry?”

“I don't fancy Pan,” Harry muttered again, feeling the need to repeat it seeing as Hermione didn't seem to have heard the first time. “If I did, I would have shagged him already and put him out of his misery.”

“I... I doubt that would work, Harry,” Hermione said softly. Almost like she was talking to someone on their deathbed. She opened her mouth, then shut it again. Unable or unwilling to voice her thoughts further. The girl frowned a moment.

“Just be careful of him, all right?” She managed to say.

It was Harry's turn to frown over at the girl. She had basically repeated her warning of the boy. From what Harry got of the annoying Slytherin, he didn't think he was really a concern despite both Draco and Blaise warning him off—which could be bias considering their views of the white-haired boy. But Hermione had warned him twice of Pan now. Was there something that he wasn't seeing?

He was almost afraid of asking Hermione if she was able to elaborate further. But he was a Gryffindor after all. “Care to explain?”

The girl turned to Harry and patted his shoulder. “You'll see.”

Harry's frown deepened, knowing that he wasn't going to get the explanation he wanted, unless he
forced it out of her. If it was potentially harmful to his health, she would have told him immediately, so it couldn't be that.

“Morning... Harry... Hermione,” Ron yawned as he staggered down the stairs from the boy's dorm. He was already dressed, though his clothes were rumpled and mismatched, like he hadn't bothered to check what he was wearing. Or perhaps he'd just thrown on the closest garments to the bed.

“Good morning, Ronald,” Hermione replied somewhat frostily.

“Sleep well?” Harry asked, a little confused. He knew or had his suspicions, rather, that the reason Hermione was upset was due to Ron and Lavender's growing closeness. Still, unless Ron and Lavender actually got together...

A florally scent caught Harry's nose and it wasn't Hermione who was wearing it.

Oh no he didn't, Harry mentally cringed. He knew Hermione would pick up the girl's fragrance and if she didn't already know, she was going to find out soon enough that Ron and Lavender were seeing each other. Harry had often considered what would happen if his two best friends started liking the other, he had also considered what may occur if something like this were to happen. It generally looked much like their fourth year but far worse.

And it always ended with Hermione in tears.

His thoughts were promptly severed when he was filled a sudden, blinding rage. He stumbled from his chair, head butting Ron on the way and fell over on his hands and knees, as the broke over him in waves. Then it retracted back into the little 'Draco bubble' residing in Harry's mind, where it proceeded to buzz away angrily to itself.

In retaliation, Harry forced as much annoyance as he could muster into his side of the bond, hoping it caused as much of a distraction as Draco's emotions had been.

“Harry!” Hermione cried out alarmed just as Ron bellowed a loud and pained, “Jeez, mate,” Ron muttered, rubbing his sore stomach. “What was all that about, then?”

Hermione bent to help Harry up, completely ignoring the other third of their trio. “What happened? It isn't your scar, is it?” The girl asked worriedly.

Harry shook his head, trying to reassure his friend. “No, not my scar. It's just my head. For a moment there just went a bit... erm...odd,” he replied somewhat idly, his mind still elsewhere.

Well, it looked like Draco had been informed of yesterday's events and wasn't best pleased by what had happened. Harry wondered whether he should even bother warning Pan now as there was a 50/50 chance of the boy having been present when Blaise told Draco. There was also the possibility that he was standing right outside the Gryffindor portrait awaiting Harry to leave.

Hermione's eyes were fixed on Harry. Sharp, like that of a hawk. “What do you mean your head went a bit odd? Do you mean like a dizzy spell?”

“I guess,” Harry shrugged.

“Have you been drinking regularly?” She continued to ask, in the voice one would use on a patient.

“Of course,” Harry replied, a little annoyed.

“I'm sorry, Harry,” Hermione said apologetically, obviously hearing his annoyance even if he hadn't
wanted her to. “But we need to cover all the bases and since you've already been to Madame Pomfrey today...”

“What do you mean?” Ron asked, bringing everyone's attention back to him. “What happened to Harry?”

“Nothing major,” Harry replied before Hermione could. “I just needed to see Madame Pomfrey for my back.” He shot Hermione a look, to keep her quiet and strangely, she complied without a fuss.

“Are we going to breakfast then?” Hermione queried, sounding rather stiff. “Although I think Ronald needs to rethink his attire, he can't disappoint Lavender, after all. She'd be simply horrified if she saw he was wearing two different coloured socks!”

Ron gave Hermione an odd look, before glancing down at his feet.

“Green? These aren't my socks,” Ron moaned and darted back up the stairs. Carried easily by his long legs.

“We'll save you a place!” Harry called after him, despite the fact it really wasn't needed. No one else was even awake yet.

Hermione was silent as she left the Gryffindor common room but quickly sparked to life when they were far enough away. “I can't believe him!” She muttered. “The brainless oaf! And Her! All she does...”

Harry trailed after Hermione, like a faithful puppy as she vented her frustrations, listening to her and nodding along appropriately or making affirmative noises—though he was fairly certain Hermione wasn't paying any attention to anything that he was currently doing—his face, he kept hidden in his hands.

- jaderequiem -

“Hey, Harry.”

Harry turned from the butterbeer in front of him and over at the voice calling him name. At first it was hard trying to locate the speaker, as the Three Broomstick was packed with students but then he saw the person and almost cringed.

“Hello, Chris,” Harry replied as amicable as he was able to force himself. It was hard given he had become almost claustrophobic with all the strangers brushing past or flirting with him. Though, strangely enough, not all that many other students were, today. Instead, mostly they just stared at him, which in itself was really creepy.

He sorely wished Draco would get rid of him, since Harry hadn't seen Pan all day. And Draco would be able to sense Harry's growing irritation of the newcomer if he wasn't already able to see it from his location a few tables away from Harry's own.

“Mind if I join you?”

“Not at all,” Ron said happily, totally oblivious to Harry's unease although it didn't go unnoticed by Hermione. She frowned but remained silent for the moment.

Chris sat down, dragging with him the lanky, dark haired boy he was always seen with. The boy looked highly uncomfortable, like he wanted nothing more than to get as far away from there as possible. Like he had somewhere else he had to be.
Harry felt Draco's annoyance surge a little.

“So, what's your name?” Harry asked the other, Ravenclaw boy. Feeling the need to include him.

“Jaime Devon,” the boy replied and casually shook Harry's hand.

“So what did you guys do today?” Chris interrupted the pair, he was smiling brightly but Harry could see it was a fake. He could also see that the boy was less than pleased with his friend. The Angelus briefly lowered his shield enough to read that Chris was indeed as furious as Harry had guessed and amongst other things, the boy was positively terrified.

But of what?

Harry's eye brows furrowed pensively.

“Something wrong, Harry?” Hermione asked worriedly. “Are your headaches giving you grief again? We can go back now, if they are,” she offered and stood from the table.

Ron, looking highly confused, followed suit.

“It's nothing, Hermione,” Harry said, waving dismissively. He turned to Chris who was still awaiting a response. “We've just done the usual, really. Restocked on things, chocolate, potions ingredients. Had a look at Zonko's but nothing beats the Weasley twins stuff, so it was pretty pointless.

“What about you?” He took a long sip of his drink as the Ravenclaw started to speak.

“Well y'know...

“What have we got here?” Drawled a voice, suddenly.

Harry didn't need to his bond telling him anything. The voice and the scent of a musk and light spicy traces was enough to give Draco away.

For a few moments Harry's thoughts derailed. Wasn't that what he had smelled the previous night? He hadn't noticed before, but obviously Draco wore cologne. A really nice one. Though he didn't think Draco used to wear one, he could have been wrong though. After all, most of the time he was with Draco, Blaise was there and his cologne was really quite strong. Still...

Dislodging the thought with a shake of his head, Harry decided to see how this would play out. Usually Pan would just threaten any and all who approached Harry and as Draco couldn't exactly do that right now, well Harry was just interested in seeing how he managed.

“Get lost, Malfoy!” Ron charged in.

Harry's head hit the table with an audible thump.

Draco glare fiercely at the redhead but his gaze quickly swivelled to the Ravenclaw. “Decided to trip Gryffindorks into you bed now, Chrissy?”

“Piss off Malfoy,” Chris growled.

“Funny, I had thought you liked them young. Isn't that what you told Flint? Didn't have big enough balls to do it when his older brother was here though, did you? No, you had to go after a child once his big brother was gone.”

Harry felt disgusted and by the looks of Hermione and Ron, so did they.
“That’s a lie!” Chris shouted as he stood. His seat toppled behind him. “Don’t listen to him Harry. What would he know? It was probably him that likes little kids! After all his family is dark, I wouldn’t be surprised if the whole lot of them...”

“Don’t you dare finish that,” Draco warned in a deadly whisper. “Or you won’t live to regret it.”

Crabbe and Goyle materialised then at Draco side, both cracking their knuckles ominously, though Draco was by far the most intimidating of the three. His silver eyes flashed with the promise of death, his lithe figure coiled eagerly in anticipation of the kill and his magical power swirling beneath a thin veil, barely concealed and begging to be let free.

It was at that moment that Harry truly realised what a danger Draco could be, if he so chose and that the boy likely was well suited as his warder.

Harry also realised that if he was going to sneak away, now was the time to do it. Subtly, the Angelus caught Hermione's eye in silent communication, then, using all the stealth he possessed, carefully edged himself from his seat and quickly slipped into the throng of people, moving about the cosy establishment. Biting his lips whenever he touched someone longer than he would have liked. He hated leaving his friends there and hoped Ron didn't get too irritated at being ditched, at least Hermione would understand and be able to explain, or at least side track the redhead for a while. The Harry bit his lip realising maybe leaving the pair alone together wasn't the very best idea, after all. Not when this morning's little drama hadn't quite been sorted out yet.

Sighing heavily, Harry pressed on. The angry buzz of Draco quieting down into a pleasant little drone at the back of Harry's mind, offering him an unusual sort of comfort.

The streets outside were bustling but not so crowded and was a pleasant reprieve from all the noise and clutter inside. The wind a blessing as it caressed his face and filled his nose with the scent of pine and the first promises of snow.

“Harry, there you are. I've been looking for you.”

“Yes, Pan?” Harry said, not bothering to turn around but instead, slowly made his way toward the outskirts of the small mountain village and toward the shrieking shack. “I thought you'd be dead by now.”

The taller boy paused and frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Malfoy knows about yesterday, is what,” Harry explained. “So I half expected you to be found dead lying around the school sometime later today.”

Pan smiled down at Harry as he followed the other boy. “And you thought to warn me? I'm touched,” he replied happily. Ignoring the fact that Harry had practically foretold his impending demise.

Harry shrugged. “It's only fair I give you a decent warning in advance. It'll save you from being killed and Malfoy from being thrown into Azkaban for the murder of a student.”

Pan's enthusiasm dwindled a little.

He peered out over the boundaries to the isolated shack that was located on the equally lonely little hill.

“What is it about that place that is so interesting to people?” Pan asked curiously. “I know they claim
it's haunted but any sensible person would know how true that really was. I mean, our school is technically haunted.”

Harry had to agree.

“The shrieking shack isn't haunted,” Harry conceded. “Anyway, was there anything in particular you were wanting?”

“You know you shouldn't be alone,” Pan replied. “Besides, I wanted to show you this.” And he pulled out a small crystalline vial. It was filled with an almost pulsating blood-red fluid that glittered beautifully when it caught the light. “It's a love potion,” Pan stated.

Harry paled and glanced at it more warily.

“Don't worry, Harry,” Pan grinned toothily, “your kind are immune to such things as are we. I was just wanting to have a little fun with it, is all. Even if technically we are immune to them, they are still wicked aphrodisiacs.”

Slowly Harry nodded, only mildly relieved.

“I have to admit, Draconis did a brilliant job of distracting that Ravenbore, what's-his-name?”

“Chris,” Harry offered absently. “You saw that?”

“Obviously,” Pan rolled his eyes. “I just lost you while you were trying to dodge everyone on the way out of the place. It was just a fluke that I came this way as opposed to the other route I had been planning. Anyway, want to walk back? I have plans I need to put into place with this stuff.”

There was a devilish light in his eyes that made Harry feel sorry for whoever was to be the victim of his prank. The look was something akin to what one of the twins would pull when up to something exceptionally devious.

Yes, Harry felt extremely sorry for whoever the target was.

He turned abruptly, staring into the distance as he felt Draco drawing nearer.

“Pan, I think you should go,” Harry warned. “Draco's on his way.”

But the other boy shook his head. His snowy locks swaying as he did so. “I'm not leaving you alone, regardless of any threat to my health. Besides, I think it's about time we had this confrontation, don't you?”

Harry peered at the other boy, his emerald-eyes wide. “You're mad,” Harry declared.

The wolfish grin Pan flashed the prince only helped confirm Harry's observations on the other boy.

“Perhaps,” Pan shrugged carelessly. “Perhaps not. There are few certainties in this world. Though I am fortunate to know of one.” He pressed forward but Harry, having a slight indication of where their conversation was headed, threw up his hand and pushed the other boy away before their lips could meet in a third kiss.

Then, Harry ducked as a curse whizzed past him, scorching the ends of his hair and setting the tree behind him alight with green flame.

“Oi! Watch it!” Harry exclaimed, as Draco appeared then, in his line of sight. Blaise bringing up the rear, looking tired and a tad regretful.
The blonde appeared contrite for almost a whole two seconds before he launched himself at Pan. Both fell to the ground with an oomf! And began rolling around in the fallen autumn leaves and pine needles. Each trying to get a good hold of the other as they scrambled around throwing hits and trying to gain the upper hand.

“I think we should stop this before it gets out of hand,” Harry said as Blaise strode over.

The latter glanced over at Harry then to the tree that was quietly smouldering away in a pretty green flame. Casually, Blaise extinguished the fire and shook his head.

“I've told you, haven't I?” Draco growled low in his throat and punched Pan in the nose, resulting in a beautiful spray of blood that was really quite distracting. “Stay away from him! He is bonded to me. Don't interfere where you don't belong!”

Pan struggled beneath Draco, apparently having great difficulty in trying to throw him off.

“I'm not getting between them,” Blaise said, taking a step back and giving Harry a look which stated doing so was suicidal.

“But they're not even using their full strength,” Harry pointed out. His head tipped sideways as a stray spark fell past.

“Even if they aren't,” Blaise stated, “I'm not getting in between them. Not unless Malfoy decides he wants to tear Torrez's head clean from his shoulders. Perhaps not even then. It's his right to do what he feels necessary to keep you safe and to deal with Torrez's disobedience.”

“Get off me!” Pan hissed.

Harry's attention snapped back to the fight. And it was the first time Harry had actually seen Pan really angry. Somehow, he hadn't actually been able to picture it before now.

Pan slammed his fist into Draco's stomach causing the blonde to grunt but he didn't relinquish his position as he held Pan down and punched him again in the face. “I should have been his bonded, not you! I know you're aware that if it weren't for my mother, I'd hold his warder bond and you'd have nothing!”

This, however only seemed to rile Draco further. “What do you know?!” He hissed and kneed Pan in the groin. Harry and Blaise winced in sympathy. The blonde then proceeded to ram his fists repetitively into his cousin's face and body.

All around the four young vampires, magic sparked and hissed. Were it not for the surrounding trees which sheltered them, Harry knew everyone would have seen the light display. As it was, he wasn't entirely sure that even now others wouldn't.

It had to be stopped, Harry decided resolutely. Even though the fight hadn't been going on that long, he could feel everything that Draco did. His unrestrained anger and uncertainty, his fear. Harry was also privileged with the gift of feeling all of Draco's physical aches and it was making the Angelus slightly ill, as the little Draco in his mind throbbed with pain.

But to top it all off, he felt incredibly sorry for Pan. Pitied him. The boy was clearly getting the worst of it and he hadn't really done anything yet to warrant Draco's obvious hatred. Well, Harry internally amended, nothing that I know about anyway.

Most of all, perhaps the most surprising was that he also felt immensely saddened as he watched the two cousins trying to harm the other. If what Pan had said before was true, and that they had at one
point considered the other a brother, this was simply awful and he didn't think he could bear seeing them continue further. Draco was the Prince of the Invidians, so he should rightfully have the respect of his people, but Pan was... Well that didn't matter.

He had thought that he'd have liked to see Pan being more respectful and not so... well, bothersome but not at the price of his pride, which he would most definitely lose if he lost to Draco now and likewise, Draco his own if he lost to the other.

“You will stay away from Potter, or else,” Draco hissed in a voice that was very close to becoming a growl.

Pan was fighting back with very little success as he was the one trapped beneath the other. However a stray shot flew out and cut Draco’s lip. “Or you’ll what?” Pan smirked back. “What would the great Draconis do?”

In retaliation, Draco seized his cousin by the hair and slammed his head painfully into the ground, strangely reminiscent of Harry's encounter with Vulcan. It was then Harry noted in almost horror that Draco's claws had lengthened and knew instinctively what he was about to do.

“I'll kill you,” the Invidian prince declared without emotion, his hand drawn back and ready to strike. This frighteningly, made Pan's smirk widen almost madly.

“Stop!” Harry ordered as Pan murmured simultaneously, “Then I concede.”

The following stillness was unnerving. More so since Harry was uncertain what was going to happen next. Neither of the boys had moved from their previous position. Pan was a mess of leaves and dirt and blood. His mouth swollen, little crimson rivulets streaming from his nose into the warm cavern. This, disturbingly, distracted Harry a great deal.

But not quite as much as the image of Draco did. He, much like Pan, was sporting a swollen mouth, split and leaking tiny droplets of blood.

Harry quickly glanced away.

“I concede,” Pan said again, his body going limp. Worriedly, Harry pulled Draco from the other (his eyes carefully averted from Draco's face), in case the trapped boy repeated exactly what Harry had done while in the same position. Draco, too appeared wary and easily accepted Harry's help. It seemed however, that their suspicions weren't needed as Pan lay quite still on the forest ground. Harry wasn't sure what to make of it.

Gradually, the beaten Invidian sat up and fixed an intense look of displeasure at Draco. “I will back down for the time being, until a time in which Harry asks that I no longer have to do so or,” the boy's cool green eyes froze over, “that I believe you have acted wrongly in or against him.”

Draco's own eyes shone in challenge but appeared to accept the conditions of this withdraw. “That won't be necessary,” he intone cockily.

Pan turned his head away. “We'll see, Draco.”

Blaise stepped in then, his wand drawn. Harry glanced between the three Invidians, utterly confused by the goings on. He had thought that this was over and now, it seemed it had barely begun.

“What's going on?” He asked, mildly alarmed by the tenor of his voice.

For the meantime, at least, no one else noticed.
The dark haired Slytherin turned to him briefly. “Torrez has just offered up a temporary truce and pledge of fealty to Malfoy,”

“My loyalties lie with Harry, now and always,” glared Pan hatefully. “You had better remember that in your wording or I won’t agree to anything you say.”

“What are you doing?” Harry asked, still not sure what was happening.

“A wizard’s oath,” Pan replied with a grimace. “I’ve agreed to a wizard’s oath, if only to keep that one from harping at me constantly.”

“I’ll give you harping,” Draco growled and pulled his wand from his sleeve.

“Enough! You two, stop it,” Harry cut in exasperated. He stood between the glaring cousins to keep them from another fight. “Pan has conceded defeat, at least until a time in which he finds you incompetent or acting wrongly when it comes to my protection. I think you could at least be a little less antagonistic.”

Draco looked at Harry with an expression of complete incredulity. “You want me to be less antagonistic? Toward him?”

“You still haven’t given me an exact reason to distrust him,” Harry pointed out, fairly. “You’ve only told me that I should and so far, from what I’ve gathered of your interactions today, he has told me nothing but the complete truth. So why shouldn’t I trust him?”

Careful to avoid Blaise’s eyes, Harry imitated the expectant look Hermione had used on him earlier and fixed it firmly upon Draco. The blonde’s face blanked although he was exceedingly frustrated and angry, though Harry wasn’t certain of who his feelings were aimed at, just that they were there, buzzing away beneath an artfully arranged façade of indifference. In fact were it not for their bond, Harry knew he wouldn’t be able to tell what the other boy was thinking at all.

“It’s... complicated,” Draco answered, eventually with what Harry took as an internal wince.

“Then until you feel the need to tell me why he should me forced into a Wizard’s oath, I think his promise should hold over.”

Harry knew that what he was doing was reckless, a wizard’s oath would be the best way to protect himself against anything Pan may do to him in the future. However, he already had enough foresight to see some potential dangers in the boy being under the oath and thought he would much rather take his chances.

Draco looked almost horrified. “Potter, you can’t trust him?”

“Yes, not entirely, no,” Harry admitted. “But enough to hope he won’t kill me in my sleep or hurt me, while you’re still around at least. Besides, I can call for your help if ever I need it, seeing as our bond is now open again.” Surrupitiously, he peered at Pan trying to read him, but the boy didn’t react in anyway he could see.

“So it’s decided,” Harry said and pushed Pan ahead of himself, back towards the school. “Pan will behave, though continue to watch over me and report back to you. How does that sound?”

Pan made a sound of protest but was cuffed across the head. “Would you prefer being under the Oath?” Harry asked. He received a small shake of the head. “Well then, this works out better. Doesn’t it?”
“Potter,” growled an irate Draco, “you can't do that.”

“I can and I will,” Harry retorted as Draco came up by his side, wearing a very dark look indeed. “Until you're willing to inform me of why I should stay clear of Pan, we are going to try this my way.”

“Potter,” Draco tried again.

Harry thought he may have a way of getting both cousins to comply. It was a long shot in the dark, but Harry hoped his guess would be right. If Pan really had wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, even just the slightest bit, he wouldn't want to disrespect the man his father had served faithfully until the very end. Likewise, seeing as Draco was held in high regards of Harry's Aunt, he wouldn't want to been viewed in a negative light by her.

“Any objections and I will be having an interesting chat with my uncle and aunty.” The Angelus watched as the other boys absorbed his words and reacted. Pan blanched dramatically while Draco looked mutinous, though the emotions thrumming along their bond informed Harry that the boy was feeling rather put out, as well as something else that passed for what Harry deemed as admiration, though he couldn't be sure. Following this was an icy and reluctant acceptance.

Even if it hadn't been intended, a resolution had finally come about and while not entirely satisfactory, at least for now it would do.

-Hermione and Ron returned to Gryffindor tower not quite half an hour after Harry himself, both were a little withdrawn, which made Harry think that something had happened between them but it seemed nothing of the sort occurred. If only it had been something as simple as that. But for Harry, nothing was simple.

For most of the afternoon the three ensconced themselves in Harry's room and settled in for a few games of chess and simple conversation. Hermione for the most part revising over some homework she had completed a week previous.

Ron glanced up at Harry suddenly, a look of determination on his face as he ordered his bishop's move. “You'd tell me if there was something wrong, wouldn't you?” he said.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed bemused. “Why d'you ask?”

But Ron just nodded his head. “You know I'd support you, no matter what right? It may take me a bit to get my head around it, but I'd be there for you.”

Harry gazed at his best friend of the past five years in no little confusion, he turned to see Hermione focussing completely on her homework, though he could tell she was listening in intently. “Ron, what are you trying to get at?”

“Look,” Ron said instead, not quite meeting Harry's gaze. “Are you into blokes?”

“What!” Exclaimed Harry, he stood abruptly, knocking the chest set awry and spilling the various angry and protesting pieces across the floor and his own bed. “What on earth—”
“It's all right! I'm fine with that now, I just thought you would have told me. You know, me being your best mate and all. But Zabini? A Slytherin? I know he's neutral, so I guess that isn't so bad but Harry, a Slytherin!?”

Harry who had sunk back to his place on the bed, ignoring the indignant screeches of his little army bit his lip as he gazed evenly at Ron. The red head was breathing heavily, like he had ran to the Quidditch pitch and back again without pause. And to think so few hours ago he and Hermione were having a conversation similar to this.

What, did he have a huge sign floating above his head proclaiming he was gay? True he wasn't sure if he was gay, never considered it before as he had been busy or interested in girls, but still...

“Ron, I'm not gay and certainly not with Zabini,” Harry said seriously.

Hermione stayed suspiciously quiet.

Sighing Ron's determined look increased. “Harry you don't need to lie to me. Can you honestly say, on all our years of friendship that you and Zabini aren't together.”

“I swear, Ron,” Harry said immediately and with great feeling. “We're not together. We're not interesting in the other in that away at all. I don't fancy Zabini and I'm unsure how that conclusion was drawn.”

“I saw you together,” Ron said almost mournfully, like it was the worst thing his eyes had ever laid on. “I saw you and Zabini together.”

Harry frowned, growing somewhat angry now. “And what were we doing?”

“You were talking and then you went off and he followed you. You tell me what you were doing.” Ron sounded like he wanted to believe Harry, but wasn't sure what to believe. He looked somewhat cross and lost.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, Harry wanted to laugh hysterically. This was the third person to query his sexual orientation and the second to have it linked with Blaise in some way. He was angry, yes, that his best friend didn't trust him anymore but this, it was ridiculous. “I'm not going out with Zabini,” Harry stated firmly. “He has been tutoring me,” which wasn't entirely a lie, “Haven't you noticed my grades in Potions?”

The potions tutoring was Draco, actually, but let Ron assume what he would.

“And Runes, he's been helping me with that as well.” Which also wasn't entirely false.

“Why didn't you go to Hermione? She would have helped you,” Ron pressed, obviously not liking that Harry would turn to a Slytherin for anything besides a fight.

“I've tried remember, and no offence Hermione,” Harry offered the quiet girl, “but it didn't work. I just couldn't retain the information as easily. Her style of teaching is more like a lecturer, while Zabini explains things on a level that I can grasp easily.” Of course, Harry hadn't given much time for Hermione to actually teach him anything this year, so he wasn't sure if her teaching methods would still be as ineffective as they had been the previous years.

Slowly Ron seemed to deflate, though he still had a somewhat bitter expression. “But a Slytherin? Why a Slytherin?” He muttered and shook his head. A weak grin gradually breaking out on his lightly freckled face. “Sorry that I thought you and him where... you know. But when I saw you two it just looked that way and I.. I thought you'd tell me something important like that... and well, since
the beginning of term you've been vanishing an awful lot... I just...”

The Angelus looked at his friend. The boy was right, he had been running off a far amount since the beginning of term. But more often as of late. He sighed, feeling far more guilty now that Ron had pointed it out to him.

“Look, I know I've been kinda absent a lot, recently,” Harry muttered, running a hand through his hair. “But between being tutored and going for runs as Blitz, I haven't really had time for you guys and I'm sorry about that. But now that you've kindly pointed that out to me,” Harry said with a wry grin, “I promise I won't run off too often and make you feel abandoned.”

“Good to hear it,” Ron grinned and clapped Harry hard on the back.

Harry was certain he heard Hermione softly mutter, ‘Boys,' under her breath. He ignored it though and grinned back at Ron.

“Looks like we'll have to start again,” Harry sighed—he had been winning for once—and began picking up the scattered chess pieces.

“I guess we should try stopping the rumour going around that you're secretly shagging Zabini out in the Quidditch stands, then.”

Horrified, Harry glanced over at Ron. “What?”

“I'm not sure who started it, but apparently they saw you two out there...” He stopped clearly noticing Harry's colouring draining from his face.

When had that happened? Was that what the noise had been when Blaise and he were talking? A student prowling about the school? His back still twinged at the memory, it had only been the previous night after all but how had anyone seen them arguing and mistake it as that?

He was doomed.

Harry could see the headlines now and they definitely weren't pretty.

“You know,” Ron commented, observing Harry carefully. “You've gone awfully pale. What were you doing with Zabini out in the stands if he's meant to be your tutor?”

Harry was supremely surprised by Ron's statement. Hadn't Ron usually been the most oblivious when it came to things going on around him? Perhaps that had something to do with his hereditas. Maybe it helped make him far more aware? But then, the situation in general was still quite unbelievable.

“A fight actually,” Harry said dismissively, waving his hand in an absent manner. He had more pressing concerns to deal with. “Who else knows?”

“Not many at the moment, but you know how the gossip grapevine at Hogwarts works. It's only a matter of time. Unless Torrez puts a stop to it somehow. I thought you'd notice that people had gone back to just staring at you and no longer actually... y'know, offering anything.”

Harry grimaced but shook his head. “I had thought that was all Pan's doing.”

“So had I, at first,” Ron conceded with a shrug.

“Lets just hope it all blows over fairly quickly and everyone moves on to something else. I really
don't want that hung over my head."

"You and me both, mate."

The rest of the afternoon passed in a peaceful manner before Harry announced that he was going for a run as Blitz. Neither Ron nor Hermione begrudged him a chance to stretch his animagus' legs, both knew how much trouble it caused him to keep the minx quiet if kept shut away for too long and neither would be able to accompany him. Still, he felt bad for having to leave them after his earlier promise to Ron.

Quietly, Harry slipped away and into the thicket that Draco, Blaise and himself used for their transformations. Both Slytherins were already there, as was usual. Draco was leaning against the nearest tree, arms crossed and appearing bored. Blaise was coolly examining his manicured nails. Upon sight of him, Draco's eyes light up and Harry felt the vague sense of the boy being pleased.

"We weren't sure if you'd show," Blaise answered Harry's unasked question.

"Right," Harry replied, bemused.

"Why wouldn't they?"

"Probably because we didn't exactly part on the best of terms," Draco stated, clearly reading and interpreting Harry's emotions correctly.

"Right," Harry said again.

For a moment, Harry actually studied Draco to see how well his healing had gone and wasn't surprised in the least to see the blonde bore not a scratch. It was also then that Harry bothered to check Draco's attire and was mildly disappointed to discover that the boy was wearing his robes. "You know," Harry said glancing at Draco, "the clothes you wore last night suit you far more than your robes."

He completely missed the slight flush which infused the blonde's cheeks and the smugly superior look Blaise tossed at said blonde.

"Now," he said, interrupting the awkward moment without knowing it. "How long do we have?"

"A few hours until dinner," Blaise supplied, tone smug. Harry looked at him oddly.

"Right well." Without thought, he slipped into his animal form and stalked toward the end of the den's boundaries. Instinctually, he cocked his head to the side as his nose caught scent of something foreign and unwanted.

He was abruptly assaulted with the maddening urge to seek out the source of revulsion and wrongness and shot off into the surrounding bush. He knew Draco and Blaise got annoyed whenever he did it, but knew they also understood that it was in his animal's nature to be frisky and bolt at any given opportunity, especially when it had been confined to his human form for sometimes a week or more. Besides, as long as they didn't know he was off hunting, he would be fine.

"Blitz, get back here!" Called Draco feeling as annoyed as he sounded. But the scent drew Harry on until he knew that whatever he was seeking was growing extremely close.

"Later," he replied. 'I'm off to have some fun.'

After several moments following the scent, Harry was unable to determine the direction his prey had gone as the scent was everywhere. The feeling of wrongness and evil assailed him, far stronger than
ever before. It was almost like he was drowning.

The minx was about to turn back, when his fur suddenly stood on end and a low growl was torn from his throat.

He couldn't see what the threat was but knew it was somewhere close and observing him quietly. Whatever it was, Harry wanted it dead. All of his instincts screamed for him to sink his claws and teeth into it and tear it apart but another part, a smaller part told him to find Draco. Harry however, ignored that voice and decided to draw whatever it was out of hiding.

But first things first, he very carefully masked his end of the bond to Draco. The last thing he needed was Draco coming along when Harry wanted to do this alone. If questioned on it later, he could tell the blonde that his hunting instincts had kicked in.

He brushed the thought aside, having had far more pressing matters to deal with.

I know you're here, he thought trying to catch sight of anything that may give away his observers location. But no such luck.

He paced restlessly around, not sure whether he should change back into his human form or not. He was certain that only one being was watching him, but he didn't trust the fact that said being may not approach him once he transformed. And instead may run off with the information that Harry was an illegal animagus and use it against him.

He didn't have long to consider this however, before he could do much more than yelp, some invisible force picked him up and threw him against the nearest large tree trunk. He collided with it resulting in a sickening thud.

“Well, would you look at that,” a voice purred abruptly. “What's a lost little minx doing in a dark, dangerous forest like this? And what gorgeous emerald eyes you have. Inherited from your mother, yes?”

So his identity was known, but by how many others? Harry's vision swam dangerously, as he tried to clear it and glare back at the figure before him. He knew what he was looking at as soon as his eyes glimpsed the other and now that he had time to actually focus on his instincts, he now knew why he was so hell bent on wanting the opposing figure dead.

The creature peering back at him, looked completely normal and could easily be mistaken as human but the scent was enough of a give away as well as the golden eyes. He was one of the clanless. A Gensvacare vampire.

Idly Harry wondered where Draco and Blaise had gotten to but didn't focus on that fact for long, as his attention locked on that for the being before him. He allowed the scent to crash upon him, adjusted his senses to his surroundings, absorbing the waves of malevolence that the other gave off, feeling his fangs lengthen as his Angelus instincts stirred below the surface. A longing that verged on near perverse filling him completely.

“Harry Potter. Yes, I know who you are. Didn't your mother ever tell you not to go off into dark forests, alone?” The vampire paused then laughed menacingly. “Oh my bad, I forgot our lord killed her.”

Abruptly, Harry lunged forward and snapped his jaws at the vampire's neck. It appeared such a move was predicted though and the vampire danced nimbly away. “Now, now Harry don't be like that, I am going to be your new keeper after all, until the dark lord comes to claim you. He should be
most pleased with my accomplishment. Who knew going for a stroll today would bring such luck?"

*New keeper?* The thought caused a thread of fear to blossom.

“Do you have anything to say? No? Pity.”

The man bent toward Harry, ensuring the minx was secured tightly by his hidden bonds before he grinned maliciously, his eyes bore into Harry's and the Angelus began to shudder. A soft, almost beautiful thrum filled the air and turned Harry's veins to ice as the other tried to coax him into surrendering his mind.

*Come on Harry... give in... submit to me... Harry...*

So that was what it felt like to be under another's enthrallment? It was just too bad for the Gensvacare that Harry was immune.

Almost lazily Harry blanked his expression and dulled his eyes, recalling what Draco had looked like. He allowed his tensed muscles to relax and become compliant as the vampire's beautiful, chaotic and hateful song fill his head.

The Gensvacare frowned down at him a moment and Harry lowered his head in complete obsequiousness, unsure exactly what he was supposed to do. The other vampire's expression grew smug. “Took you long enough, but even you wouldn't be able to fight off my enthrallment for long.” He ran a hand over Harry's soft, creamy fur.

Harry only just controlled himself from whipping around to tear the other's hand off, but he managed. If barely.

“I think I'll have you call me master. What do you say to that? Still not up to conversation? That's a shame, I hear you can be quite witty. Ah well.”

The vampire seemed to like listening to himself ramble on. Harry pondered if that was possibly due to him have no other company. His musings were cut off abruptly when he felt a spike of worry from Draco. The blonde was back somewhere where Harry had first run into the vampire. He had to have scented both and realised it was fresh.

*Not yet, damn it,* Harry cursed mentally.

Abruptly Harry's invisible bindings were released and a collar was fitted snugly to his neck.

“So everyone knows who you belong to,” the vampire said with a smile.

The statement caused Harry to seethe. He didn't belong to the vampire and the very thought of if made his blood boil. Before either could blink an eye, Harry pounced on the other, claws sinking into soft flesh and teeth tearing through ligaments and cartilage but his grip wasn't well aimed and he was ripped off.

“I should have known,” the vampire spat angrily, a hand clutching at his damaged shoulder. “I knew that had been far too easy. You are well known for cocking up my lord's plans, after all.”

He slashed Harry across the shoulder and neck, causing the minx yowl out in pain. This caused a stillness in Harry's bond. He cursed inwardly as he then felt Draco's temper rise and his rapid approach. But Harry wanted the kill to himself.

In a manoeuvre neither foresaw, Harry abruptly changed back, his nails lengthened into claws. He
caught the vampire under the throat and tore open his neck. The Gensvacare stumbled back as black
blood spurted from his ruined throat, even as he tried to lessen the bleeding, but Harry wouldn't
allow it. With a viciousness he didn't know was in him, he ripped the weakening hands away and
latched on to the willowy neck, his slender hands snapped the bone with one precise movement and
he pulled away, blood dripping from his claws.

The vampire collapsed and didn't move again but even that didn't satisfy the Nikolai heir. With a
grace Harry shouldn't possess, he plucked the Gensvacare's blackened heart from it's cage and just
peered back at his kill without emotion.

It was too easy.

Far too easy. He realised detachedly.

To kill, to take another life and Harry felt absolutely nothing for it. No remorse not even a
satisfaction. The only feeling that he could really claim was a sense of calmness that had suddenly
cloaked him. A sense that he had done what was needed.

Was that what it felt like being a killer?

Deciding he didn't want to think about it anymore, Harry transformed back into Blitz and made his
way back to his thicket, ignoring as Draco and Blaise called for him to stop. It was evident both had
come upon the Gensvacare's mangled corpse. They'd also quite possibly scented Harry's own blood
as well and were worried and likely pissed. Well, Draco was highly annoyed, as was usual. Livid,
too as Harry predicted and also extremely concerned.

Which reminded him. He released his end of the bond and continued back to the trio's den.

Harry didn't quite make it to the thicket, however, as he was suddenly pounced on from behind and
pinned to the hard ground.

'Get off of me, Ice.'

He was ignored as the nixie leant in to sniff at his bloody shoulder, then pressed his muzzle firmly
into Harry's neck and growled, 'Why didn't you wait for us?' Draco countered. 'Why didn't you call
for backup?'

'Because I knew I could handle it.'

'That's not the point, Blitz,' Draco hissed.

Squirming around, Harry tried to toss Draco from his back but was unable to do so and instead
ended up flat on his back. At least that way he could glare up at the other boy. "Get. Off," he ground
out.

"Not until you get it through your thick skull that there is a reason I am bound to you," Draco replied
evenly, even as he readjusted his position to effectively trap Harry. "I'm here for your protection.
We're partners, until one of us dies or our bond is severed. You will not be running off alone and if
you get into any kind of situation, you call me. That's why I'm here."

"Fine," Harry sighed in defeat, though his eyes narrowed on the blonde.

Draco paused, blinked then leaned in closer. "Potter, why are you wearing a collar?"

It was then both seemed to realise they were back in human form and that Draco still had Harry
pinned, there faces inches apart. This would look incredibly wrong for anyone who happened upon them.

“Am I interrupting something?”

Which is apparently what Blaise thought.

“No,” Harry said turning his head to face the newcomer as Draco slowly stood. “Malfoy was trying to drill into me the importance of pack hunting.”

“Sure that’s the only thing he was trying to drill into you?” Blaise pressed with a smirk.

Harry levelled a glare on the new arrival, the effect was ruined by the slight colour suffusing his cheeks a soft rose shade.

“Drag your mind from the gutter, Zabini,” Draco snapped, his eyes were chips of ice. Then he was stalking off toward the school.

Harry stood calmly and brushed off the bits of forest attached to his clothes as he ignored Blaise completely. His neck and shoulder were still bleeding and didn’t look like it was going to stop. Almost absently he ran his hand through the warm crimson liquid.

“Is there a reason I’m not healing as I should?” He asked Blaise, startling the boy.

“Not that I know of,” Blaise admitted after a pause. “Maybe Malfoy does?”

“Malfoy is off in a strop now because of your insinuation,” Harry pointed out calmly. “I doubt he’ll be wanting to talk to either of us for a while.”

And he was angry too. No furious seemed more fitting to what the Slytherin was feeling. It was tinged with annoyance and a touch of embarrassment.

“Ah well, what can you do?”

“Perhaps keep inaccurate observations to yourself?”

“Hey,” Blaise cried defensively, arms raised as though to ward off a physical attack. “It didn't look inaccurate to me.”

“Just don’t say anything to him, in fact keep all observations that may be detrimental to your health to yourself. At the moment he is extremely angry, although some of that is likely my doing, you I'm afraid wouldn't stand a chance against him right now. So I'd avoid him if I were you,” Harry warned and began fiddling with the collar around his neck.

“Advice noted.”

Harry hissed when the collar stung him and he allowed his hands to fall away. “Good,” he said to Blaise, absently. “Now can you help get this thing off?”

Blaise looked at Harry questioningly and blinked.

“Harry, why are you wearing a collar?”

Harry glowered and the question was ignored.

-jade.requiem-
The next few hours passed without event. Blaise took Harry's advice and avoided Draco like the plague and Draco avoided both Harry and Blaise. Until that is, Harry received a small note in his soup at dinner.

He glared at the small origami frog doing laps in the liquid and pulled it free. He had been enjoying his soup, too.

“What you got there, Harry?” Dean asked as he leant over to see what it was.

“Origami frog,” Harry replied and revealed the wiggling paper frog to his fellow house mate. Annoyed that whenever it moved it would splash soup on him and Draco's barely concealed glee only helped cultivate Harry's growing irritation.

“Why d'you put that in your soup?” Seamus asked.

It seemed everyone turned to look at the Irish boy, their stares were flat and bored right into him.

“It fell in,” Harry said as he dried the frog and slipped it into his pocket. “I've been trying my hand at origami. It must have gotten loose or something because I could have sworn it was in my bag before.”

Harry knew his lie was well received until his gaze fell upon Hermione. Her eyes were narrowed and she was eying his pocket with suspicion, then far more troublingly she looked right at Draco. He would have to answer to her later. He just knew it.

As his own note the previous day had stated, Draco's was the same.

Meet me in our room at eleven.

That gave Harry a few hours to play a few more games of chess with Ron and satisfy all of Hermione's questions before he slipped out.

The room was as it had been the previous night when Harry arrived and again Draco as always, already there and standing to the side of the fireplace. His face thoughtful. Harry was happy to see he had taken the advice about the clothing.

“Hey, Malfoy,” Harry said and somehow sprawled elegantly in his favourite sofa.

Blaise, Harry noted wasn't there so Draco was obviously still angry at him.

“Look,” Draco said, skipping the pleasantries. “As I wasn't able to finish what I was saying earlier due to our interruption... I- Don't you ever bloody do that again!” He barked suddenly, “I mean it, Potter, you are to come to me for anything you have trouble with, all right? I may not be able to help much on the surface of things, unless in a situation like this afternoons.”

He seemed to be growing more infuriated by the second, while Harry became nonplussed.

“He was really worried,” Harry mused thoughtfully as well as shocked. And not for the prince but me.

“Do you realise how...” Harry was having a hard time trying to determine exactly what Draco was feeling. Prominently, there was anger. It was almost always there, it seemed. Something that felt like dread and embarrassment but the worst feeling was what Harry took as helplessness.

“You don't need to explain,” Harry said, as it was obvious the boy was going to have difficulties
saying what he felt.

Draco gave Harry a hard look and proceeded.

“First I felt your fear and then found scattered scent traces of that Gensvacare with yours. To top it off, you closed your end of our bond off again and fought alone. What would you have done if it incapacitated you? I wouldn't have been able to find you because the bond was closed. Merlin! I don't think you truly understand what could happen to you.

“Not only are you The blasted-boy-who-lived, you're an Angelus. Nikolai heir and Crown prince. Now, while most other creatures out there won't know what you are, your luck isn't going to hold out forever and someone will eventually discover your weaknesses and exploit them! It's this reason that I've been assigned to you, to make sure things like that don't happen but how can I do that when you bloody well hare off on your own?!”

“I'm not some child who needs a baby sitter!” Harry snapped, growing angry himself at being treated like a child. He stood and glared at the other boy who was observing him just as heated. “I know how to take care of myself. I've been doing it for years and despite what Snape thinks, it wasn't just sheer dumb luck!” Only partially.

“And today, Potter?” Draco sneered. Looking every bit like the Draco Malfoy Harry had grown to dislike.

“Another hurdle my life throws in on occasion to make it more interesting,” Harry quipped, absently his fingers grazed his tender neck.

Draco's eyes fixed on the movement in an instant and promptly seized Harry's shirt and pushed it aside to reveal the large slash. It was healing, albeit far more slowly than it should have been.

Draco's eyes narrowed.

“How long has this been going on?” He asked, voice softening slightly but still infused with a touch of anger. “I know your back was injured yesterday but that's understandable given your wings are sealed in. Have you had any other injuries that don't heal almost immediately?”

Draco's constant mood swings were bound to be the end of Harry, that or they'd drive him mental eventually. Harry wondered if Blaise had picked up on the boy's almost bipolar tendencies and reasoned he probably had.

Harry tried to glance at his injury where the blonde's fingers were softly brushing the edges but was unable to. Sighing, he replied, “No. Haven't really hurt myself lately and despite what you may believe, I harbour no masochistic tendencies.”

Draco snorted. “I'll have Zabini look into it,” he said and relinquished his hold.

The sudden loss of contact had Harry feeling mildly dazed but he managed to seat himself just fine and watched as Draco paced back and forth in front of him instead. The blonde appeared to be having an internal struggle and his emotions didn't help Harry in trying to fathom out what was wrong.

“Why don't you trust me?” Draco asked and Harry was terribly offended but Draco cut him off before a word was said. “Damn it Potter, just listen.”

Harry's mouth snapped close with an angry click.
“You may claim to trust me,” he gave Harry a quelling look when it appeared the Gryffindor was about to interrupt, “but I don’t you think you do completely. Or you at least don’t trust my judgement.”

“And you trust mine?” Harry asked incredulously.

“Potter, look where your misplaced trust has landed you in the past,” Draco retorted without heat.

This helped deflate Harry only a little. “I don’t trust Pan entirely,” he said knowing where all this was coming from and wanting their discussion on him over as soon as possible. “But I’m willing to give him the benefit out the doubt. Until he proves he can’t be trusted, and I do trust you…” he said, uncomfortably. “I wouldn’t let you read my emotions like a book if I didn’t, but you can’t expect me to just agree to what you say, either.”

Draco nodded faintly, although Harry got the impression that the feeling was mutual.

“Then we’ll agree to disagree on this matter,” the blonde said, looking and feeling incredibly bitter about it. He continued to pace in front of Harry and seemed to be gathering his courage or perhaps he was trying to form proper sentences. Either way, Harry knew that the blonde was struggling with what he really wanted to say and despite the fact that at another time, Harry would have loved nothing more than an opportunity to get one up on Draco for his lack of eloquence, he found the blonde’s sudden problem somewhat endearing. Not that he’d ever tell Draco that. He didn’t think the Slytherin would be too terribly pleased.

With that in mind, Harry thought to end the other boy’s suffering.

“Let me guess, you want to be friends?”

The blonde’s expression turned wary, almost like he was expecting Harry to mock him or perhaps laugh out right. “That’s right,” he said with an equal caution. Then he held out his hand for Harry to take.

The gesture was not lost on either.

It was the same yet different Draco Malfoy who was offering his hand to Harry in friendship and despite many misgivings, Harry didn't think he could decline the blonde's hand again without feeling bad about it. He knew the Draco he had met that day on the train was mostly an act and that the Draco who stood before him now was the real thing but that wasn’t just it. Harry didn't think he would be able to crush that small light of hope within the blonde's grey eyes without being affected.

Easily, Harry stood as he accepted the proffered hand in his smaller but no less stronger one. He only just registered the surprise that flickered through the bond he shared with the Malfoy heir. Until that moment, Harry hadn't realised exactly how badly Draco had wanted his friendship and was almost shocked himself by the sudden delight that blossomed in the Slytherin and thrummed along their bond back to him.

It was then that Harry noticed Draco was actually smiling. The first honest smile Harry had ever seen him give.

It was devastating.

The Gryffindor countered with a radiant smile of his own and steadily shook the hand clasping his firmly.

“Friends,” he said, still smiling.
Chapter thirteen: The descent

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But how can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

The next two weeks flew by in a flurry of classes, the premature arrival of winter and a vindictive snow storm, letters to and from Harry's family and splitting his time among his Gryffindor friends and his Invidian ones. There was also homework, which he was never short of. This, of course, meant Harry was one very busy boy.

Draco and Blaise had started talking to each other again at Harry's encouraging, though Blaise took the Nikolai heir's advice to heart and never again spoke his observations out loud. At least, none that were potentially fatal to him. Well, not very often and seldom while in earshot of Draco.

Harry even felt a little bad about Blaise's newfound situation. Almost regretting his work in cultivating the dark Invidian's backbone, as it seemed that by doing so, he had only shortened Blaise's life expectancy.

Pan—surprisingly—had kept his word to Draco, and while the white-haired boy continued to follow Harry around and report back to Draco, he was no longer considered a pest anymore. Mostly he was just a silent observer, only stepping in to separate Harry from overzealous fans and was more often seen snooping around, amusing himself with various misdeeds—nothing serious—though he had yet to be caught in the act. Something that was proving to be quite difficult for the entire faculty, except Dumbledore who appeared to know it was him and turned a blind eye to everything that he did.

Harry assumed the old wizard allowed it only to distract the students from the looming darkness that now plagued the wizarding world, or perhaps the old man found it amusing. He did have a rather twisted sense of humour, after all. Sometimes Harry had to question the headmaster's sanity though.

Then there was the love potion that Pan still hadn't yet used. Harry was still curious as to what the Slytherin intended with it, but never asked.

And Draco and Harry's friendship seemed to grow. It had been somewhat stilted to begin with, given they had been rivals for five years and merely acquaintances of a sort for the months that had passed since they had been bonded. Of course, all of it had to be kept secret from the school, which was a lot harder than Harry had initially thought it would be. At times he had almost gone and sat with Draco, as it had become something of a habit when the two were alone or with Blaise.

But then, Harry had also noticed something rather peculiar about his and Draco's developing relationship. That being sometimes he got the oddest feelings from the Slytherin. Though he hadn't been able to decipher them clearly.

Another thing that Harry had observed was that, well, Draco stared at him an awful lot.

Sometimes the Gryffindor got the impression that Draco may even fancy him slightly, but he had laughed that particular idea out the window. The Angelus just attributed that to Hermione placing ideas in his head. The fact that his warder was highly tactile really didn't help matters any, though.
And when around Harry, the Invidian was generally always within arms' reach, if not less.

Most disturbing, however, was that Harry found he really didn't mind being in such close proximity to the other. Truth be told, he rather enjoyed it. During the few occasions where he'd question why he was so accepting, he put it all down to his lack of positive touch growing up and that seeing as he and Draco held a warder bond, he'd be more receptive.

So for the most part, the past few weeks had gone reasonably well.

There was but one minor flaw in the way things had become.

“I can't find anything abnormal about it,” Hermione muttered dejectedly, as she prodded the collar Harry had given to her.

The two were nestled in a secluded corner of the library, not far from where Harry's old alcove hid, studying the collar he had obtained through his run in with the Gensvacare vampire.

Ron, as was more often than not these days, nowhere to be seen.

Actually, he was probably off snogging Lavender by now, which accounted for Hermione's current odd mood. It made Harry want to kill Lavender for having caused the upset in the harmonious Holy Trinity.

Harry had already secretly vowed that if Lavender dared say ‘Won Won' again in his presence, he'd at least hex her mute for the remaining school year. But that, unfortunately, wouldn't ease things between Hermione and Ron. Still, Harry had to admire Hermione's resilience. He wasn't so sure he'd fair quite so well had their situations been reversed.

“Well,” Hermione quickly amended, not seeing her friend's gaze locked on her, “aside from the charm to keep it from being removed by the wearer, it looks just like any normal collar. And you say you found this out in the forest? I can only imagine what could have happened to the pet of such an expensive looking thing.”

Harry nodded but kept his thoughts to himself. No need to tell Hermione he had been the pet in this particular circumstance or have her find out that he was well on his way to becoming a serial killer. That thought made him terribly depressed.

Sure Hermione and Ron accepted him now, but what would they do if they ever found out that he had already killed three people? Well, beings. Vulcan's death was in self defence and he was an Angelus, Greyback was human most of the time, even if he no longer possessed a conscious but had been a werewolf when Harry killed him, as for the Gensvacare... well, it was just in Harry's nature to kill them. He still hadn't even told his aunt and uncle about that run in and didn't think he would for a while yet...

“So essentially, it's harmless?”

“Yes,” Hermione said with a prim nod. “Although to be certain we could give it to Professor McGonagall and have her test it for anything I may have missed.”

“I suppose,” Harry said, not feeling like giving the collar up at all. In some bizarre way, he felt it like some sort of trophy but he grudgingly allowed Hermione to stash it away in her large book bag. Glancing around at the scattered books the bushy haired girl has surrounded herself in, Harry snatched up a copy and couldn't keep his brow from arching in surprise.

“Bonds, Hermione? I thought we were here trying to work out the reasons for my slow
regeneration.” Even though his words were calm, inside he his mind was racing. The book hadn’t been merely Bonds but more specifically, on that of Blood bonds.

Did Hermione suspect something? Harry bit his lip.

“It was just something I was looking into,” Hermione replied hastily and bagged that book, too. “And I have gone over everything in this library that may be of help. But from what I’ve gathered, there still isn’t enough information for me to go on. Especially since there is nothing in here on your clan and the information released to the students on vampires in general is nothing new...” Her frown deepened.

“...There has to be something that we’re missing. And I would swear that it was something incredibly simple.”

“Even my books didn’t help, then?” Harry asked with a sigh, still more focussed on the fact Hermione was pursuing information on blood bonds for some reason that he should perhaps be wary of.

Hermione shook her head. “Don’t get me wrong, they were intriguing if still quite vague. Like it says very little on how your clan came about or even the... other clan,” she said, lowering her voice. “From what I understood of the text was that you and the other clan are considered elites in the vampire world and are somehow linked to the Regalis, although I had always thought they were merely myth.”

“Regalis?” Harry questioned, captivated. He had read something that had mentioned the Regalis as well, but he just couldn't remember what he had been studying up on at the time.

His question was ignored as Hermione rambled on. He decided to mute her out as she waffled on for the moment and instead focus on this new potential issue.

Harry was fairly certain the books he had lent Hermione mentioned nothing on blood bonds being in place between Angelus and Invidians. Or just any type of bond in general. He blinked and recalled the reference between Angelus, Invidians and their tie to Draconis. Could that have been what peaked Hermione's interest when it came to bonds? She had been looking at Draco a fair amount lately and Harry knew it wasn't because the girl fancied him. Was it because she had or was close to, figuring out Harry's tie to the blonde?

Maybe, the young prince thought with a frown. Possibly. Though Harry certainly wasn't willing to stake anything on that assumption just yet.

But that logic was flawed. Just because there was a similarity in their names didn't necessarily mean that they were linked in anyway. Even though Harry knew for a fact that Draco had indeed been named after Draconis, their creator as well as the constellation, Hermione wasn't aware of that...

It took a few minutes for Harry to realise that the girl he was contemplating was studying him intently. He blinked at her. Had she asked him something? He didn't think so, then again he had been ignoring her.

“Er, what?” he asked, a touch nervously.

“I asked whether you thought Dumbledore would call you again before the Christmas holidays,” Hermione answered with a small shake of her head. “Honestly, Harry.”

“I don't know,” he replied, folding his arms across his chest. Lifting his gaze, he settled it upon his friend. “He might. To discuss things, see if I have any ideas so I can think it over during the break.
but...” he trailed off with a shrug.

The silence that the pair fell into was stifling. Not something Harry was used to when it came to being with Hermione or Ron.

*Is it really getting this bad?* He thought morosely to himself. *That I'm drifting away from them? That we're drifting away from each other?* Harry knew he no longer spent almost all his waking hours with his best friends. Not like he used to. The trio had been almost inseparable and now, now it just seemed like each where drifting away slowly. He wondered if that's what growing up meant.

Taken by impulse, the Angelus leaned across the table packed with books and brought a startled Hermione against him in a hug. Almost immediately, she returned his embrace albeit in confusion.

“You all right, Harry?” She asked worriedly when he finally released her.

“Oh,” he replied, trying to figure out why he had done what he did. “I just realised something, is all.”

Hermione nodded along, as though trying to encourage him further without saying a word. But Harry spoke nothing more on the subject. Unable to form words from his thoughts and voice them.

“Ow!” Harry yelped suddenly, as Hermione took a swipe at him. He pulled away from the girl as far as he could, without standing from his chair and fixed her with a glare. “What was that for!?”

She huffed and cross her arms. “How many times must I tell you to stop playing with that?”

The boy in question glanced at his friend like she wasn't quite right in the head, before he understood. “Oh,” he muttered guiltily and dropped his necklace back into his robes, earning a small curt nod from the girl.

“Now, I think we should start on our potions homework.”

Harry groaned and dropped his head to the table, but the impending connection was broken by the stack of books in the way.

“But what about... my problem?”

“I think you should discuss that with your Aunty and Uncle,” Hermione replied. She gave Harry a helpless look, which wasn't something that he was used to seeing on her very often. If at all. She knew the answers to everything. “There just isn't enough information for me to even hypothesise. It could be anything. From the final stages of your instincts coming in, to an allergy to something you've been exposed to.”

The Angelus's whipped up and locked on Hermione's face. “What do you mean about the final stages of my instincts coming in?”

Hermione gave Harry a patient look. “I'm guessing you haven't read the *entire* book about your clan, have you?” She asked.

Harry shook his head sheepishly and Hermione nodded.

“I'm just going on my observations. But from what I've seen, I'd estimate that the last of your instincts are just now coming in. I'd even go so far as to expect them to have reached instinctual ‘maturity’ by Christmas, if not sooner.”
“How’d you figure that?” Harry asked, bemused.

Instead of answering the boy, Hermione pulled a worn looking book from her bag and held it beneath Harry's nose. He took it immediately, recognising it as the book on vampires his under Demetrius had given to him those few months ago.

“Read it,” the bushy-haired girl ordered, sternly. “All of it. You're going to need the information.”

Harry glanced at his book in growing alarm. He had skimmed through it. Read the main things he thought was important and skipped the rest. What on earth had he missed that was obviously of great importance? Surely it couldn't be to terrible, could it? Wouldn't Draco have at least warned him? Not unless he already thought I'd known, Harry answered himself.

“It isn’t bad, is it Hermione?” He asked anxiously.

She offered him a soft smile. “No, not bad, exactly. But I'm certain you won't be too pleased by what you read.”

“It doesn't have anything to do with my supposed aversion to werewolves and vampires, does it?”

“No, Harry,” Hermione replied with another shake of her head. “Although the werewolf aversion has it's own issues, obviously. But we can look at that when the problem comes up later on or...”

Harry chose to ignore the small bout of guilt that comment caused. Promising himself that one day, he would tell both Hermione and Ron what he'd done. But until that day came, he'd keep his silence.

“Right,” he said, pretending to be listening to the witch. He dropped his gaze to the book in his hands and sighed in resignation. “I'll just get to reading the book then?”

Hermione smiled encouragingly at Harry. Though of course he didn't see the look.

The girl rolled her eyes at the emerald-eyed boy. “See that you do,” she said with a nod and returned to her assignment.

-jade.requiem-

After classes that afternoon, found Harry trotting through snow two-feet deep. Despite the rather obvious reasons to stay indoors on such a nippy day, Harry had wanted to visit Hedwig. With the way things had been going lately, he had been far too busy trying to share his time out amongst his friends evenly and complete his homework, leaving little to no time for him to check-up on his beloved owl.

Obviously he saw her whenever she'd deliver mail from his family, if they didn't require the need for Czar, the large ebony owl of theirs', to deliver Harry's mail. Still, that wasn't quite the same and the Angelus was beginning to really feel guilty about neglecting his faithful friend.

A small chill ran up his spine, having nothing to do with the coolness that clung to the air. Hermione had brought it up again. But how could she not? He hadn't been called in to see Dumbledore in what felt like years, even so, at the back of Harry's mind was the ever present question he had been asking himself since he'd heard about the blasted prophecy.

He didn't believe in destiny. That things were just fated to be, nor did Dumbledore and he had enforced this idea on Harry. What had happened, had happened and not because it was predestined. Dumbledore made certain Harry understood that, and he did.
The boy sighed heavily as he let his feet carry him, guided by some invisible trail. And now, there wasn't merely prophecies he had to contend with, but other things that had to be taken into account if Voldemort was ever going to be vanquished. While Harry knew that fate didn't map out everything, he also knew that he would be the one to defeat Voldemort somehow. Dumbledore hadn't specified how that was to be done, but had none so subtly hinted that it would be a power Voldemort didn't know and had often mentioned Harry's ability to love.

It was times like this that he wished he could run away, but he knew that he couldn't. He didn't have that luxury. On a couple of occasions he had even wondered what life may have been like had he been born to his and aunt Selene and uncle Demetrius. Immediately, of course, he had felt guilty for such selfish musings. His parents had loved him dearly. Enough to sacrifice their lives for his own. Who was he to even consider what it would have been like having different parents when he had been blessed with the ones he had?

“What am I going to do?” Harry questioned himself aloud.

And he still hadn't informed Draco of the prophecy and wasn't sure he ever could.

Or, at least not until after Harry had killed Voldemort. If he didn't die first, that was. And Harry was almost certain if Draco were to catch word that the rumours that had been flying around school about the prophecy were true, the blonde would find someway to attach himself permanently to Harry's side, or lock him away somewhere safe. Neither option sounded particularly desirable.

He grimaced and turned to Draco, who was striding purposefully towards him through the thick blanket of snow.

“You've become more daring,” Harry smirked at his warder, forcing all uneasiness away. “What would everyone say if they saw the Gryffindor Golden boy walking along with the Slytherin Ice prince without at least throwing some kind of insult at the other?” The green-eyed boy teased lightly, “surely they'd think our world was at an end.”

The Slytherin rolled his eyes but returned the smirk. “That, or they'd think it was some dastardly plot by Voldemort,” Draco bantered back. “Though I doubt very many people would actually see us anyway. Any sane person would, at this moment, be seated in their warm common room.”

Inwardly, Harry smiled as Voldemort's name rolled easily from Draco's tongue. It seemed not so long ago, that even he wasn't unable to quite accept that it was merely a name. Actually, it was probably safer, considering who he would have been surrounded by growing up. Still, Harry thought it was a great accomplishment. Now, if only Ron could get over his little phobia...

Harry sighed wearily and focused back on the Slytherin. “I can't Draco,” he said, knowing what the other was really asking him. “I promised Ron I'd help him with something later on. Then there's Hermione...” He trailed off wishing that his two best friends would just get together. Then they'd have each other to distract and wouldn't bother so much with him.

No, his conscious denied. They'd never simply dump me like that.

This time Draco sighed, in mounting frustration.

“I understand,” he said feeling bitter. “With the wease-Wesley spending all his time with Brown, Granger has no one else.” The blonde frowned at that. “When did Wesley start up with Brown? I'll assume she threw herself at him seeing as he can't see past his—”

“Draco,” Harry murmured in warning.
“All right,” the other muttered resentfully, “no insulting the Wesley.” The ‘in your presence,’ remained unsaid but Harry still knew it was there.

“Why do you hate Ron and Hermione so much?” Harry asked abruptly, genuinely curious and still a little annoyed. “I already know that you don't really hate muggleborns but you can't stand her and Ron... well, I figured the whole Weasley versus Malfoy thing was just due to your supposed allegiances.”

Silence answered him. That and many conflicting emotions that gradually receded back into Draco’s corner of his mind.

It seemed Harry had come across one of those forbidden subjects with Draco. Strangely, there hadn't been too many of those and the Slytherin was willing to share pretty much everything with Harry, despite the latter having a fair amount of things that he'd dance around or clam up about. The Cedric incident was one such thing, as was the Ministry of magic mess.

He knew Draco was aware of a majority of what had happened, seeing as Lucius had been present during both events (even if not for the entire thing.) The Angelus also knew that Draco was extremely curious about both incidents and would have loved questioning Harry further, but had refrained himself, so it was only fair that Harry leash his own curiosity until the Slytherin was willing to speak about it himself.

“Never mind,” Harry said and stopped as the pair reached the top of the stairs. The Owlery just beyond the door. The young Angelus tilted his head to the side as he heard whispers. No, it sounded vaguely like singing. He frowned as he tried to recall exactly where he had heard that music before. However, the song died well before he could remember. “Did you hear that?”

The Invidian's brows furrowed in confusion. “Hear what?”

“Something...” Harry said, not turning to look at his companion. What if he was beginning to hallucinate? Or was going mad? He shook his head to clear it. “It's nothing... important.”

Without another word, Harry entered the owlery and was greeted enthusiastically by Hedwig as she swept down and landed on his arm. “Hey girl,” he cooed. “Been well?

She gave a soft hoot and nipped at his ear.

“I'll take that as a yes.”

Stroking her downy feathers, Harry turned back to his friend. Draco was just leaning against the doorframe, glancing around at the large chamber in boredom. “You don't have to stand there, you know,” Harry pointed then frowned as a sudden thought came to him.

“Draco?”

The blonde turned and arched a brow in question.

“Who were the Regalis?” Harry asked the moment he had Draco's full attention. The blonde didn’t bat an eye at the Gryffindor's unexpected question. Although he was evidently perplexed and curious as to why Harry was suddenly asking.

“The Regalis are meant to have been blood gods,” Draco replied, easily. “Though there is no proper documentation of them having ever existed and if there was, it was long lost or destroyed over the centuries.”
“So you wouldn't be able to tell me whether we are descendants of them?”

“No,” Draco answered slowly. “All we can go on are the stories told of them. Although, it is said that all vampires are descendants from the five in one way or another, but again we have no accurate proof of any of this. Records of the Angelus and Invidian races came sometime after the supposed disappearances of the so called Regalis.

“There had been stories passed down through the generations though, saying that Draconis was one of the Regalis. The last brother, but no one knows for sure if that's true, either.”

“There were five?” Harry queried, as he absently fed Hedwig some treats.

“Allegedly,” Draco shrugged and started towards Harry and the beautiful white owl. “Each was meant to have mastery over an element; fire, water, metal, earth and spirit or air. It varies with each recount of the old families'.

“Why do you ask?”

“Something Hermione brought up,” came Harry's response. “She was also saying that I would have reached my 'instinctual maturity' by Christmas, or just before. I guess that means I'll be a fully fledged killer,” he chuckled bitterly.

Draco gave him an odd look and frowned. “You're fine with your family and myself,” he pointed out, “and we're all, as you put it, ‘fully fledged killers.' So why is it so different?’”

That actually made sense, in a way.

He was pondering that when Hedwig leant forward and nipped at Draco's finger as he attempted to touch her. The Slytherin shot the bird a filthy glare and slipped his injured digit into his mouth.

Carefully, the Gryffindor helped launch the snowy owl into the air. She fluttered around a bit, before settling for the alcove he’d been in before Harry had entered the chamber.

A sudden draft blew in the Owlery door, causing both boys to look toward it.

“Does that mean you’ll be taking part in the annual Games?” Blaise asked, appearing at the door of the Owlery. His dark eyes were eerily bright.

Harry felt a sudden chill travel down his spine.

“Harry won't be entering the Games for Yule,” Draco glowered at Blaise menacingly.

The Nikolai shivered at the tone and was startled when he found himself suddenly encompassed by Draco's comforting scent and had said blonde wrapping his very thick and expensive scarf around Harry's neck.

“So you don't freeze to death,” Draco drawled out lazily, having again read and clearly interpreted Harry's feelings. He was getting remarkably good at that. Harry, himself still had a fair amount of difficulty even attempting to decipher what Draco was feeling let alone figuring out what he was thinking.

“Thanks, Draco,” Harry murmured, a little bewildered by it all and a pale blush tinting his cheeks. “But won't you get cold?”

“I'm a Slytherin, our common room and dorms are down in the dungeons. I'm pretty used to the cold
after all these years,” the blonde replied loftily. “Just next time you want to go traipsing about in the
snow, remember to come prepared.” Draco looked completely unaffected by Harry's gratitude.
Internally though, was a different story.

Harry understood that Draco wasn't one to display his...softer feelings openly, certainly not in front
of Blaise who, for some reason Draco still possessed a rather strong dislike of. Though it was
dwindling, day by day. Which was something.

Maybe Harry was having an effect on Draco's mannerisms, too?

“Oh C'mon, Malfoy,” Blaise muttered, brushing aside the small interlude between the other boys.
“Aren't you willing to let Potter have *some* fun during Yule? You know the annual Games are
probably going to be the only fun thing he would be allowed to do. Especially so close after his
crowning.”

“Have you ever been to *any* of these Games or have you only heard of them from others?” Draco
asked harshly and didn't even bother waiting for an answer. “They aren't *fun*, Zabini. And I know
for a fact that neither Lord and Lady Nikolai would allow Harry to attend.”

“I had thought they *would* want Potter to take part,” Blaise said. He glanced between Draco and
Harry for a moment. “It's not like he can't handle himself. He's already proven it at least twice more
since the first time.”

“That's beside the point,” Draco drawled, his eyes had narrowed on the other Invidian and was
almost looming. “He won't take part because it's unsafe. Regardless of whether he can handle
himself or not, too many accidents tend to happen during these so called Games. Far too many for
Lord and Lady Nikolai to readily allow him.”

“Even if both attend themselves?” Blaise questioned. It seemed he was unable to quite let go of his
point.

“That would give them more reason not to allow him,” Draco replied curtly. Clearing growing *very*
angry with Blaise's relentlessness. “What would happen if all three Nikolais were to die during the
Games? Think before you speak, Zabini,” he chastised the other Slytherin.

“What kind of Games are you talking about?” Harry asked warily. Blaise's eyes widened in surprise
and he carefully looked away when Draco shot him a glare.

“It's a ...was, a rite of passage. The final marker to Adulthood, so to speak. Though these days it's
just something to keep the *idiots* happy. I was told that Lord Demetrius didn't take part in the Games
until he was 26 and then it was because he was made to. He refused to take another after his warder's
death and so was forced by the Elders into taking part of the games.

“He wasn't happy, understandably. Having already been crowned King for many years prior but he
did as he was told and proved himself to them...”

“The Games are usually held on or around Winter Solstice, but your crowning is meant to be held
then, so it's possible that they may even postpone it until next year. I doubt the idiots of Court would
want to hold the Games this year, especially with something far more interesting going on.”

“Have either of you ever been to one of these Games?” Harry asked, feeling the disturbing chill from
earlier crawling over his skin as he channelled Draco's emotions.

Blaise shook his head and chose to remain silent.
Draco nodded and swallowed thickly. “I was made to go last year with my father to prove myself to the Court. Never mind I wasn't even sixteen at the time. But I took part, proved I was capable of doing all they asked of me... It's a major test of character...”

There was something in the way Draco spoke of the whole thing that set Harry on edge. Maybe he should be glad that he wasn't going to join in on this year's Games. Draco didn't look like he wanted to join it again anytime soon and perhaps there had been an actual reason Demetrius had delayed his participation himself.

“This event is the best time any of your opponents, known or otherwise have a chance to kill you while faking an accident,” Draco added, driving his point home. “As I said, I strongly doubt your family would allow you to participate.”

“Right,” Harry murmured, feeling rather disturbed by what he had been told. What kind of game was it anyway? Did he even want to know? Going on Draco's feelings considering the matter, Harry was certain that he really didn't.

“Look Harry, Don't worry about it,” Draco intoned with a confident air. He slung an arm around Harry's shoulders in what the latter supposed was intended to be a comforting gesture but in reality, was making him kind of flustered. The sudden smugness emanating from Draco informed Harry the blonde was aware of this, too. “If you don't want to attend, I'll make sure you don't have to. I'm allowed to do anything in my power to see to it that you remain unharmed.”

From the corner of his eye, Harry could see Blaise was about to say something and by the dopey grin on his face, it would be totally inappropriate. Quickly, Harry shot the boy a quelling look, causing Blaise to roll his eyes.

“Anything on my regeneration problem yet?” Harry asked then. It had been his main concern, after all. Even if their meeting was a rather unplanned. He was also really beginning to wish he had met them in their common room, or at the very least went there now. Even if he felt immensely better with the warmth of Draco's scarf around his neck... and his warder still pressed to his side with arm firmly around him.

The Nikolai frowned slightly.

Draco shook his head. “We haven't been able to find anything.”

“Neither has Hermione,” Harry mused aloud and sighed, deciding not to make a deal out of Draco's closeness. If it helped him keep warm, he'd allow it. “We did discover this though.” Lengthening one of his nails until it became a claw, Harry carelessly sliced open his palm, making a shallow wound.

Blood began pooling in the Gryffindor's palm, then just as quickly stopped. Drawn by the sweet scent and vibrant colour of his life's essence staining his skin, the Angelus licked away the tiny crimson pool to reveal his skin already knitting itself back together, leaving his hand looking like nothing had been done to it in the first place.

He failed notice to odd looks that both Blaise and Draco gave him.

“Well,” Blaise voiced, a little nervously. Harry glanced up at him and watched as the other's dark eyes darted to look at Draco whose mind appeared preoccupied by other thoughts. “It's a temporary thing, then?”

“Seems that way,” Harry conceded with a shrug. “I've had Hermione check that collar for spells but
she wasn't able to detect anything besides the one that prevents the wearer from removing it. She's taking it to McGonagall for testing to be sure. To be honest, I didn't think it was collar, though.”

“Neither did I,” Draco added and cleared his throat. “Your lip was still split when you met me on Friday night after that fight—”

Blaise, a little behind Draco and off to the side stilled completely at that statement and paled dramatically. But thankfully, Draco hadn't noticed. Still, Harry found it ridiculously amusing and discovered it increasingly difficult to keep his amusement to himself.

“Mm,” Harry nodded along with Draco, unable presently to speak without letting loose a torrent of laughter. Blaise was looking terribly desperate for some kind of escape route, which forced Harry to realise how honestly scared Blaise was that the blonde would kill him. This dampened the Angelus' humour somewhat.

“And I'm fairly certain it was still unhealed when I saw you again at the Three Broomsticks.”

“Right,” Harry nodded again. “So we are almost completely certain that whatever it was that effected me, can't be the collar.”

“You still haven't told us exactly how the Gensvacare got the collar on you to begin with,” Blaise pointed out, innocently enough. “Whenever asked you always dance around the subject and don't give a proper answer.”

“I was a little distracted at the time,” Harry replied with a glare at Blaise. “Besides, how he got it on me is unimportant. What we should be focused on is what has been affecting me and how but I doubt we'll figure out the how until after.”

“What's that?” Draco asked abruptly, pointing to the thing held between Harry's numb fingers.

The green-eyed boy glanced down and inwardly winced. Hermione would have his head for this. She'd told him repetitively not to touch his chain. That it would only draw attention to it and what happens?

“Oh,” he murmured and released the ring and charm he had been holding. “It's...nothing important,” he tried to say, unsure how he was to lie successfully, but Draco glanced up at him, studying him carefully.

“It is important,” the blonde refuted with a tentative tone. “At least it is to you.”

Harry shrugged and pulled away from the other boy. “I...” he sighed and slipped the charms back into his robe. He knew he could tell Draco about the charms, even Blaise so what was holding him back?

He supposed it was his independence. Having to rely on Draco as much as he was presently, coupled with the fact he shared a lot with the blonde already, Harry guessed that his reluctance to share this piece of information was so he could have something to himself and his best friends. Although, the remainder of the Golden trio were well aware of Harry's involvement in the hunting for Voldemort's Horcruxes as well as the Prophecy... So was it so bad telling Draco and Blaise about his charm?

No, Harry decided. It wasn't bad and may actually be of great important in the future. He just wouldn't give the full details, but knew with their intelligence that the two Invidians would be able to decode his meaning, anyway.
“I guess they are important,” Harry finally acknowledged, still partially reluctant. “The charm is a safety blanket, should I need it. The chain is the link to my friends and the ring... is a reminder of everything I have to lose.”

-Yawning, Harry reread his letter to his aunty and uncle. He had received one from them yesterday morning at breakfast and was only now able to write back, since he had been busy with Hermione for the past few days. For the most part, however, the Nikolai heir had been secretly planning how to split Lavender and Ron up somehow.

Harry's family had informed him that they were going to pick him up from Kings Cross station in a few weeks time for the Christmas holidays. He'd already told them that Hermione and Ron wouldn't be joining him this time, but they would try to the next holidays. His aunty had been disappointed but accepting of it.

“Who’s that to?”

“My Aunty Selene,” Harry replied, absently as he ran a hand through his hair. “Want me to say ‘hello’ for you? I'm sure she'll be pleased.” He grinned up at Draco as the blonde leant against the back of his chair. Often Harry would tease Draco about his 'feelings' for Harry's aunt, though the reactions varied.

“Whatever,” Draco replied, disinterestedly.

“I'll take that as a yes,” Harry smirked and began another paragraph to his letter.

There were a few moments more of the scratching of quill on parchment before Harry sat up once again, his face slightly pink.

“Draco, does Ice need to go for a run?” He enquired suddenly.

“No. Why?” The blonde asked, baffled.

“You're leaning on me. Quite heavily I might add, that usually means he's wanting to go for a run,” Harry explained, trying to manoeuvre so Draco wasn't pushing him into an awkward posture. “I mean, I've noticed that you tend to get more... affectionate when he's closer to the surface,” he amended.

Immediately Draco withdrew.

“Thanks,” Harry murmured as he straightened up, quill poised over his parchment. “You were really beginning to hurt my neck.”

Draco cleared his throat, as he got his embarrassment under control. “Have you seen Zabini today?”

“No,” Harry answered slowly. “No I haven't. I figured he was sick or something. Why, hasn't he been in your classes either?”

“No he hasn't,” Draco replied thoughtfully.

That was worrying. Blaise had vanished the entire day then. Harry hadn't seen the other Slytherin since the previous night during dinner. That was almost twenty four hours ago. Had Draco not seen him since the previous day also?
Harry wasn't able to ask as abruptly the door to their common room flew open and in waltzed Blaise, flushed and panting whilst waving around a few bits of parchment.

“I've got it,” he declared between large gasps. “I know what's wrong with you. Why we failed to see it before is beyond me, but it's so simple.”

Harry immediately quashed the urge to say how much like Hermione Blaise sounded. He was pretty sure neither Slytherins would be pleased by such a statement.

“Would you get to the point, Zabini?” Draco asked irritably, he was leaning against Harry again. Harry sighed but let him.

“It's our potion Malfoy!” Blaise declared with a grin. “The potion we take that hides out powers from others. Potter's been given a stronger dosage. Enough to slow his healing abilities. I imagine it may also hinder his other instincts a little as well, though I can't say for sure at this point. He was able to take that healthy Gensvacare unaided.”

One of Draco's hands had slipped up to the nape of Harry's neck by this time, his fingers curled amongst the wavy hair and was absently stroking it.

Harry contemplated if he should point that out to the blonde or just leave him to it.

“Then we have a problem,” Draco stated, his fingers coming to a stop. “That potion is rare and expensive, coupled with the fact Harry's identity is known only by the Silver court, the Elders and those tied in with both as well as the few people that Harry himself has informed. None of them would do this, meaning we have a traitor in our midst.”

His eyes shone with an unholy glee.

“It can't be Pan,” Harry interjected immediately, knowing where this was going. “I can't explain it, I just know it isn't him.”

The grip on his neck turned almost possessive as Draco growled, “What is with you and Torrez? Why must you always side with him? Can't you see, all the evidence points to him!”

Harry jerked himself out of Draco's grasp and glared. His eyes flashing frozen emerald flames. “If you recall, Malfoy,” Harry snapped, and took a small amount of satisfaction from the way Draco flinched, “I don't always side with him. I chose you to hold my warder bond. Even if your parents didn't approve the match, I could still have chosen to bond myself to Pan, had I wanted. And going on what Lord... Parish was saying, I'm assuming that there were more supporters of Pan amongst the Court members.”

Feeling Draco's remorse, Harry's ire lessened and he sighed accepting the unspoken apology. He felt a little guilty himself now, for bringing that up. “As for the evidence,” he continued on, in a calmer tone, “all you have is that apparently someone is on to my secret and that they have decent enough connections to be able to obtain that potion. The rest is just guess work.”

“Potter,” Blaise intervened, “he is a possibility. I'm not saying that I agree with Malfoy's theory, nor am I saying I'm against it. Just bear that in mind.”

Harry glanced over at him and nodded in acceptance.

“Are you able to tell how long ago I took the potion?” Harry asked him, not really wanting to look at Draco for the moment.
“Well yes and no,” Blaise said and dropped into an empty seat. “You were able to heal yourself after the werewolf attack, so sometime after then. The thing is, while your version of the potion is stronger than ours it would seem it requires you take it at regular intervals, in smaller amounts. If you took too big a dosage you may end up unconscious.”

Pondering that slowly, Harry recalled the incident earlier that year when he had been drugged and believed it to be someone within his own house. Even after all the tests Madame Pomfrey had done on him, she hadn't been able to determine exactly what the drug was or what it did beside the obvious, though she had concluded it wasn't harmful and so no further investigation was needed.

Harry decided to state his theory.

“Do you remember the day Pan arrived and I needed to be helped from the Hall by Hermione and Ron?” He asked and leant back against the table.

“Yeah,” Draco nodded and gestured for Harry to continue.

“Do you recall me telling you that I had been drugged and we were unable to determine exactly what the drug was?” Both Slytherins nodded. “Well I was just wondering, do you think that was the first time it happened? Since it was the first time using the potion whoever it is overdosed me by accident, but learnt from that mistake and have gotten better at it?”

The other two occupants of the room were silent as they thought that over. “It's possible,” Draco reasoned slowly. “And would make sense but would also mean we're dealing with an amateur. That, unfortunately widens the scope of things.”

“I assume it is being slipped into my food or something then?”

“I'd agree with that,” Blaise said. “Though how they're doing it is a concern. Surely you'd notice someone tampering with your food or drink while you're eating. Unless...”

“Unless what?” Harry asked warily.

“Unless it's been slipped into the food or drinks served to the entire Gryffindor house,” Draco answered with a frown. “It wouldn't be too hard to accomplish. A well trusted student visiting the kitchens every so often and slipping the potion in. It wouldn't affect any other student without vampire blood in them either, so it would go unnoticed.”

“That should be answered easily enough,” Harry said. “I'll just go ask Dobby if he recalls seeing anyone in the kitchen on a regular basis.”

“Dobby?” Draco blinked. “As in, our missing house elf?”

“Er... Yeah, that'd be him,” Harry confessed, he shot Draco a sidelong glance.

“How'd he end up here? Father told me he'd gone missing. I figured father had killed him or something.”

Harry looked at Draco questioningly. “You kill your house elves?”

“We've been known to, yes,” the blonde replied, sounding unconcerned.

A few minutes passed, in which Harry awaited his usual horror and or disgust at such a thing occurring to make itself known and was surprised when nothing of the sort happened. He blinked, trying to get his head around the fact that he just didn't care about the life of a house elf anymore.
Even Dobby, who had been a friend and was still considered one.

It seemed that the last threads of his humanity were almost completely gone.

“It's getting late,” Harry murmured quickly and began gathering up his letters, parchment and quill. He slipped them into the pocket of his robe “I'll see you guys tomorrow.”

“Hey,” Draco soothed, as he went to intercept Harry’s departure, feeling his ward's growing distress but was stopped by the Gryffindor raising his hand.

“It's all right, Draco,” Harry reassured his warder. “I just need to think... some things over. That's all.”

Then he stepped from the room and was deposited not far from Gryffindor tower.

It was still rather early, for him at any rate, but he was tired and upset. He knew it was a common thing to treat house elves with little to no respect, they had no rights after all, even so Harry no longer cared about the way that Draco spoke of them as though they were nothing and meant nothing. Disposable and easily replaced.

He wondered if he'd be as willing to accept the death of a human. The thought was answered when he felt a rebellious roil of his stomach at the notion. So it was safe to say that humans were safe from his urges to kill and his indifference. For the time being, at least. But it was all a matter of time, wasn't it?

Ron was in the middle of a chess game with Seamus when Harry stepped into the Gryffindor common room. Why Seamus even bothered was a mystery to Harry. But he was determined to beat Ron at least once and so Harry had to give him that.

Harry was pleased that neither seemed to notice his arrival.

Hermione, however, was a totally different story. Her eyes rose from her book as she saw him and she stood, looking like she wanting to talk with him. From her expression, Harry knew, it wasn't going to be anything good.

“Not tonight, please Hermione,” he pleaded, before the girl could start. “I just want to have a shower and sleep. Talk tomorrow?”

The girl sighed and gave a mildly disapproving look. “All right,” she said, her eyes flickered briefly to Harry's neck. “But we need to have this discussion.”

Nodding his acceptance, Harry then bolted upstairs to his private room and took an extra long hot shower to drown out what he thought he should be feeling, just as Demetrius had instructed when he’d first killed another. Draco was right, too. Harry accepted his family and Draco. Accepted the way that they were, how could it be so hard accepting that within himself?

It was a much refreshed Harry who left the shower and crawled into bed. He was already asleep by the time his head hit the pillow.

That night his dreams were haunting.

Dark lightning flashed all around and he watched as the familiar crossroads bled into an ancient courtyard. Paved in greying stone that had, at the peak of it's splendour, been white but lay currently stained crimson and amber by the sun's dying rays.
Someone was humming. A beautiful, broken melody.

And the scent of the ocean, rain and blood filled his nose and a single word, a prayer, fell from his bloodied lips.

“...Draco.”

-jade.requiem-

It was still early in the morning when Harry awoke and the sun had yet to rise, but he was unable to go back to sleep despite longing to.

That last dream had changed significantly from the usual that haunted him at the night, but Harry chose not to think on it, he had more pressing matters, such as identifying the student that had been drugging him.

Rolling out of bed with a soft *pat* of his bare feet on the cool floor, Harry gathered up his school robes and uniform for a much needed hot shower. The air was freezing, something which was only exaggerated by the fact Harry's body was hypersensitive to everything, which turned out to be both a blessing and a curse.

Presently, it was a curse.

Bundled up in his school things as well as Draco's thick scarf, a pair of gloves and his book satchel, Harry tottered off down to the kitchens in order to question Dobby on anything suspicious. More importantly, any students appearing in the kitchens more than was normal. On the way to the kitchens however, he ploughed into Blaise who was also headed there.

“Morning Harry, mind if I join you?”

“Go for it,” Harry shrugged easily. “I need the company at the moment anyway. At least I'll have someone to talk to until breakfast time.”

Blaise chuckled darkly. “Didn't sleep well, then?”

“I wouldn't say that exactly,” Harry replied as both boys crossed into the large kitchen that supplied the residents of Hogwarts with it's many meals. “What are you doing up so early?”

“I couldn't exactly sleep with Malfoy and Torrez fighting the way they are. I predict today a lot of Slytherins will be a little tetchy and wand-happy. I'd advise avoiding them as much as possible, were I you.”

“Noted,” Harry murmured darkly. “I was wondering how long it would take until they'd be back at each other's throats. What was the fight about this time?”

“Not sure exactly,” Blaise said with a shrug. “I heard mentions of a photo. I could be wrong though. Malfoy was really pissed. I don't think I've ever seen him that angry before, well, except maybe when he heard about Torrez kissing you,” Blaise admitted.

“Anyway, if we could move this questioning business along. Hopefully when I get back the disastrous duo will have cooled down a little for me to intervene and not have my head torn from my shoulders.”

Harry winced in sympathy. “That bad, huh?”
“Potter, you have no idea.”

After a little difficulty in locating Dobby, Harry and Blaise set about interrogating the small and loyal elf but in the end were without very many answers and had many more questions. Harry bid the cheerful elf a goodbye as he chomped happily away on the small treacle tart said elf had provided.

“He worships the ground you walk on,” Blaise said in bemusement, as he chewed on an apple. “How did that happen? Especially as he was a Malfoy house elf.”

“Long story,” Harry sighed, as both made their way slowly to the great hall.

“I'm all ears.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Maybe some other time. I'm not kidding when I say it's long besides, shouldn't we be working on how I'm being poisoned?”

The Slytherin paused on that.

Dobby was a reliable source of information as long as his memory hadn't been altered but few knew of his connections with Harry and if the elf's memories had been modified, then all the other house elves in the kitchens would have had to have it done, too.

It was all so frustrating to Harry. There had to be something they were missing. Was it possible someone was slipping in unseen?

“I still say someone is getting into the kitchens somehow and slipping it into the food. That's the only possible way. As I said, it would be too obvious trying to get you to take the potion any other way,” Blaise stated.

“Is it possible that it is in a vapour form?”

Blaise blinked. Obviously considering the point before he dismissed it. “It's possible,” he said. “But it would effect Malfoy and myself if that were so.”

“Unless it was in a place that only I had access to,” Harry pressed, warming up to the idea. “Such as my common room. No one else but Ron and Hermione have been into my bedroom so that's out entirely.”

“You know, you may be onto something, Potter.”

Harry smiled disarmingly.

“What are you two doing so early in the morning?” Draco suddenly drawled, he was glancing between the pair suspiciously.

“Interrogating the house elves,” Blaise answered. “Since you are walking free, I deem Torrez was the one who ended up in the hospital wing this time?”

“No,” Draco growled. “The little bugger high-tailed it out of there.”

“Draco,” Harry began, an amused lilt to his voice. “He's taller than you.”

Draco tossed Harry a dirty look. “By an inch.”

Blaise laughed suddenly before adopting a look of complete innocence. “Yes, let us not forget he's a whole inch bigger than Malfoy, here.”
There was a pause, then the blonde reddened abruptly and Harry had to lunge forward to stop him from taking a dive at Blaise. “You just wait Zabini!” Draco snarled. “I am going to hex you blind!”

“What did I tell you, Zabini?” Harry hissed, as he struggled to contain the furious blonde.

“It was a joke!” The dark Slytherin squawked but at the animalistic growl from Draco was soon running down the hall and away from them, screaming like a girl.

Actually, the entire thing had Harry in near hysterics with laughter. Though he bravely held his mirth in check. He really had to wonder if the screaming had been for his sole benefit or if Blaise knew about Harry's first year detention with Draco in the Forbidden forest.

Nothing more was said for a while as Harry listened to the rapid footfalls of Blaise as they faded into the distance. Hopefully, that gave him a good head start to hide from Draco or seek sanctuary somewhere.

Dumbledore's office seemed the best idea.

“You can let go now,” Draco informed Harry quietly. Harry wasn't so sure though, there was an odd stiltedness coming from Draco's end of the bond.

“Promise not to damage him?” The Slytherin partially turned in Harry's grasp and gave him an odd look. The Gryffindor shrugged and rolled his eyes while releasing the taller boy a little reluctantly.

“You never know,” he said.

“What were you and Zabini able to find?” Draco asked after a long pause.

Harry sighed and shook his head.

“Nothing much. Nothing useful,” he amended. “There isn't anything unusual going on in the kitchens. Not anything visible at any rate, but I have a new hypothesis and that is the potion is being distributed in a vapour form. Possibly in Gryffindor tower. Likely the common room.”

Draco was nodding along though he didn't seem too horribly interested. In fact he seemed quite distracted.

“Actually,” Harry stopped, ensuring the blonde ceased all movement as well. “Why are you fighting with Pan again? He has kept his word and hasn't done anything inappropriate since our bargain was struck.

“What changed?”

The Slytherin pulled a face making him look like a petulant child. “It wasn't quite as bad as what Zabini informed you of, I assure you,” he drawled instead. “We only argued. There was no flying fists or use of our magic.”

Harry arched a brow, not satisfied by the blonde's reply.

“Nothing's changed,” Draco sighed. His eyes darted sideways to peer at Harry, “much.”

“Right,” Harry murmured and rolled his eyes.

“I take it that you're feeling better?”

“Huh?” The Angelus queried, as both started back along the corridor. He glanced over at Draco. “Oh. Yeah, fine.”
The blonde frowned, a pensive expression adorning his face. “Why are you up so early?” He asked, curiously. “Zabini has a reason for waking at this time, you though. Usually you’re one of the later risers.”

“Odd dream.” Was the only answer Harry supplied. “Hey, I’m going to head out to the Owlery to have Hedwig send my mail, want to come or are you going to head straight up to breakfast?”

“I’ll join you,” Draco replied without pause. He eyed the scarf wrapped around the other’s neck, an amused smirk making itself known. “I assume I won’t be getting my scarf back anytime soon, then.”

“Oh,” Harry murmured in embarrassment, pink stained his cheeks. He had actually forgotten that Draco had only lent the thing and would be wanting it back sometime. Hurriedly, the Angelus prince went to remove the garment from his throat.

Draco chuckled and rewrapped the soft fabric back round Harry's neck. “I wasn't hinting at you to return it. In fact, you can keep it, since you are so clearly attached to it. I have another one in one of my trunks, somewhere.”

“I’m not attached to it!” Harry denied automatically, causing Draco to shoot a knowing smirk at him.

“Of course you're not,” the blonde replied teasingly, his smirk growing wider as Harry fought to keep his discomfiture at bay. “You've only worn it everyday since I gave it to you in the Owlery.”

The retort flew from his tongue before Harry even thought. “It's been cold everyday since then! Of course I'd wear it.”

“But our classes aren't that cold, Harry,” the Slytherin murmured, stepping closer to the Angelus. So close in fact, that his warm breath ghosted across Harry’s lips.

Was it him or did Draco actually purr his name? The Nikolai wasn't certain, but now was one of those times that he was getting those indecipherable emotions from the blonde and it confused him greatly as well as made him increasingly flustered. Draco it seemed, had that effect on him these days.

Inwardly he frowned. This wasn't normal, was it?

Ignoring the increased palpitations of his heart and the knowledge that his cheeks could probably shame a cherry, Harry arched a brow at his warder coolly. “Says you.”

“Yes, says me,” Draco said, lowly.

For a heart stopping moment, Harry thought that the blonde was going to kiss him and he was prepared to take a step away, but instead Draco pulled back abruptly. “Come on, Harry. I’d rather get this done as soon as possible,” the blonde drawled, with a bored air. “It’s going to be absolutely freezing outside.”

What the Angelus deemed to be self-reproach soon filled the Slytherin's end of the bond. It was quickly suppressed as Draco turned toward the pair's destination once more, leaving a bewildered Harry staring after him.

---- one more chap until I'm up to date with posts people :)
Chapter fourteen: Death's messenger

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?

Chapter fourteen: Death's messenger

“Harry!”

Not now... Harry inwardly muttered, intent on getting something hot to eat for breakfast and not liking his chances of that if his bossy friend had her say. Oh sure, she'd let him eat but she'd be nagging him while he was trying. He decided to play deaf and had just gotten inside the Great hall when—

“HARRY JAMES POTTER!”

The aforementioned boy winced and halted his steps as his name echoed across the corridor and into the large Great hall, heralding the arrival of an irate Hermione Granger. Almost timidly, Harry turned to watch the girl approach as her clipped, purposeful stride carried her toward him in an angry haste.

Once she stopped in front of him, she folded her arms roughly across her chest, with that pinched expression McGonagall was so very fond of.

“I was waiting for you to come down stairs,” the bushy haired girl began in a carefully patient voice, “and imagine my surprise when Ron tells me you weren't in your room. Did you forget that we needed to have this little talk? Where were you?”

“But Hermione...”

“No ‘Buts' Harry!” She growled, her patience no longer existent. “You're avoiding this conversation.”

“I'm not avoiding anything,” the boy denied. “I want breakfast. Then we can talk.”

Hermione's expression darkened and she opened her mouth just about to speak when some Ravenclaw girl burst into the hall, causing everyone to stare at her frantic expression and gasps.

Harry wasn't able to recall a name, but he vaguely remembered her as being a friend of Cho Chang's and that it had been her who had snitched on the D.A group the previous year to Umbridge. He held no warm feelings for her.

With an indifferent sort of curiosity, Harry watched as the girl ran up to the head table and began some tearful diatribe that had the teachers nearby Dumbledore leaning in to listen intently. Then the staff members began to converse quietly amongst themselves for a few moments more.

The headmaster nodded once, then he and Flitwick stood and followed the still pathetically tearful girl from the room. None of the three glanced once in Harry's direction.

“I wonder what that was about,” Ron asked with a puzzled expression. “Wasn't she Cho's best mate?”
“Yeah,” Harry answered, absently as his eyes scanned the Ravenclaw table for the glossy obsidian locks and Cho's pretty face, but wasn't able to find her anywhere amongst her fellow house mates. He frowned.

Strangely.

Ron saw the expression immediately. “You don't still... fancy her, do you?”

“No,” the Nikolai replied, instantly. He turned to his red-headed friend. “Why would you think that?”

“You had that look on your face when you used to think about her,” Hermione added as she slid in next to Harry at their table, sitting opposite Ron. The look she offered the Angelus informed him she hadn't forgotten about their discussion but was willing to let it slide. For the moment. “But it also held concern.”

“I don't fancy her,” Harry confirmed, knowing it was absolutely true.

Hermione already seemed to agree with him on that and gave him a knowing look. One Harry didn't particularly care to think about, or consider the reason behind it. He turned away and set about covering his toast in a thick layer of cherry jam.

“I really hope not, Harry,” Ron muttered, his mouth still half full of egg.

“Ron that's disgusting!” Hermione exclaimed, her nose twisting in revulsion. “Don't talk with your mouth full and chew before you swallow!”

Snickering quietly to himself, Harry internally grinned at his best friends before his expression darkened as he again caught the scent of Lavender's damn perfume on Ron. He was a little surprised Hermione hadn't smelt it yet, as it wasn't like the perfume was weak...

Actually, now that he thought about it, Hermione probably couldn't smell Lavender's perfume on Ron because her own was also, really quite strong.

Considering that, Harry took a careful bite from his jam-covered toast and chewed thoughtfully as he eyed both his best friends before his gaze inadvertently drifted towards the Slytherin table, where his eyes immediately met Draco's grey ones. It wasn't abnormal or anything. Even before the two had become friends, their gazes seemed naturally drawn to the other, of course not quite as often as it was these days.

He allowed his eyes to wander further until they settled on Pan, to find the snowy-haired boy slaughtering his sausages. The Angelus' lip quirked up in amusement.

“Harry?”

Turning to his friend, the boy slowly chewed his mouthful and swallowed. “Mm?”

Hermione looked more than a little uneasy. “We really...”

Dumbledore appeared then, followed once again by Flitwick.

Cho's friend was nowhere to be seen—not that Harry cared for her at all—but still, it was a rather curious thing. He wondered if Cho was injured or something. Harry dislodged the thought easily from his mind. He really didn't care after all.
“We will be having a half day today,” the headmaster announced, causing many happy murmurings to start amongst the students seated. “You will continue to your first classes as usual but have free time after lunch.”

“Damn it,” Seamus cursed, as he stabbed viciously at his eggs. “We still have potions.”

“It was inevitable,” Harry muttered darkly.

Ron, who was in perfect agreement with Harry nodded his head. “If it had been a Friday when we have potions last, it would be guaranteed that we had the second half of our classes.”

“Someone up there hates us,” Dean muttered.

Ginny, who was seated at Dean's side, patted his hand in sympathy.

“Harry come on,” Hermione announced, once the Nikolai had finished his toast and hot chocolate. “I need to visit the library and you can help me carry some of the books.”

“But—”

The look Hermione fixed on him, had Harry knowing there was no way he was escaping her now. That it was in his best interests just to go along with her or else risk the possibility of injury by hex.

“All right,” Harry sighed. Standing slowly he slipped his satchel back over his shoulder. “Ron we’ll see you in class.”

The redhead glanced up curiously between his two friends, nodded once and continued on with his breakfast. Harry felt mildly disappointed. He had hoped Ron would at least offered to come with them.

With another sigh, Harry trailed Hermione from the Great hall and down to the library, just as she had said.

“Harry this isn't safe anymore,” the girl began, after casting some type of sound scrambling ward. “I'm not sure how long this has been going on or even how it started but it isn't safe anymore. I can't let you continue alone.”

The Angelus stared at his friend in total confusion. “What are you talking about?”

“Malfoy, Harry,” Hermione said in exasperation. “This thing between you two. How can you both be on such good terms now? I admit I found it all very strange to begin with, even after finding out about the Nikolai’s connection to the Malfoys.”

Immediately, Harry stiffened. What did she know?

She can't know about our connection... There is no way she could. Harry chastised himself mentally. Of course she can, she’s Hermione and she had been reading that book on damned Blood bonds.

“What connection?”

Hermione gave the Nikolai a penetrating stare before she sighed, somewhat deflated. “This can’t continue,” she said again, almost pleading this time. “I'm not the only one who is going to figure this out. The other day I over heard two boys speaking about you the other day. More specifically, they were talking about how Malfoy seemed to be going soft on you.”

Harry opened his mouth to answer and almost choked, “What—”
His friend silenced him with a shake of her head. “Just listen, all right? I've been watching you two closely and it is fairly obvious that there is something going on between you. I can’t tell exactly what it is... Is he your–” She stopped herself suddenly, studying Harry then she shook her head, as though trying to dislodge something. “And then there's Pan.”

Harry blinked, again totally thrown. “What?”

“Pan, I know he comes into this mess somewhere. Give me more credit then that, Harry,” Hermione replied, sounding a little miffed. “He knew you from before school starts and then I swear he almost called you by your real last name. His references to you as his Prince also struck as something more than just an endearment.”

The Nikolai heir's head was spinning as he absorbed all the information the girl had thrown at him. He knew she was far too smart for her own good. It was evident now in how she had somehow puzzled that much out. His eyes narrowed as he listened to the rest of what Hermione had to say.

“It wasn’t too hard finding information on the Nikolais, either,” the book-worm continued, her voice gathering speed as her enthusiasm grew. “They were a well known Pureblood Russian family. One of the very few families that never interfered in any of the wars both muggle and wizard. At least, never openly... and then they all vanished one day. Apparently slaughtered by a rival family.”

Hermione's eyes rose then, to stare evenly back as Harry, as though waiting for him to either deny or confirm her words, but he remained silent. Instead, he peered back at his long time friend, his features schooled in complete insouciance, though his mind was running wild with questions he wanted answered.

He had never thought to look up his family in general, now though he was really wishing he had. Obviously he’d left too much up to assumption when handing over his own books to Hermione.

“And then your books stated how the Angelus Royal family had gone into hiding around the exact same time the Nikolais seemed to vanish from the face of the earth. It was far too coincidental,” Hermione said, more to herself now than Harry. “I decided to investigate it further and was able to discover that several more families were wiped out not long after. It was claimed that they were the families involved with the destruction of the Nikolai line and guess who led the hunt to avenge the Nikolais?”

Harry wasn't sure but he had a fair idea. Especially with the knowing spark that lit Hermione's dark-brown eyes.

“Lucien Malfoy,” Hermione intoned with a flourish of her hand. “Who was supported by a Silvain Torrez. There were others, obviously. But I thought those names in particular would mean more to you.”

For seemingly endless moments, Harry said nothing. Just sat against his chosen desk across from his friend with a indifferent expression and a cool, penetrating stare.

Inside his mind though, was quite a different story. All turbulent emotions and conflicting thoughts. But all pointed out one prominent thing. Hermione had figured out that the Nikolais were the Angelus Royalty and that they were tied with the Malfoys and Torrezs in someway or another. That was probably where her ‘blood-bond' books came into play.

He really wasn't sure what he could do. No one outside the circle of both clans was meant to know. Not even Dumbledore knew about that. His aunt had pointed out that she regarded his friends highly, but was it high enough to allow Hermione such knowledge?
He hoped so. He really did.

Hermione had always been the one to stand by him. Even in Fourth year when it seemed everyone else was willing to think the worst, she was there to support him. He also knew that while Hermione was curious about him and his clan, the reason she had even bothered researching all this herself was because she had been worried about him. And now because of him, she had forfeited her own life.

It just didn't seem right that she may have to die. He couldn't obliterate her. Didn't know how and doubted she'd be given such a chance by Draco, who'd likely be more inclined to snapping her neck.

Harry knew there was only one possible hope of fixing this. He was going to have to tell his Aunty and Uncle. Only they could decide what was to happen and Harry just prayed that they would be lenient and grant her mercy as well.

“You've no idea what you've just done...” Harry whispered, morosely.

“I've probably just gone and brought about the wrath of a very powerful King down upon my head,” Hermione replied somewhat mordantly, despite Harry's words being a statement. Her features softened after the terse reply and she gave a tiny smile. “I'm quite aware of what I've gone and done, Harry.”

“Then why did you do it?” The Angelus asked, his temper rising due to the confusion. If Hermione knew what could happen, why on earth would she go ahead and do something so damn reckless? She would have been safe if only she hadn't told him of her discovery. Why had she done it?

The girl strode confidently over to the unsettled boy and stopped before him, not wavering at all before she reached out and took his hand in her own. She gave the appendage a comforting pat.

“So you know you're not alone in this. Whatever it is. I don't want a repeat of what happened last year. Or you feeling isolated from everyone else because of what's happened,” she said seriously. “I know that until now you couldn't tell me certain things—like this this,” she made an all encompassing gesture. “That maybe Pan or Malfoy, perhaps both have been assisting you, since their families supposedly supported yours generations ago...” The girl hesitated a moment. “They don't... You didn't tell them about-?”

Harry shook his head, knowing that Hermione was talking about both the prophecy and his mission to locate and destroy Voldemort's Horcruxes. This prompted his friend to nod.

“I wasn't sure how much they know.”

“They know very little,” Harry murmured and slumped down on his desk. “How long have you known about...me?” He asked, warily.

“I've had my suspicions for a while now. Although it wasn't until recently that I was able to work out the truth,” she replied calmly. “I haven't told anyone else.”

Harry nodded, allowing his head to loll back as his eyes slid closed. He exhaled slowly as exhaustion seemed to fill him. “You can't tell anyone else,” he intoned, quietly. “Not even Dumbledore is aware of my status. Although, I'm not sure how long it will stay that way.”

The Angelus opened his eyes and glanced over at Hermione, catching the end of her dubious look.

“Even Dumbledore doesn't know?”

“No,” Harry confirmed, dragging a hand back through his hair. “He knew as much as both Ron and
you. My Uncle didn't tell him anything else.”

Hermione nodded, though was biting her lip in contemplation. It looked like she was dying to ask a question but wasn't sure how to ask it. Or perhaps she was just unsure of how Harry would receive it.

“Ask away,” the Nikolai heir sighed wearily and stood from his desk, stretching his back as he did so. “I know you want to.”

Still, the Gryffindor girl seemed a little apprehensive in her curiosity. That in itself made Harry rather uneasy. But after a pregnant pause, Hermione's inquisitiveness got the better of her and she finally caved to it's demands.

“How exactly do both Malfoy and Pan fit into the picture?”

Biting his lip, again Harry found himself speechless and considered ignoring the question altogether. He couldn't betray Draco or Pan's secret but he wasn't sure keeping things to himself was good, considering the still potentially disastrous conversation he needed to have with his family over Hermione's recent discovery.

“They've been helping me,” the Angelus returned. “They're... guides, of a sort. Like you said. Malfoy knows all about politics. Different Pureblood etiquette that I can't learn from my family at the moment,” Harry said, speaking mostly truthfully. “In Pan's case, he's my self-appointed body guard.”

Harry watched as Hermione digested that and began to mull the words over in her head. He felt more than a little surprised that she hadn't caught on to his half-truths and incomplete answers. But he was more than happy to accept whatever good luck that had prevented the usually sharp girl from seeing through him as she usually did.

“Pure blood etiquette?” Hermione questioned, then shook her head. Apparently already beginning to speculate on a new theory. Though Harry wasn't privy to it.

The shrill screech of the school bell went, announcing the standard five minute period until class was to begin, startling both occupants of the now quiet room.

“Is your curiosity quite sated now?” Harry asked, haughtily trying to make light of their previously serious conversation.

Hermione blinked once, then shook her head as a tiny smile slowly spreading across her face. “For the moment,” she conceded, then set about removing the wardings around them.

Harry nodded, still rather unsure himself about where they were up to.

“I don't particularly like not knowing exactly how this truce between you and Malfoy formed,” the bushy-haired girl stated after a few moments of silence. She turned to Harry. “I can only assume it has something to do with past good relations between your families and while I don't particularly agree with friendships of that sort, I'll accept your judgement of him for the time being.” Then, she shot Harry a warning look. “Just be careful. I don't want to see you hurt.”

Feeling like a large weight had been lifted from his shoulders, Harry smiled lazily back at his friend.

“I'm fairly sure I can handle Malfoy, Hermione,” the Nikolai heir voiced, confidently.

Hermione sighed and gave him a shrewd, calculating look. “There are some things even you can't
protect yourself from, Harry,” she said, sagaciously. Only the last few room wards left over to be removed. “Just remember that.”

He nodded.

“Oh, by the way,” Hermione started, as her and Harry exited the library together, both carrying a few books the bush-haired girl had selected. “Tell Malfoy I think his scarf looks better on you. It brings out the colour of your eyes.”

The loud, piercing sound of the bell resounded throughout the class, signalling it's end. It was a godsend to the lion pride, who had already lost 37 house points. Courtesy the greasy git and his loathing of all things Gryffindor.

“I want a four-foot essay on this type of memory restorative potion, the differences between it and the other types available. The effectiveness and all the known negative effects that have been recorded through history. This is to be on my desk by Monday. No later.

“You are dismissed.”

All the students hurriedly returned their school things to their bags and began scurrying from the room. Harry, was one of the last to go but caught the brief grin Draco flashed him before the blonde slipped from the room.

“Mr Torrez, if you'll remain behind for a moment?”

Curiously, Harry watched the snowy-haired Invidian approach the teacher's desk but didn't bother sticking around to hear their conversation. Blaise was still packing up his cauldron as Harry exited the dank old room.

Once all three friends were outside the classroom, Ron immediately began complaining. “Can you believe that bastar—”

“Ron!” Hermione reprimanded, sending a glare the red-head's way. “What have I told you about the use of your language?”

The boy just rolled his eyes and muttered something under his breath.

The girl's anger piqued and she asked, in a deadly calm voice that reminded Harry a great deal of both Lucius and Snape when furious; “What was that, Ronald?”

Despite himself, Harry snickered at his companions. His problem with Hermione and Ron may be simpler to fix than he previously thought. All he needed to do was give a good shove in the right direction.

“Potter,” a female voice hissed.

The Angelus turned sharply, easily locating the owner of the voice standing within a set of shadows of an alcove.

It was Pansy Parkinson.

Her dark, sleek hair falling about her hard face which was twisted with distaste, making her already pert nose more pronounced. She didn't look exactly happy with the current situation but she had to
want to speak with him for a reason. Harry was almost fairly certain what this reason revolved around.

He sighed heavily and with much frustration. Was it confront Harry for the truth day or something? The Nikolai didn't particularly feel too inclined to speak with the Slytherin girl. She'd never been nice to him, in fact, generally she was a grade A bitch to him and all of his friends.

The Gryffindor boy frowned a moment. Excluding recently, of course, he mused. But then, pretty much all the Slytherins had been treading somewhat lightly around him as of late. Harry suspected it was the influence of both Draco and Pan.

“Hey guys,” Harry called out to his still bickering friends who were a little down the hall from him and the still hidden Pansy. “Go on without me,” he tried waving them both off.

“What about you?” Ron asked, with a frown.

“I just forgot something,” Harry replied, vaguely and hitched his book-bag higher on his shoulder. “Go ahead without me. I'll catch up in a few seconds.”

Hermione, Harry observed, was deliberately eying the shadowed alcove just behind him. Then she gave him a pointed look before reaching over to seize the red-head's wrist in a vice-like grip. “Come along Ron.” With a dark amusement, Harry watched as Ron was led away like a lamb by the skilful Gryffindor girl.

After confirming that his friends were indeed gone, Harry turned to the still hidden Slytherin girl.

“Parkinson,” he intoned, politely. “What can I do for you?”

She sneered a bit, then seemed to check herself. “I'm here about Draco,” she drawled out.

“Of course you are,” Harry said and crossed his arms over his chest. Briefly, he glanced further down the hall to ensure no one else was coming their way. But it was still clear.

Pansy sniffed.

“What we are to speak is to remain between us,” she said, studying her manicured nails, “Draco isn't to hear a thing.”

“Why in the world would I tell Malfoy anything?” Harry asked, sounding confused and looking perfectly perplexed. He knew that if the wrong people figured out he and Draco were friends that they would be screwed and that Draco could possibly be expecting assassination attempts from his own house members.

The thought made something churn horribly within Harry's stomach.

He shoved the feeling a side as he focused on Pansy. At least he knew he could kill her without guilt should the need arise.

“Oh please, Potter,” Pansy drawled, appearing mildly amused now and a little impressed. “You're a good actor, I'll give you that, at least.”

“Here to talk about my acting skills then, are we?”

“Definitely spending too much time with Draco,” Pansy muttered to herself, but Harry heard each word clearly. “No,” she said, raising her voice to normal level. “I'm not here to speak about your
acting skills, I'm here to warn you.”

“Oh, a threat?” Harry smiled darkly. Delighting in the way the Slytherin girl actually shrunk back a bit from him. Though not completely and she hardly appeared defenceless. More like a cornered panther.

For a moment the Slytherin studied him, her dark eyes calculating. “Don't you dare hurt him.” She warned, lowly. “If you do, I'll skin you alive. And that's nothing to what some of the others will do.”

The smile Harry wore slid from his face as he studied the girl before him. He didn't like her at all, but she felt sincere in her words. Still, he wasn't willing to be baited into a conversation that he knew she was trying to pull from him. Well, not until he confirmed a few things, but first, he'd continue with her little game.

“Parkinson,” Harry started slowly, “I think you're a little confused. Unless of course, you're telling me to take whatever Malfoy throws at me? But then we both know I'm not the type of person to back down often. If he hexes me, I hex him.”

“Oh cut the crap, Potter,” Pansy snapped irritably. Losing her façade of all cool and impassive. “Everyone's noticed how he's changed. He's honestly content now. Far happier than I've ever seen him and I like seeing Draco happy. He deserves it after what you put him and his family through!”

Harry decided he didn't want to travel down that particular path and so stuck with the ‘not knowing a thing' story. “And his happiness pertains to me, how?”

The Slytherin let out a frustrated growl. “You can play innocent all you want, but you aren't fooling me. I know Draco far too well to not know what it is that's effecting him in this way. Even if he denies everything.” Here, she shot Harry a filthy glare then her expression morphed. “Besides, you're wearing his scarf,” she smirked, triumphantly.

For a few moments, Harry's brain stilled. She recognised Draco's scarf, too? Of course she does.

Harry gave the girl a level look and decided to go with denial. It usually worked for him. “Parkinson, I'm sure you're aware that there a loads of scarfs that resemble this one out there in the world.”

The Slytherin's smirk widened, reminding Harry briefly of Draco.

“Wrong, that one was custom made and none of them have the history that one has,” the girl retorted, a wicked gleam to her eyes and looking like she wanted to touch the garment. “Draco's had that scarf since his third year and refused to have it replaced. I can identify any and all of it's imperfections as well as stating how the scarf got them.”

“Obsessed much?” Harry muttered in complete disbelief.

“Believe what you will, Potter,” Pansy replied boredly with a touch of annoyance. “But I'd know that scarf anywhere. It has ‘The Property of Draco Malfoy' embroidered in silver on one of the corners.” Her expression turned instantly smug. “What's it like being claimed as the property of Draco, Potter?”

That actually made Harry feel kind of... weird and he tried not to grimace openly at the Slytherin's statement. He also made a mental note to check the scarf later for that supposed name-tag.

“I belong to no one, Parkinson. Property or not and I think you're delusional,” Harry stated simply. He tilted his head to the side, quizzically. “Delusional and obsessed with Malfoy.”
Pansy stepped back and hissed like a cat tossed in water.

“Fine,” she muttered, “I came to you for help but obviously you don’t care what may or may not happen to him.”

That caught Harry’s attention.

What?

“What on earth do you mean?” He scoffed, adopting an air of very mild curiosity, when in reality he was really dying for her to spit the words out.

“I think Draco’s in trouble.”

“Yes and why would that be?” Harry prompted with a coolly arched brow. “And why didn’t you go to Dumbledore if it's so serious. Even if Malfoy and I were friends, what could I do to help him?”

“Get rid of Torrez.”

Harry stared hard at Pansy, his countenance set in complete incredulity. He was well aware of the fact that Pansy and Pan clashed rather horribly, having happened upon the two once or twice while they were arguing, but he never thought she’d blame Pan for something as serious as Draco being in danger from him.

“You can’t be serious,” Harry muttered, to himself.

“Torrez is your lap dog, don't even try to deny it,” Pansy cut in, sharply. “He comes to your every beck and call like a faithful mutt to it's master. If you felt anything at all for Draco, you'd send that bastard Torrez away.”

“Why?” Harry pressed.

Pansy paused a moment, as though unsure if she should continue or not. Then she swallowed and gave a tiny nod, as though reassuring herself. “The house has been divided ever since Torrez arrived,” she said, her mouth twisted in distaste. “Now it's been split into those loyal to Draco and the others that are following Torrez.”

“And this is bad, how?”

The Slytherin shot Harry a filthy glare. Then, seeming a little less confident of herself, she fished inside her robes and withdrew a long parchment of paper. “These are all the people sided with Draco in our house,” she said, pressing the crumpled paper into Harry's hands. “You figure it out.”

“It's good to know he has such a loyal friend,” Harry voiced, tonelessly as his eyes quickly swept the list of those named.

The girl's eyes narrowed further, as though she thought he was being sarcastic. “Of course he does! Not all of us are back biting vermin you all seem to believe. He needs good friends. Especially now his father is locked up.” She fixed Harry with an accusatory glare.

Harry shrugged calmly. Totally unaffected by her look.

He studied the list of names once more, this time more carefully. He couldn't be sure, because he wasn't certain about any in Slytherin house, but he was almost confident enough to state that the listed people were neutral to the war, meaning...
“Pan’s leading the faction that support...”

It didn’t make sense. Harry would have thought that since Draco’s father had been the ‘Known’ Death eater, that the other little Death Eater wannabes would all have flocked to the Draco as well. But they had gone to Pan? What had happened? Had Draco fallen out of favour within his house?

*I suppose this would explain the absence of Crabbe and Goyle*, Harry reflected. He hadn’t seen Draco with the pair since the last Hogsmeade weekend, but then he had been sneaking off to talk with his warder more often and had never considered the real possibility behind the the lack of Draco’s usual ‘body guards.’

Pansy smirked at him briefly. “Smart boy. You're not as dumb as you look.”

“Gee, thanks,” Harry replied, sarcastically as he slipped the list into his robes, causing Pansy's smirk to widen once more. “I'll be sure to inform Dumbledore of this,” he voiced, patting the now hidden list of names.

He studied Pansy for a moment, seeing if she was opposed to the idea but when she made no such protest, Harry nodded once.

“Just so we're clear on a few things, Potter,” the girl intoned, her features becoming impassive once more. “I still don't like you but I find you at least tolerable, unlike the rest of your ilk.” With another smirk, Pansy turned on her heel and proceeded back the other way. Toward her next class.

Harry watched her go with a frown, before he too hurried along to his next class, with his mind still elsewhere. He needed to know what the hell Pan was doing and he was going to demand answers the next time he saw him.

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The Angelus prince had made it to his class on time. Though it was cutting it extremely close and he ended up extremely pink in the face. Due to the lateness of course, Harry found that most of the seats with the shared Ravenclaw class were taken.

Hermione was seated with Terry Boot at the front of the class, while Ron was trapped with some highly irritating nameless, Ravenclaw girl and Harry found himself seated next to Jaime Devon. The Angelus was extremely grateful that Chris didn’t share this class, even so he wasn't entirely sure what to make of Jaime yet, either. Though the boy had never indicated he harboured any potentially malicious or even ‘hero-worshiping’ tendencies towards Harry, the Gryffindor had decided to reserve his judgement on the other's character.

Harry had liked the faux Mad-eye Moody after all, and look how that had turned out? With the man attempting to murder him.

He offered Jaime a brief smile that was mirrored slowly by the other.

“Er,” Harry muttered and blinked as he read the script from the black board. He hurriedly withdrew his school books and things. “What page are we on?”

“Page 696,” Jaime answered as he uncapped his ink-bottle. “The fall of the Weiss bloodline. Tragic, really. Such a strong and talented family all slaughtered horribly. Can you imagine how magically powerful you'd be if you contained their blood? I think they'd be right up there with the Peverells and everyone claims ancestry to them.”

“The Peverells...” Harry muttered with a frown. Hadn't he heard that name mentioned somewhere?
Jaime merely rolled his eyes at Harry and settled down to work.

“Why are we studying about them? I didn’t think we were meant to start on the ancient bloodlines for a few more weeks yet.”

The Ravenclaw shrugged. “Apparently we’re ahead. Not that I mind, too much. Reading up on different bloodlines and the kinds of magical talents they possessed are far more interesting then reading about Goblin rebellions and the like.

“Take the Von Gaertners for example, they were renown for their use of powerful blood magic. This, of course was all before blood magic was considered dark. They were also able to develop a poison that ensnared the mind of any who drank it. Making the victim nothing more than dolls. I guess you could say they made a liquid version of Imperio. Thankfully, they took the poison's recipe to the grave.”

That caused Harry to pause, he eyed Jaime curiously. “And others haven't attempted to recreate this potion?”

“Of course many have,’’ Jaime acknowledge, his finger marking his place in his book. “But none were ever successful in the attempts and if they were, they've kept it secret. Knowledge is power, Harry,” he said. “And that kind of knowledge is dangerous. Besides, many speculate that it may have contained a little of the family's blood itself.”

“But wouldn't the person be able to break out of it?” Harry pressed, “Like some people can throw off the Imperio?”

Jaime shrugged, helplessly. “I only know what I read,” he chuckled lightly as he pointed to the paragraphs he had read in Harry's book. “If you wanted to know more on that potion you'd need to look that up separately and I doubt it'll have anything useful in our school library,” the Ravenclaw reasoned out. “It is now considered a highly illegal potion, even if it no longer exists.”

Harry mulled over that, finding that this history lesson really wasn't so bad as it usually was with Binns’ sleep-inducing lectures.

“Then there are the Weiss family,” Jaime continued, clearly enjoying having an audience. Not that Harry was complaining, he was learning faster then he usually would, considering their class was usually where he took his naps. “They were a light orientated family. Said to have been very powerful magically, they also produced a couple of Seers.”

The Angelus nodded along.

“Danika Weiss, was meant to have been the greatest from that line.” Here, Jaime again pointed out the appropriate passage in Harry's tome, after flipping to the correct page.

“Wait, she was a seer?” Harry asked, his brow furrowed a little. He turned to find Jaime giving him a slight smile, apparently understanding Harry's abrupt outburst.

“The last heiress? Yes. Which makes the families deaths so much stranger. You'd think that if she was half as decent as history claims her to be then, she'd have at least foreseen her own grisly demise.”

“Mmm,” Harry murmured in agreement.

“There was also the Andjelics, they were rumoured to have been part dragon and part wizard. Though I think that rumour was likely started because of their ability to command dragons with ease.
Probably from a rival family jealous of their talents. It's sad that their own pet dragon were to turn on them like that."

“Yeah,” Harry agreed, deliberating on that information. Was it possible the family could speak dragon like he could speak snake? He'd never tried speaking parseltongue to a dragon before but considered it might be like trying to talk English to someone who only spoke Latin. Then again, it may be more alone the lines of trying to bark at a cat.

Then Harry's thought turned to something else entirely as his mind processed the dates of each family mentioned so far. From the look of things, a lot of very powerful families had died out during or just as the Dark ages came to an end.

“Are you bored yet?”

“No,” the Gryffindor replied, honestly as he glanced up at his companion a little startled. “I was just curious about the timeline, was all.”

The Ravenclaw frowned, too. “Why worry about the...” His dark eyes widened slightly. “Oh, you mean that they seemed to die out around the same time?”

“Well, yeah,” Harry admitted, skimming his finger across the text of his page. “All around the end of the Dark ages.”

Jaime shook his head. “A lot of families didn't make it through the Dark ages. Beside, look here,” he pointed to another block of text and Harry tried not to stiffen. “The Nikolais are somewhat recent in their bloodline being wiped out. There was an absolute uproar when they were killed, too. I remember my Great Grandpa going on about it when I was little, despite it being over for years. From what I was told, Lucien Malfoy was out for blood and didn't stop until he had the head of all those he thought was involved in their deaths.”

Harry shuddered.

“I know,” Jaime conceded, looking a little sheepish. “It's kind of eerie and all but, well, it is interesting, too.”

The Angelus remained mute. Unsure what to say further and disturbed greatly by the subject they were currently on.

“Makes you wonder, doesn't it?”

“Huh?” Harry blinked.

Jaime shook his dark-hair, his eyes shone with mirth. “I think I've distracted you enough for the day,” he stated with a grin. “We had better start on our actual work before we get in trouble.”

Sighing, Harry opened up book back onto page 696 and began reading. It wasn't long before the text blurred with his mind focused elsewhere and he gave up altogether. Now that he had time pretty much to himself, his body was trying to get him to sleep. He was still extremely tired, after all. He had woken far earlier than he usually would.

It was with that thought, that Harry's mind shut down and he drifted off to the land of dreams. With his last conscious thoughts on his strange dream and Draco.

Unsure of how long he had been out, Harry was rudely awoken some time later as he found himself lying flat on the ground and Jaime looking white as a sheet and like he was about to have a heart
attack.

Everyone turned to look at the downed boy. Including the floating History teacher.

“Is everything all right, Mr Potter?”

“Sorry, Professor,” Jaime interjected, breathlessly. It sounded like he had run a mile. “I accidentally knocked him out of his seat. I saw a bug crawling over him and tried to get it but it seems I may have over estimated my hit.”

“Yeah,” Harry murmured, bemusedly as he dusted himself off and found his seat once more. “Sorry, sir.”

Binns stared at Jaime then transferred his gaze to Harry for a few moments longer. He gave a brief nod. “Please be careful, gentlemen.”

Both boys nodded immediately.

The Teacher gave another nod and went back to his lecture, while Harry carefully avoided the concerned looks both Hermione and Ron cast his way.

“Sorry,” Jaime murmured apologetically, once everyone had returned to their work. His dark eyes were filled with shame. “I was trying to wake you. I didn't realise you would react so violently to someone trying to shake you awake.”

“My... happens, sometimes,” Harry replied, honestly. His reaction to others had been settling down a little but it seemed not quite as much as he'd thought. “Doesn't matter.”

The Ravenclaw nodded, his face slightly downcast and nothing further was said.

-jade.requiem-

The moment Harry set his foot outside the classroom door he knew something was terribly wrong, but wasn't sure exactly what.

The air felt different, smelt different. Like someone had interfered with it somehow and the ever present part of Draco in his mind was oddly still. He was still awake and aware, that much was certain but it was almost like the other was trying to assess something carefully and didn't want anyone else to get in his way.

Warily, Harry headed towards the Great hall for lunch and towards Draco who seemed to be moving out of the dungeons.

Before the Angelus even made it to the corridor outside the Great Hall he was able to determine what was different about the air. It was tainted heavily with the heady scent of blood and sickening stench of death.

Flanked by his closest friends, Harry carefully led the group out of the corridor and into the vast chamber just outside of the Great hall, where he came to a stop.

People were crowding around the entrance halls, seemingly concentrated on the large wooden doors. Their shocked chattered was the only thing that Harry could hear. He pushed forward, eagerly followed by Ron and Hermione to see what had drawn the attention of the other school inhabitants, but the trio were quickly separated in the thick throng of students. Ron having been tugged away by that leech Lavender Brown and Hermione, barely fighting off the push of the crowd to stay at
Harry's side.

“Dumbledore's coming.” Someone said.

A sharp jolt of anxiety and warning announced the arrival of Draco on the other side of the hall. Harry instantly spotted him weaving his way through the crowd to get as close to the Angelus as he could, there the Invidian prince proceeded to bark out order's to the Slytherin prefects.

“Parkinson! Harper! Get everyone into the Great hall and do a head count. I want to know if there is a single person missing from our house, understood?” He didn't even bother to see whether they complied before he turned to Hermione. “I suggest you do the same for your house, Granger.”

Hermione looked distrustfully at the blonde before she shared a quick glance with the Nikolai heir, then she nodded. Although to Harry it looked extremely reluctant.

He glanced about the impending chaos in mild confusion, as the prefects from the other two houses immediately followed Draco and Hermione's lead and began ordering the rest of their house mates to sit at their tables in the Great hall.

While the mass of students made their way into the hall under their prefects watchful eye, Harry was startled as a hand settled on his shoulder and tried to pull him away furtively. He turned and was surprised that it was Draco's hand, seeing as they were in a very crowded place with many eyes and ears. Even though he knew the blonde had been at his side, that had been more than a little unexpected. The Slytherin though, didn't appear to care very much and tried again with equal luck.

“Harry, come with me,” the Slytherin ordered in a harsh whisper. Desperation was beginning to lace his tone. “Now.”

Wary as well as terribly bewildered now, the Angelus refused to be moved. “What's wrong?” He asked, despite the fact he could feel how incredibly frazzled Draco's nerves currently were. He didn't feel it was wise to just follow the order.

Pan appeared then and tried to do what his cousin could not. “Harry, don't,” he warned.

Standing before Harry, the white haired boy blocked most of Harry's view, but since the Angelus had done a fair amount of growing over the past weeks, the use of Pan's body as a visual shield wasn't as effective as it may have once been. The invidian wrapped his arms around the emerald-eyed boy and tried to drag him bodily away.

And for once, Draco didn't complain.

It was all for naught, though, as the remaining student body parted almost seamlessly to allow Harry to view the scene that Draco had been trying to protect him from and his breath was torn from his throat in a sharp, painful gasp, transfixed by the sight that met his eyes.

It was Hedwig.

His beautiful snowy owl was sodden with blood in patches, some of her feathers ripped from her breast and lying scattered about on the floor beneath where she rested, nailed to the doors by her two awkwardly twisted wings. Her large, now sightless amber eyes peered through him. Her beak was open, and looked jarred, broken. One of her talons outstretched, clutching a blood soaked parchment as though expecting Harry to release her of her burden.

“Hedwig,” Harry whispered brokenly, in disbelief and confusion.
The muttering all around seemed to dim in his ears and he knew it was because all those who hadn't yet entered the hall were staring at him. No one else in the school possessed an owl like Harry's so everyone knew she was his.

Taking another, numb step forward and pushing Pan from his path, Harry's eyes were suddenly drawn to the message transcribed in blood. It was disturbingly reminiscent of the chamber of secrets. Though the words were more angular and harsh and spoken in a language he shouldn't know.

*You won't be able to hide forever, fallen star.*
*And your pet Dragon can't always protect you.*

And as promised yesterday, the next four chapters~!

This is all I've done for now people. I'm currently working on chapter 15 and post randomly although my [LJ](https://www.livejournal.com) account is generally *always* the first I update. So I hope you guys have enjoyed what I've completed so far.

Questions? Comments? more importantly, con-crit and/or you just wish you point something out? Go a head! I can only improve if my mistakes are named otherwise I'll keep repeating them!

Thank-you, all you lovely and wonderful people who have reviewed. And I hope to have something out very soon. *Crosses fingers*
Chapter fifteen: Closure

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But How can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well? Slash. Dm/Hp

Forgive me! Until quite recently... *cough*today*cough* I had forgotten my password for this account. I'm back though, and posting the 15th and 16th chapter. And in time for Christmas, too :)

Chapter fifteen: Closure

The vicious red words blurred and wormed their way across Harry's vision as he stood, still numbly gazing upon the scene of his faithful companion's desecrated remains and the final message she bore. Trying to comprehend the reasons for such a senseless act.

Why had they done it?

To prove that there was someone in the school who could easily reach him anytime they wished? To show him that they were willing to hurt those close to him to get at him as well? Or was it just to show the kind of power they possessed? To scare him? To hurt him?

What was the real reason behind killing... Hedwig

Harry closed his eyes as he felt them beginning to burn with the prelude of tears he wouldn't permit to fall. He refused to allow her murderer that one thing. Small as it was. Even if they weren't able to see him at that moment.

Whoever did this will pay, he swore to himself in a vicious promise. He opened determined emerald eyes and took another, blind step toward his owl's ruined body, compelled to be closer to her. To soothe the pain she no longer felt, just as she had often done for him in life.

But before Harry quite knew what was happening, he found himself in the impenetrable hold of his warder, with the other's chest firmly at his back. Draco's lithe arms were encircled tightly around his body, just as Pan's had been earlier, only this time not in restraint but in comfort and reassurance.

Harry was immediately cocooned within the magic pouring from Draco like a raging tempest. Though to the Angelus, it was soft and warm, welcoming like the magic of Loiresvale was. Draco's unique scent filled The Angelus' nose with the familiar aroma of spices and musk and danced over his body. Shielding him within the icy magical vortex from the stench of death and something sweet that tainted the area like a thick, noxious smog.

It was the safest he had ever felt, but Harry knew he couldn't stay there.

“Let go of me.”

His request was ignored.

“Why do you never listen to me?” Draco breathed fiercely into Harry's ear, even as he clutched the unresponsive Gryffindor to himself. As if doing so could protect him from all he'd seen. Or at least, that he could absorb Harry's pain. “Stupid Gryffindor.”
Then, Harry was being dragged rather forcefully away from Hedwig and through what was left of the students still loitering about the entrance hall. Until that is, Draco stopped unexpectedly. As if only just noticing that he had an audience, the Slytherin turned and fixed narrowed, furious silver eyes on the few gawking students that unwisely hadn't yet left the entrance hall. “What are you all staring at?” He snarled, “50 points from each of you if you're not in the Great hall and seated at your house tables by the count of three.”

Not one of the students protested despite the somewhat unreasonable punishment and made a hasty retreat. It seemed no one was willing to go up against an incensed Draco Malfoy. Especially one apparently embracing Harry Potter, because that Draco Malfoy had clearly gone mad.

“I assume you want stasis wards in place?” Blaise asked carefully as he slid from the corner he had been standing in. He warily approached the two, but stopped at the soft growl that Draco emitted. Harry gave a slight start at Blaise's words, and abandoned all thoughts of an escape from Draco's hold. Stasis wards?

“I had believed that went without saying,” the Invidian prince sneered condescendingly at Blaise. “But apparently I overestimated your intelligence.”

*Why stasis wards?* Harry tried to think. But his brain refused to function properly and so it took longer than usual for him to connect what he was hearing with what he already knew.

Technically, a stasis ward acted similarly to that of a containment spell but also froze everything within a sort of time lock. Ensuring that whatever was within the ward would be preserved completely until the spell was lifted. And unlike the more simplistic containment spells, that merely kept things in, a stasis ward also kept things out.

Harry though, couldn't quite fathom why such a complex and magic draining spell was required when Draco could have had a simpler ward against intruders. Surely that would have been enough of a deterrent? What was there to keep in?

*Unless there is something Draco doesn't want to let out,* Harry thought over quickly. But what? And he severely doubted right now Draco was in any mood to talk. Especially after him snapping at Blaise like that.

Still, he had to ask. Especially since it involved Hedwig.

“What are you doing?” The Nikolai interrupted, frowning at Draco and Blaise suspiciously. He tried to pull away from his warder again but found it was no use. Either the other had been hiding his strength before, or Harry was growing weaker. “Don't touch her!”

He was again ignored. Even by Pan, although the boy did offer Harry a sympathetic look as well as a dirty one directed at Draco.

Blaise glanced at Draco uneasily but slowly approached the double doors that held Hedwig and quickly set about casting some complex looking charms around the owl and the doors she was nailed to.

“Make sure *no one* can tamper with the wards,” the blonde ordered, glaring slightly at his cousin who hadn't left with the others. “Torrez, get back into the Great hall and keep an eye on the others.”

“I think you mean get back in the hall so that bitch of yours can keep an eye on *me* ,” Pan countered, bitterly.
Draco let out a low growl in warning that was much more animal sounding than human and his eyes had changed to a brilliant fiery gold. “Now is not the time for this, Pandarius!” The blonde hissed out.

“Aye-aye captain,” Pan drawled and gave an exaggerated salute. Then with a final wistful and questioning glance at Harry, he slipped into the Great hall.

“Here.”

Harry's attention was quickly drawn back to Draco, as a thick black cloak was draped across his shoulders and pulled over his head. It was surprisingly cool despite the thickness and smelled like Draco.

Just like his scarf still did...

“I don't want your cloak!” The Nikolai snapped, earning himself Draco's complete attention as the blonde curled an arm firmly around him once more. “Why did you seal Hedwig in? You could have placed the seal on the door after removing her first!” He hissed, voice beginning to bleed with feeling.

He could sense Draco's chaotic emotions, which were a blend of caution, anger and frustration. They really weren't helping to temper his own feelings and if anything, were actually making his worse. Then there were also those other emotions seated deep within the blonde that were forever present but unidentifiable for Harry. And underlying all of this was a tiny yet growing thread of fear.

But why was Draco scared?

“You can't stay here,” Draco said, in a calmer if now distant sounding voice. He dropped his head to Harry's own. Resting it just at the smaller boy's cloak-covered temple as he shepherded Harry down the draft-filled corridor once more.

Away from Hedwig and that disgustingly sweet fragrance...

“My cloak has a variation of the notice-me-not spell woven into each of the fibres,” Draco continued, completely oblivious to Harry's musings. “So as long as you don't talk, it should be almost as effective as an invisibility cloak.”

Harry shook his head, trying to dislodge the feeling of spider webs that seemed to be trying to fog his mind. “But Hedwig...?”

Draco didn't even break his stride at Harry's words so soon after the warning, but his grip did tighten noticeably around the slighter boy and he spoke simply. Almost as though addressing the weather. “A casualty of war.”

Harry's eyes narrowed, furiously. A casualty of war?

Well, Draco could have gone and said that she was just a bird, which if Harry were being completely honest with himself, had actually expected the blonde to say. Still the Slytherin didn't have to sound so blasé about it. She still meant a lot to Harry, bird or not. Hedwig had been one of his first friends.

“Draco,” the Nikolai ground out.

“The area is tainted with a... poison,” Draco finally stated. Though it sound like it had been dragged from him and that he would rather not continue, but he did. “She was practically soaked in the stuff. It wouldn't effect me at all. Or the other students—”the blonde added quickly at Harry's look. “You
on the other hand... while not exactly toxic to you it could cause your senses to mess up for a bit and we really don't want that to happen.”

The blonde shot him a sidelong glance, peering right at him despite the use of the cloak. “You may not have noticed it, but it has already begun effecting you. Otherwise you wouldn't have allowed me to drag you away as I have.” His mouth quirked up in a minute smirk. “It's actually made you quite docile.”

Harry hissed softly, in a very mild mortification of his warder's insinuation. Docile was he? Well, he'd show Draco...

“Don't even think about it,” his warder cut in.

Harry's opened mouth closed with a click before he frowned and remembered that he didn't have to listen to Draco.

“I can walk on my own, you know,” he bit out, indignantly and scowled when he wasn't released.

Draco was treating him like he was about to break or something and Harry was growing thoroughly annoyed with it. He didn't want Draco to coddle him like a sodding child! And Draco was. In his own way he was treating Harry like he was a mere child and Harry didn't like it one bit.

Although, the treatment may also have been due to the poison which was apparently circulating in his system.

“I am quite aware you are capable,” Draco responded, his emotions settling but still incredibly alert. Harry doubted that the blonde would miss even the heart beat of a mouse a few hundred yards or more away. “I'm just not so sure that if I were to release you, if you'd run back to the entrance hall in order to fetch Hedwig down from the doors.”

Harry briefly wondered if he should do just that, but decided not to. He turned his head away with a scowl. “You didn't have to leave her there,” he grumbled under his breath, not willing to give in just yet.

Even if Draco was right in his actions.

The blonde sighed. A touch of annoyance seeped from him into Harry through their bond. “Your life holds far more value over a mere bird, Harry,” he replied and gave the Gryffindor a knowing glance. “I shouldn't have to be telling you this.”

Harry froze as it suddenly felt like he had been stabbed through the heart at Draco's words. It was possibly the most bizarre time to recall it, but the words from the muggle play of Julius Caesar echoed through his mind, mockingly.

*Et tu, Draco?*

So, Draco didn't really see him as a person as he had initially thought. Was the Invidian only protecting him out of an obligation as well? *Well of course he is,* Harry reflected glumly and he looked away from the other. Harry’s sole purpose was to defeat Voldemort before running off and becoming the next Angelus king. Then he'd sire his own heir ensuring the Nikolai family lived on. That was his duty. End of story.

And it was now Draco's duty to ensure he lived to fulfil his role.

*He doesn't really care about me.* Harry thought, and strangely, that acknowledgement hurt far more
than even Hedwig's death did. The Angelus closed his eyes and gave an exhausted sigh. *He doesn't really care.*

In some tiny recess of his mind, he knew that wasn't true. It had been pointed out more than enough that Draco hadn't really seemed all that interested in any of the titles he possessed but that didn't stop his rapidly darkening thoughts.

“Harry?” Draco questioned carefully, as his hold on the Gryffindor grew lax. The Angelus could sense Draco's bewilderment and surprise that was gradually turning into concern when Harry remained unresponsive. “...Harry?”

The sable-haired boy shrugged off his warder's hold and continued onwards, without saying a word. He wasn't sure what to say. What was there to say, really? Sometimes things went best unsaid. Harry thought now was probably one of those times, as he was sure that whatever he said now he would later regret.

Besides, he didn't want the blonde touching him anymore.

He didn't think he could stand looking at him, either.

Having not truly planned on going anywhere besides Dumbledore's office, Harry walked on but didn't make it far before Draco had seised his wrist in an almost painful grasp. The Invidian then spun Harry around to face him as he took hold of the Angelus' chin roughly, bringing their faces mere centimetres apart.

“Draco...” Harry warned, as much as he was able. Given that his jaw was pretty much locked in place by the other's hand. He narrowed his eyes, which to his horror were beginning to sting again.

“I promise you we will get the one responsible,” Draco vowed lowly and with a burning sincerity that infused every word and permeated from his very being. Especially his lovely silvery eyes.

He clearly thought Harry was finally reacting to Hedwig's death and had absolutely no idea how far off the mark he was.

*If only you knew,* the Gryffindor mused in bitter amusement.

The Invidian's grip on Harry's chin loosen a little, his words, however, were no less forceful. “But we have to get as far away from the entrance hall as possible and I need to get a message off to your family and to mine.”

“And if I refuse to go with you?” Harry argued and would have crossed his arms had he been able to.

“Then I will stun and carry you the rest of the way myself, if I must,” replied the irritated and puzzled blonde. He eyed Harry, clearly wondering what had happened within the short span of their conversation.

The very thought of being man-handled appalled the Angelus and he glared. His eyes a burning gold against Draco's icy silver.

“Now is not the time to mess around,” Draco gritted out.

Harry knew the blonde wanted nothing more than to shake him or even blast a hole through the wall but was barely keeping himself from doing so. However, that didn't stop the Invidian's temper from growing or his damn scent from overwhelming Harry's senses as it spiked and churned. Just like
Draco's...

“Magic,” Harry breathed, as his eyes widened at the epiphany. His hostility and hurt temporarily sidetracked.“I can smell yours.”

This, apparently, bothered Draco greatly. “We're going,” he barked.

“But we can find whoever did this now,” Harry argued, not quite aware of what he was saying. Just knowing that it was complete truth. He forced his internal debate away for later contemplation and latched on to the new topic eagerly. “All you have to do is let me near the doors and I could locate whoever the person is.”

The look on Draco's face darkened considerably. “No,” he intoned brusquely. “I'm not letting you run off to get yourself killed in what is quite clearly a trap. Now, come on. I think we had best see Dumbledore about this first...”

“We don't need to—”

Draco narrowed his eyes, and trapped Harry against the stone wall, causing the hood to fall from the latter's face.

“I still don't quite think the situation has sunk in yet,” Draco started, lowly. “But there is more than one person in this school who will do anything they can to hurt you. The fact that someone was able to get a hold of your owl, kill her and then nail her to the school’s entrance doors—an incredibly busy part of the school—then get away again without being seen is a major cause for concern.”

Harry knew that. Of course he knew that.

“How is this any different from all of my years, here?” Harry retorted, hotly. “Each year I almost die. Or someone close to me does. How is this year any different?”

“Because this year, I don't know who's after you!” Draco hissed, in an attempt to keep his voice down. But it's volume was growing by the moment. “All the other years I knew or had a fair enough idea of who to keep an eye on and warn you somehow. This year, I have nothing to go on.”

Harry was stunned.

That admission must have cost Draco a lot, being as proud as he was and yet he had still done it. But what the Gryffindor couldn't quite fathom was that Draco had done all that to protect him years before he had known what Harry would become. For years before Draco himself had officially assumed his role as Harry's protector, he'd been doing so from the shadows.

**But why would he?**

“Whoever this person is... I—” Draco broke off, staring at Harry with both an angry and pained expression. He sighed softly in resignation and dropped his forehead to Harry's and lowered his gaze. “I just don't want to be the one who finds you nailed to a door somewhere.”

Harry was at a total loss for what to say to the other. He still hadn't quite recovered from the earlier ordeal. Nor had he really had much time to process it and now this? Well, now he knew why Draco had been afraid, at least.

Maybe Draco did care for him beyond his duty as protector? They were supposed to be friends, weren't they?
Swallowing the tiny bout of guilt at doubting the blonde, the Nikolai patted Draco's back awkwardly. Unsure what was expected of him in this kind of situation but at least Draco wasn't crying. Harry had never been good with the whole comforting others thing. That was Hermione's role.

He didn't even protest when Draco pressed his face into the crook of his neck, assuming that too was a comfort thing. Albeit, a very strange comfort thing. He idly wondered if it was an Invidian habit or if it came from Draco's nixie form, since Ice had a tendency of placing his muzzle in the junction of Blitz's neck, too.

Harry didn't have long to wonder though, as Draco's warm mouth abruptly latched on to the side of his neck and he felt as his warder's fangs pierced the soft skin of this throat. He gave a yelp in surprise.

Draco promptly withdrew his fangs and pulled back a little, licking the blood from his lips. He was watching Harry carefully, not appearing repentant at all. Though his gaze was worried, he was staring at Harry with an intense and almost calculating gleam in his eyes that made the Gryffindor instantly wary.

Harry just knew that that look didn't mean well for him. Even if Draco was his warder and couldn't do anything to hurt him technically, he could still do anything he wanted so long as he thought it would keep Harry safe. He decided that he really didn't like that look one bit and tried to take a step in retreat, forgetting for the moment that Draco was still holding him and he was still trapped against a wall.

“You tricked me,” the Angelus blinked, still slightly in shock from the fact that Draco had actually bitten him. Without consent. Couldn't that be classed as a rape of sorts?

Not if you allowed him to drink, his traitorous mind supplied him.

And Harry found that he couldn't really deny the statement. Definitely not with that rich scent of his own blood filling the air, mingling with Draco's magic and messing with his senses. Though he did wonder whose side the little voice was on, because at that moment it was most certainly not his own.

“I wouldn't say I tricked you,” Draco stated, finally. His voice had deepened a little more and sounded thick with... hunger? It vaguely brought to mind the image of a starving wolf and Harry immediately tensed. “I was being completely honest in saying that I didn't want to find you nailed to a door.”

That still didn't explain Draco deciding to snack on him. Even if the blonde did no more than puncture his skin and spill his blood.

“And using me as a temporary food source explains how?” Harry pressed, trying to find the sense in his warder's skewed logic. But was finding it increasingly hard to concentrate on those thoughts when he could feel his blood pulsing out of the puncture in his neck and trickling down his throat.

“Remember when Zabini said that I could do anything within my power to protect you?” Draco questioned as he cocked his head to the side. His expression was strange and his intense stare was doing odd things to Harry's pulse.

“Let go,” Harry protested, wondering when exactly Draco's arms had dropped from the wall to encircle him instead.

Draco, as seemed his wont for the moment, ignored him and continued to speak as if uninterrupted.
“Which isn’t limited to intentionally drawing your instincts out.”

What? Harry’s mind stilled at the announcement only to start back up a moment later musing furiously on that piece of information. He hadn’t known that was even possible but even if it was, he didn’t want his other instincts to be drawn out. He didn’t want to give up the parts of him that were still human just yet. And it seemed unfair that Draco was trying to force him, even if it was for his own good.

“Draco, let go or—”

“Or what, Harry?” Draco asked suddenly calm, but the Gryffindor could feel his warder’s heart racing against his own chest, like a maddening drum. Betraying any hope the blonde may have had in convincing Harry that he was fine. Even if the Angelus hadn’t been able to sense Draco’s unsettled emotions through their bond.

Harry swallowed, feeling profoundly disturbed at the heat generating between them. It was also doing a brilliant job of fuelling his anger.

“Will you kill me” The Slytherin questioned seriously, his hold tightened to the point it was beginning to crush the Gryffindor and was making it a little difficult for him to breathe. “You can try.”

Then again, it may had been due entirely to being drowned in the scent of Draco’s magic and his own blood or the fact that he was now mere inches away from the blonde’s neck and his sweet blood that the Nikolai could hear flowing beneath the alabaster skin.

What am I thinking? Harry thought, slightly confused and horrified as he again attempted to pull back.

He squeezed his eyes shut as he tried to suppress the thirst within him that had cruelly sprung to life. But soon found himself a prisoner to his own body and needs as his fangs lengthen further and ached with the knowledge that all he had to do was ask and Draco would allow him to drink what he craved.

You evil bastard... Harry’s mind swore as he tried to keep his sudden fear to himself. He didn’t want to change. He was scared that he would become someone completely different, having already seen and felt the changes within himself.

And how was this going to help anyone? Especially if Harry was too focused on wanting Draco’s blood than to defend himself at present. What had Draco been thinking? Because, clearly he hadn’t.

The blonde’s voice softened and the already emotionally unstable Angelus was almost too scared to look into Draco’s eyes. “But would you be able to?”

Draco’s words were almost like an ice bath to Harry’s fevered mind and the question had the Gryffindor’s brain coming to a total standstill, as he processed the blonde’s previous sentences carefully and made his blood turn suddenly cold.

Would he be able to kill Draco?

At that very moment he felt like killing the boy but Harry knew that he couldn’t, emotionally speaking. He had already grown far too attached to the Slytherin and killing him would be as bad as killing Ron or Hermione. Maybe a little more, judging by the way his heart gave a strange twinge in disagreement.
That aside, could Harry still?

The Angelus prince felt something within him snap sharply into focus.

“Draco, let go,” he growled out weakly as his anger bled away into a strange and desperate sort of longing. He licked his suddenly dry lips, positively horrified at the almost pleading tone his voice had taken up and began to struggle more furiously against the other's resisting embrace.

He refused to degrade himself further by begging to be released. His pride simply wouldn't allow it. Nor was he just going to drink from Draco like he now knew the blonde wanted.

Harry hadn't seriously considered that he'd grow dependant on the blonde's blood before. Having sampled Draco's blood only briefly when they'd formed the blood bond and hadn't wanted it since but now... He wondered fleetingly if this was one of his weaknesses as being an Angelus, or if this was some side effect from Draco biting him but the idea was gone as quickly as it had appeared, as his mind fixated on one thing.

The drug that pulsed like liquid fire through his warder's veins.

“What do you plan on achieving, Draco?” Pan interrupted suddenly, drawing the attention of the bonded pair.

Well, in Harry's case, a vague awareness of his presence.

The snowy-haired Invidian was glaring at his cousin but made no move to interfere. Instead, he stood still easily a few metres away, his lips twisted slightly in displeasure. “I can't say I approve...”

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to the side of the growing confrontation and folded his arms neatly across his broad chest. “It's not your battle to fight.”

Opting not to listen to the white-haired boy, Blaise stayed put. Though he did look like he wanted nothing more than to be anywhere but there.

“Zabini, stand down,” Draco ordered.

Immediately the other complied.

Hermione, it seemed had regained her composure and for once appeared at a loss as to what she should do. It lasted for about a second or two before she began trying to calm Ron and help him see reason. “Ron, I think you should lower your wand,” she said, looking almost like she would regret her words. “I don't think they're hurting Harry.”

She shot Harry a brief glance, apparently trying to correctly ascertain whether her words were indeed truth.

He gave a tiny nod in agreement, wondering if his neck had healed yet.

“You should listen to what Granger is saying, Weasely,” Draco added, arrogantly. Clearly not caring about whether he hurt anyone's feelings at present, unlike Blaise. Even if such a thing wasn't exactly the best idea with Harry's emotions being as volatile as they currently were. “Can't you see that you're not wanted here? Bugger off.”

“Draco,” Harry hissed out, quietly. He was no longer trying to get away from Draco, as it was only his warder's hold that now kept him upright.

“Harry?” Ron asked, opting to ignore the blonde altogether, he looked horribly confused. Then he paused, seeming to really take in the way that the Invidian held Harry close to him. Ron's wand lowered slowly and he stood looking at Harry and Draco strangely. As though not quite able to comprehend that the Slytherin appeared to be attempting to support his friend and that Harry may actually be accepting of the contact.

Ron's blue eye's narrowed suspiciously. “What have you done to him, Malfoy?!?”

“Listen you—”

“Ron...” Harry cut in sharply.

His voice suddenly hoarse with a want he stubbornly refused to acknowledge, now he'd broken from it's lure. But it was getting harder to focus by the minute and with the sudden turn of events, he felt a raging migraine coming on.

“It's all right...” he said, desperately trying to come up with something to distract his fiery-tempered best friend with and wasn't having much luck in the process. “He's just... He's been...”

“...donating blood,” Draco finished, with a slight roll of his eyes at the boy in his arms. “I'm his donor.”

Where on earth had that idea sprung from? Although Harry knew that Draco was just covering for him, did the Slytherin really have to say that? It was bound to cause a great deal more questions that he wouldn't be able to answer.

But at least Ron appeared to have been sidetracked for the meantime.
He stared long at Harry with an odd expression. “He knows? About the... about your—”

“He knows I need blood, yes,” Harry was quick to say. They were still out in the open after all. Where anyone who was skilled enough in charms or in possession of extendable ears might hear what they were discussing. He was surprised that so far none of them had mentioned anything too incriminating yet. But that didn't mean it would remain that way and with questions heading down the dangerous path they currently were, he knew it was a mere matter of time.

“Then why are you all weak?” Ron pressed on, ignoring Draco yet again but clearly taking in what the blonde was saying. “Shouldn’t he be the one collapsing and everything?”

“That I would, Weasley,” Draco conceded, neutrally. Harry could tell he was beginning to get really quite annoyed. “As it is, you interrupted us. So you can blame yourself for his present state.”

“Ron,” Harry interjected tiredly, seeing Ron's mouth open, clearly ready to say something rude. “Can we let it go for the moment? I just want to see Dumbledore about... this—”

The redhead nodded slowly, still frowning. He didn't look like he wanted to drop the subject at all but the sharp jab of an elbow into his ribs courtesy of the crafty Hermione obviously did the trick.

“All right, Harry,” Ron agreed warily, and with a slight warning to his voice, “but I want to know how Malfoy discovered your... condition.” He tossed Draco a dark look and then stepped forward, intent on taking the Angelus from the Slytherin.

But Draco clearly had other plans and drew Harry closer to himself. “I'll take him to Dumbledore,” he drawled, imperiously.

“Like hell I'm leaving Harry with you!” Ron exploded loudly and once again brandishing his wand like a sword. “I'm fine with him needing you for your... your donations. Why he hasn't told us about that I don't know—” he shot Harry a slightly perplexed if hurt look. “But don't think for a moment that I trust you. For all I know, you could have him under some sort of spell that makes him think he needs you...”

And like that, it appeared a light had suddenly flickered to life in the redhead’s mind. “You must have done something to Harry!” he exclaimed. “You've got him under a hex or something! What was it? I swear Malfoy if you don't tell me I will use every curse I know to force you! And I'm not above using Unforgivables.”

“Ron!” Hermione gasped, horrified as Harry peered back at his best friend totally stunned and growing more and more frustrated and angry at not only what had happened to Hedwig but also the current events he was being forced to endure. Now really wasn't the time for Ron to question what was happening, nor was it the time for the Nikolai heir to lose control over his damn thirst.

Speaking of which...

Don't go there, Harry warned himself furiously, as he clung desperately to the last threads of his humanity. He was quite sure that his friends would not best enjoy watching him drink Draco's blood.

Draco’s eyes narrowed into hateful silver slits and he pulled Harry closer, almost absentmindedly. “You listen to me, Weasley,” Draco snarled threateningly as an abnormal wind sprung to life and tagged ruthlessly as his robes and hair. “I would do no such thing. Do you hear me? Now shut up or piss off. At least Granger has enough sense to keep quiet.”

The aforementioned girl looked affronted for a moment.
Dumbledore appeared then, followed shortly by Snape and McGonagall. The latter of which immediately continued down the corridor to check on the students in the hall, sparing Harry a sympathetic look as she went. Snape's expression was completely blank and for once kept his peace, though he was eying the small congregation of students in interest before he called both Pan and Blaise to him.

Although his posture was relaxed, with the arrival of the professors Harry felt Draco's already tense emotions go suddenly entirely taut and Harry had but to guess why. The blonde believed that Snape was loyal to Voldemort and was still quite unaware of the man's real allegiances.

This was only proven when Draco very subtly manoeuvred Harry around so that he was furthest from the potions master. Still, Harry sorely doubted that the horribly sharp man would miss a detail such as that. Even if he wasn't paying close attention to what the Gryffindors and Draco were doing.

The headmaster drew up before Harry, his blue eyes dull and sad. “I'm sorry my dear boy,” he intoned sincerely. “Your life appears ruled by misfortunate events.”

Harry heard Draco let out a soft hiss in displeasure and slight warning. Dumbledore didn't seem the least bit surprised by this, nor did he seem shocked when Harry settled a placating hand on the blonde's shoulder.

“No,” Harry argued, bitterly. “I just had to be born at the end of July.”

Draco was instantly curious.

That's when Ron found his tongue once more.

“Professor, Malfoy has Harry under some sort of spell!” The redhead burst out. “Look at him! He can't even stand. Malfoy's done something to him, I know he has!”

“Ron!” Hermione and Harry both exclaimed in unison.

Dumbledore, just as earlier, didn't seem the least bit surprised by Ron's outburst. Though he did look to be considering the redhead's words very seriously. He nodded once as McGonagall came back into the entrance hall.

“Harry, if you Miss Granger and Mr Weasley wouldn't mind waiting for me in my office? Your guardians will need to be notified of this,” the headmaster stated, somberly. No twinkle in his eye and his voice lacking it's usual mirth. His eyes drifted from the Gryffindors to the trio of Slytherins. “They will want to be informed of this and I'm certain they will also be wanting to discuss your future here with us at Hogwarts.”

Harry nodded numbly.

Hermione looked like she was dying to say something before frowning disapprovingly at Ron, who was grinning smugly at a rather annoyed looking Draco. No, make that an absolutely livid Draco. It just seemed he was very well practised at hiding his emotions.

“Mr Malfoy,” Dumbledore stated clearly, “if I may have a word?”

“But...” Harry started. Not at all liking how this was going. He knew he could trust Dumbledore but he didn't want to leave Draco behind. He wanted the other boy to come with him but he wasn't sure what to say to the head master.

But hadn't he been trying to get away from his warder not that long ago?
There was also Ron and Hermione to now deal with, though Harry knew Hermione already knew far more than Ron did concerning Draco. She still didn't know everything and Harry didn't feel like explaining anything to either of them at the moment. He just wanted to rest his tired head and Draco would be the perfect buffer against their questions.

“Of course, Sir,” Draco intoned, politely enough. Even though Harry was aware that the blonde was positively seething and now held murderous intentions towards the old man as well as Ron.

Dumbledore nodded, totally oblivious.

“It'll be fine,” Draco murmured softly into Harry's ear. Speaking so lowly only Harry could hear him. “I'll sort this out, then I'll join you.” Carefully, almost as if scared of breaking the green-eyed boy, Draco handed the Angelus' care over to Hermione.

Then, fixing sharp icy silver eyes on Ron that threatened an excruciatingly painful death, the Slytherin sauntered over to the headmaster. “If anything happens to him, your head is the first I'll be coming for, Weasel,” he promised with utmost sincerity.

The words strangely brought a small smile to the Angelus' lips.

--xXx--

Harry fidgeted.

He had been seated within Dumbledore's office for what felt like an eternity now, but couldn't possibly be over ten minutes, at the most and still he waited for the old man to return.

Hermione hadn't said much after sending Ron off to get Harry's blood-chalice, even though now that he was out of Draco's presence he no longer needed it. It also seemed his emotions had returned to normal. Or perhaps it was just that his shock had worn off and whatever Draco had done to draw out his instincts had dulled down a little. But were by no means as dormant as they had been that morning.

Harry glanced over at Hermione as she sat, her countenance pensive. It appeared she was looking through him and struggling with some sort of internal debate. And no matter what Harry did, he was unable to quiet the steady sound of her heart beat in his ears.

Why me? Harry mused, despondently and he slumped down in his seat. Why does this stuff always happen to me?

His thoughts returned to the sharp message scrawled messily across the entrance door. A strange sort of hatred fill him once more as he recalled his beloved friend and pet nailed upon the wood. He hadn't been able to get her down to bury her as he would have wished, instead he was bundled up and left in the headmaster's office to think.

The only company Harry had beside the quietly contemplative Hermione was the small comforting presence of Draco in his mind, even if the boy was currently on the warpath.

The Nikolai would hate to be the person bearing the brunt of the blonde's fury right then. The thought actually brought a small smile of cheer to his face before it abruptly vanished as his thoughts returned to his family.

Swallowing heavily, he already knew exactly what would happen once his Aunt and Uncle heard about what had occurred. The pair would floo in immediately and demand he return with them to Loiresvale and he wouldn't be able to set foot back in Hogwarts until after he had an heir to continue
the Nikolai line.

In short, they wouldn't let him leave their sight again.

Just as his thoughts began to darken further, Dumbledore returned to the office with a sweep of his bright magenta and lilac robes. “I'm sincerely sorry about what has happened today, Harry,” he said sadly, the perpetual twinkle missing from his eyes. “I'm sure you know what is likely to happen now?”

Harry nodded, not sure he could voice his answer.

“Would you prefer to have your friends pack up your things in the event that we cannot dissuade your guardians from keeping you here?”

Hermione stood from her seat so fast that it almost toppled over completely.

“Sir?” She glanced from Harry to Dumbledore then back again, perplexed. “Harry's leaving? But why? There has to be some way—”

The Nikolai shook his head, feeling like he had been dealt a major blow. “I doubt they'll want to keep me here after what's happened,” he murmured tiredly. “Not unless...” they catch the perpetrator and killed them, he silently finished.

“Unless?” Hermione pressed.

Harry sighed and shook his head again. “They won't, Hermione,” he said with certainty. It was foolish to even consider it when he knew that Draco would likely push to have him home schooled as well. If what he had done to Harry was anything to go by, the Angelus wouldn't put it past his warder at all.

Before Hermione could say another word, Dumbledore's fireplace burst into life and deposited an anxious looking Selene. Ignoring all else, the Angelus queen instantly made her way to Harry, with hurried whisks of her emerald robes and cloak.

“Mon amour!”

Harry felt instantly warmed.

“We received the message and came immediately,” Selene said, as she carefully looked Harry over with gentle hands and worried violet eyes. “Are you all right? Have you been harmed?”

“I wasn't touched,” Harry responded softly, absently soaking in his Aunt's magical aura. Basking in it, much like he had with Draco's but not quite. Selene's magic was tranquil, unlike his warders.

Selene gave a tiny, relieved nod then pressed a warm lingering kiss to his forehead as she withdrew a little, to stare into Harry's eyes as unshed tears glistened in her own. “I'm sorry for your loss,” she murmured lowly. Then, pulling back, she stood to his side with a comforting hand on his shoulder, looking every bit a queen addressing a subject as her gaze turned on Dumbledore icily. Even the tiny streak of soot across her nose was unable to detract from her presence.

Actually, Harry suspected that even if the woman was dressed in rags she could somehow make someone dressed in the finest of silks feel the lesser being.

Demetrius, who had appeared not long after Selene was looking sombre. He shook his head at his wife before turning his attention to the headmaster.
“Professor Dumbledore,” he stated neutrally, “I believe there are certain concerns that need to be addressed in regards to my nephew and his safety here at Hogwarts. I had been informed that he would be safe within these walls and yet something like this has occurred.

“Are you not a man of your word, headmaster?”

*Your Uncle will find the culprit.* Selene's thought was suddenly projected into Harry's mind, startling him slightly.

Until that point, Harry really hadn't realised how much he had missed this connection between his family. It felt so good to be in such close contact again. To be able to converse so freely without having to worry about intruders listening in.

*And they will be dealt with. By him or your warder,* Selene continued.

*Draco will be brought into this?* Harry asked, slightly alarmed. He hadn't considered that a possibility and didn't want Draco locked up in Azkaban for murder... But then, he didn't want that to happen to his uncle, either.

Selene squeezed his shoulder gently. *Of course,* she replied *By the quick note he got off to us, I am certain he desires the privilege. And you need not worry about Azkaban, neither will be caught.*

Harry thought that was rather confident of his Aunt but then, his kind were well known assassins. Or, had been well known, rather. Since apparently their existence had been erased from history.

*Draco has been doing a fine job in protecting and tutoring you,* the elder added.

*He has,* Harry acknowledged with an odd sort of pride.

*And you've grown quite attached to him...*

Harry's face flushed slightly and he chanced a glance at his uncle who, for the moment appeared quite submerged in his discussion with the headmaster. Or so Harry hoped. He didn't want his uncle hearing any of what they were thinking. He wasn't exactly of the understanding sort.

*He has been blocked from this conversation,* Selene responded, mild amusement infusing her thoughts. *This sort of thing isn't for him, I think.*

Why did it always feel like she was talking about something else? Especially whenever Draco was brought up.

Feeling a little disturbed, Harry cast about for another topic to discuss when his eyes instead landed on Hermione. She was glancing at all three Angelus' in curiosity. Though in the two elders' cases, it was guardedly.

Selene's gaze followed Harry's own. “*Qui est ceci, Harry ?*”

“Err, Aunty Selene this is Hermione,” Harry said, gesturing to the bushy-haired girl. “Hermione, my Aunty Selene.”

The Gryffindor girl looked a little intimidated when the elder woman finally acknowledged her presence with a radiant smile and took her hand in greeting. Though now that it had been pointed out to him, Harry noticed that the gesture wasn't nearly as sincere as the touches his aunt bestowed on him.
His friend also appeared quite aware of this.

“Hermione,” Selene murmured cordially, “Harry has told us all about you and Ron. I'm so glad I finally get to meet you. Although, I would have much preferred it being under far different circumstances.”

“Yes,” Hermione agreed immediately. Apparently desperate for a chance to latch onto any sort of conversation starter. “And I just had to meet you. Especially to ask how you managed to return Harry so well...”

“Trained?” Selene finished with a slight quirk of her brow and amusement dancing in her eyes. “Oh, I have my ways,” she said with a secretive smile and cast Harry a fond look. “I have had years of practise on Harry’s uncle.”

“Then Selene and I shall remain here until something is done about this,” was Demetrius' quiet command. It drew everyone's attention. “If you would be so gracious as to have us?”

Dumbledore nodded, politely. Though visibly quite drawn. “If you'd allow me to have someone show you to your rooms?”

Demetrius gave a curt nod. After casting a glamour on Selene then himself he pulled his hood up around his face.

“What does this mean?” Harry asked his aunt quietly, as she followed Demetrius in hiding within her cloak. She glanced at the boy and even though he couldn't see her shadowed face, he could feel the soft weight of her gaze.

It means the hunt has begun, she replied in his mind.

There was a commotion outside the headmaster's door and Harry heard Snape bellow something unintelligible before the doors slammed open and in strolled Draco looking perfectly at ease and totally unconcerned that he may just have dented the walls with his entrance.

Snape hastily closed them behind himself.

“I need to talk with the headmaster,” Draco announced then stopped when he saw the two visitors. Discreetly, Harry saw the blonde incline his head to each of the disguised Angelus, and received one in return.

“Draco, you are acting like a child,” Snape chided quietly, so only the blonde would hear. It was a shame that more than half the room's inhabitants had enhanced hearing and so heard his every muttered word. He turned to the Dumbledore after quickly looking over the others within the room. “Excuse us headmaster, after his brief talk with you Mr Malfoy got it into his head that he could just barge into your office.”

The young Nikolai frowned, wondering why Draco wanted to see Dumbledore. Harry had thought it had all been a simple ploy of his warder's just to get into the office to check up on him.

Despite the rude interruption, Dumbledore appeared vaguely amused. Although he settled stern blue eyes upon the Slytherin student.

“We can speak later if you wish, Mr Malfoy,” he said, peering over his spectacles. “I am a little tied up at present with my guests, as you can see.”

Harry could feel Draco's disappointment and annoyance surge.
Then Snape keeled over stunned and unconscious, before Dumbledore could do much more than blink. Hermione let out a surprised gasp but paused before she dropped to her knees, checking on the downed potions' master.

Casually, Draco slipped his wand back up his sleeve. “I don't trust him,” he stated simply.

Dumbledore appeared more than a little troubled. All traces of amusement from earlier had completely left his expression. “Mr Malfoy, you just attacked a teacher of the school.”

“He’s not to be trusted,” Draco repeated and Harry felt remarkably guilty for not informing his warder of Snape's under cover role earlier, because now he was going to make himself look like an idiot, and earn himself Snape's anger when he was later revived.

Actually, Harry was curious to see what happened when the man did eventually come to.

“You do realise that what you just did is a grounds for expulsion?” Dumbledore continued seriously. His sky-blue eyes sharp like that of a hawk and Harry could sense that he was prepared to stun Draco should the need arise, but the Angelus prince also knew that the old wizard wouldn't be fast enough.

“I have some important information to give you,” Draco countered, soberly. “Information I can't give while he's conscious.”

What are you doing!? Harry questioned, mutely. Unable to believe that Draco had decided to reveal himself as an ally to Harry and in doing so, possibly offering himself up as another potential spy.

Catching Draco's eye, Harry shook his head. Trying to portray his thoughts without having to speak but the blonde just gave a tight smile and looked resolutely away.

You idiot, Harry inwardly fumed. He tensed in his seat to keep himself from wandering over to Draco and smacking him over the head with something heavy, to knock some sense back into him. You have no real idea what you're getting yourself into!

“Minerva,” Dumbledore called into his fire place, not once looking away from the silent blonde teen. “I require your presence a moment.”

No more than three minutes passed, all in complete and thick silence before McGonagall entered the headmaster's office.

“Oh my,” was the first thing that she said. A hand to her mouth as she caught sight of her stunned associate. She glanced about the room, seemingly noting everyone as her gaze swept passed them. Though she did frown a little when she looked at the two hooded occupants of the room. “Should I call for Poppy?”

“Severus will be all right for the moment, Minerva,” Dumbledore informed her. “But I wonder if you might be able to show our guests to their rooms. The ones I had set up near Gryffindor tower at the beginning of this year?”

He had this planned? Harry thought, shocked yet again.

No, I believe he was merely prepared for something like this to happen, Demetrius this time replied, causing Harry to leap almost violently in his chair. Luckily, no one aside from his relatives saw this.

Well, perhaps a few of the past headmasters of the school had from their portraits, though they all appeared more interested in what was going to happen to Draco for hexing a teacher in front of
Selene's head turned and Harry could tell that she was glaring at his uncle in a silent reprimand.

Demetrius, Harry noted in mild amusement, stubbornly avoided the look.

McGonagall seemed taken aback by Dumbledore's words but nodded simply. “Yes, headmaster,” she murmured before turning her full attention upon the two hooded Angelus. “If you would please, follow me?”

“Miss Granger, if you would be so kind as to summon Madame Pomfrey?” Dumbledore said, sounding calmer.

“Yes, Sir,” the girl murmured. She stood and gave Harry a questioning look. “I'll see you later, all right Harry?” Hermione asked, evidently needing the confirmation before she left him alone. Even if he was with family that cared.

Harry gave his friend a wan smile. “I'll be fine,” he assured her.

She didn't look like she believed him. Nor like she was wanting to leave him there. Without warning, she lunged forward and hugged him in one of her bone crushing embraces. Funny, for someone with such thin arms, she was remarkably strong.

Clumsily, Harry returned the hug from his seated position.

“I'm sorry, Harry,” Hermione mumbled, sounding like she was on the very brink of tears. “I'll figure out something. Just— promise that if you leave, you'll say goodbye first?”

She honestly seemed to believe that she'd never see him again after she left the room.

Well, given the circumstances it was highly likely, so he guessed that he couldn't fault her there. Especially after he had assumed that he would be leaving once his aunt and uncle arrived. As it was, that possibility was still very real.

Despite being uncertain about the future ahead and how things may change suddenly, he thought that he could at least offer her that one reassurance and keep it.

“I promise.”

Hermione nodded as she released him and dashed away the tears that had spilt from her eyes. “Sorry,” she mumbled again. This time in slight embarrassment.

With a quick and awkward wave to Selene, Hermione darted out the door.

“Come,” Selene murmured, softly. “There are things that must be discussed.”

Guided by his aunt's gentle hand, Harry stood from his seat and went to follow McGonagall's lead as she slipped out of the room, with Demetrius not far behind. The young Angelus stopped though and turned to his aunt. “But Draco?” He said quietly as he cast a look over his shoulder to the blonde boy.

Draco was standing, looking completely relaxed and uninterested in what was happening around him. Actually he looked very much like Lucius just then, the ever cool and collected politician and aristocrat. But Harry knew that it was just appearances, because he could sense Draco's nervousness and anxiety.
Harry didn't want to leave Draco there alone with Dumbledore and the still out cold Snape. Feeling it as more a form of desertion.

*He will be fine*, Selene reassured him. *He is a resourceful young man and is doing what he believes is best for you. Do you trust him?*

*Of course*, Harry replied, instantly and glanced over at his aunt who smiled.

*Then let him do this*, Selene responded, gently. *As your uncle's support was shown in allowing you to enter a death match, permitting Draco this will also show your support of him and his abilities as your warder.*

That was not what Harry had expected to hear. He smiled self-depreciatively as he realised that all this time when he had argued against Draco, he was showing that he didn't think the blonde was capable of his duties. He wondered then, if he was meant to go along with the majority of what Draco advised was best and only argued against things every so often to keep a balance between them.

But most of the time Draco tended to let Harry have his way and never complained. Well, he'd say something every now and again but that was pretty much it.

*Confidence?* Harry reflected. He trusted Draco with his life, shouldn't that in itself be a major show of confidence? There were few people in the world who Harry now held with such esteem.

Though if this was what Draco needed, then he'd do it.

Turning his back on Draco determinedly, Harry filed out of Dumbledore's office. With Selene's hand still comfortingly on his shoulder, the young Nikolai summoned all the confidence that he could muster and allowed it to flow through the bond to his warder.

He was pleased when he felt Draco's emotions mirror his own.

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“Blaise was the one who erected the stasis ward,” Harry said as he watched his uncle pace back and forward before the modest fireplace that was currently warming their chambers. Demetrius had been that way ever since he had seen what had happened to Hedwig and was unable to access the area to pick up the magical signature of her assailant.

*Hedwig...* Harry resolutely pushed the sudden swell of emotion aside and swallowed the lump in his throat.

The Angelus Lord nodded but said nothing more on it the subject.

“I should never have allowed you to return here,” he muttered to himself instead. “I put far too much trust in someone I do not know personally. Once we are done here, I will be withdrawing you from Hogwarts and you will continue your schooling with Selene and I at home.”

Harry's heart stopped and his body grew tense at the announcement. That had been what he had feared the most.

Feeling Draco's niggling through their bond, Harry forced himself to calm so he wouldn't get his warder all worked up over nothing. It seemed Draco hadn't been much better for wear in terms of emotional exhaustion. But whatever happened in Dumbledore's office, had clearly gone in his
Demetrius stopped his pacing and glanced at Harry, guilt glittering in his amberish eyes. “If I had kept you at Loiresvale and had you home schooled none of this would have happened.” He proceeded to pace once more. “I should have taken you to Shiresford Quay. No harm could befall you there.”

“Demetrius, I think you are being unreasonable,” Selene cut in, from her place beside Harry on the sturdy sofa. “We are both to blame here but we cannot punish Harry by taking him from his friends. As much as I would rather have him safe with us, I think in this case we should leave it up to his warder to decide the best course of action.”

Demetrius looked about to object but was waylaid by Selene before he could.

“The young Malfoy Prince has taken exceptional care of Harry,” she said admiringly and smiled at the Gryffindor. “From what I understand, Draconis lets Harry get away with far too much but has still managed to protect and guide him. I agree that it may be best to remove Harry from school but ask that you think this over first.

“Perhaps we can remove you from school a few weeks earlier as a trial?” Selene asked as she turned to Harry, completely. “If your uncle is still certain he wishes to keep you home once Yule is over then he can discuss this with Draco then.

“What do you wish to do?”

She already seemed to know Harry’s answer. He could almost see it in his aunt’s eyes and he knew she wanted him to speak it aloud.

“I want to stay here,” he said and glanced away from his uncle’s face. Not certain what he would find there. Anger, at his refusal to comply? Disappointment?

“Then we shall try Selene’s suggestion and see if everything settles here in your absence,” Demetrius stated neutrally. Though apparently didn’t believe that was going to happen anytime soon.

“However, I will still be talking with Draconis about this. I am quite certain that he will agree with me and wish to have you withdrawn from the school immediately.”

Harry nodded, knowing it was probably the best arrangement he was going to be dealt.

“Is there anything else you were wanting to share?”

The youngest Angelus looked at his uncle, perplexed at the amused tone that had tinted his question. What did he mean? What else was there to share?

He continued to stare uncomprehendingly.

“You are covered in Draco’s magic,” Selene explained with a frown at Demetrius. “And there is dried blood on your scarf and collar which would suggest that you allowed him to drink from you.”

“Err,” Harry murmured in discomfit as colour suffused his cheeks, painting them a pale wine just like his lips. “I didn’t—” He stopped himself before he could say that he hadn’t let Draco do anything, knowing that his relatives wouldn’t be impressed. However, it was too late to cover his slip.

Demetrius’ amber eyes narrowed and Selene’s expression blanked. “He didn’t have your consent?” The eldest male asked in an eerie tone. “He drank from you without asking?”
“I wouldn’t say that,” Harry mumbled, then cleared his throat. Knowing that it was his fault that he was now having to explain everything to fix it or have his relative's disliking Draco for his un-permitted ‘drinking’ of Harry's blood. “If he had of asked, I would have let him but he didn't drink from me. He just punctured my neck and was trying to get me to drink from him.”

Selene and Demetrius exchanged a look.

One that left Demetrius' expression slightly sour.

“It looks like I may not have an ally in Draconis, after all,” he muttered, then gave a longsuffering sigh, while a small self-satisfied smile formed on Selene's full lips.

Harry arched a brow in question which only prompted Demetrius' lips to twitch.

Now, was quite possibly the worse time for Draco to make an appearance, and as such, the fates chose then to send him. So when Draco was let into the room, he was met with a blushing Harry, smug Selene and stony-faced Demetrius.

The blonde eyed him askance.

Feeling sorry for his warder and suitably guilty for creating yet another awkward situation for Draco to get himself out of, Harry subtly tapped the side of his neck where Draco had bitten him, prompting the Slytherin to flush a matching shade of pink before all colour fled his cheeks.

“Lord Nikolai—” he headed off but stopped when Demetrius rose a hand to silence him.

“Draco,” Demetrius stated calmly enough despite taking, what Harry could only describe as a menacing step towards the blonde.

To his credit, Draco didn't flinch back and drew himself up to his full height. Putting himself about an inch or so taller than the older male. Demetrius saw this and didn't seem to like it, either.

“We need to discuss a few things,” he intoned. “Join me?”

It was a command, not a request. Everyone knew it.

Harry frowned at his uncle, not entirely sure why he was suddenly acting so hostile towards Draco. He wasn't stupid and knew that it had something to do with Draco bleeding him without actual consent but he had thought that they had gotten over that already. Apparently not.

Then there was Draco, who while was royalty himself wasn't bowing to Demetrius like Harry had expected of him. Maybe Draco had insulted Demetrius or something? That seemed likely, but he was always so careful and knew far more than Harry even did in regards to etiquette so he wouldn't intentionally have anger Demetrius.

Harry glanced over at his aunt who was watching the unfolding events in rapt interest.

Well, no explanation from that corner then, Harry sighed, deciding he was just going to have to ask about it later.

Inclining his head respectfully, Draco stepped around Demetrius and slowly made his way over to Harry, where he pulled a smallish mahogany box from his robes and pressed it gingerly into the younger boy's hands.

“What—?” Harry breathed, in surprise. The box was heavier than what he had been expecting and
almost slipped from his grasp before he managed to steady it. At that same time he caught sight of the ornate silver plaque and his brain seemed to freeze for a few seconds, then his eyes darted up to peer at Draco in silent gratitude.

Knowing that there were no words could truly do justice to the appreciation he felt and that any attempt would break the banks which held his sorrow at bay.

“I had to incinerate her,” Draco explained, apparently compelled to do so and feeling rather uneasy. He withdrew a plain pale feather from his pocket and handed that to Harry, too. “This was the only part of her that wasn't tainted.”

Harry clutched the feather closer to himself numbly, as he ran his fingers over the rich, smoothly polished surface of his box to the silver plate and cursive script that bore Hedwig's name lovingly. He hadn't thought he would actually get to bury her as he wished. Didn't believe he would get to see her again, actually, but Draco had proven him wrong.

Draco, it seemed liked to prove him wrong.

“Thank-you, Draconis,” Selene said sincerely. She smiled sadly at Harry as he twirled the snowy feather between his fingers, unable to thank Draco himself verbally. “She meant the world to him.”

“I know,” Draco said, softly. His eyes not leaving the dejected younger boy's form once.

Reluctantly, the Slytherin withdrew and moved away, although Harry knew that Draco wanted nothing more than to stay with him. Without a word, Draco turned and followed the now sombre Demetrius across the chamber.

Harry didn't see Draco's pained and longing glance his way as he departed the room, although the Angelus did hear as the blonde closed the door to the chamber. The soft click seemed to echo loudly in the otherwise silent room.

Closure. That's what this was.

The young prince felt his eyes sting once more.

“It's all right, mon petit étoile,” Selene murmured quietly, seemingly sensing his distress herself. She gently ran her fingers through his hair soothingly, as she rested his head on her shoulder. “It will be all right, you will see.”

Harry was thankful for his Aunt Selene, who held him when he finally broke down at the unfairness of everything and as she tried to soothe his pain.

He was grateful to Draco for securing Hedwig for him and being able to offer him the closure that he had unknowingly wanted and needed, before taking that final step and leaving humanity behind him.

But most of all, he was thankful that Draco wasn't there to see him cry.

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Chapter sixteen: No longer quite home

Author's notes: Finding out he has an uncle isn't the only discovery Harry makes during his sixth year at Hogwarts. But how can he cope with all the new things he must take in as well as accept that Draco Malfoy of all people, has a duty to him as well?Slash. Dm/Hp

Chapter Sixteen: No longer quite home

If Harry had thought that with the departure of his human instincts he'd turn into one of the cold-hearted beings his book on Angelus described, then he was pleasantly surprised to find how terribly inaccurate the ancient tome was.

All it had done was awaken a maelstrom of new complex emotions, reasoning and wants, to the point in which Harry found that he thought the human mind seemed rather simplistic in comparison and yet, deep within the chaotic vortex of his newfound thoughts still resided a small and completely separate part of his mind that he recognised as the remains of the old him. The parts that, even after becoming completely aware of his true nature, Harry stubbornly refused to part with.

That actually comforted him somewhat, knowing that there was still a part—however small and locked safely away—of the old him still lingering beneath the surface.

And, despite having adjusted to his body over the past few months, his already hypersensitive senses and gradually waking instincts, he felt that he had been sorely unprepared for what was truly to take place once his actual nature did finally kick in.

He had already known that the Angelus were born hunters. More so than the clanless that they sought out above all else but he had absolutely no idea of how much his clan lived for the chase. How, even as he sat Harry could feel the incessant urge to seek buzzing away noisily, while Selene carded her fingers through his tousled sable locks soothingly. And, had Harry's vocal chords possessed the capacity to produce such sounds, he would have been purring his pleasure at such attentions.

Something which brought to the fore another very interesting part of himself he had never considered before, though he supposed he really shouldn't have been taken by surprise at such a revelation, since he had always found Selene's presence a comfort to him as were her touches but now, he found himself extremely appreciative of the innocent contact.

Perhaps, a bit more than he should have been, though his instincts told him it was all perfectly normal and nothing was wrong with it.

One thing that was bothering Harry, however, making him quite anxious and restless, to the point of fidgeting; was Draco's disappearance.

Night had fallen. Rendering the school in pale halftones and shadows. Dimming the vibrant colours of the day and darkening them, until it was hard to recall what colour everything was during the light hours as well as blanketing the castle and grounds in the hush that preceded sleep.

Draco had been outside for hours now. Somewhere out in the Forbidden forest Harry was able to gage and he presumed that the Slytherin was with his Uncle still, since the two had left together and not returned since.
Despite knowing all this, Harry was worried.

Or perhaps, it should have been phrased more along the lines of *because* Draco was with his Uncle out in the forest, Harry was rather worried.

Apparently the two had gone into the forest under the guise of completing a detention for Snape. Well, Draco had the detention and strangely enough, Demetrius had offered to supervise. It made Harry extremely suspicious of his Uncle's ulterior motives.

Draco was exhausted, his ankle throbbed, he had a headache and was absolutely furious, but oddly enough, satisfied about something. The only reason Harry hadn't gone out to see what was happening to leave his warder in such a state was his Aunt telling him that he needn't worry.

"Why not have something hot to eat, hmm?" Selene suggested as she removed the silver lid from one of the trays of food, that was set easily within reach.

Immediately Harry's nose was assaulted by the scent of rosemary, mint and lamb, making his mouth water but he had decided that he wouldn't eat until after he was certain that his Uncle and Draco were safely back in the castle.

He shook his head and proceeded to gaze out into the night, beyond the ebony panelled frames of glass, his hand carelessly stroking Hedwig's box. "No thank-you."

Selene sighed, replacing the lid with a faint clink of silver on silver.

"Draco will be fine," she said, understandingly as she swivelled back around next to the Gryffindor's seated form. "It is your Uncle Demetrius that I would be more concerned about. He is not as young as he used to be and I'm certain Draco is a very determined young man and will refuse to concede defeat."

This had Harry's instant attention.

"What do you mean?" He asked her carefully. Sure that he must have heard her wrong, because he thought that she had said something along the lines of Draco and Demetrius fighting each other. "I thought that Uncle Demetrius was just going to talk with Draco... He never said anything about..."

His eyes widened and he shot up from where he was seated, more than ready to bolt for the door.

Whether to aid his Uncle or Draco at this point was a little hard for him to determine. Though it appeared his fears had been validated.

A tiny smile tugged at the corner of Selene's lips and she shook her head. "Your Uncle has formally challenged your warder to see who is the strongest of the pair. Draco or himself," she soothed and pulled Harry back down once more.

That didn't sound particularly pleasant.

From what Harry sensed of both his Uncle and Draco earlier, they were fairly evenly matched. Demetrius may have even been physically stronger than the Invidian was, though Harry knew for a fact that his Uncle wasn't quite as fast as Harry himself or even Selene, which may in the end help Draco, since the blonde, while not as swift as Harry wasn't exactly slow, either.

Harry cringed. Either way, it sounded a right mess.

"Does this have something to do with Draco biting me?" he asked, feeling almost completely certain that it was and not sure what he thought of that.
Selene inclined her head in acknowledgement. “Somewhat,” she replied vaguely a frown beginning to form, replacing what had previously been a devilish smile. “Though I think your Uncle has known for some time now that he would need to do this. I was aware from the beginning this would happen.”

Harry nodded along, then bit his lip when the situation truly sank in. “But I thought...”

“There are certain... circumstances, that will permit an Invidian and Angelus to enter into a physical contest of this sort,” Selene stated, apparently foreseeing Harry’s question. Or perhaps just aware that he hadn’t completed reading up on all the different rituals that took place within his clan. “Know this, both must enter into the contest willingly, and neither can injure the other with the intent to kill.”

Oh, and that was meant to make Harry feel any better?

That simply meant that the two may still injure each other gravely without meaning to. It was possible and his Uncle had been so very upset with Draco, that Harry wouldn't be completely surprised if Demetrius did kill his warder. Accidentally of course.

That thought invoked more than a tiny thread of fear.

“After their sparring is done, they will seek out and kill the ones responsible for Hedwig’s death,” Selene continued. Her lips twitched before she broke out into a bright smile just as Harry felt a weary sort of elation trickle from Draco. “It seems that your Draco was triumphant and that your Uncle is now quite sore.”

Unsure how to respond to that, Harry gave an uncertain smile causing Selene to let out a peal of soft, crystalline laughter.

“Demetrius will be fine,” she assured him, once she ceased her laughing. Though her words and voice were filled with amusement still. “I believe his pride has had the worst beating, today.”

It couldn’t be a particularly nice feeling for the incredibly proud Angelus king to be bested by a boy who had yet to reach his prime. Regardless of the fact that said boy was apparently the best that his entire clan had to offer in terms of protection, intelligence and cunning.

“And if both are too injured to go looking for Hedwig's killer?” Harry inquired, curiously and only a little impatiently. Surely seeking vengeance on Hedwig's murderers should have taken precedence over some sparring match to see which was the stronger between Draco and Demetrius? Well, at least Harry thought it should.

Selene appeared thoughtful a moment. “Then they will go looking again tomorrow. I think that will be the likely course of action considering your Uncle is now in a fairly dark mood.”

Harry was unable to stop the smug expression from slipping onto his face upon hearing that but he was curious as to the actual ‘circumstances’ that came into play for this particular sparring match.

“But under what conditions is Draco able to physically hurt Uncle Demetrius?” Harry queried. From everything he understood was that an Invidian couldn't really so much as lift a hand against an Angelus in attack... Well, Draco could get a little rough sometimes but he'd never really hurt Harry in any way. Although, when Harry really reflected on that, he realised that there couldn't really be any physical constraints that kept the Invidian's from harming any Angelus. It all had to be a psychological thing.

The curious Nikolai heir decided to state his theory.
“And you would be correct,” Selene replied with a nod. “It is more or less a mental block. Their instincts wouldn't allow them to harm us intentionally.

“But to answer your previous question, there is a certain ritual,” Selene continued, “much like that of your blood-bonding, that will allow Draco to fight your Uncle with the intent to best him, as the case is. Like your blood-bonding to Draco, he must drink a little of your Uncle's blood. The spell is only temporary however and will wear off by tomorrow morning.”

For some reason, Harry was troubled to hear that Draco had to drink from Demetrius. Since Draco was his warder, he shouldn't have had to touch Demetrius' blood at all and despite knowing the reasons for it, Harry still felt... disappointed. In himself, oddly enough and in Draco, too.

“Your Draco would not have liked it any more than you,” Selene soothed, as though she had read his mind. She placed a hand on Harry's shoulder and glanced out the windows, into the darkness. In an effort to locate Demetrius, it seemed. “I would not be surprised if he asked to drink from you when he returns.”

Harry really wished that she'd stop calling Draco his. Especially when coupled with 'drinking' from him.

“But we have our chalices,” Harry argued, not entirely keen on the idea of letting Draco have his way when it came to drinking from him. Even though a part of him was horrified that his bonded Invidian had fed from another and demanded that he somehow right the situation. Despite the whiny, highly irritating little voice, Harry kicked the urge aside. “He doesn't need to drink from me.”

“Ahh, but would you rather drink from him or from your chalice?” Selene returned with a gentle smile.

Until earlier that afternoon, Harry would have easily been able to answer with ‘my chalice' and quite possibly pulled a face at the mere thought of drinking from Draco. Now however, he knew which blood he'd much rather have and it wasn't the kind that was produced by magical cups.

Was it possible that all this time Draco had wanted to drink from Harry?

He remembered discussing the subject with Draco and Blaise back in their common room. But Blaise had said that Harry wouldn't need to drink from Draco because of their charmed cups. The young Angelus bit his bottom lip as he realised that although Blaise said that, he hadn't once stated that it would stop Harry from craving another's blood. Nor had the darker Invidian once mentioned Draco having any urges to drink from Harry.

It was meant to be a thing of intimacy wasn't it? An Invidian drinking from an Angelus, although the reverse was quite normal. In days long past, at any rate.

Well, that was an interesting thing to learn.

“Hot chocolate, then?” Selene interrupted his reveries and held up a steaming pitcher of the enticing liquid. “And look, a bowl of marshmallows.”

Harry smiled at his Aunt's attempts at coaxing him to eat or at least drink something. Even after living with her for those weeks at Loiresvale and helping her while she baked treacle tarts just for him, he still couldn't quite picture her in the traditional role of the domesticated housewife. It seemed so out of place. It made Selene look out of place but still, it made Harry feel much better about everything else.

Just then, an almost timid knock came to the chamber door, prompting Selene to glance toward it.
Her brows furrowed slightly in thought, she replaced the pitcher on the little table next to the sofa and swept toward the broad entrance to open it's door.

Harry was also highly curious as to who would visit so late in the evening. He was also extremely wary, though he knew that only Dumbledore and most likely the rest of the staff of the school were aware of their location. Still, that did very little to help soothe the young Nikolai's now extremely thin and frazzled nerves.

“It's Hermione,” Selene commented, lowly. The door was still closed and she was about a couple of paces or so away from it. She turned to Harry, inquiringly. “And she's brought a friend with her. Male, I think. About your age and quite... florally. Do you wish to see them?”

Florally?

Harry swallowed a touch nervously, as he allowed his senses to wander and focus on the two students beyond the door. It wasn't exactly an easy task but nor was it quite as difficult as he had initially thought it would be in trying to correctly assess the magical streams that continuously ebbed and flowed about the air currents.

Selene had been quite right in her statement; it was Hermione and the florally boy who had accompanied her, was Ron.

“The other's Ron,” Harry observed and bit his lip, feeling a powerful surge of some emotion from the other side of the door. He wasn't quite ready for that, and felt the sensations snap back to him, rendering him temporarily disorientated.

Selene's eyebrows rose in surprise but a smile graced her features. “They are quite protective of you. Both of them and terribly anxious to see you, it seems.”

“Then we mustn't keep them waiting,” Harry replied, having cleared his head with a shake.

The elder Angelus gave Harry an understanding smile and took the final few steps to the entrance before she pulled the heavy, wooden door open. The act making it look as though the door weighed no more than a piece of paper when Harry knew it was at least double his own weight.

“Mrs, I mean Lady—” Hermione began, nervously.

“Selene,” the woman urged gently, after only a tiny pause. “Please, call me Selene and if you'd come in? I'd rather not have someone happen upon us.”

Hermione flushed, nodded and hurriedly entered the room hauling the awe-struck Ron in with her. And had Harry not been cast suddenly spellbound by the appearance of his two best friends, he may have enjoyed the look on his best friend's face. Even the slightly disgruntled expression Hermione wore as she scowled at the redhead briefly.

Closing the door again behind the teens, Selene gestured them to the other available sofa, recalling Harry's attention to the present and his guests.

“I am told that you are Ron?” Selene said, looking at the redhead.

He nodded mutely, clutching Harry's blood-chalice in a death grip. Unable to form a sentence of any kind, it seemed. Actually, he reminded Harry greatly of back in fourth-year when the fiery-haired boy had had a thing for the part Veela, Fleur Delacour and acted almost exactly the same way.

Unperturbed by the response, Selena smiled at Ron and as she had done earlier with Hermione, took
the boy's hand. "It is a pleasure to meet you," she said, then straightened completely and glanced at Harry. "I would love to speak with you further however, now does not seem the appropriate time. So, if you'll excuse me, I shall leave you three alone to talk."

*I'll be in the next room if you need me,* she assured Harry before he felt the soft fringe of her thoughts receding from his mind.

Harry nodded and watched as she glided from the room and into the chamber Harry assumed was where his Uncle and her were to sleep.

All three friends looked at each other mutely.

"How... How are you feeling?" Hermione asked Harry, breaking what had quickly been turning into an awkward silence.

"All right," he replied, not entirely sure what to say when even he wasn't sure what he was feeling, exactly. "Tired, I guess. Drained...*thirsty...* he finished, silently and tried to ignore the way Ron was now staring at him but found it was almost impossible to achieve.

Was the fact that he apparently needed Draco's blood was so repulsive to Ron, that the redhead now looked at him as though he were a complete stranger? To the point in which Harry was making his own best friend nervous? Scared, even?

Actually, Harry was making himself kind of nervous as he listened to the dull murmur of his friends' heart beats and the soft hum of their breathing.

Ron was positively rank with the emotion but underneath all that and his rapidly beating heart, he was still Ron and still concerned about Harry's wellbeing. Enough to bring him to see whether he was all right. Then again, it could have been entirely due to Hermione's prompting.

Harry felt his heart plummet.

A feeling that didn't go unnoticed by Draco, wherever he was.

"Ron," Harry started, unsure how to proceed. The green-eyed boy glanced to Hermione for some help but found her staring between them, looking a touch sad. That couldn't mean anything good. Not for him.

He sighed softly, feeling almost like a limb had been severed from his body.

Standing Harry gently placed his box down on the window sill and sought out the still steaming pitcher of hot chocolate that Dobby had brought for him. Perhaps the little elf had known that he was due company because he had provided more than enough mugs for the group. And as Selene had pointed out, there was also a small plate filled to the brim with tiny, pink and white marshmallow stars. The kind that Harry loved.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Ron questioned, he placed the chalice on the nearest table.

His voice was oddly calm for him and yet incredibly distant. Almost like it wasn't him at all, but someone else speaking through his lips. Someone that Harry didn't know. And it was for that reason that Harry couldn't look at the other boy whom he considered a brother. Instead, he plucked up one of the tiny marshmallows stars from the plate and began playing with it.

"About what?" The Angelus questioned wearily if somewhat defensive, as well. "About my drinking from Malfoy or him knowing about my... condition?" He said, bitterly. Repeating the word
that Ron had used earlier that day.

Harry felt a spike of embarrassment from the redhead as once again the other's heart rate sped up.

“I know you're lying,” Ron said with a certainty that unnerved Harry more than he was willing to admit. The Angelus turned slowly to find the other's blue eyes settled on him seriously but without accusation. “He isn't your donor, you're his.”

The small pink marshmallow Harry had been toying with dropped from his fingers and bounced almost dejectedly to the floor. That had been more than unexpected. He opened his mouth, determined to correct his quite possibly ex-best friend “I—”

Ron sat back in his sofa. “Don't,” he said sounding suddenly as tired as Harry himself felt. “Just... don't, all right? I'm trying to get passed this, Harry. I am. I've already had a fair idea of why Malfoy had started leaving us all alone and then once I saw...” he swallowed and his eyes darted away. Almost as though too scared to dwell on whatever he had intended to say.

“Saw?” Harry pressed, leadingly. Confused now by Ron's almost-rant and not quite complete sentences. He had more than just the vague sense of déjà vu.

But Ron shook his head stubbornly.

“Ron,” Hermione attempted to cut in. “I really don't think—”

“And even before Hermione pointed it out, I hadn't actually thought... And then you had already promised us the last time...”

Harry felt his insides freeze. Just a little.

“And I guess I understand why you wouldn't tell us about Malfoy's... problem. But did I really have to find out that he was your mate this way? I thought that—”

The entire plate of marshmallows fell to the floor and shattered loudly, spilling its fluffy pink and white contents.

“What?” Harry all but whispered. Scared to raise his voice any louder than that and break the bizarre spell that had settled over room at sound of the breaking plate and Ron's declaration.

“Harry, are you all right?” Selene said as she reappeared. She caught sight of Harry's expression and of the spilt marshmallows. With a wordless wave of her wand, the mess was cleared. Silently, she slipped an arm around the younger Nikolai and he was temporarily stunned to find that his eyes were now level with her own.

“Perhaps it would be best if this was to be discussed tomorrow?” Selene questioned the group, though the inquiry was truly for Harry alone.

“It's all right,” Harry assured her, a little shakily. Still unsure what to think on Ron's words for the most part. He had been startled by the completely ridiculous announcement... That was all. Ron had just done a brilliant job of scaring him almost half to death.

“If you are sure?” Selene pressed, not appearing like she approved of the continuation but accepting of it, if only for him.

Harry gave the barest nod of his head.
Stay? He asked her. Suddenly not wanting to be left alone with his friends.

At least, not for this.

Selene smiled warmly and tucked a wayward lock of his hair midnight-black hair behind an ear. Of course, she replied instantly.

“Ma- Draco isn't my mate, Ron,” Harry finally murmured, perplexed as to why that statement hurt so much to say. He figured he may as well call the boy by his first name in front of his friends if they were going to keep discussing their current topic. “Whoever they are, I still haven't found them—”

With Selene's presence, Ron's outbursts had been dulled down, somewhat. And he glanced at her warily before he spoke next, “That's not what—”

“Oh!” Hermione hissed lowly. Clearly not quite low enough. Her eyes also darted to Selene's admittedly now quite intimidating presence before they levelled on Ron with a warning look. “Stop!”

The redhead turned to the girl, “But Hermione—” he protested, turning bright red. “You know that —”

“Ron,” she snapped again, still trying to remain calm and keep her voice down despite her obvious anger at the blue-eyed boy. Then she turned to Harry, schooling her features. “I'm not trying to say or suggest anything.” She stopped and cleared her throat. “I was just wanting to let you that you have our full support. No matter who your soul mate may or may not be.”

Here, the Gryffindor girl shot the redhead a look.

Ron opened his mouth indignantly and evidently about to say something unpleasant about Draco. Or perhaps even about Harry's attachment to said blonde Slytherin, thus earning himself the anger of two fiercely protective females but instead of saying anything, he let out a loud and carrying bellow as Hermione's well placed kick at his shin landed.

Hard.

He fixed, narrowed, red and suspiciously watering eyes on the girl as he savagely bit his lower lip and clutched at his injured limb tenderly. “Why the bloody hell did you just kick me for?!?”

“You are quite aware of why, Ronald,” the girl replied waspishly as she gazed back at Ron with a level look. Just daring him to go against her, Harry suspected. He felt his respect for her rise another notch. She wasn't generally the violent sort. “And mind your language.”

Harry sensed a faint glimmer of humour and found his Aunt observing the couple in amusement. He didn't even bother asking her what she found funny about the situation, he had always found their arguments to be somewhat entertaining. So long as they didn't drag him into it. Whatever it was.

Are they always like this? Selene queried, slanting a glance Harry's way.

Almost always, the younger Nikolai qualified.

“I wasn't going to say anything too horrible about the great bloody git ,” Ron grumbled in denial, still nursing his leg with a scowl. “Harry, I want you to know that I'm there for you, mate, but I don't think I can take this sort of thing...” Ron said, sinking into his sofa as Selene settled piercing violet eyes on him. His voice only got smaller under her gaze before he tore it away from her and peered down at his feet, instead.
“I mean I know... it's not your fault or anything. It happens and that with your... er, with your clan,” Ron quickly glanced at Hermione, as though asking if he had the right terminology and in receiving nothing in response, dropped his eyes once more. “That you have soul mates but don't have to... well, accept them.”

“Ron,” Harry cut in with a shake of his head. “Draco isn't—”

“Wait,” Ron said, his hands thrown up before him, almost like he was fending off a physical attack. “Just, hear me out. All right? I need to get this out.”

Harry glowered, but relented with a huff.

“Maybe... maybe it's just the old rivalry talking but it's hard, you know?” He looked up at Harry and for the first time in what seemed like forever, actually appeared to be seeing his old friend in the sable-haired youth. “I was accepting of Zabini, because he's never been anything to either of us. Face it. But Malfoy, he's our rival. He's been your rival in everything since the beginning...”

The redhead let out a shaky breath and stared back down at his feet. “But he's been my rival when it comes to you. You're my friend and that was the one thing I had above him. So you see why this may be difficult for me to get my head around? I know it's not your fault and you can't choose your soul mates but...”

This day was turning out to be a rather eventful one. Not one but two extremely proud boys voicing their insecurities to him. This couldn't be a good thing... And despite wanting to ease his best friend's issues, Harry also wanted to strangle him for persisting with the subject of Draco as his soul mate.

“Didn't you hear me? He's not my soul mate,” Harry muttered.

And if his voice sounded a tad on the resentful side, it was all because he was annoyed at the situation.

That was all.

“He's been tutoring me, with Blaise.”

“And you let him... drink from you as payment?” Ron asked, appearing undecided on whether he should be disgusted or angry by that confession.

“He doesn't drink from me,” the green-eyed boy stated. Happy that he wasn't lying to his friend about that fact. Although, he wasn't completely sure how long that statement would remain true...

Ron's colouring turned a ghastly shade of green. “When I arrived it looked like he was wanting to eat you.”

“He was just angry about everything, that's all,” Harry quickly intruded, catching the odd look that flittered briefly across his Aunt's otherwise unruffled countenance. He really hoped that she couldn't hear his internal debate waging. “So I wouldn't be surprised that he looked like he was going to—”

“You've got blood on your collar,” Ron pointed out, blandly.

Oh, Harry thought rather dumbly. He should have remembered that. “Er... right,” he sighed. Too tired to fight and just really wanting to sink into the comfort of his bed. Sleep sounded like a blessing right at that moment. “I don't know what to say. Whatever I do say, you don't believe or won't believe. I've already told you that he doesn't drink from me... I could have scraped my neck when I was leaning against the wall earlier.”
Hermione offered him a doubtful look. One Harry didn't particularly like much, especially with Ron still mostly unconvinced.

“Then, he isn't really your mate... is he Harry?”

The question seemed to cause Ron great pain. It was shared by the green-eyed boy but for totally different and unfathomable reasons.

“Not unless I'm in some sort of denial,” Harry replied with another, bone weary sigh. He could have sworn both Hermione and his Aunt had let out the same amused snort.

He glanced at each, respectively.

Ron too seemed to have heard this, appearing incredibly ill and growing decidedly sicker looking by the moment. More so than even the time he'd hexed himself into puking up giant slugs.

Now that was some achievement.

The redhead sighed, closing his eyes as if being tortured by some unseen force and didn't speak for what felt to Harry like a small lifetime. “If he ever hurts you,” Ron muttered, eventually. Sounding resigned and bitter and more than a little disgruntled, “I'll kill him.”

Harry guessed that was the most acceptance of Draco's friendship he'd ever wring from Ron, for the moment at least. But it made the Angelus happy, all the same. It meant that Ron wasn't going to abandon him as he had feared.

He let out a soft sigh, not realising he had been holding his breath.

Suddenly the atmosphere in the room distorted and Harry felt his Aunt tense, as all around the chamber seemed to distort and darken, ever so subtly. He doubted had he not been so hyper sensitive to his surroundings that he would have noticed the change.

“I need to see the headmaster,” Selene announced at once, appearing troubled. It's your Uncle, she informed Harry through their telepathic connection.

It wasn't the first time that the young Nikolai wished he could speak directly into his Uncle's mind and get the answers he was wanting, just like his Aunt could but even though they were relatively close in proximity, the distance was still too great for Harry to attempt without causing himself a fierce migraine or blacking out completely.

A very painful lesson he had learned at Malfoy Manor and Demetrius had only been a floor or so away.

The Angelus queen turned to Harry, quietly contemplating her next move. Or perhaps discussing it with Demetrius through their bond. She nodded once, confirming Harry's assumptions.

“Harry you are to remain here, I will be back soon,” Selene said, hurriedly fastening the brooch of her cloak. The Zabini heir is outside covering your magical signature, she continued speaking directly into the younger Nikolai's mind this time. So you aren't to leave this room, it's important.

“What's wrong?” Hermione exclaimed, looking terribly worried herself. She surged to her feet followed quickly by Ron who appeared not quite certain of what was going on, but ready to join should he be asked.

Selene considered Hermione and then Ron a moment. “Demetrius has come across some troubling
news out in the Forest,” she replied vaguely.

*Is it bad?* Harry queried curiously as he slipped into his Aunt's thoughts. Nerves made his previously tired mind perk up once more in alarm, making him agitated and reminding himself of a caged animal pacing restlessly in its enclosure, awaiting the arrival of a storm. The feeling had the young Angelus wanting to accompany Selene to ensure she reached her destination safely. Even though he knew he'd be more likely to hinder her progress than aid it in anyway.

Was it so bad not wanting to be separated from his family for too long?

*There has been one fatality,* Selene replied gently as she carefully cast a glamour and pulled her emerald cloak up about her face. *Though your Uncle is more concerned with the number of clanless and werewolves he's sensing in the forest.*

“Can’t I come with you?” The Nikolai heir blurted out as Selene pulled open the doors that kept their temporary accommodations.

“Not this time, my Angel,” she replied. *Your Dragon would be most upset with me.*

*Who cares what Draco thinks!* Harry shot back as the door to the room closed and sealed him inside with his friends.

*Do not fear, I shall return soon,* Selene promised as she retreated. Already out of range of Harry, preventing any further telepathic communicating and the young Angelus hated it.

He hated the feeling of helplessness that made a place within the pit of his stomach. He hated that he was left inside, safe and warm while his Aunt was playing messenger out in deserted school halls where anything could happen to her or that Demetrius and Draco were still very much outside with at least one werewolf on the prowl and a handful of clanless vampire’s running loose.

“Oh Harry, your Aunt will be fine,” Hermione stated, patting his shoulder in comfort. “So don’t look pull that face.”

Ron nodded his head, vigorously in agreement. “No offence mate, but you really do look like a lost puppy. All sad and abandoned...” The redhead's expression drew down as he frowned slightly. “It is actually really depressing.”

The three lapsed into silence, each pondering something, though their thoughts remained their own.

“What's really wrong?” It was Ron who asked, surprisingly, since Harry sensed it had been Hermione bubbling over with curiosity at the abrupt change of events.

“There are a number of Gens-er, vampires and werewolves out in the forbidden forest. Uncle Demetrius has sensed a few of them...” Harry trailed off after remembering that both Demetrius and Draco were out in the forest and had injured each other. Not too badly... well Draco wasn't injured too much, however how would the pair stand-up to a small coven of Gensvacare as well as werewolves?

His worry only spiked.

“Harry,” Hermione intruded upon the Nikolai's increasingly dark musings, a troubled frown was creasing her brows. “There isn't a full moon tonight.”

The Angelus gave a nod as he turned his eyes back to the starry skies he could see through the glass of the nearest window. Their tiny pin-pricks of light the only illumination that the heavens provided
in the absence of the moon. “I know.”

“Does Dumbledore know about the werewolves?” Ron asked then.

He too was glancing out the window but to the dusky forests below where Harry heard the chilling cry of a werewolf. It was soon joined by more howls, each prompting the Angelus prince to tremble with the violent need to seek them out and destroy them.

Again, Harry shook his head.

“Then we must tell Dumbledore!” Hermione exclaimed, thankfully distracting Harry before he could throw himself out the window in reckless pursuit of the werewolf pack. Her chocolate-brown eyes darted to the door, as if trying to figure something out. Then they narrowed. “I’d bet my life that we have at least one guard on that door,” she wagered softly, ensuring only the Angelus heard.

The widening of Harry's eyes were the only thing that betrayed his surprised and he was pleased that neither of his friends saw the look.

Hermione, really was far too intelligent for her own good.

“I'd also be willing to state that your Uncle Demetrius suspects the school wards have been breeched, else I doubt your Aunt Selene would have left you here,” Hermione finished louder than before, a troubled frown creasing her brows.

She turned to Harry, her concerned look growing as she continued her theory. “You're pretty safe here. No one knows of this place. In the dorms you could be reached easily enough but here is an unknown for those who may have insides sources and with an Invi-wards shielding you, there is no way your location will be given away to those seeking you out.”

“Ginny,” Ron breathed, looking suddenly stricken. “What about Ginny?”

Harry never did find out what Hermione told Ron because at that moment he felt Draco falter in surprise and all else ceased to exist in his mind.

“Draco...”

In a heartbeat, the Angelus had almost torn the door from it's hinges and was streaking down the deadened school corridors, his speed so great that the air lashed across his face in tiny icy whips, drowning out almost all other sound that attempted to invade his hearing.

The Nikolai was certain that he heard Hermione's echo shriek for him to come back. He may have even caught Ron, and quite possibly even heard Blaise take up the chorus, however their pleas went ignored until he couldn't hear them any longer, but the very soft noise of his own feet barely meeting the ground as he moved. The wind moving past his face and the infinitely loud sound of his heart pounding away furiously in his own chest.

Harry reached the stairs to the entrance hall in very little time and found the headmaster, his deputy and Snape speaking with Selene in hushed tones before the Nikolai matriarch stopped and glanced about the chamber wearily, clearing sensing a disturbance but unable to locate the source.

Which in itself was more than odd, had the Gryffindor really thought on it. However his mind was focused elsewhere as he tried to puzzle out Draco's exact location and was slightly startled but extremely relieved to sense that Draco seemed mostly fine, if a little surprised himself at Harry's suddenly much closer proximity.
The main thing was that Draco was still safe and relatively unscathed, which was all that really mattered to Harry.

Sinking forward, only just realising his actual location and yielding to the minor ache of his legs at his sprint, Harry leaned against the railing of the staircase in support. Allowing his earlier adrenalin rush to wear off as his sharp eyes roved around the vast chamber, categorising the differences he saw and felt.

The site had been cleansed. Any visible sign of what had happened earlier that day long gone, however Harry could still easily pick out the remnants of what had taken place on the air alone. No matter how much magic had been used to remove it, the taint of death hung heavily over the area and there were a myriad of magical signatures interwoven and mixed together like some bizarre cocktail, all creating a blockade and preventing Harry access to the one magical signature that he had wanted most.

Right and how is Uncle Demetrius even supposed to make sense of this mess and locate Hedwig's killer? He glared at the large wooden doors as if expecting them to answer him. Grip tightening in irritation, the Nikolai's lengthened claws dug into the rail and completely shredded the wood.

This has to be Draco's doing, he realised. A stasis ward had been erected by Blaise at Draco's command and so would be taken down again by the blonde's word only.

He wasn't sure how he knew that, just that he did. It was almost like how he had known that he could have located Hedwig's killer himself if Draco had of let him and if he wasn't so annoyed with Draco's ploy to keep him from seeking out Hedwig's attacker himself, Harry would have congratulated the blonde.

Just as Harry began contemplating joining his Aunt down with the headmaster, his attention was drawn by the shift in his surroundings. The scent of blood, pungent and enthralling assaulted his nostrils and he turned slowly, intent on locating the source of the aroma only to find Pan standing directly behind him.

The Slytherin's face was schooled to calm despite the intense emotions burning hopelessly in his pale green eyes. He looked little better than death warmed over and his robes were splattered in a vibrant scarlet colour that called to Harry like the hypnotic lure of a siren's song, dimming his anger at being snuck up on.

“They can't see us. Nor can they sense us,” Pan said, quietly and let his eyes drift to the four adults conversing fleetingly before returning his gaze to Harry. “It would be best for us if that were to continue.”

The Angelus studied the other boy with a dark sort of interest, even as he fought the sudden urge to jump him and drink. Much as he loved that idea, Harry didn't want to shame or dishonour Draco by turning to another Invidian for blood unless he found his soul mate somewhere amongst their ranks. But having a more than willing source standing before him was seriously making him rethink the morals he still possessed.

Especially as said willing victim was already practically soaked in blood.

Emerald-green eyes flickered briefly off to the side, as he felt a strange sensation pressing at his skin and noted the barely visible pulsating cage of energy. Something that exposed the fact he was standing within a containment spell of some kind. One that apparently, Selene was unable to detect from her place.
Another sort of stasis ward, he reflected as he took in the similar magical flows that Hedwig had been held in earlier, and Harry suspected that the ward was the reason for the change in ambience. He wondered then too, if he'd easily escape the ward should the need arise. Though he was sure Pan wasn't a threat to him. Angelus instincts or not, perhaps it was the fact that he had been around the Slytherin and had unknowingly formed a bond of a kind with him.

Whatever it was, it prevented Harry from distrusting Pan completely. Even though he knew he should be cautious when it came to the snowy-haired boy.

Then there was still the list of names from within Slytherin house that supported Draco in Harry's pocket and with it the unwritten list of loyalists that followed Pan who was supposedly the leader of those who supported Voldemort...

Yes, caution would indeed be a safe thing to practise.

“Where have you been?” Harry questioned, not raising his voice above that of a low murmur. Nor was he really needing an answer, he had his own assumptions after all and the excessive amount of blood was a rather telltale sign as to Pan's previous activities, still the Nikolai thought he may as well see how Pan would react.

The Gryffindor's eyes lifted to fix themselves on the snowy-haired Invidian's, expectantly.

Strangely, Pan gazed at Harry with unease and ignored the question. Taking a decidedly tentative step forward, the Invidian pressed a blood covered digit to Harry's lip in a gesture for silence.

A move that wasn't entirely needed but having the enticng crimson fluid at his lips, Harry couldn't help his natural reaction which was to lick the smear away. He was, however, extremely careful to avoid Pan's finger in the process knowing that licking that would cause a whole host of issues he'd much rather keep clear of.

But Harry really wanted to take that one finger into his mouth and remove all the blood from it. Most distressingly, he was beginning to lose his fight with his own body, which was having really quite disturbing reactions to the small amount of warm, coppery fluid trickling down his throat.

Damn it, he cursed himself as he saw a particularly knowing glint enter the Invidian's eyes. Though oddly enough, the Slytherin didn't act on it for once. That may have been due to the fact that Pan seemed very serious about something. Whatever it was, Harry felt ridiculously grateful.

Right, so blood acts as an aphrodisiac of a kind for me, Harry reasoned as he fought furiously to drive off his problem before it took on a more physical form. He was also horribly thankful that Draco, wherever he was out in the Forbidden Forest, was not able to decipher his feelings, which was evident in his bewilderment.

Merlin, I hope this doesn't happen all the time...

“Draco was successful in his attempt to draw out your instincts,” Pan observed, looking a little disappointed but also rather curious. He appeared to be trying to discern something and was having trouble with whatever it was. Then the Slytherin sighed, coming to no real conclusion that Harry was able to see, let alone attempt to understand. “There's something you must see.”

Carefully, Pan gestured Harry back toward the four adults below them in time for the Angelus to see Dumbledore greet Demetrius sombrely at the entrance doors, a stretcher levitated at the elder Nikolai's side. It was covered in a thick linen cloth that was soaked through with crimson and was dripping all over the newly cleaned floors.
Someone up there must hate me terribly, Harry groused mentally at the divine scent that filled the air and clogged his nose. It stopped abruptly, only to be covered by a very faint, sickly sweet fragrance that was strangely and disgustingly familiar. Again just as swiftly, the scent transformed into a stench that had him very quickly wanting to bring up everything he had eaten that day. “What—”

“Shh,” Pan murmured and clamped one bloody hand firmly over the Nikolai heir's mouth. “Just listen.”

Draco appeared soon after, limping ever so slightly and under a strong glamour to hide his injuries just like Demetrius, though the latter's features had very wisely been charmed different as well.

It was weird, the sudden stirring of emotions in Harry as he caught sight of the injured blonde Slytherin. It was like a nervous sort of anticipation and he felt something within him uncoiling. Heating his blood and once again igniting his thirst to imaginable heights. This time though, he wasn't worried about it and eagerly embraced the sensations and desire that assaulted him.

Pan apparently had a fair idea of what was happening and didn't seem to like it one bit. “Stop that,” he whispered hoarsely, and let his eyes slide over to Harry. “You're going to give us away if you keep that up.”

But it was too late because Draco's gaze immediately locked on Harry, although the Angelus was under the impression that the blonde couldn't actually see him, either. That is, before he remembered that their bond had basically announced his presence to the other prince so he really shouldn't have been all that surprised.

He watched as Draco's eyes narrowed and flitted a little to the left of Harry, roughly to where Pan was hidden.

That didn't surprise Harry, though.

What did startle the young Angelus, was that Draco didn't betray their presence. Instead he pretended he hadn't noticed them and turned back to Dumbledore, though the blonde was feeling extremely peeved at the situation and still somewhat sore. Even if his injuries were already beginning to heal.

“Mr Malfoy identified her as Miss Chang,” Demetrius stated neutrally as he nodded at the swathed corpse. “What was left of her, that is.”

Harry's emerald eyes widened a little before they narrowed as he tried to get a better look at the covered body. That had been Cho Chang?

It was a peculiar feeling to see the red drenched corpse of his ex-girlfriend floating at his Uncle's side. Even stranger to feel nothing for her, not anger or sadness or even guilt at the display. Particularly since he had at one point been close to obsessed with her.

Brushing the thought away with ease, Harry's eyes darted around to those assembled below him. Despite his brilliant eyesight, he still wasn't quite able to make out Dumbledore's features in the dimly lit entrance hall. McGonagall looked like she was going to be ill any moment and Snape seemed far more caught up in the rhythmic dripping of Cho's blood gradually painting the floor.

As it was, Harry himself was finding it hard keeping his eyes away from the puddle.

“Minerva,” Dumbledore sighed, wearily and for once sounding as old as he was. “If you would have Poppy make preparations for Miss Chang? I will inform her parents of this unfortunate turn of events. Severus if you would be so kind as to join her and determine Miss Chang's cause of death?”
“She was torn to pieces by a wolf,” Demetrius cut in sharply, evidently irritated at being dismissed so carelessly. “A very large wolf. Her neck was snapped. Part of her face is missing and her innards—”

McGonagall promptly emptied the contents of her own stomach on the floor without so much as a warning. Even after she had finished, she held a hand to her mouth while the other clutched at her middle in a feeble attempt to calm it.

“I'm sorry, Albus,” she apologised as she turned her head away and after clearing the mess, started for the stairs. Intent to get away from the corpse and to seek the school's resident mediwitch.

Harry couldn't fault the woman. He could smell Cho perfectly from his hiding place with Pan and she was positively rank. He suspected that it was all due to her organs and whatnot having been ruptured adding to the stench of her death and wondered how Draco and Demetrius could stand being so close to her. Not to mention Selene who now stood at the Nikolai king's side, appearing anxious to leave herself.

No doubt wanting to return to where she thought Harry was still safely hidden. It actually made him feel rather guilty.

Finally registering a few interesting facts about the ward behind which he was veiled, Harry frowned. Pan had stated that no one outside of the ward should sense them, which they couldn't really. Disregarding Draco who knew that Harry was present as well as Pan, that or the Invidian Prince had a fair idea that the one shielding the Gryffindor was Pan. However, the main thing that Harry found decidedly odd was that he could still very much sense everything outside of the magical barrier.

“Why have you not shielded us from outside influences?” He inquired quietly. Not wanting to be over heard by the three vampires below, feeling almost completely certain that he could be heard by them if too loud, at least.

“That can be dangerous,” Pan answered just as softly, confirming Harry's suspicions while his pale-green eyes followed McGonagall as she hurried down the hall opposite them. Her strides quick and clipped, the sound echoed loudly along the vast entrance chamber. “If we shield ourselves from what may be out there, we could walk directly into a trap.”

Harry gave a reluctant nod in acceptance, seeing the logic in the Invidian's words and returned his attention to the goings on below. “I take it the school isn't about to be overrun with gensvcare and werewolves, then?” he joked a little.

“Well not yet,” Pan confirmed, sounding more like his playful self. He moved forward and stood directly next to Harry, his bloody robes brushing against the Angelus distracting him for a few moments. “Your Uncle would be out of here the moment he thought that. I wouldn't be surprised if he port-keyed you directly to the Quay.”

The Quay... Harry questioned, silently, before he understood. Ah, Shiresford Quay.

“A werewolf?” Dumbledore asked, sharing a look with Snape.

“I cannot confirm whether that was the case or not,” the Angelus lord replied and Harry knew it was a lie. He was also absolutely certain that his Uncle's gaze flickered up to Pan for a second. “Though the lack of a full moon would suggest otherwise, I am quite sure that while I was out with Mr Malfoy that we had come upon very recent traces of a werewolf pack. I am also very certain that whatever did this was a wolf or, at the very least, a large canine of a similar jaw structure. The markings on the flesh and bone are quite distinct in this.”
Snape turned his eyes on Harry's glamoured Uncle, scrutinisingly. Most likely trying to use legimency on the other. Or perhaps trying to portray his thoughts on having a student—and one of Snape's favourites at that—identifying a body that was quite possibly mauled beyond almost complete recognition.

The potions master said nothing on it, however and remained a silently brooding tower of disapproval. Harry had a feeling that a lot of Snape's current dislike was directed more inwardly than anywhere else though. Since it had been his detention that had placed Draco in the dangerous position to begin with.

The headmaster gave a nod. “If we may finish discussing this in my office once Miss Chang's body is set to rest within the hospital wing?” He inquired. “Severus, if you would see to Mr Malfoy's wellbeing first?”

All else was ignored as Harry turned his attention to the white-haired boy standing at his side, trying to understand exactly what was going on. Harry wasn't stupid and was well aware of the fact that Pan was carelessly modelling robes absolutely soaked in blood. There was also the not so small fact that, for however brief a period it was, Harry was sure that Demetrius had actually looked at Pan. Or rather, he had known that the snowy-haired boy was in the area, even though it seemed like Selene was unaware of that fact...

But none of it really made sense to the young Angelus. He frowned, at the conclusions he had drawn. It somehow didn't seem right. Because why would Demetrius condone Pan's killing of a student? A Human student? Why would Demetrius turn a blind eye to what the snowy-haired Invidian had done?

Surely his Uncle wouldn't have turned to Pan of all people to... kill someone?

Harry's eyes narrowed as he realised that yes, his Uncle most definitely would do something like that to protect himself and his family. It was times like this that the young heir had to remember that his family weren't completely innocent and had survived for years in hiding. Concealed beneath an intricate web of lies and by using others as shields. In this case, Pan happened to be the one sheltering them.

And yet, it had been Demetrius who ordered Pan to kill the Ravenclaw girl?

The look Pan offered Harry was a sad one. “Now you know,” the white-haired Slytherin replied simply and swept passed Harry, wrapping an arm around the Nikolai's waist as he went. Clearly expecting Harry to follow without complaint.

Immediately, Harry broke from the hold and tried to shake off the strange tingly sensations that crawled up his spine. “Explain,” he ordered. “Do you mean—”

“Not here,” Pan muttered, his hand clamped over Harry's mouth once more. Though this time, the Angelus wasn't to be distracted by the blood and he tried to turn his head away from the Slytherin's hand. “The walls have ears. Here more than other places. Besides, it's not my place to say. Not even for you.”

Harry glowered, more than willing to use his compulsion on Pan to get his answers but knowing that in this case the other was probably right. As much as it annoyed him to acknowledge that fact. But then there was the question of why Demetrius would have a mere student killed? Had she discovered something she wasn't meant to?

He suddenly felt incredibly uneasy about the discussion he was still due to have with his Uncle on
Hermione and what she knew. He was seriously beginning to contemplate not sharing that with his family.

“She was nothing but a pawn,” the Invidian added, almost disgustedly about Cho. He was peering intently at Harry, as though willing for the Nikolai heir to understand. “A puppet whose strings had already been severed.”

Instantly, Pan found himself being scrutinised by Harry’s piercing emerald stare.

It was quite possibly the best opening Harry could hope for, in terms of questioning Pan on his allegiances, however the sable-haired boy found himself unable to ask. He suspected it may have something to do with being surrounded by Pan’s ward, even if he felt mostly safe with the Slytherin boy he wasn’t about to try his luck just yet. Besides, there were other subjects he felt he could examine first.

He needed to discuss this with his Uncle, he decided firmly. Though he could easily see the reasons as to why the Nikolai Lord would acquire outside help, especially under this kind of situation. Even so, it had been extremely risky. What if Pan had been caught? As it was, the boy was still clad in the clothing he had worn when he’d killed the girl. Still very much advertising what he’d just been up to and he didn’t seem the least bit worried about that fact, either.

“Come on,” Pan smirked slowly, regaining some of his usual cheer. He swept his arm back around the still very disgruntled Gryffindor. “Let’s get you back before you find yourself being subjected to more questioning than is necessary.”

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Despite Pan’s efforts, Harry still found himself under the scrutiny of Hermione. Luckily for him however, Selene had been delayed slightly in her return and thus was still quite unaware of the youngest Nikolai’s little escapade about the school after ignoring her warning of staying in the room. Still, he wasn’t sure how long it was going to stay that way. Especially with Hermione harping on at him about being irresponsible.

Thankfully though, Pan actually chased her and Ron away after a while, but not before the determined Gryffindor girl promised to have more words with the tired young Nikolai before her departure. Harry was thankful for the reprieve—however small—that Pan had offered him, as the Invidian left.

Harry could already predict what the next day was going to turn out like and there were still a great many things he had to get sorted out. He needed whatever rest he could manage. Though he did wonder how Hermione and Ron failed to notice the state of Pan’s robes.

“It’s been settled,” Demetrius announced as he strode through the door and into his temporary rooms. Selene was at her side frowning and looking relatively displeased by his sudden declaration. “We’re leaving tomorrow evening for Loiresvale, after which we shall return to Shiresford Quay in preparations for your Crowning and the Yule festivities.

“There is at least a small coven of Gensvacare vampires in that forest,” Demetrius muttered in disgust. “And if I’m not mistaken, a decently sized pack of werewolves as well. This school is rank with their scent.”

Selene nodded. “Five werewolves at most,” she estimated.

Surprised, Harry glanced at his Uncle. “You can sense them all?” He asked just to be certain, since
he was almost completely sure he couldn't sense them from the school. Then he felt something within him twist strangely. “From here?”

At least, he didn't think he could.

Demetrius only nodded in response. “I was speaking with Draconis briefly,” he continued, completely oblivious to his nephew's growing distress, “and he agreed that it was for the best if we were to leave.”

Harry felt his heart sink. What had happened during the hours Demetrius had been with Draco. Had the blonde decided that Harry should leave the school or was it all decided on the more recent development with the werewolves and clanless?

“Draco wanted this?” Harry asked, having no idea how lost he sounded.

“No, Harry,” Selene murmured and shot a look at her husband, stilling his lips. “Draconis wasn't wanting this. He was trying to figure out another way around it but recognised that this was the best option available to us for now.”

“Then,” Harry paused, his brows furrowing in displeasure, “he's not coming with us?”

“He will be joining us when school it released for Yule,” Demetrius intervened. His brows too, were drawn down. Seemingly having finally caught on to his heir's unhappiness. “By then, we hope to have come up with a plan or alternative. He was quite passionate in what he thought of me keeping you locked away at Loiresvale or even Shiresford,” the Angelus king smiled here and for the first time, Harry noticed that his Uncle's glamour had been dropped and that the man was sporting an impressive black-eye, despite his healing already having kicked in and that his lip was quite badly split.

Harry didn't bother keeping the smug look from stretching across his face as he took in Draco's handiwork, even though he knew he should be a little more sympathetic of how his Uncle was feeling.

“Yes,” Demetrius muttered, his face darkening ever so slightly at catching Harry's expression. “Stubborn that one. A perfect match for you.”

Selene coughed and began busying herself with sandwiches that had now replaced the trays of dinner that had been left untouched. She filled a plate with a large number of them—certainly more than enough for Harry to eat. Actually, far more than he considered even necessary.

“Selene,” Demetrius voiced suddenly, as he observed his wife making up the plate. His brows drew down slightly and his amberish eyes became unsettled. “Have you not told Harry what Draconis and I were doing?”

The beautiful queen beamed a smile at Demetrius and Harry watched as his Uncle's expression grew quite troubled and perhaps a touch panicked. “Harry is aware that you challenged Draconis to a duel,” Selene answered in a placating tone, though her violet eyes glittered knowingly. And, with what Harry took as a gleam of satisfaction as well.

Harry secretly vowed to never get on her bad side.

Demetrius spared Harry a sidelong glance. “But he clearly doesn't know why I challenged his warder and you didn't inform him, did you?”

“As head of the household, it is your place to discuss this with your heir,” Selene replied.
The Angelus king frowned, “But under these circumstances...” he started, appearing far more than a little disturbed by the subject, “I had thought that since he... that you’d—”

“What are you talking about?” Harry cut in feeling slightly peeved but also worried, he hadn't once seen his Uncle become so inarticulate. He glanced from his Aunt to his troubled Uncle, studying them both curiously and wanting them to spit whatever it was out before Draco arrived, because the blonde was now practically right outside the door. “I thought it was because he had bitten me without technically asking to? Isn't that why you challenged him? That's—”

“It's nothing.” Draco drawled smoothly as he slipped into the room and after closing the heavy wooden door behind him, instantly started toward Harry. The Slytherin was feeling exhausted still, but immensely pleased if still quite sore. He ceased his advancement as his eyes meet Harry's fiercely narrowed ones.

Now that the blonde was standing only a few feet away looking slightly better off than Demetrius was, Harry felt the tension and worry from earlier slowly drain from his body to be replaced with relief, then, just as quickly, anger and a bitter sort of resentment. The latter of which he didn't understand, and apparently Draco didn't either.

Demetrius was feeling remarkably guilty for some reason.

“I believe congratulations are in order,” Selene smiled at Draco, breaking the tension that had been beginning to suffocate her nephew. The blonde boy took the words with a polite inclination of his head. Albeit, a rather stiff one and still not once glancing away from Harry's eyes.

His neck, it seemed, hurt a fair deal more than he was letting Harry know.

Harry was the first to break eye contact and turned his attention on his relatives, no longer able to look at Draco without feeling betrayed somehow.

“If we're leaving tomorrow,” the Gryffindor intoned bitterly, ignoring his warder who had yet to move from where he stood immobile, like he was under a full body bind. It was getting harder to achieve, Harry knew as he felt the twinges in Draco's body but as far as he was concerned, Harry would leave his warder to suffer a little longer. “Then what will be done about Hedwig's killer?”

Demetrius studied both boys quietly, his own unease vanishing completely in the process. “That still needs to be dealt with,” he conceded, carefully. “But our main concern at present is the continuously growing number of clanless in the forbidden forest. Then there is the pack of werewolves that should be men during this time of the moon's cycle.

“Dumbledore has been made aware of new breed of werewolf. However, I believe they are merely taking an elixir of some sort to change forms prematurely. Possibly this may even extend their changes.”

“You believe Voldemort intends to take Hogwarts?” Harry asked dubiously, easily deducing what his Uncle had meant. He knew it was a possibility that the evil wizard would attempt to claim the old magical school. The castle was, after all, a source of great and ancient magic. It had been Tom Riddle's home for seven years. It had once been what Harry called home...
He refused to dwell on that fact.

“There was proof enough of what he’s up to when he had your owl killed, Harry,” Draco stated languidly. Though his eyes looked anything but.

Again, Harry averted his gaze from Draco and looked at his Uncle expectantly.

“It would appear that way, yes,” Demetrius acknowledge with a nod. Then his expression turned serious and almost angry. “I was informed that you took on a gensvacare alone out in the forest.”

Harry swallowed the nervousness he felt all of a sudden and schooled his features to calm that could rival one of Draco’s best indifferent expressions. The Gryffindor didn't dare glance at his warder. Though the shock from the blonde informed him that this time, it hadn't been his warder who had snitched on him. But then who?

Blaise, his mind supplied, feeling horribly betrayed. He was going to have a word or two with the little tell-tale but he’d deal with that later, he had far more pressing matters to focus his attentions on.

Demetrius appeared content in trying to distract him from his queries and Draco sounded completely certain that it had been Voldemort who had had Hedwig killed. While even if the Invidian was correct in his statement, Harry couldn't quite see the point in why the psychotic dark wizard would want to warn him... although, the message was clearly more a threat than an actual warning of a kind and Voldemort had always been weird that way.

Obsessed in trying to prove his superiority to that of a partially trained child.

It was madness. Pure and simple.

Then something far more worrying wormed it's way into Harry's mind and darkened his thoughts as he considered the actual message that he had received. It had been a threat to Draco as much as it had been for himself. Slowly his resentment of the blonde bled away to be replaced with concern for the Slytherin once more.

“If Voldemort was the one to leave that message, then he knows that Draco has been protecting me,” Harry murmured, speaking his thoughts aloud and carefully sidestepping what was sure to turn into another lecture. “And threatened him.”

Everyone else seemed a little confused by this.

“Yes, we are fairly concerned with the fact that Voldemort has become somewhat aware of Draconis' position in regards to you,” Demetrius agreed. “Though at this point, it is still more or less just assumption. How are you so certain that he was informed?”

Harry stared at his Uncle in disbelief before recalling that gaping was considered rude and that his Aunt Selene wouldn't approve. He closed his hanging mouth so he didn't look quite as undignified as he previously had. “I think the message I was left, more than explained that whoever killed Hedwig was quite sure of Draco's allegiances,” Harry replied somewhat sardonically.

Selene took a step closer to the dark-haired boy as she studied him seriously. “You understood that message left behind?” She asked, softly. Carefully.

“Why wouldn't I?” Harry inquired, perplexed.

“It wasn't in English,” Demetrius answered, instead. He was frowning again and looked to be considering what next to say or if he indeed, wanted to even speak the words on his mind. “It was
left in a language none of us here know and my attempts to translate them with a spell only forced
them to be erased from the door.”

“It’s another language,” Harry stated, more to help himself truly understand just what he was hearing
but still completely unconvinced. “A language that isn’t English, one that none of you know and yet
somehow I can read fine... Is it possible that it was parseltongue?” He asked, though he was almost
certain that it wasn’t. He didn’t think that came in a written form at all, but it was worth a shot since
that was the only other language he had the ability to speak and understand.

“No,” Draco replied, growing irritated. Harry assumed it was because he refused to acknowledge the
blonde. “That was my first assumption but the characters of the script were far too angular... They
looked very similar to Runes but not quite and I don’t believe parseltongue has a written form.”

Finally Harry spared the Slytherin a look. “But there is a chance that it may?”

“Parseltongue is a rare gift,” Demetrius commented, drawing Harry’s attention back to himself.
“However, as far as I know it remains only as a spoken language.”

It felt almost like the floor had been snatched out from beneath Harry’s feet as the meaning finally
sunk in. By some sort of freak accident or perhaps ‘blessing’ he was able to read and understand this
language that his own family and warder weren’t able to. He almost shuddered at the possibility it
was yet another ‘talent’ he had picked up from Voldemort, much like the parseltongue skill.

“What did it say, Harry?” Selene asked. Harry had noticed her settle an arm around him but didn’t
complain, even if he was wondering if he could somehow feign he had amnesia.

“Word for word?” The green-eyed boy queried, not really wanting to divulge the message in it’s
entirety. Though he knew he should, especially since it may practically be a death threat against
Draco.

Selene nodded.

“Merlin,” Harry muttered, dragging a hand through his hair as he tried to recall the words exactly.
“Something like, I can’t hide forever and my pet Dragon can’t always protect me. It also referred to
me as a fallen star, though I had guessed that was due to your references in calling me your star all
the time,” the young Angelus confessed. “And the Dragon mentioned is quite clearly Draco.”

Both adults looked suitably spooked by the revelation.

“I believe it would be best if you were to share our rooms tonight.”

Oddly enough, it was Demetrius who suggested it.

“And I must stress the fact that I don’t want you going anywhere without one of us or Draconis with
you,” he continued, gravely. “We leave at first light tomorrow. I shall inform the headmaster of our
change in plans.”

“But my stuff,” the youngest Nikolai countered, still not quite understanding the urgency to leave nor
the tense atmosphere that had returned to the room. It was almost like his Aunt and Uncle believed
that they had one of hell’s hounds, if not the entire pack were on their tail and that in itself was
making Harry feel like he stood at the very cusp of some invisible abyss and was one step away from
falling if he misplaced a foot.

There was also the not so small promise he had given Hermione that he’d say his farewells before he
left.
“And I can’t leave without saying goodbye to Hermione and Ron,” he pressed, stubbornly.

“Then they must be done tonight.”

“Pan is coming with us when we leave,” Harry added calmly. Far more calmly than he thought he'd be able to feign successfully and watched as confusion made its way onto Selene's features, while Demetrius looked a tad wary. Draco had gone bizarrely quiet in Harry's mind which the latter had come to understand didn't mean anything good for him. It usually ended in some sort of explosion.

“Why do you want Pandarius to join us?” Selene queried curiously.

“To keep him from Draco's hair,” Harry replied. It was true and one of the many reasons he had thought it best to take Pan with them. The second was that he didn't trust Pan not to do anything to Draco while Harry was away. At least while Harry was around, the rebellious Invidian listened, more or less and hadn't attempted to hurt his younger cousin.

Well, not really.

Another reason was to keep an eye on Pan, though the young Nikolai wasn't certain whether removing the white-haired boy was particularly wise when it came to the group of Voldemort supporters.

Would the group act on their own in the absence of their so called leader or would they flounder about and lose nerve? He wasn't certain and that was one of the uncertainties that made Harry really worry. Though he trusted Pansy's word on the matter. She seemed genuine of her concerns and if she thought it was best to remove Pan, then she must have seen or known something that was worth going on.

Then of course, the was the fact that Demetrius had apparently sought Pan out to do his killing for him. Something that Harry was going to talk with in Uncle about once they were away from the school and any potential eavesdroppers.

“I see,” Demetrius stated, evenly. Though Harry wondered if the man really did see where Harry was going with this and get his approval. Although, now that Draco was very much present he considered whether Demetrius would need Draco's approval first.

“They don't get along,” Harry went on, “and I don't want one of them killing the other while I'm away.”

Selene looked intrigued if still somewhat perplexed by something. “And it is for this reason you wish Pan to accompany us? While I have no qualms to speak of, I had thought you'd prefer the company of your warder?”

“And I would,” Harry agreed immediately but becoming rather bewildered himself. He carefully avoided looking in Draco's vicinity, which it seemed Selene was attempting to point him in that direction. “But as Uncle Demetrius said, Draco wouldn't be joining us until Yule break, so I assume he'll turn up just before my Crowning. Until then though, that leaves two weeks and a bit for one to murder the other.

“Besides, Draco has school work he has to do and I know for a fact that Pan doesn't care about his studies. He finds following me around far more educational...”

Demetrius smiled jovially. “Just like his father.”

Harry wondered if that meant Pan's father fancied his Uncle Demetrius at some point too, then
decided that kind of question was probably one best left alone.

He didn't want to have nightmares, after all.

“If you'll excuse us?” Draco interjected, his voice barely hiding the fury that now surged through the bond he shared with Harry. “Accio.”

The Gryffindor wasn't the least bit surprised to find himself being hauled out of the room and into the chilly corridor to be immediately berated by his terribly miffed warder. He was then once again, wrapped up in Draco's concealment cloak.

“What were you thinking!?” The blonde raged the moment the pair were alone.

It didn't phase the Nikolai one bit. He supposed had their situations been different, he wouldn't have liked it either but as it was, it seemed the best for everyone. Well, it was definitely the best way of ensuring Draco continued to breathe, Harry was sure. Even if he wasn't exactly happy with his warder that didn't mean he wanted to see him dead.

Again, Harry was caught off guard by the Slytherin's powerful magical aura as it surged and wrapped around his mind. He barely managed to shake off the effects to consider why he was reacting like that when moments prior he hadn't felt at all inclined to go anywhere near the blonde Slytherin. Perhaps being so close to his family had dulled the effects of Draco's magic?

“Draco, really,” Harry muttered in annoyance at both himself and the other boy. More so the blonde because it was his fault that Harry's body was having strange reactions. At least that was his reasoning. “You do recall we're out in the open and anyone happening past may hear us.”

The Slytherin flushed slightly, though whether it was in anger or embarrassment at his own mistake, Harry really couldn't tell. Draco's emotions had gone beyond barely decipherable and into chaotic.

With a vague wave of his wand, the blonde erected a sound scrambling ward, much like the ones that Hermione now favoured.

“Zabini, report.”

Harry's eyes snapped over to the dark Invidian, startled that he hadn't noticed Blaise's presence until he had become visible, a little further down the hall from where Harry stood. The Slytherin bowed in position.

“One of your weaknesses,” Draco explained tersely, without waiting for Harry's question.

“There have been no changes. Only Potter's friends, Granger and Weasley have been in the area since I took up my post. Torrez dropped by earlier and escorted Potter's friends away. There has been no other events of interest and nothing has been tampered with.”

Draco nodded, as though expecting nothing else.

“Why did you tell my Uncle about the Gensvacare?” The lone Angelus queried in a cool voice. His countenance mirroring his tone and not betraying the hurt that he felt, though he supposed Draco was still very much able to read his emotions.

“What are you talking about?” Blaise frowned. “I've told no one.”

Harry kept studying the darker boy, still not quite convinced he was telling the truth but after a moment Draco nodded.
“He isn't lying,” the grey-eyed boy stated slowly and glaring off at nothing in particular.

“Sorry,” Harry muttered, feeling guilty at having so little faith in Blaise.

“It's all right,” Blaise replied as he offered Harry a sad smile. “I'm sorry about your owl. I almost feel sorry for whoever is responsible, they don't stand a chance now with your Uncle and Malfoy hot on their trail.”

Harry returned Blaise's smile with a satisfied one of his own.

“Return to your post,” Draco growled at the other Invidian and with a quick nod, Blaise appeared to vanish again. “Now lets sort out your things and then you can say your farewells,” he said a little more calmly as he turned to Harry, who stood regarding him pensively.

“How does this mean I'm stronger than Uncle Demetrius?”

Harry had no idea what possessed him to ask the question but it was a fair one and he was sure Draco would answer it. Perhaps then he could try and ferret out the reasons for Demetrius challenging the Slytherin.

He cursed inwardly as he realised Pan would likely know the reason and be more than happy he share his knowledge. Blaise though, probably wouldn't be so forthcoming.

“What?” Draco asked baffled, his irritation temporarily displaced. Then he grimaced. “Physically no, you're not as strong as him just yet but your speed surpasses his own. In fact, you are quite a bit faster than he is. I was actually surprised,” he admitted, grudgingly.

“And yet you still beat him,” Harry pointed out, expressionlessly.

“Yes I did...” Draco replied now eying him warily. Almost like he expected Harry to avenge Demetrius' hurt pride or something as equally insane. “Come on, lets go get your things from your room.”

The small trek to Harry's room was uneventful and done in complete silence with Draco's emotions churning about endlessly. To the point, in fact that they were beginning to make Harry feel slightly ill and consider more than once blocking the Slytherin until after he had sorted himself out.

He didn't though, because as messed up as Draco currently was, Harry knew that his warder still took great comfort in their bond. Even if Harry was just at his side.

The pair arrived at the large mirror which guarded one of the entrances to his room and now that Harry thought on it, the large and beautiful thing looked so very out of place. Even at Hogwarts where almost everything seemed a little odd to those not quite used to magical residences. And from what Harry had been able to tell from both Loiresvale and Malfoy Manor, Hogwarts was still slightly... different.

Still, the surface reflecting his and Draco's image back perfectly threw him off a bit as he realised this would be the first time he had ever allowed anyone else to use the enchanted entrance. It was almost an odd feeling as seeing himself in the mirror. He had never used it before without wearing his father's invisibility cloak.

“As lovely as it is admiring ourselves in the mirror, might I suggest that we move this along?” Draco drawled out. His tone just this side of snappish. “I really don't have all night.”

Pretending to ignore the tone and the blonde altogether, Harry dropped his voice to a low and near
sibilant hiss as he spoke the password, “ *Quadrivium fati.* ”

Snatching the other's wrist, Harry pulled him through the mirror. Shuddering slightly at the feeling of having been doused in an icy shower for the short transition from the corridor into his warm room, that was heated by a small, covered fireplace.

Once inside, Harry dropped Draco's wrist and set about returning his belongings to their respective trunks with a few charms Selene had taught him. Not once uttering a word to the blonde who in return, had not spoken again either. Though he was leaning heavily against the post of Harry’s bed, trying to keep his weight from his still very sore ankle which was also growing on the Angelus' nerves.

“Why are you taking Torrez?”

The question was so quiet that Harry had almost thought that he was hearing things, but Draco was watching him intently, clearly awaiting some sort of answer.

With an annoyed huff, Harry slipped his hand into the pocket of his robes and tossed the list of names to the blonde. “Read that,” the Nikolai instructed as he seated himself, cross-legged on his bed and leaned back against the post of his headboard. “Tell me what that means to you.”

Draco looked as Harry curiously as he seised the parchment and read. It took little more than a few seconds before he was peering over at Harry suspiciously.

“How'd you get this?”

Harry smirked over at the blonde, enjoying the fact he had the upper hand for once. “I have my sources and they shall remain anonymous. Suffice it to say, it's because of that list, that I requested to have Pan join us instead of having him stay here with you.”

“So you're taking him for *my* safety?” Draco queried, archly.

Not sure what to make of Draco's feelings on the matter since his face betrayed nothing and his emotions were far too jumbled to even bother contemplation, Harry gave a cautious nod. “Amongst other things that I've noticed and need to check out. I thought it was best.”

Still, Draco's countenance remained rather impassive and Harry disliked the fact that he was unable to decipher what the Slytherin was feeling and so, powerless to work out just what was so wrong. It didn't stay that way for long though, as the Invidian let out a disgruntled sigh while muttering to himself about clueless Gryffindors.

“It's my duty to protect you and yet you insist on protecting me.”

“That's what friends do,” Harry stated, scowling slightly at his warder in growing frustration. “You protect each other.”

Sensing Harry's darkening mood, Draco backed off a little. Though not by much and still persisted with the topic. He was studying Harry carefully almost like he wasn't sure the Gryffindor quite understood his words. “You do realise the situation you've placed yourself in, don't you?”

“If you're meaning the temptation of drinking from him, then yes,” Harry responded, succinctly, narrowing his eyes further. “I was quite aware of that.”

Draco's grey eyes darkened and Harry surmised that they had finally touched on the actual issue that was bothering his warder so much. But did the blonde honestly think that Harry wouldn't be able to
keep from drinking Pan's blood? He may have been somewhat right, the Nikolai wasn't entirely
certain himself but he was fairly confident that he could keep any unsavoury urges such as that to
himself.

“Merlin,” Harry muttered exhaustedly, wondering where on earth he was finding the energy to speak
when his mind refused to stay focused on anything for longer than a few seconds. He sighed and
shut his tired eyes. “I had the prefect opportunity to drink from Pan tonight and managed to refrain.
Do you really think that I would drink from another when I know what that would mean for you?”

The Invidian was momentarily startled.

Harry rolled his eyes in exasperation. Clearly Draco thought him somewhat dense.

“You're my blood-bonded and I'm yours, meaning we can't drink from anyone but each other unless
under certain circumstances,” Harry's eyes settled on Draco, trying to gauge exactly what the other
was feeling but still, was unsure just what to make of the mess that was his warder's emotions. “And
I wouldn't touch another's blood but yours.

“Now,” He started when he could take the ache in the blonde's ankle no longer, and fixed Draco
with a look that seemed to paralyse the other boy. “Why are you not healing?”

Draco's eyes skittered away, feeling somewhat guilty and ashamed.

“The injuries are inflicted by an Angelus. They will take longer to heal than normal wounds would,”
he supplied with some reluctance.

Harry also understood that there was something else that the blonde wasn't mentioning about the
circumstances of his healing. Or rather, lack thereof.

“And just why won't you tell me the actual reasons for you're being challenged by my Uncle?” Harry
wanted to know, though he was fairly certain he wouldn't get that information from the blonde. Still,
it couldn't hurt to try.

“Because you're not ready to know,” Draco stated simply and gave a sigh. Then seeing that Harry
was about to refute his claim, he settled a heavy and intense gaze on the Gryffindor. “If you were
ready, you'd already know why I was challenged and would also know what I'm thinking right
now.”

Actually, Harry rather got the impression that Draco was thinking about eating him again. But that
sounded foolish, even in his head. Until he recalled his previous conversion with his Aunt Selene
and things suddenly made more sense. He was almost certain that it may have had something to do
with Draco having to drink from Demetrius, but the Slytherin was so stubborn sometimes.

And that was when things got a little more uncomfortable for him.

_I didn't drink from my chalice_, Harry groaned mutely as he realised his mistake and very subtly
edged away from his warder when he realised that his body was once again having unwanted
reactions to Draco's very close presence, even though something about the Slytherin seemed
slightly... off.

Sighing unhappily Harry immediately set about riffling around his newly packed things, trying to
locate his missing blood-chalice, only to belatedly recall that Ron had taken and left it in Demetrius
and Selene's temporary rooms.

“Brilliant,” he muttered sarcastically and sank to his knees with a grimace then buried his face in the
fabric of his bed covers, wanting to ignore Draco but finding that he couldn't.

His whole damn body was against him and pointing out quite unhelpfully that his bonded Invidian was in the same room and would be more than willing to satisfy his appetite. The problem being, Harry couldn't be sure exactly which 'appetite' his mind was referring to, as the mere thought of taking Draco's blood was making him almost delirious with want and he was certain that he wouldn't be able to hide that fact much longer.

He wasn't gay or at least, he hadn't been gay before and now apparently he was. Or maybe he was bi-sexual and becoming an Angelus had only brought out that side of him. Then again, he may have no real preference and as long as it had a pulse and fresh blood flowing through it's veins, Harry wasn't picky.

Harry let out a minute whimper and prayed to the deities that were meant to exist, in hopes Draco hadn't heard it.

*I'm doomed,* Harry muttered silently and squeezed his eyes shut as he felt Draco's emotions warp, giving way to his concern for the Gryffindor as well as something that Harry interpreted as anticipation. *Merlin, what have I ever done to deserve this? I was always such a good child...*

“Problem?” Draco queried, standing near Harry.

The latter threw up a hand to stall the other as he tried to gather his scattered wits and refrain from laughing at the absurdity of the situation he had somehow gotten himself into. It wasn't funny in the slightest.

This was bound to happen eventually, he tried to calm himself and be reasonable about the situation. But really, he rather felt that his slowly developing instincts had been a little off the mark when it came to this because now, it seemed much more like he had been tossed into a river and was expected to know how to swim against the powerful currents.

But he couldn't swim and knew he would be swept away should he attempt.

“Are you hungry?” The Gryffindor asked, retaining some semblance of sanity, at least. However feeble a grasp it was and thankful that he's kept his voice normal when he knew it had almost come out all syrupy with want.

“Now that you mention it...” Draco responded, guarded. Though he didn't look remotely interested in sustenance of the edible variety.

Harry nodded, pointedly ignoring his warder's heated look and carefully navigating around his things scattered haphazardly about the place, made his way over to his desk and the box of treats Selene had sent him the previous day and handed the entire box to the Slytherin.

“Nothing of that is remotely healthy but should tide you over until we get back to my Uncle and Auntie's room,” Harry explained, keeping as wide a berth from the Slytherin as he possibly could, given the enclosed space both inhabited. “There is also a flask or two of Sanguisé in there if you're erm, thirsty.”

Mentally, Harry slapped himself. *He* could, or more importantly *should* have taken a drink from the flask. But apparently, most of his actual intelligent brain had turned itself off.

“Am I making you nervous?” Draco questioned as he knelt a foot or so in front of Harry. The blonde already knew the answer, judging by the damn smug look on his face and the fact that his emotions had settled somewhat. There was no longer a single trace of anger at all, just a very tightly reigned in
sense of... belonging. Which was just odd.

Harry stood up hastily and set about to re-charming his things back into their trunks. He knew he was being a coward and that earlier he had been all for throwing himself quite bodily at his warder, which was more than mortifying. At least now he was able to tone down his desire to do just that.

Then again, it may have something to do with Draco's magic which, despite it being no different than usual, all warmth and musk and hints of spice, it felt different. Both drawing him in and repelling him in the same instant.

Spying his invisibility cloak, Harry carefully folded it up and slipped it beneath his robes.

“I'm going to see Ron and Hermione now, if you're coming.”

Draco looked annoyed and perhaps a bit insulted. He was angry again and feeling more than a little impatient, as well. “Stubborn Gryffindor,” he muttered under his breath and exhaled heavily. “The bloody things I put up with for you.”

“I take that as a yes then,” Harry grinned half-heartedly at the blonde who was still kneeling on the ground, petulantly. He rather resembled a child who had been denied the toy he coveted and was all huffy about it.

Unable to prevent himself, Harry snickered then immediately clamped a hand over his mouth as the blonde settled narrow silvery eyes on him.

“I'm glad you take such great pleasure in my torture,” the Slytherin glared.

“Only about as much as you take in mine,” Harry returned, feeling affronted. “And don't deny you enjoy seeing me squirm.”

Perhaps that hadn't been the best choice of verb to use, considering the dark and predatory look that sprung to life in Draco's eyes. In response to the challenge Harry had unwittingly proclaimed.

Turning around to make a hasty retreat and not bothering he see whether the blonde followed him or not, the Gryffindor crossed the room and quietly drew his door open. Stepping into the sixth year boy's dorm Harry was greeted with the half light of evening and the soft, even breathing of those who had already succumbed to sleep. There was also the occasional snore or two from Seamus.

Ron's bed lay conspicuously empty and apparently untouched since that morning, at least.

If Ron wasn't in his bed, he'd have to be down in the common room and Hermione was well known for her studying to ungodly hours of the night. Surely she'd still be up at least? Ron may have even been with her.

Yes, that's probably where he was. And a safe place to start searching for the pair.

“I was going to tell you that it was already late,” Draco informed him, glancing about the dorm with little to no interest. “But you ran off to hide before I could.”

“I'm not hiding,” Harry denied in a hiss.

“So you claim,” Draco drawled lazily, though it came out more as a purr than anything else and Harry was hard pressed not to shudder in delight at the almost verbal caress. He was more than certain the blonde was immensely pleased with himself, if his feelings were anything to go by. Although Harry had to wonder when Draco had become so incredibly annoying and persistent in
whatever it was he was trying to get Harry to notice.

“Are you trying to wake the whole of Gryffindor house?” Harry murmured, shooting the blonde a dark look as Draco trailed Harry down the staircase and into the equally as quiet Gryffindor common room.

The dying embers of the fire place cast a soft golden glow about the room and it's occupants. Two of which were sleeping quite soundly, oblivious to their sudden audience.

Hermione slept, propped up in her favourite chair with her finger keeping place in the large book she had been reading. It was the one on blood bonds, Harry noted again with unease and all around her were scattered reading materials. Some on werewolves, there was an advanced one on potions and different forms of compulsion. Not exactly safe reads but nothing that would warrant any real concerns from anyone else or teachers.

Ron lay sprawled all over one of the nearby sofa's, clearly just there to keep Hermione company. It was a heart warming scene. Maybe this was the sort of thing that was needed to push the two together.

One thing Harry knew for certain though was that he couldn't wake them up.

He hadn't really noticed earlier, but both of his friends seemed so tired and worn. It was only now that as he watched them sleep did he notice the difference between them, the sort of peace that only rest could really offer. Still, he couldn't leave without delivering his farewell as he had promised.

It was left in the form of a letter to both and the list that Pansy had given him.

--xXx--

“Harry, wake up.”

The aforementioned boy moaned, turned over and buried his face in the satiny heat of his pillow, in an attempt to avoid the annoyance trying to wake him from what had been one of the most restful sleeps he'd had in a what seemed like an eternity.

He was laughed at for his trouble. The sound reverberating through his own body and ears as his cushion moved, prompting the drowsy Gryffindor to open one bleary eye and found that his actual pillow was one very amused and half-dressed Draco Malfoy.

If the latter was perturbed by Harry's use of his body as a pillow, then he didn't let on. Besides, the Angelus was almost completely certain that Draco was enjoying it. Harry wasn't complaining either, though perhaps it was because his mind was still sleep fogged, or maybe it was because of the blood bond that had Harry so calm about waking up, half sprawled over the blonde.

Even though he hadn't recalled how he had gotten to bed. Nor really having fallen asleep and waking up partially draped over Draco was definitely not something he had been expecting.

Harry groaned again, and dropped his head.

Draco prodded him, none too gently. “Not much of a morning person, are you?” He asked in amusement. Harry could just hear the smirk in his voice.

“Speak for yourself.” Harry retorted, though his words were muffled. “Blaise said that you're no better than me when it comes to waking you up. On weekends, at least,” he amended with a frown and glanced up when he felt Draco go suddenly tense. Their bond seemed to have frozen, too.
“’Blaise’?” The blonde Slytherin drawled out neutrally, peering down at Harry with an unreadable look. “Since when have you called him Blaise?”

Harry blinked. The pleasant sleep induced haze lifting in light of his error. “Err...”

“Good, you're up,” Demetrius observed.

The extra and unexpected greeting had Harry’s head snapping around so fast he thought for a moment he may actually lose it. He stared over at his Uncle, feeling strangely like he had done something wrong. But Demetrius seemed fine with the situation and even appeared amused himself. Harry wasn’t sure what to think. He had been certain Demetrius wouldn't find the situation at all humorous.

Surely finding your nephew sleeping with another half-dressed male wasn't something good. Warder-bond or not... Though it was completely innocent.

Then again, his Uncle did have a bizarre sense of humour, after all.

“Don't be a prat,” Draco whispered hotly into his ear, grazing the lobe with his lips as he did so. The combination of which caused the Gryffindor to shiver, evidently the blonde was more than pleased by the result. “You've done nothing wrong.”

Harry cast his Uncle a bleary-eyed glare prompting the elder to smirk at him in a very Malfoy-esque way. “All your things have been taken up to the Headmaster's office. We'll be leaving in half an hour.”

“Right,” Harry returned, a little distractedly as he felt Draco shift behind him. He tried to ignore the heat that radiated from the blonde and the thin, half-undone shirt that the Slytherin wore. “Where's Aunty Selene?”

“Getting ready to leave. You know how females are,” Demetrius intoned, mock-wisely. His eyes darted to Draco a moment, looking contemplative. “Mm, perhaps not.”

Harry glowered, indignantly. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing,” Demetrius smiled charmingly. Harry noted it was the same almost-but-not-quite-innocent smile he pulled on Selene whenever he had done something she didn't like. The younger Angelus glared balefully at his Uncle's retreating back, while the man casually returned to his sleeping chambers where Selene was still presumably located.

“I'll be joining you in a week.”

Harry turned around and peered at his warder. “School isn't let out for another two and a bit weeks,” the younger boy stated. Unless he had been asleep far longer than he recalled, though he didn't believe he had been. He rubbed his face tiredly and covered a yawn.

It was also then that Harry became aware of the fact the the blonde had one of his wrists and was absently stroking the pulse point. The Green-eyed boy didn't think Draco was even aware of what he was doing, nor did Harry mind as the Slytherin kept caressing the tender skin, prompting tiny little sparks to ignite at the contact. It also had the dual effect of making Harry want to melt into the floor.

“I've asked my father to withdraw me from school earlier. He was extremely surprised that I wasn't going with you,” the Slytherin gave Harry a pointed look before he went on. “My mother will come to collect me next week under the pretence of me visiting a sick relative out of the country.”
“Keep away from Bellatrix,” Harry warned suddenly, feeling sick at the thought of losing yet another he cared about to the sadistic bitch. He had already placed her near the top of his to kill list. Once he was able to recognise her magical signature, she wouldn’t stand a chance.

Draco smirked, then his expression changed as he dropped his eyes to his where his hand was still firmly attached to Harry’s wrist. It was bound to happen since the Angelus’ heartbeat had increased to almost threefold.

Appearing contemplative, Draco brought the ivory limb to his mouth, though not quite touching. His breathing was almost even and warm, brushing across Harry’s exposed flesh with every exhale. It was his heartbeat only that betrayed him, even his feelings were quite collected as he waited patiently. Still, Harry knew what the other was asking even if it wasn’t aloud. Draco was far too proud to ask. Perhaps far prouder than even Harry was, something that he found bizarrely endearing.

Selene had been right in her prediction of the Invidian wanting to drink from him, even if the request was a silent one.

Silently, with his gaze adhered to Draco’s noticeably darker grey eyes, he pressed his wrist against the the Slytherin’s soft lips in acceptance of the unvoiced request. And as the last occasion with the blood bonding, Draco wasted little time and latched on to Harry’s wrist as his long fang’s sank into the silky skin and he began to drink eagerly.

Harry hadn’t put much thought into the actually piecing of his skin by Draco’s fangs, having figured it would sting and so was totally unprepared for the unadulterated surge of pleasure that it caused alone.

But it wasn’t just his pleasure, he felt Draco's too. Felt it and absorbed it as his own until he was disorientated and was no longer able to identify which feelings belonged to who or even really whom was whom.

Gasping at the sensations, Harry squeezed his eyes shut as he felt the every pulse of his now rapidly beating heart fill his ears and leave through the tiny punctures in his wrist and flow into Draco’s hot mouth. The feeling of some seductive and volatile heat coursed through his veins with every drop of blood Draco lapped up, tenderly. Hungrily and without restraint. It was driving Harry mad with the intensity and he was sure that if things continued any further, he was definitely not going to be able to hide how much he was enjoying having the Slytherin drink from him.

As it was, he wasn’t so certain that his warder couldn’t already tell. Harry had bitten his lip to keep from moaning and already, there was blood in his mouth. He had also shredded the mattress of his makeshift bed with his clenching fist as it dug into the furniture.

Then Draco withdrew his fangs, but kept lathing his tongue along the puncture marks in the Nikolai’s wrist. Harry couldn’t prevent the soft, somewhat pained moan from escaping his slightly parted lips and collapsed onto his back as his eyes fluttered shut, lethargically.

“Intense,” was the only word his still completely scrambled mind could produce. Still, he was proud of that one achievement.

He now understood why bonded Angelus and Invidians often ended up lovers. It wouldn’t be difficult a thing to accomplish. Actually, it would be much harder to avoid.

“Everything always is with you,” Draco admitted, after clearing his throat a bit. It did little to rid him of the thickness that was still very much present in his already husky voice. It made him sound kind of sick, actually.
He looked like he was about to say something else but didn't get the chance as Demetrius and Selene entered the room.

“Bonjour,” Selene greeted warmly. “Sleep well, I hope?”

“Morning.”

“Good morning, Lady Selene,” Draco replied, his eyes darted to Harry's a moment although the Gryffindor was unsure how to interpret the brief look that Draco had cast him and his feelings were once again too mixed to define. “I slept quiet well, thank-you.”

Selene beamed at him. “Lovely. And Harry, how was your rest?”

Harry turned pink under his Aunt's close inspection. “Great,” he managed to get out. Discarding the fact it sounded slightly garbled and possibly quite unintelligible. It seemed that with Draco drinking from him, his wits had been dulled to the point that he was only capable of speaking a word at a time.

Lovely.

“Selene,” Demetrius intervened with the barest traces of a smirk at Harry's discomfort and slightly dazed expression. “We must be leaving soon if we are to be prepared to leave Loiresvale once Pandarius arrives.”

The Angelus queen sighed. “I suppose you are right.” Though like Harry generally was, she sounded resentful of that fact. Then she turned to Draco. “You have an open invitation to our home. So you need not wait the full week to visit us should you feel like it.”

“Thank-you, my Lady,” Draco said, a little surprised but content.

“Selene,” the woman smiled. “Please, call me Selene.”

The lone blonde inclined his head, politely and shook Demetrius' proffered hand. “And you may refer to me as Demetrius. I think you've more than earned that right.”

Again, Draco nodded, feeling nonplussed.

“Come now, Harry,” Demetrius said and helped the now quite sluggish Gryffindor from the sofa-turned-bed. “The floo network will cut off in exactly nine minutes, so we really must be getting to Dumbledore's office.”

Harry stood leaning against his Uncle for support, feeling like his legs were about to give out on him they were that unsteady. He offered Draco a smile when he sensed the blonde's self-reproach, so the blonde knew that Harry didn't blame him for his temporary lack of strength. It only seemed to make his warder feel ten-times worse, though.

“An entire week without me,” Harry voiced, trying to lighten Draco's mood, “you can finally have some alone time. Even ask Parkinson on a date.”

He was extremely pleased to sense the abrupt change in Draco's emotions from dark to confused and outright horrified. At least it didn't feel like the blonde's world was very close to collapsing in on itself anymore.

“What gave you the idea that I had any interest in Parkinson whatsoever?” Draco drawled, after he was able to catch himself. The very corner of his lip twitched, betraying his amusement to all those
Harry shrugged. “I never said anything about you being interested in her. However, I am more than certain that she fancies you.”

“And how might you know this?” Draco inquired, his brow arched looking truly curious and growing far more amused.

Again, Harry shrugged. “You can just tell,” he explained, and glanced up at his Uncle who was now chuckling down at him, for reasons Harry was unclear of. He was almost certain that there was something to this picture that he was missing. “Right we had best leave before he hacks up a lung or something.”

“Well then let us leave before I laugh up anymore vital organs,” Demetrius commented, dryly. “I fear my lung is already long lost.”

“Right,” Harry agreed half-heartedly. He didn't want to leave Hogwarts. His friends and most importantly, Draco. Even if it was only going to be a week as opposed to the two and a bit that it was going to be previously. For the first time in his short life, he felt truly scared of what may happen while he was gone.

*It's just a week,* he reminded himself sternly. *A week. How hard can it be without Draco for a week? Until a few months ago I hadn't even liked him!*  

It was a hard mantra to keep when his feelings were mirrored almost completely by Draco.

Then he recalled something and pulled the bundled up invisibility cloak that he had stashed in his robes the night before. He handed it to Draco carefully, feeling somewhat bereft without it but still a little happier knowing that as it had sheltered his father and himself when it was needed, the cloak would also protect Draco.

Draco's eyes widened slightly. “You possess an invisibility cloak?” Harry could have sworn he heard the blonde mutter something like, “This explains so much...”

“My dad's,” Harry confirmed, feeling a bit embarrassed by it all and carefully ignoring the latter part of Draco's comment. Imaginary or otherwise. He had thought the gesture was a good one. He had Draco's favourite scarf which was infused with his magic and the cloak was covered in Harry's magic and scent. It had seemed only fair. Even if in this case it were only a temporary trade-off. “So look after it. I want it back when I see you next week.”

“I can't take it,” the blonde declined and tried to pass the silvery cloth back.

“You can and you will,” Harry argued, refusing to accept the cloak. “I'll be safe locked up at the Quay while you'll be stuck here for an entire week with possible enemies still wandering the school halls. You need it far more than I do.”

Still, Draco looked rather adverse to the idea and totally unconvinced.

Harry sighed, dragging a hand through his dark locks and was struck with sudden inspiration. He peered up at his warder beneath his thick, inky lashes. “Take it for me? I'd sleep better knowing you had it.”

Harry had never seen Draco agree to anything quite so fast before, even if the Invidian was feeling extremely annoyed at both Harry and himself. At least Harry had managed to get Draco to agree about taking the cloak. It give the Gryffindor some peace of mind. In fact, it felt almost like his own
father would be watching out for Draco.

That thought filled Harry with warmth and gave him the resolve to leave. With a fleeting smile for his warder, the Angelus slipped from the room to be immediately swept up into the folds of his Aunt and Uncle's robes.

What happened next was a blur as the Nikolai family traversed the dead halls of the school and up into the headmaster's office at such speed that everything the trio passed by looked like a smudged child's paintings. The portraits smeared and running in together with the cold stonewalls and the ground. Harry only vaguely heard what was being said in the office itself before he was lost in the whirling emerald vortex that hurled him out and into the travel-chamber of Loiresvale.

“Home, sweet home;” Selene smiled as she stepped out of the floo and peered around at the chamber. “Come, Raeda was told to prepare your favourite for breakfast.”

Nodding, Harry followed along quietly as he adjusted to the wards of the place pressing down on him. It's magic reaching out and connecting with his own, reforming a bond that had been misplaced in his absence.

Loiresvale felt exactly the same as it had when he had left. It smelt exactly the same, too but it no longer held the same appeal that it once had. The warmth he had once felt was still very present but almost clinical in nature. Distant almost and the silence of the place... It was deafening after all the noise he had grown accustomed to at Hogwarts. Even as the magic of Loiresvale purred against his skin in an endless surge on the air, welcoming him home.

“Once you've eaten you may do what you wish. Pandarius will be arriving a little later in the afternoon. We shall depart for Shiresford Quay soon after,” Demetrius continued walking on Harry's other side.

Suddenly, Harry had never felt so alone.

*It's just a week*, he reflected as his thoughts brushed against the part of his mind where Draco's bond resided. It was distressingly smaller now with the distance between them and Harry knew it would get smaller still when he left for Shiresford Quay. *I can survive a week.*

But a week had never sounded so long in his life and Harry felt more like he'd been given a life-sentence in Azkaban.

---xXx---

AN: And now we are up to date :) Thank-you all for your patience and for all you lovely people who reviewed. Merry Christmas everyone!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!