New Skin

by Magentasouth

Summary

A very different post war world. Old enemies run into one another in a all-male revue bar...

Notes

comments fuel the updating machine
chapter one

He sat back, stunned.

How was it even possible?! Of all the, pardon the phrase, gin-joints.. in all the cities in the world – How the hell had they both ended up here.. How had he ended up here?!

How was it possible that Harry was still alive?!

He narrowed his eyes, trying to determine whether it was perhaps another boy.. a boy who merely resembled his former-enemy.

His hair was longer. His body almost unrecognisably changed – gone was any hint of innocent adolescence – the boy who he was watching could not have been mistaken for innocent in any way whatsoever.

The black light shimmered over the expanse of pale skin as the figure moved and undulated for the howling, slavering audience.

As the boy turned, the glint of green shimmered momentarily in his eyes before they slid closed. His hands stroked down the exposed expanse of his muscled abdomen and on to his groin. A thick line was visible in the tight vinyl pants. Harry’s fingers teased over himself as he dropped to his knees, his head falling back. He displayed a preternatural flexibility as he bent backward and then tumbled like an acrobat, to land lightly on his fingertips, lowering himself, seemingly lost in his own world of sensation as he rubbed himself suggestively against the stage. It was..very..easy to imagine him doing the same to a willing body beneath him.

The rest of the...dance... if it could be called a dance, passed in a haze. He couldn’t drag his eyes away. It was him.. He was certain of it.

When the boy had retreated amid resounding cheers, he got up surreptitiously from the table in the back of the seedy bar and moved to the exit. It hadn’t appeared that Harry had recognised him.. Surely if he had he wouldn’t have finished his dance. He’d have gotten the hell out of there, if he’d seen him Still. Something was telling him that the unfamiliar creature he’d just watched, spellbound, for almost half an hour, was far more aware of his surroundings than he seemed.

He couldn’t risk using his magic to try to detect him. If Harry had decided to escape – there was precious little he could do about it right now. Still.. perhaps he truly hadn’t noticed him. Perhaps it was merely his own paranoia – although Merlin knew that it could not be considered paranoia when they were actually after you.

He walked around the bar until he found an alley that led to the back exit.

It took several hours before the door opened and two laughing boys spilled out – but he had become very good at waiting. Most of his life was spent rather passively these days. Those were the good moments.

He recognised the boys from earlier acts. They were both outstandingly pretty specimens of young male flesh. As were all of the exotic dancers, and indeed most of the bartenders and serving staff in the moderate male revue bar in the Sydney backstreet.

Standing as he was, in the shadow of the doorway, the dancers walked past him without looking
He waited, telling himself that he was wasting his time. He needed to be moving on... finding a place to settle for the night. It had been an idle whim to step inside the bar. There was a hostel further down the street which he had been intending to stay in. Hostels were his preference these days – when he was given the option. He tried to keep moving.

In the beginning he had fled to Canada and had actually begun to build a life.. He had used the funds he had with him to acquire an apartment.. had sought work.. It had taken less than two months before he had aurors on his back. He had had to run, leaving all of his new-seeded life behind.

It had been a modest life too..

He had cursed it each day – the pitiful conditions to which he was forced to accustom himself.. A bed of his own.. half a bookshelf of books.. muggle takeaway food.

Of course now he had no bed of his own.. no books at all.. he was lucky if he could occasionally scrape together enough money from what he stole..and far less frequently earned.. to acquire a room in a hostel – where he might have a shower and enjoy the luxury of a door between himself and the animals he shared his current world with..

If not.. it was sometimes a shelter.. more often a hidden corner of a rail bridge.. a park.. an alley.. Wherever he could find a place out of the wind and cold.

The worst part was the knowing that all of his discomfort.. the freezing.. the starving.. the blinding anger at those around him could all be eased with a gesture.. He need only think the words for a warming charm.. It would take no effort at all to summon a bread roll from the table.. Even less to sever the head of the bullish muggle policeman shoving him along and out of whatever temporary shelter he had found for himself tonight..

But if he were to do that.. if he were to weaken – even in sleep – and use his magic...

Well... the last time he had used it to defend himself from a half drunken rowdy looking for a fight – he had spent the next weeks running for his life. They had chased him constantly. It had been a stroke of luck that had saved him in the end, not any skill of his own or incompetence on the part of his pursuers. He couldn’t take that kind of risk again.

So he kept to himself.. he avoided all forms of confrontation. He stayed in motion.

He had managed to steal another fat wallet from an impatient businessman the day before yesterday.

It was laughable. Of all the astounding things he had done.. and seen.. and learned in his life – the skill that was of most use to him now.. at the end of all things.. was the primary survival tool he had developed in a filthy muggle orphanage.

It was as if he had come full circle, he thought to himself sometimes.

So long ago and he still remembered the feeling of lying in bed with a constant painful ache in his belly because he had not been granted the opportunity to eat.. again..

Stealing had made his life bearable. The other children were not treated as he was. If they were hungry – they would be given another slice of bread.. another half bowl of watery soup.

He learned to slip out through the back fence and fleece muggles for money.. The money for food.. clothing. Once he had bought socks.. It had been a difficult choice at the time. It seemed a risk to purchase something so permanent when he might need the money for more immediate concerns soon enough.

And now.. decades later – it seemed he was back in that world in which calculations of primary need predominated.

After he had opened the wallet and found.. glory of glories – two hundred dollars inside, he had been painfully tempted to use some of the money to purchase a winter coat. The days were
growing shorter and soon enough he would be hard pressed to find shelter outside without risking illness. He could not afford to become sick. He couldn’t risk remaining anywhere for more than a few days...a week or two at the most. If he were to become ill enough to be found and taken to a muggle hospital...Well...His life might be a continual movement from agony to agony but he was not yet prepared to die!

He had not bought the coat. He had hidden half of the money in a dusty pipe near an abandoned industrial building and had taken the other half in search of a hostel...in search of a shower. A phone book in a telephone booth provided an address within walking distance.

He had been intending to take a room and then go out and buy something to eat. Nothing too expensive. Something that would keep.. that he could transport with him. Perhaps two-minute noodles.. They could be eaten without water if need pressed. He didn’t know how it was that he came to wander into the bar. It was...a completely pointless risk. Perhaps, he conceded, he had been lonely. It had been...a while...since he had last looked at another being with anything approximating desire. These days, all of his calculations were ordered around potential risk. He had been obliged to waste several dollars on a beer, which he nursed for hours as he sat and watched the dancers ply their trade one by one. It was...strangely comforting. And arousing, of course.. But primarily comforting – to discover that he was still capable of feeling attraction.

That was.. until Harry stalked out onto the stage under dark purple lights.

He wrapped his arms around himself more tightly and shivered in the dark. The hostel would be closed now. He needed to move soon and look for a suitable place to bed down for the night. Night! It was almost morning. Harry had apparated away – if it was him.. Or perhaps he had left through the main entrance. He had been here for hours.

“Not dead yet, I see”

The voice emerged from the darkness directly opposite him, startling him. There was nothing visible although he scoured the wall and looked over the entire area to the best of his ability.. There was no trace of a disillusioned form. If the boy was there, he was either using a potion of some kind or an invisibility cloak.

“Not quite” he offered softly.

There was a long silence. He took a hesitant step forward, looking about uncertainly. Had the boy left?!

“What do you want?! How did you find me?!”

He stopped. The voice came from directly behind him and he felt the cold line of a blade on his throat. The metal shifted incrementally against his skin when he swallowed.

“I was not looking for you. I...did not even intend to step into the bar – it was entirely
coincidental.
I want...to continue to survive. Nothing more.”

The knife pressed harder against his throat and he closed his eyes, trying frantically to think of how he might best escape further pursuit if he needed to use magic to heal himself. He cursed himself for having hidden the rest of the money - he would not be able to retrieve it if he needed to jump away from Sydney in a hurry.

Then the knife was removed smoothly.

He breathed out.

Further down the alley a dark shadow appeared, flinging something fabric-like off itself and bunching it under its arm. He recognised the boy’s form. He was walking slowly.

“Well. Come on then” the hard voice growled irritably.

Tom hesitated for only a moment. His better judgement was telling him to turn away and get the hell out of there. Go and retrieve the rest of the money and get as far away from this city as he could tonight.

Logic and memory dictated that this was one of the most dangerous threats in the world for him. After all – This was ‘the one with the power to vanquish him’ – even if he might arguably be said to be quite effectively vanquished already. Every sense in his body that opposed death was screaming out that he needed to escape.

He turned down the alley and followed the shadow of the boy that he had spent the better part of his life trying to defeat.

Harry did not slow any more for him as he followed him down the almost empty street, although Tom was sure that he was monitoring his pursuit very closely. The colour of the sky spoke of the coming dawn as Harry turned and climbed the white steps up to a modest apartment building. Some almost alien part of his own mind wanted to sneer. Most of the rest of him looked up at the tidy stone building as if it were an edifice of diamond studded golden luxury. Harry had apparently successfully built something approximating a life for himself here. He had succeeded where Tom himself had failed. That almost depressed him.

He walked up the stone steps after the boy, who had left the foyer door ajar for him. Inside, the building proved to be clean and well appointed. He could hear quiet steps ascending the stairs. He had the strong feeling that the only reason that he heard them at all was because Harry was choosing to give him an audible sign of his progress, that he might find the correct apartment.

He followed.
Climbing the stairs took him longer than it did Harry. He reasoned that it was more to do with his present state of malnutrition than it was a factor of his age. After all.. he was physically not much older than Harry himself. Although.. in his mind he felt two hundred years old sometimes. Still.. at least Severus had come through in the end.. before everything went to hell.. If he had not been able to restore his appearance, he would undoubtedly have been killed immediately when he fled. His former.. rather reptilian.. visage was not at all easy to disguise. The potion that Severus had developed had been the decisive success factor in the ritual that he had designed to restore himself. ...Although...perhaps that restoration had contributed to his loss of control over his own servants.. to their dwindling fear and respect...which had allowed such a
coup d’etat to take place.

After all.. in the wake of the ritual he found himself suddenly far younger than virtually all of his men. He resembled more the lovely young toys at the revels than he did their own rough darkness.

Physically he was now..once again.. a young man in the prime of his life. Directly following the ritual he had seemed to be somewhere in his late teens – now however, he estimated his visual age at perhaps twenty four. It was difficult to remember exactly what he had looked like at that age..He had spent so many years in dusty tombs and hidden cities looking for the answers to immortality and power. There had not been an overabundance of mirrors in the dark depths and he had barely looked up from the books, scrolls and tablets he was working upon.

He had wondered at one point whether he might have better preserved his more intimidating appearance – whether things might have gone differently... however in light of the other factors involved, he thought that it probably would not have saved him. The rot within his ranks was already too far advanced.
No.. if he had not carried out the ritual.. if he had not reacquired a human face.. a youthful body.. he would almost certainly be dead by now.

The door hung ajar.

He approached it tentatively, feeling the cold sweat break out on his brow suddenly. Even as he had slowly climbed the stairs, he had felt that he could turn about and run... but entering this blind alley of the apartment door unsettled him beyond everything thus far.. He hesitated just outside the door for a long minute, his hand an inch away from the wood.. He was telling himself that he was not yet weary enough of surviving to risk his life on this. There was no sound. The door did not move.. No voice demanded he hurry, no hand closed the door in his face. It seemed rather that all of time held it’s breath.

Then he pushed the door open.

Within, there was a very dim light emanating from a room at the end of a hallway. The door to the room was only open a crack. The rest of the dark hallway evidenced three further doors, all closed.
He felt sufficiently confident to step into the hall, however he could not bring himself to close the door behind himself. He feared that if it closed, it would lock.. if it locked.. then the aurors and the bounty hunters and the horribles would all pour in and take him.. So he stepped gingerly closer to the door at the end of the hallway and the slightly flickering light that he decided was probably a candle.
He had reached halfway down the hallway when the apartment door closed with an audible clap. He whirled, panicked, in time to brush shoulders with Harry, who stalked past him with an impatient irritable expression.

“Well that took bloody long enough” the other boy snapped and strode through the door at the end of the hall, pushing wide the door and revealing a small lounge with a candle burning on the table. “You know.. I never saw you as the timid type, Voldemort” he growled from somewhere further into the room

Voldemort.
Tom sighed, feeling a faint pang in his chest. He hadn’t heard that name in a while.
He looked uneasily at the apartment door again. It might not be locked. He could try it...
No. He would not confirm to the boy his discomfort at being here. He turned around and trailed after the boy into the candle-lit room.

“You’ll want a shower” Harry informed him when he walked in. He was dragging some blankets
and pillows out of a linen closet at the end of the room. “You’re not sleeping on my couch in the
state you’re in. I’ll lend you some clothes while you wash yours.” He marched to the long dark
shadow of the sofa and dropped the blankets and pillow on it pointedly.
“Bathroom’s the first door in the hall. I’ll leave the clothes here. Don’t do anything stupid – This is
your only warning.”
At that he turned on his heel and let himself through a door at the end of the small lounge next to
the linen cupboard, closing it after himself.
After a moment Tom saw a yellow light appear in the crack under the door.

He looked at the blankets and pillow on the sofa. The small candle on the coffee table.
If Harry wanted to trap him, it was possible he could be offering this hospitality simply to
distract him while the re-enforcements were on their way... but he didn’t think so. In fact, from
the way the boy behaved and from the way things had been going toward the end, he rather
suspected the boy was every bit as desperate a fugitive as himself, in his own way. There was no
room in the current wizarding world for Dark Lords or Saviours. Lucius Malfoy had seen to that.

Swallowing, he retreated to the hallway and moved to the first door.
A small clean bathroom in white and blue tile was displayed when he flicked on the switch near
the door. There was a toilet and a shower over a bathtub with a blue and white plaid nylon shower
curtain. Opposite him, over the sink, a mirror displayed his own dirty face and greasy hair to him.
His eyes bothered him. The dark blue orbs were marked by a feral tension that had never been
resident there even as a child. They displayed his low burning fear transparently as he looked
away from the mirror uncomfortably
He breathed a soft calming sigh and closed himself into the room, trying to let go of the jangling of
his anxious nerves.
Peeling off the layers of filthy fabric he dropped them in a small pile on the floor at the end of the
bathtub before he turned on the shower.
The steam started to fill the room almost immediately. He was relieved when it obscured his face
in the mirror.
As he stepped under the hot spray he couldn’t quite suppress a tiny ache of gratefulness that Harry
Potter was apparently a far better person than he himself.
If he had been in his position, he would probably have killed him, to be on the safe side.
After a minute, he looked down and grimaced at the brown taint of the water sloughing the dirt off
his body. The bathtub would probably need to be cleaned when he was finished. He ignored the
shame that pricked him momentarily and reached for the soap in the little tray that was stuck on
the wall with suction cups. For a very long time, he scrubbed himself all over, turning around in
circles and basking in the glorious heat.
When he felt tolerably clean he turned to the shampoo and washed his hair no less than three
times, hesitating indecisively before he also used a tiny amount of the conditioner.
He stepped out onto the bathmat and reached for the towel, feeling like a new person.
He never had that feeling when he got to use a shower in a hostel. They were invariably shared
bathrooms and the shower would be tiny, uncomfortable and lukewarm.
There would as often as not be a filthy rubber mat in the bottom and the towels one could rent
were always sandpapery things that barely covered one’s hips. Nothing like the thick plushy sky
blue bath sheet that was currently caressing his body.
And of course there was always the fact that after he had washed he would be forced to climb
back into dirty clothes, simply for lack of alternate options.

He wrapped the towel around his waist, tucking it in, and gingerly picked up the pile of dirty
clothing, holding it apart from him like something that could contaminate his new clean body if he
drew too close.

In the other room he found that an empty washing basket had been placed beside the sofa while a
small pile of folded garments were laid upon the back of the sofa. He dropped his lumpen rags in the washing basket and moved to look at the clothes Harry had laid aside for him.

There was a set of pajamas.

He hadn’t worn pajamas since he’d been at Hogwarts.

Beneath them was a pair of black jeans and a grey long sleeved tee shirt. The material felt soft and warm. He stroked it with his fingertips. At the bottom of the pile lay a pair of black lycra boxer shorts and a thick woolly pair of socks.

He sat down on the sofa and took deep breaths for a minute, blinking and trying to dispeel the sudden wash of emotion that was threatening to actually bring tears to his eyes. It was foolish to react this way. To clothes no less! He was being weak. Even choosing to follow the boy back here instead of leaving and playing it safe was a sign of his weakness.

He turned and picked up the clothes off the back of the sofa, bringing them down to his lap over the towel. Leaning forward he smelled a faint fresh scent. It was somewhat woodsy. The clothing smelled so good. Eventually he stood and dressed in the boxers, socks, jeans and teeshirt.

He couldn’t possibly put on pajamas. What if he had to run?!

He left his boots at the side of the sofa. He had had to persuade himself with difficulty not to put them on. But they were muddy and filthy. He couldn’t soil the sofa with them.

The boxers and jeans were slightly too large for him. They hung a little. He wished he had a belt.

He wished he could simply charm them to the correct size.

Nevertheless the long sleeved tee shirt felt amazing against his skin. He wrapped his arms around himself, stroking its plush fabric.

He stood in the dark for a moment. Behind the thick curtains he could see the telltale lines of yellow on the floor that indicated the sun was rising in the outside world.

With yet another agonised thought of immediately putting on his boots and getting the hell out of this apartment by whatever means necessary, he reached for the blanket and pillow.

When he lowered himself onto the firm velour surface of the sofa and spread the blanket over himself he felt at once relieved and fundamentally insecure.

If he slept here.. If he allowed himself to remain vulnerable around the boy in the other room... It was tantamount to complete surrender... He was placing his survival in the hands of his enemy. He sighed, rubbing his fingers over his eyes miserably.

Then he sat up and reached for his boots.

“Leaving?”

The voice startled him.

Again!

He half turned and spotted a shadow near the curtain that he hadn’t looked at twice before. How did the blasted boy do that?! Had he been under some kind of notice-me-not charm? Did he still have full use of his magic?!

Did he realise that Tom did not!?

“..Yes.” he muttered. “I cannot stay.”

“Why?”

The boy didn’t seem overly perturbed, merely curious. Tom fumbled for an answer that did not sound like he was running away.

“I have.. other things to do. It is none of your concern.”
“Well that’s bullshit...” the boy observed snidely.
“Are you afraid of me?!?”
He sounded amused.
Tom turned around and scowled at the shadow, whose face he couldn’t make out.
Damnable creature. How dare he suggest that-.
At that moment Harry stepped forward and the barest hint of the candlelight caught his face. Tom was suddenly painfully reminded of the blindingly lovely creature he’d witnessed dancing on stage.
Harry wore loose dark trousers and a tight dark teeshirt. He moved like something silky and powerful – like a creature entirely in its element. Tom found himself holding his breath as he approached.

“The war’s over, Voldemort.” Harry sneered down at him mildly.
“We lost. Both of us. The Ministry won. The purebloods won.. If I turn you in now – I might as well sign myself up for the kiss at the same time. They’d deport me if I were discovered here.
...and I’ve lost the appetite for killing – though I’ll defend myself if you find you really can’t let it go without a last fight..
Leave.. if you want. I won’t stop you. The door isn’t warded. You can keep the clothes. You look like you need them more than I do.

He looked up into the eyes that were black in the dim light. Not green at all..
“Why..?”
He didn’t manage to finish the question. It was too large to complete. Why had the boy not run?.. Why had he spoken with him?.. invited him back here.. Why had he offered these things?.. Why did it seem almost as if he did not wish him to leave?.. Why did he himself not wish to leave?!.
Why was he trying to force himself to put his boots on and walk out the door, right now?! The silky boy shrugged.
“Because you remind me of someone I used to be. Everything is gone and we remain. Because you watched me dance. What does it matter?! I don’t have the energy to debate it with you. It’s been a long night for me and I’m going to get some rest. Stay or go, as you like. If you’re going, shut the door after you.”

He turned with catlike grace and walked noiselessly to the back room, letting himself in and tossing the door back after him. It didn’t close. A couple of inches remained uncaringly open. It was as if Harry did not even require the empty gesture of protection that a closed door would afford.
Tom realised suddenly that he must have been in the room since he returned from the bathroom. The door definitely had not opened. He would have spotted that.
It meant, of course, that Harry had stood and watched him have an embarrassing moment over thrice damned fresh laundry.
And of course he had watched him dress..
However the embarrassment of being observed to be near tears over the scent of washing powder far outweighed the thought of the boy seeing him in his altogether, even considering how emaciated he had become over the last years.
It burned him to be so pathetic before his enemy. To have the boy entirely dismiss him as any threat at all...

He reached for his boots.

He paused, his clean fingertips hovering over the muddy leather.
For a moment, under the shower, he had felt human again.

He listened to the silence from the bedroom and wondered if the boy was lying there in the dark listening just as hard to see if he would leave.
Chapter two

Chapter Summary

comments are very motivational

He released the shaky breath he had been holding after a minute when his chest started to ache. This was ridiculous. He was treading on eggshells, considering running away, tired and exposed simply because the boy had embarrassed him. He was currently in a comfortable apartment.. there was probably food.. no one knew he was here. He could hide out here for days.. perhaps longer, if he were careful. Potter had managed it. There was a simple solution to all of his problems and it didn’t..necessarily.. require magic to carry out. Without Potter – this was his apartment.. his food.. his shower..

Although.. he reminded himself of how smooth, graceful and strong the boy had seemed as he danced. How beautiful...
His own physical state was not up to much right now. If he were to be in any way capable of dispatching the boy now..he would probably require magic to do so – and to do that would be tantamount to whistling for Lucius’ dogs at the door.

But the boy had used magic here it seemed. Perhaps there was some kind of disguising spell or shielding ward on the apartment. Of course he could have been carrying a charmed object ..or perhaps the notice me not area was a permanent fixture cast by another on a certain area of the room?!

He sat back on the sofa and unreeled his awareness of the room around him looking for ward layers. From an early age he had been very good at detecting ambient magic. Gringotts had offered him an apprenticeship as curse breaker – but he, realising the other possible uses, and convinced of his own great destiny, had politely-refused and set off to find hidden things instead. The skill had stood him in good stead over many years.. It was horrifying that now he would only think of applying his greatest talents after he considered resorting to muggle forms of bloodshed. Repugnant.. but he could feel how the years of running had changed him.

So different from the years he spent disembodied and starving for solid form.. or the years in which he was freezing and aching from the effects of the blasted ritual to grant him that body perpetuated on potions and venoms.
It seemed that virtually his entire life had been spent in some manner of discomfort, wanting for things.

And right now he was warm and clean and...potentially... if he were to walk into the kitchen he could simply eat something.
But the ruin.. the destruction of everything he was.. everything he had had..and might have achieved – he had almost held the entire wizarding world in the palm of his hand!! – all of that loss could still be laid at the feet of the silky little whelp in the next room.

So he had offered him a bed and a shower... so what?!
He had destroyed his body.. several times. He had distracted him to the point that he had failed to see the web of influence...money..favours..threats and machinations that Lucius had thrown over
all of his most loyal... the web that stretched through light, dark, the ministry, the outlaws. The man had unified the wizarding world – against him. There was order now. In his own plans, blood had only ever figured as a means of retaining the support of the majority – his pursuit was of greater power, greater knowledge – and a change in the approach to dealing with the Muggle world. In principle – while he was convinced that the greatest threat to the wizarding world came from the billions of muggle maggots breeding and creating weapons, any witch or wizard of any blood status who evinced sufficient power and skill could gain a measure of his respect. However Lucius Malfoy was of the hardline purist persuasion and always had been. It was why he had been so very useful in acquiring the material support of the oldest families. The entire British wizarding world was centred around purebloods now.

In Lucius’ new world - halfbloods were at best allowed to exist as slaves – he himself would have been summarily killed, even were he not who he was... Interbreeding with muggles was punishable by death for Wizard/witch, muggle and any offspring that might eventuate. It had been one of the earlier policies and one that had been justified using him as an example of the dangers. Later policies were more palatable to the weak sots in the ministry. Lucius’ approach to dealing with mudbloods had been positively humane in contrast. The willing were stripped of their magic, obliviated and excluded from the wizarding world. The unwilling were interred until they were willing. No doubt Azkaban was a powerful persuader. The muggle world was marginally superior to that dismal painful existence. A spell detected muggleborn witches and wizards at birth now and the ministry routinely ‘healed’ the genetic aberration that allowed them to use magic.

Oh there had been opposition on some fronts. Certainly. Nevertheless, the influence and pull of the man holding the strings was absolute. He had everyone dancing. Tom had seen some of the more recent laws advertised in the international wizarding papers by chance occasionally – it seemed that Britain was thriving. The blood traitors had snapped into line in the face of losing their freedom. They had almost completed rebuilding. Magical education was receiving all funding and development imaginable to produce the best possible future generations of witches and wizards. Other nations had taken notice. He had heard rumors in Canada while he was there that some thought the policies being enacted in Britain were progressive and beneficial to wizarding kind. When he had come to Australia last year he had stopped listening..

Yes. There was some kind of dampening...or...shielding... ward around the apartment. How the hell did the boy succeed in putting that up?! Had he perhaps contracted another wizard to do it?! Or..was he simply not pursued as Tom himself was?!.

It mattered little. What the ward represented was SAFETY. He could not be detected here if he used magic. Hence – he was now – again – superior to Harry Potter. There was nothing to prevent him from killing the little bastard finally.

He rose from the sofa quietly, employing care and grace that had been blunted by clumping muggle boots and starvation.

Why would the boy have brought him here?! Surely he must have realised the implications! Was he suicidal!? Were there some other protections in place against the very thing he was now thinking of doing!?

He stalked cautiously into the dim bedroom. The light thrown from the sun behind the curtains left everything a faded blue tone. The boy lay on his back in the bed, head tossed to the side.. arms above the blankets and visibly
unarmed - apparently sleeping. A small...gloriously satisfying...detection spell told him that this was deception. The boy was awake and attending to him with the utmost attention. He prepared a wandless spell to incapacitate him, raising his hand in the doorway.

“You really just can’t let it go.. can you?!” the tired voice sighed. “It’s just not part of who you are to learn from the past! Even now...” The half shadowed head turned toward him but the boy did not seem to raise a hand to defend himself.

“Everything.. everything.. that has happened is your fault.” He hissed back at him.”

The boy gave a bitter laugh. “Do you really believe that?! Can you be that blind?! I was an infant. I hardly forced your hand. Blame Dumbledore – sure – the man was a bastard when you get right down to it.. Blame Trelawney for daring to prophesise your demise.. blame yourself for not reacting with more thought and foresight... But don’t blame me for everything you did to yourself! I was trying to defend myself.. trying to survive! My entire life was shit because of you. ...And don’t blame me for Lucius Malfoy and what’s happened to the world either! He was your servant.. your general. If anyone should have stopped him – it was you. You know – sometimes I’ve wondered what you would have done if you’d won. What the world would look like now if you’d succeeded..”

Tom scowled. He should have released the spell by now.. instead he was hesitating in the doorway and listening to the brat. Technically he did not seem to be a brat anymore. Technically he seemed to be a rather beautiful young man with a death wish.

He took a step closer, wondering what the hell he was doing. His fingers tingled with the temptation to kill the boy..But no.. it would be better to use a low level spell and then dispatch him via muggle means. Who knew how effective the ward was against unforgiveables and dark magic.

“If you kill me... you’ll be running forever..”

He paused. What did the boy mean?! He’d be running forever anyway. If he didn’t kill him, that would not change.

He must have read the confusion on his face because he answered.

“I'll help you.. We can take it back. ...together. We were the strongest at one point, Voldemort. And maybe some would say that you were the most intelligent – your academic results were always touted as so fucking wonderful. ...Personally I think you were an idiot.”

He flicked a minor burning hex in the sublime confidence that he could. The boy’s hand went to his cheek to the mark it left but he didn’t rage or fight back.

“See.. you’re an idiot. ....My face keeps this place in rent. It’s the only thing between me... us....and the breadline..”

Tom smirked. “It wasn’t your face you were shaking in that bar. To his astonishment the boy smirked back softly.
“...I saw you watching me while I danced...I recognised you...
...I Liked it. To dance for you – to feel your eyes on me...”

The dark head turned slightly, looking over at him. He faltered for a moment, suddenly remembering the way the boy had curled and stretched himself on the stage... the hot hard lines of his body as he’d stroked and thrust and driven the audience wild...
he’d wanted to touch him too...
He’d wanted to lick and taste and grip and drive himself into the gorgeous creature.

He moved closer... a few steps.

“...Are you going to try to kill me now? ...Again?
...I’m waiting. You see I’m not armed. Hurry up if you’re going to do it...”

Tom took a slow breath.
So easy.. the spell was sitting at the front of his mind.. he could feel it tingling on his fingertips..
The boy could be gone.. for good...

As if the thought had roused him, the shadowy figure moved, balancing itself on its elbows. The covers feel away, displaying a pale sculpted chest.. Harry’s dark haunted eyes looked up at him almost in challenge.. As if he were daring him to do it.
He swallowed, looking at him. So ..lovely...

“Why did you not run?!” he whispered, curiously. “Why did you bring me here?!”

The boy simply looked up at him steadily.
He moved closer still..
::I think.. I’ve always been waiting for you::

The soft hiss jarred his mind.. shocked him as nothing else had done before. He’d known the boy spoke the language but he’d never heard him use it.
He stepped close.. close enough to reach out and touch the boy. His fingers hovered.. It would be so very easy to release the spell his mind was holding ready..
A hand slowly reached up and met his own, questing... touching.. and then gripping. Pulling at his fingers gently. The feeling of touching the boy’s skin made something inside Tom shudder

::come...:: the boy hissed.. barely audibly. ::I won’t deny you... Kill me afterward... if you want...::

He felt his own libido give a sudden twitch as the silky unfamiliar Harry pushed back the covers.. displaying his nakedness. His readiness.. Such a delicious expanse of skin.. muscle.. perfectly formed.. The boy lay back then, spreading his arms as if emphasising his own vulnerability.

Tom burned to curse him.. kill him.. but still he found himself hesitating.
He felt his cock harden in the foreign clothing.

“A trick? You cannot buy your life with a quick fuck, Harry...”

The boy closed his eyes..smiling secretively.
“Then don’t make it quick..
...I’ve wanted you since I was twelve years old, Tom...”

He felt his stomach clench slightly. What?! What was the boy talking about?! How?!
The hardening line of Harry’s cock seemed to support his statement, unbelievable as it was. Tom tried to prevent his eye from grazing down the beautiful body. It was difficult.
“Why?!“ he whispered, infuriated at the plaintive tone in his own voice.

The dark eyes opened again and Harry’s brow furrowed.

“I didn’t want to.. I fought not to.. The way you looked made it easier... But now.. you look how you looked in my mind.. Well.. you look closer to how you look in my mind.. I can see the last years haven’t been good to you.

I...I can help you.. I want to help you... But you’re probably too bloody minded to accept it.

Just... lie with me.. Just for tonight? We don’t have to do ...anything...” The low voice trailed off suggestively.

Tom stared.

Harry moved over in the bed slowly, his eyes calm and steady as they met Tom’s own. The invitation lay strangely between them.

To his astonishment, he found himself raising a knee to climb onto the bed. Something in his stomach gave a kick at the stupidity he was displaying. Allowing himself to postpone (it was certainly merely a postponement) his satisfaction in killing the boy..for..what?! A short tousle under the sheets..

He found he really was not adverse to a short tousle under the sheets with this creature. And that was weakness!! What was wrong with him?! Why hesitate?!

Harry had made no move to reach for him.

It was as well. The sharp tingling of his nerves, alert against the possibility of deception, might have led him to curse the boy quickly and assuage his own unease.

He lowered himself cautiously onto his side in the bed, still fully clothed, watching the boy suspiciously.

Harry looked back at him with wide hopeful eyes. He seemed to be waiting.. Tom narrowed his eyes and.. delightfully.. the boy looked down submissively, as if he’d chastised him.

When Harry darted another brief glance up, the hope in his eyes was painfully fragile.

Tom swallowed nervously. If he were to entertain this possibility with the boy.. if he were to allow himself to lose attention for this time, he needed to be more secure than at present.

Making up his mind he turned his attention outward and focussed on the room... the apartment. The wards he wanted drifted up in his mind with ease. Some things, it seemed, one did not forget.

He layered them room by room before summoning a shoelace from one of the boy’s shoes and transfiguring it into a beaded bracelet. He charmed each of the twenty beads into portkeys.

It took a while.

Harry simply lay watching him, apparently understanding what he was doing and displaying more anticipation than before in light of it. When he had finished the bracelet he attached it to his own wrist and then looked up uneasily.

The boy surged forward as if he had been impatiently awaiting the moment he finished. He reacted without thinking and bound him in place. It was an instinctive spell and he blinked in reaction a moment after he’d cast it. The other boy’s face was painted in self recrimination as if he regretted his error. Swaddled in ropes, only his head peeked free. He started to babble immediately.

“I’m.. sorry.. I didn’t mean to.. Just...I won’t do anything.. Don’t go...Do whatever you need to do.. to feel..safe.. but..but stay with me..

Maybe.. you could..tie me..uh... I mean.. to the bed..not like this.. I mean.. If it helps.. You could..silence me.. if you want..

I.. Please...”

The dark eyes entreated him.
“No.. I have something...better.” he informed him darkly.
“ sözü etmek” he spoke quietly, brushing aside the boy’s long black hair and pressing his fingertips to the pale forehead.
A faded lightning bolt scar was exposed, disturbingly. He grimaced. Seeing it reminded him again of exactly who the waif was.
But the spell would prevent malevolent action on the boy’s part at least for the moment. The prophesy aside – Harry Potter would not be physically capable of attempting to harm him for this night.
It was unsatisfying.. but it would have to suffice.

“But...I... want you to... Please...” the boy whispered.
“I dreamed about you...for years...
.....I...I didn’t tell anyone about those dreams. How could I?! They were.. so different to the other dreams of you.. no one would have understood..
I used to dream you would come to me in my bed at Hogwarts.. Like this.. Like you are now.. Sort of.
You were older than me.. strong.. so hot... I wanted what you did.. Sometimes in the dreams you’d ..you’d tie me to the bed..
“please...”

Tom dispelled the incarcerous with a vague flick of his fingers and the full expanse of the lithe muscled body returned to his view. It was an improvement.

“Perhaps I will tie you later...” he muttered distractedly, reaching out and trailing a finger down the centre of the hot chest. Hairless and firm.. it felt..good.. to touch another person. He couldn’t remember anything of the last time he had lain with another. Certainly.. a long time ago - in the few weeks between his restoration and his downfall. He had indulged quite excessively at first when his body was restored – the first pale restored body he’d worn for several years had been incapable of those acts and the sudden return of sensation and desire had been a heady drug. He’d glutted himself on pretty young things.. both male and female alike. One further reason why he had perhaps not paid as much attention to Lucius as would have been wise.

He sat up and pulled off the grey long sleeved shirt, noting the hungry fixation in the other boy’s eyes as he looked up at him. Harry had not dared to move this time, as if to breathe too hard might take this chance from him once again. Tom tilted his head, looking down at the sharp angles of the boy’s jaw. He unfastened the top button of the black jeans and dragged the zip down carefully over his own now-eager erection.
The sight of the hard bulge covered by the lycra boxer shorts seemed to affect the boy lying beside him greatly. Harry was panting.. and he had barely touched him.
It seemed that the things he had said might have been true.
Was it possible that his enemy had been desperately obsessed with him for so long and he had been entirely ignorant of it?!
Before the ritual in the graveyard he had had no body.. his concerns were elsewhere.. and then afterward – he had a body but seemed to lack any libido whatsoever..
And after the final ritual.. well.. He had been distracted. Harry had, for the first time in years, not been the number one priority on his mind.
Perhaps things might have been very different if he had realised...

He lowered himself to his back and lifted his hips, balancing himself as he drew down the jeans and boxers in one, sliding them down his legs and kicking them off to the bottom of the bed. There was a soft whine from the boy next to him.
“Please... please.. let me touch you...”
The desperation in Harry’s voice was delicious. He rolled to his side once again and pulled...
himself up to his knees, crawling closer. When he stroked the palm of his hand down the boy’s chest again he felt his trembling need. It was as if he might implode if he could not have contact soon.

“No.. You will remain as you are. You will obey, Harry. Is that clear..”

The boy nodded with wide eyes and shaking hands.

“yes.. Yes.. anything.. please..”

Tom smirked.

God.. the feeling of it..

How long since he’d experienced this level of pained fearful worship...

He could barely wait to sheath himself in the boy.. but how could he rush now?!..

No.. he needed to draw this out.. he needed to enjoy the subjugation of his enemy utterly. Suck every particle of marrow out of it to tide him over for the years to come.

He cast the blankets from the bed with an impatient gesture. Harry flinched and his breath sped through the moist parted lips. “Yes..” he repeated again, as if it would give him what he wanted.

Taking the opportunity, Tom let his eyes drift down the other boy’s body. As if the weight of his gaze were tangible, the boy twitched and shifted slightly at the passage of it.

He stroked the very tip of a finger down the tight lateral abdominal muscles of the boy, who he thought must almost certainly spend hours each day training his muscles. Harry emitted a soft gasp and he saw his hands clench and unclench in the effort to remain still and quiescent.

The finger trailed lower.. over the bone of his pelvis, circling it slowly. He watched the boy’s ruddy cock jump and dance helplessly. It was rather a nice organ, he thought. Very slightly curved. Helmet darkening with need. He leaned low and blew a cool breath over the boy’s abdomen, smiling at the visible goosebumps that raised on the boy’s forearms..

“You will not make a sound without permission..” he instructed quietly. The boy nodded tightly.

“If you cannot obey.. I will punish you..” he smirked at him.

This did not seem to have the desired effect. If anything, the word punish seemed to cause the boy to flush pink and breathe faster.

He murmured a soft spell to bind the boy at the base of his cock. Harry twitched slightly.

“How is it that you came to be here... working.. as you do?..” he asked idly, tracing the raised ridge of his new toy’s collarbone. There was no response. He raised an eyebrow and stated, pleased “You may answer the question, Harry.”

There was a nod and then the boy frowned slightly before his expression cleared. That frown bothered him. He was thinking to lie!? The question was rather straightforward..

“I.. ran.. took the money I had and bought a muggle plane ticket. I thought that no one would notice me here.

The job.. well.. It turned out to be quite hard to get work when I had no background.. no papers.. no qualifications. Hogwarts didn’t really give me much of a basis in anything the muggle world uses. And.. I couldn’t really afford to work in the Australian wizarding world, obviously..”

Tom nodded thoughtfully.

“I do believe I shall tie you after all, Harry..” he informed him, a mere second before he had cast the spell that captured the boy’s wrists and ankles and drew him spread-eagled.

“...Legilimens..” he said with deep and abiding satisfaction. It was unnecessary for him to incant it aloud.. he did so entirely for the benefit of the attractive little obfuscator.

The boy did not even attempt to occlude. He wandered through his memories as if strolling through a poorly organised library. Here was the time in Hogwarts.. friends.. enemies.. Redheaded Weasleys and a bushy haired girl seemed to predominate. And Dumbledore - confounded
Tom dipped in deeper to verify that the boy had indeed had a number of quite explicit dreams involving none other than himself. – these, he was able to trace back to a particular memory of the Chamber of Secrets. He watched, irritated, as the tiny boy destroyed his Horcrux. The dreams had begun soon afterward.

He examined the thoughts in Harry’s head about him. He had clearly been a very confused young man. Hate and fear and paradoxical obsessive desire warred in him when his mind turned to his enemy.

Moving on he searched for those weeks before the end. The time in which he had not been attending to Harry sufficiently.

He found a disturbing preponderance of Draco Malfoy. It seemed the son of his enemy had taken particular care to follow and intimidate Harry. One memory depicted the younger Malfoy pushing Harry face first up against a wall in one of the upper level corridors. The exact nature of Draco’s interest was abundantly clear since Harry could feel it pressed against his arse through his robes. The boy groped him, insulting and degrading him, but did not attempt to take the attack any further. He threatened the lives of Harry’s little friends should he continue to circulate with them.. or should he tell anyone of their little interlude.

There were a number of such memories. He did not watch them all but it was clear by the balance of memories that Harry had indeed moved away from his friends and support in the hope of protecting them. The attacks grew more invasive. He pulled one toward the final days and observed Harry crying, held down on a bed in one of the Slytherin dormrooms while Draco forced himself slowly into his arse. The blonde growled deprecating remarks at him as he fucked him.

Tom found himself incongruously irate at seeing the abuse of the boy he had not realised desperately yearned to be his.

After he had finished, Draco sneered at the mess he’d left of Harry. Then he informed him that he was his whore now.. That he would play nice or see what happened to him.

He went on to state, with unmistakeable conviction, that very soon – His father would be the Dark Lord.. Voldemort was finished.. If Harry wanted to live.. he needed to see that he pleased him.

Harry had been too upset to take the words seriously – he thought it was just Malfoy’s posturing.. Tom knew that this wasn’t the case.

He attended to the time after that with far more care. Harry had indeed tried to run. He had withdrawn money from Gringotts – and had run into problems in the process. He had almost been too late. Just as he was leaving, swathes of aurors had descended on Gringotts to seize control of the institution. It seemed that Lucius had recognised the benefit in ‘freezing’ certain customers accounts temporarily. Harry had barely made it out undetected. He’d taken the subway straight to Heathrow, with nothing but the clothes he wore, and had booked a flight to Melbourne, Australia.

His first weeks in Australia reminded Tom eerily of his own experiences in Canada. There was that shock and dismay at finding how completely and utterly without recourse he was in the muggle world. Harry had tried to work as a labourer.. as a farmhand.. He was universally exploited. The memories of Draco were nothing in comparison to what the muggles did to him.

He was afraid to use his magic – he had not needed to be warned that it would be traced. When he hitchhiked to Sydney he did so with the intent of finding some shadier employment in a large city. He had sought work as a bartender but lacking any experience, did not get very far.

The manager at the bar in which he currently worked had taken a shine to his looks when he came in asking. Harry had been very lucky that he had proven halfway able to dance when given the opportunity to try. It seemed that the man also operated an unofficial brothel of sorts on the side. The way he had looked at him was not reassuring...

The next several months of memories were all fairly similar.. full of dancing in a dark room under
lights.. finding an apartment..shopping in muggle supermarkets.. For a while there was a boy who seemed to spend a lot of time with Harry.. Tom noted the vague similarity to his own appearance. And then Draco found him.
The blonde was in his apartment - enraged. He spent days torturing Harry only to heal him and begin anew. He impressed upon Harry the lengths he’d gone to, in order to find him. he’d shown wizarding photos of redheads and the bushy haired girl. They looked like something that might be found on the floor after a revel. They still lived, apparently. And would continue to do so, provided that Harry never again gave Draco a reason to be disappointed in him. Harry had crawled to him and promised not to run away again. He’d done his best to please the blonde with his body. 
Draco was quite amused when he learned of Harry’s occupation. He permitted him to continue working in it.

The remaining time between that point, almost a year and a half earlier and the present day was full of dancing, sleeping, shopping and quite regularly fucking and being tortured and/or humiliated by Draco Malfoy. The brunette boy he’d been seeing disappeared altogether. A memory of a visit from the blonde turned up about once a week or so – usually on Thursdays or Fridays. Sometimes he would watch Harry dance in the bar before taking him home and using him in whatever way suited. There were some fairly depraved memories among the set that seemed to haunt Harry, to judge by their emotional strength and re-occurrence in nightmare form.

Tom stilled in painful horror at how lucky he had been not to have run into Lucius’ son when he was in the bar. It was a Saturday night! He had missed what might have been his own death by mere hours!

He didn’t know what to make of it. Harry obviously had not wanted him to know about Draco. and yet – he had hardly taken much effort to obscure the memories. If he had intended to turn him in, then he would already have been captured by now, no doubt. Therefore he did not intend to let anyone know that he had seen him. Nevertheless.. not to warn him of the pendulous threat surrounding them both.. and what if Malfoy had placed some form of infidelity tracing spell?! He might have tried to penetrate the little fool and then found himself staring down the length of Draco Malfoy’s rather unimpressive 10 ½ inches of blackthorn.

He could feel the boy’s desperate hope.. his need..flooding his mind in the most recent memories. From the moment he’d seen him in the bar, he’d hardly been able to believe his eyes – initial trepidation and cynical fatalism had given way to a cruel wistful hope. 
Harry believed that somehow.. if he could persuade Tom to desire him, they might together come up with a plan to escape their respective fates. He believed that Tom held the power to prevail against Draco Malfoy – against all the powers of the British wizarding world. – he’d done it before, hadn’t he?!

Tom conceded, it would unlikely strain him terribly to dispatch the little blond sadist – however if he were to do so, it would only bring a world of trouble upon them both. Well.. upon him.. Why should he care if trouble rained down upon Harry Potter?!
If Draco Malfoy came here regularly, then Harry’s presence here might be unofficially known to and tolerated by Lucius – in which case any disappearance of his son would be immediately and energetically investigated – and they would come here first. On the other hand – Tom suspected that Lucius would never allow Harry to live if he knew of his whereabouts – the man was nothing if not prudent – even at the risk of upsetting the fruit of his loins.
So more likely than not, Draco had kept Harry a dirty secret. That did not mean that no one knew that he was coming here regularly.
And he had never stood alone against the entire accumulated force of the British wizarding world. Harry was naive to even imagine it so. Always he had had those invisible connections around him.. the contacts and support that made it possible for him to articulate his will in public. The more powerful he’d become, the more important those linkages had become. If he had stood alone as Lord Voldemort against the Order, the Ministry and the Public, he’d have been defeated. Invisibility and proxy actors were his weapons.

Pulling out of the unfortunate boy’s head he gazed down at him once again. Harry’s face was showing a war between hope and despair.

“Please.. help me..” he whispered. “You can do it.. I’ll help you.. we can-...” he petered out, despair winning his expression. Tom’s own face was closed - resigned.

“I cannot do anything for you, Harry. Well... I could kill you..” he corrected thoughtfully. “Perhaps that would be a mercy.”

The green eyes widened and grew glassy with tears.

“No..
If you’re going to do that.. at least do it afterward.. At least give me one night..”

Tom sighed and moved away from the tragically enticing boy tied to the bed. He turned and summoned the clothing that Harry had given him, slipping the boxer shorts onto his legs and resizing them absently. The jeans followed and sat snugly on his hips when he had finished.

“Please..my Lord..” Harry tried, desperately. “Please..Tom... Don’t..Don’t leave me.”

Tom ignored him, standing and summoning the grey long sleeved shirt, slipping it on and rolling his stiff shoulders.

“I am going to take some of your clothing, Harry.” he informed him softly. “And perhaps.. some other things that I may need. I shall ..release you.. before I leave.”

The boy turned his head away and he could hear him sobbing softly against his shoulder. “No.. please..Please..Tom..” He sniffed and tried to pull himself together to speak clearly. His voice wavered painfully. “We.. could win.. You could be powerful again.. Don’t you want to really live?! Aren’t you tired of just surviving?! Please.. I’ll do anything.. It..it can’t be a coincidence that we ran into each other!
In all the world – to find each other..”

Tom mused on the unlikely coincidence too. But what the boy was suggesting was insanity. The only rational choice was to gather up everything he could use and leave this place. He would manufacture as many portkeys as he could while he was in the apartment. Perhaps he would go to New Zealand. The states were probably out – they tended to follow the direction of the British wizarding world too closely these days. New Zealand would be a terrible place to spend the winter though, he bemoaned inwardly.

He went through Harry’s wardrobe methodically, taking out leather pants and a winter coat. He found a newer pair of boots and debated whether they would be more useful than his own – which were sturdier but slowly wearing out. He could not afford to minimise anything that he would take. In the end he had amassed a large backpack of clothing, and the kitchen was his next destination.
It was while he was poring over the cans and packets in Harry’s cupboard that he felt the wards he had placed shift.

He froze, his blood turning to ice. There was silence throughout the apartment. Someone had just apparated in, and he did not need to wonder who exactly was now standing in the Hallway of Harry’s apartment. The fact that he had neither spoken nor moved was not a good sign. Obviously he had detected something suspicious. Whether it was that detection which had drawn him here or whether he was coming here anyway and only noticed it upon arriving was moot. He reached for the bracelet just as he felt anti-movement wards slam up.

He cursed. His portkeys would be useless now unless he could get out of the apartment – and he would clearly not be doing so via apparition. Draco would summon reinforcements next. Any second now. Perhaps he was doing so already.

There was no time to think about this. His mind leapt into a higher gear, providing a spell that would disguise his own magical signature and traces, even as he concentrated on the incantation of a detection spell, finding one lifeform in the hallway by the door to the apartment, moving closer under a silencing spell.

He collected himself to attack. If he was to survive the night he needed to get out fast. In order to do that, he would do best to kill Draco Malfoy – or whoever that was now outside the kitchen door.

It seemed that Harry would get his wish after all.

For one fragment of a second that thought grated him. Bloody confounded pain in the arse BOY. He only needed to see him for his entire life to collapse into shit.

No.. his life had already been shit.. this was two levels lower than shit.

Without stopping to agonise over the choice he used a powerful blasting hex on the kitchen door, flinging it, and the figure behind it, hard against the other side of the hall. Against his own better judgement he threw the Avada at the crumpled but struggling figure. For all that spell’s magical drain - It was the quickest choice for him in light of the frequency with which he’d used it over the years and didn’t require particular aim.

The body slumped at once and he was able to pick out through the dust that it was indeed Draco Malfoy. The years had rendered him a miniature Lucius clone – his thin hard face was framed with long pale blonde hair and he was richly garbed.

Hate burned through his throat.

He took a few seconds to apply a melting curse to the aquiline features. It wasn’t really sufficient. He wished he could bring the little bastard back and kill him again – harder. He contented himself with incinerating the body and scattering the dust.

Out! He needed to get out of here now!! Using an unforgiveable would alert Aurors of any description. If the suppression spell in the apartment wasn’t strong enough – and it was unlikely to be strong enough to defeat the Australian Ministry of Magic – then there would be a swift response any second!

He backed into the kitchen and grabbed the backpack, tipping everything from the shelf into it with one swipe and drawing the string on top, swinging it onto his back.

He didn’t bother to close the door behind him – he was already pelting down the stairs.

There was the sound of pursuit on the stairs above him. His heart flew into his mouth.

Tearing from the foyer door down the stairs he reached for the bracelet, grasping the first bead. Just as he whispered the activation he felt a body slam hard into him. He fell, tumbling with the weight of it, struggling to free himself even as the portkey activated.
Chapter three

Chapter Notes

Every time you read and don't review, somewhere in the world someone kicks a kitten.

He landed hard, the weight of the body behind him crushing him against the unforgiving concrete that had leapt up to greet them both on their arrival in Wellington, New Zealand.

It had been a dingy backstreet behind what had once been a bakery – he’d used it once as an apparition point many years prior. Now however – it was decidedly not the back of a bakery. He supposed he should consider himself fortunate that he had not tried to port to the inside of a brick wall rather than the middle of a delivery accesspoint on a one way road. He caught the glimpse of the large truck heading toward him even as he struggled and elbowed at the person behind him, rolling and dragging them both out of the street, tossing the backpack to the side. The screech of brakes alerted him to the immediate need to leave. But there was of course still the auror on his back to deal with. Without magic.

He curled and wound his body and threw a punch over his shoulder, connecting with a face that emitted a pained “Oof!”

He recognised the voice and felt his anger increase at least a hundredfold.

“YOU INFERNAL BRAT...” he wheeled around and drove his fist even harder into Harry’s face. “What did you think you were DOING?! I made it abundantly clear that I wanted nothing to do with you – you should have thanked your lucky stars I didn’t finish you off too before I left – What the fuck are you doing following me?! Are you MAD?!” He fisted his hands in the boy’s teeshirt and threw him up against the brick wall at the roadside.

The aggravated voice came from behind him - “Oi!! I just about bloody ran you over! What th’fuck were ya doing lying in the road, ya bloody little idiots?! It was the driver of the truck. He was a short middle aged man with coffee brown skin and a scruffy moustache. The blue shirt he wore sported the same logo as the truck he drove.

Tom whirled on the man and narrowed his eyes venomously “Piss. Off!” he hissed and turned back to Harry, who had raised his arms up in front of his face and was cringing.

“Hey - leave off the kid or I’ll-..” he didn’t get any further because Tom strode in two steps to the backpack, pulled the knife he’d swiped from Harry’s kitchen and levelled it at him

“You should keep driving. We’re just going to have a discussion about my friend’s poor behavioural choices. Your input is not required. Take the hint.”

The man stopped his forward motion in shock and hesitated. His eye kept flicking between the cowering Harry, Tom’s furious snarl and the point of the rather wicked looking blade being pointed at him. He backed up a couple of steps holding his hands up slightly as if in the hope of calming the situation. “Hey.. look.. you need to just calm the fuck down, mate! I don’t know what the situation is here
but don’t do nothing stupid aright?.. Put the knife down and everything’ll be fine. Look.. i’m leaving! Right now!.. So calm down. Y’don’t need to hurt’im or nothing. He’s already shit scared.”

Tom smirked and held the knife up until the man had retreated to the cab of his truck and closed the door. He watched him pull out a mobile phone and groaned. He should probably have just gutted him..

“I’m leaving. Don’t follow me.” he growled at the boy who was wiping away a thin trail of blood beneath his nose with the back of his fingers.

Harry’s expression became painfully dire. “No! You have to take me with you! Please – I want to go with you! I’ll.. be useful. I can.. I can get you money!.. Tom.. Please..”
He looked at him consideringly. He would get him money? How? The only thing he could do was.. Tom groaned inwardly again. This should be a perfect moment. The damned saviour of the wizarding world was begging to be allowed to prostitute himself purely to remain in his esteemed company. Certainly a red letter day.

He didn’t bother responding. He simply went straight to the backpack and shoved the knife back in, swinging it onto his back and pulling himself to a sprint down the street. The sound of another set of feet slapping the pavement behind him told him that Harry had chosen to ignore his dismissal again. Still. If the truck driver had called the police – it was more important to get far away from this street now than it was to worry about an idiotic little stripper with grandiose designs on the wizarding world.

Ten minutes later he had to slow to a walk. He simply couldn’t manage to run for very long. He needed to eat something today. To his immense chagrin the blasted brat at his side was not even out of breath. He tried to slip an arm around him to support him. Tom shook him off and glared. “What are you still doing here?!” he puffed “You’re free of the Malfoy whelp – that’s what you wanted. Go.. find another bar to shake your arse in. Stay the fuck away from me! Being around you is hazardous to my health!”

The irritatingly pretty face crumpled indecisively. “I.. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you about him.. I knew you’d leave if you knew.. I thought-..”

“I know what you thought, you idiot! I was in your mind! You lack any sense whatsoever if you truly believe that any combination of you, I and a backpack of assorted clothing and tinned food is going to stand an earthly of taking over the unified British wizarding world. You were right! – The war is over. We lost! Accept it! There is nothing else to be saved. He turned away and stomped off down the dusty street. After a few seconds he heard the damned brat follow.

“I’m going with you.” He said decisively. “Wherever you’re going. If you want me gone, you’ll have to kill me.”

He had the knife out of the backpack and at the boy’s throat in less time than it took to draw a breath. It seemed that there was sufficient energy for some things, after all. “If you insist, Harry..” he hissed sibilantly. The green eyes blinked and Harry’s split lip smiled thinly as he looked down pointedly. Tom became aware that the point of a much smaller but nevertheless probably equally lethal blade was pricking his stomach lightly. He growled in frustration. “WHY?! Why can’t you just disappear?! Why have you been haunting me since the day you were born, you ridiculous little curse! Why can’t you go off and leave me in peace! I was
surviving quite adequately before I ran into you!”

Harry looked almost guilty for a moment before he seemed to suck it up and a most infuriatingly hopeful satisfied expression fixed itself on his face.
“You need to rest.. and.. and eat. We can find somewhere and I’ll ..look after you. We’ll talk after you’ve calmed down and raised your blood sugar a bit.”

Tom blinked and entertained different fantasies of the boy’s agonizing death. Perhaps it would be worth it to slice his throat open. He had a number of other portkeys to use. He could in all likelihood get away with healing his own stomach wound before the trace found him...

Nevertheless, despite his very strong reservations about this course of action, he allowed himself to step away and replace the knife in the backpack. He trudged on down the street, temporarily tolerating the near silent steps beside him. The road sloped downhill toward the harbour. He knew that if they followed it they would eventually come to the kind of area where people like him found a place to hide away overnight. It was sometime in the afternoon to judge by the light – however, in a new place it was always prudent to take the time to check out the area one was thinking to sleep in. You only needed to have a couple of bad frights and security became a very high priority in your world.

There would be two of them if he allowed Harry to remain.

Two was better than one, if you could trust the other person. Tom couldn’t. Ever. Trust another person. At all. In any way, shape or form. Harry would be a liability.

Still.. he had seemed to know how to move with a knife.. he had demonstrated the ability to move stealthily several times.. he did not appear overly fazed by physical violence upon his person..

He had expressed the wish to.. “take care” of Tom. In other words – he would eagerly prepare food, dispose of waste, obey orders..

The obeying orders part was appealing. Having someone to dictate to in this pathetic little existence would be wonderful.

“Can we go to the beach!!?”

Tom wanted to hit him. He obviously hadn’t hit him hard enough last time. Foolish things were still falling out of his mouth.

“What for?” he asked pointedly

There was a moment’s hesitation – as if the boy were wondering about the sense of the question. What did one go to the beach for?!.. why to lie about and sunbathe and enjoy the day. Before they got on the bus and returned to their nice little apartment and tucked themselves into their warm cosy bed.

Idiot.

“No. We are looking for a place to stay for the night. I have money but it will need to be changed to New Zealand currency and I would rather not waste any of it on you.”

He thought again of the hundred dollars he had lost because he’d hidden it in the pipe in the industrial district of Sydney. To lose..so much money at once.. was almost physically painful. He was seriously considering taking the twit up on his hasty offer to ‘earn’ money for them both. It would only be fair.. After all – he was forcing Tom to tolerate his presence.

“I have money.” Harry stated defensively.

Tom turned to him slowly and tilted his head, raising an eyebrow. “Is that so?” he prompted.
Harry frowned slightly. “Yes. I got paid last night. I asked for cash since I saw you there – I’ve got a couple thousand in my wallet right now. I.. I have a savings account too..” he ventured. “We should empty that out now before my boss realises i’m in the wind. Its under his name.. but I have a debit card for it.”

The information about the present contents of Harry’s wallet almost knocked the wind out of him. He had the sudden sharp urge to snatch the boy’s wallet from him and guard it. To SAY that out loud on an open street?! He looked around surreptitiously to make sure no one else had heard.

When he heard the rest of what the boy had to say, the notion of Harry having an actual bank account stunned him to stillness for a moment.

He considered again for a brief sad moment the millions of galleons he’d left in his Gringotts account when he’d fled.

But that was not real money. Any money you could not lay your hand on when you needed it was pure imagination. He would need to lay his hands on all of Harry’s money now!

“Then we shall go to the bank first. And afterward we will look for somewhere to stay tonight.”

The boy offered a small relieved smile. Yes. He’d done something good. Good Harry. Tom smirked to himself at how desperately his new shadow wanted to please him.

“I trust we will not need to debate the fact that your money is now my money, Harry?” he queried lightly.

“No” came the soft answer. Tom smiled wider. “Good.”

The bank was not quite as straightforward as it promised to be. It ended up not being THE bank but more sort of... a long line of banks. They could not withdraw the full sum on Harry’s savings account because he lacked the identification to gain access to the account – so they went from bank machine to bank machine taking out the maximum allowable sum at each. By the time the last bank machine told them that they could not withdraw any further cash that day, they had accrued $23,700. Tom had not seen so much money in one place in years and there was another 15,000 that they would have to wait till the following day to withdraw.

The one hundred dollars that he had lost in Sydney was beginning to pale in his mind. Perhaps Harry would not..yet.. need to sell his body for him.

“Are we staying here?” Harry asked quietly. “In this city I mean.. Are we going to stay here for a few days?!

Tom considered it

In principle he thought it might be better to keep moving. Although... technically there was no way to trace their movement. The portkey had been illegally constructed.. it had been used outside the apartment.

He’d left his clothing in Harry’s living room!

It was possible it could be traced!

Unlikely... but possible. Had there been blood on it!? Would anyone investigating Draco’s disappearance think to trace a washing basket of filthy clothing?

Yes.

Lucius would. If he got that far.. if he arrived at Harry’s apartment looking for them both, he would be extremely thorough.

It was too late to go back though. Even if he had created bidirectional portkeys – which he hadn’t,
he hadn’t seen the need – returning now would more likely place them in the middle of an auror investigation than offer the opportunity to wander upstairs and quietly burn his personal effects.

Such a tragic little error. They were away.. they had money.. and if someone with the right knowledge were to trace any blood or genetic material on his clothing, they could have death descend upon them in a blaze of green at any second.

“What’s wrong!?” Harry asked worried. “You look like... what’s happened!? What did we forget!? I saw what you did to Draco.. What are you worried about!?”

“Nothing.” He snapped. There was no way he was going to admit his stupid error right now. What good would that possibly do?! No.. he would have to remain alert.. If anything happened, then he would fight and flee. He would manage somehow.

“How did you ward your apartment in that manner?” Tom asked, changing the subject.

“I didn’t” the boy answered quietly. “It was Draco. He... he would let me heal myself..sometimes. It was convenient for him if I could use magic while we were there. He didn’t want me to be a squib.. he just liked the fact that I couldn’t risk doing anything to him..”

Tom nodded, sighing. A pity.. If there were some way to create such a place again.. he could construct further portkeys.

“So... are we staying here or not?”
Harry sounded distracted. The expression on his face showed that it was more an inner distraction than anything in the environment. Tom dismissed it. Obviously the boy had not yet fully processed the reality that Draco Malfoy.. (whatever he had done to him – a boy he had been fairly regularly fucking for several years) – was now dead. Thoroughly dead. Quite definitely dead.

“yes. This is as good a place as any for the moment. We will find a backpackers for the night.”

“Why don’t we rent a place – it’d be cheaper...
Tom scowled. Why not rent a place?! Because it was wasteful.. that was why. You never knew whether you would be able to stay for the entire term and to walk away when you had paid was a crime against money.
Of course.. they did have quite a considerable sum of money just right now..
Still.. The boy was spoilt. He was accustomed to creature comforts. He wanted privacy and next he’d be demanding furniture and bloody silk sheets.

“No. We will look for a place for the night” he stated definitively.

His hand itched to slap the pout off Harry’s face.

He had instructed Harry to remain silent and, as they stood at the counter of the Downtown backpackers, it seemed for a moment that that order would be followed. However when he asked for a single bed shared-room – (the boy could obviously sleep on the floor) – Harry spoke up, correcting him.

CORRECTING him!!..

He very nearly turned and dealt with the insurrection immediately, in public.
“No.. we’d like a double room, actually.” Harry corrected mildly.

The scruffy dread-locked muggle behind the counter just shrugged and switched the key for another one.

Tom fumed. He glared at Harry, who balked somewhat, obviously recognising that this matter was far from over, and in principle had nothing whatsoever to do with the size of their room. Eighty two dollars!! His gaze could have cut glass when he turned it upon the boy. He snatched the blasted room key from the muggle’s hand and shouldered his bag, turning and stomping down the hall to the stairs.

Harry followed behind meekly enough, but the damage was already done.

When he opened the door with the key and found a room that was far too pleasant and unassuming with a large double bed and a television set he reached behind him and dragged the whelp in by his tee shirt, flinging him across the intervening space. Harry didn’t bother to fight and stumbled slightly, landing on his knees. He stayed on his knees, waiting, with his head lowered, seemingly readying himself to weather the storm.

Tom stalked over, furious, and put his boot to him viciously, just below the shoulders, kicking him over hard onto his stomach. Harry braced himself slightly with his hands but did not move to try to get up.

“I instructed you to remain silent..” he hissed, as he climbed onto the prone figure and inserted his knee in the small of his back sharply. Harry yelped and jerked involuntarily at the pain. His movement gave Tom the opportunity to wrap his arm around the idiot’s neck and lock him. Hands moved to tug at his forearm urgently as the boy struggled for breath. He was out like a light in bare minutes of weak struggle.

Tom released his limp form onto the carpet and got up, pacing away in unsatisfied rage. Harry was supposed to obey him. He had graciously allowed him to remain vertical, breathing and at his side on the implicit condition that he would do as he was told.

This could not be tolerated. He had warned the boy to obey.. he had told him that he could not speak without permission.. he had informed him that he would be punished if he was unable to follow those simple rules. Punishment was required now.

He dropped to his knees and rolled the boy onto his back, glaring down at the entirely irritating way his teeshirt had ridden up to expose his flat hard stomach and the tight curves that arched down toward his groin. Harry’s face was soft and peaceful in unconsciousness, his hands splayed on the carpet. He looked .. he looked..good..

Growling, Tom dragged his thoughts away from that and moved down the boy’s body to tug his boots off. He needed the laces.

He heard Harry awaken by the choked cough he emitted. There was a moment of silence and pained breathing before the boy emitted a low groan.

Tom frowned. That had not sounded like the boy was particularly perturbed. Technically he should be more than perturbed.. he should be cramped and afraid and miserable. His groan had sounded..aroused.. if anything.

Harry lay on his stomach on the carpet. His legs were bent up and attached with one lace to his wrists in a hogtie. The other lace wrapped around his throat and attached to his bound wrists.
“I’m sorry..” Harry managed softly. “I won’t do it again.”

“You may not have the chance.” Tom informed him and pressed the button on the remote, flipping the television on. He generally despised television – but he wanted to be distracted from the boy on the floor. He had only been waiting for Harry to awaken in order to flip the TV on in order to be certain that he would not suffocate on the carpet. He might wish to kill him – but he had no intention of doing so in a hostel where he had been caught on camera entering with him.

Harry, to his credit, remained silent, his muscles tensely strained for the entire hour that Tom watched a ridiculous muggle programme featuring two idiots and a judge. He had to appreciate the boy’s physical condition, able to tolerate the discomfort so stoically. Flipping off the TV when a game show began, he determined that it was time to go and acquire food. And since Harry had already seen fit to waste most of his hundred dollars, he would finish off the brunt of it and purchase something hot with more than one component to it. Harry could go without this evening. He had not earned the privilege of food tonight.

“I shall be back. I expect to find you exactly as I am leaving you” he informed him with a scowl.

“Yes..Tom..” Harry puffed, displaying his difficulty as he tried to talk.

Grumbling at himself for being such a gods damned sot he paused and untied the cord around the boy’s neck before he went. It wouldn’t do for him to pass out and suffocate in his absence. Harry thanked him as he laid his cheek on the carpet, able to relax somewhat. On some level that did please him a very small amount. If the boy could simply always be as obedient and accommodating as he was when hogtied, perhaps he would not constantly have the desire to kill him.

He strolled down the hall of the backpackers feeling much lighter and more carefree than he had in a long time. It did one good to have someone below them on the ladder to kick. No matter how dismal and pained life became.. the ability to pass the buck could not be underestimated.

He walked up and down the street deliberating on what he might like to eat. In the end he realised that his body in its present condition probably would not tolerate most of the delicious smelling ethnic dishes on offer. Indian, Chinese, thai, Turkish.. they were all out. Pizza too. Too much grease.

He settled for Burger King. He bought a small meal with a chicken burger and fries. It was exquisite.

He hated the fact that he loved it.

After he’d eaten he wandered down the streets, getting a feel for the area. There were several bars that were just beginning to open as he started to make his way back toward the backpackers. He looked at one or two of them thoughtfully. Perhaps.. no. he discarded the idea again. They had more than sufficient money at present – there was no need to take the risk.

They.

HE.. HE had more than sufficient money. There was no they.

He scowled and made his way back to his disobedient little curse.

As he unlocked the door to the room he experienced a strange little frisson of anticipation. He found he was quite interested in whether the boy had remained in place or whether he had sought to challenge authority again. Either presented quite appealing options. If the boy had been good, perhaps he might release him for a while. Perhaps he might allow him..to dance for him.
Of course, if the boy had sought to disobey again, he would simply punish him further. He would be less merciful this time.
It was a win-win situation.

As it turned out, Harry was bound exactly as he had left him. He raised his head when he heard Tom enter and tried to look back over his shoulder. There was a hopeful cast to his face again. Tom smirked. Whenever he saw that optimistic lilt he had the almost irresistible urge to crush it.
He strode into the room and, for the first time, leaned his head into the modest ensuite bathroom that justified the exorbitant price of a double room. A small shower, toilet and sink winked at him. He stepped inside and stripped off eagerly, virtually diving into the shower. The towel provided was marginally less sandpapery than he was used to. Nothing like as soft and luxurious as the bath sheet in Harry’s apartment – but certainly above par. He shook his wet hair and strolled back out into the bedroom with the towel around his waist. There was a soft intake of breath from the boy on the floor as he walked past. It was gratifying.

“I’m really sorry now.. alright?” Harry tried hopefully. “Could you..maybe untie me.. or.. or punish me in a different way..”
Tom snorted.
“No. And I did not give you permission to speak, Harry.”
The boy emitted a soft disappointed groan.
He unfolded the towel, turning away from his bound entertainment for the evening, and used it to dry his hair slightly before tossing it over the chair. He could feel the press of Harry’s eyes on him. It was like a delicious tension.. an electric energy. It did not surprise him to see the boy wriggle uncomfortably on the floor when he turned. From the heat in the green eyes, it had now become uncomfortable to lie upon his cock.
He smirked and walked closer, dropping to his knees in front of the boy’s face He felt himself harden slightly. Harry looked like he wanted nothing more than to stretch out his neck and lick him. Stroking his fingertips up the shaft of his rapidly hardening member, he looked down at his..so called nemesis.
Harry was struggling to remain silent when it was blatantly obvious he wished to beg.

“You may speak..” he offered graciously.

“PLEASE TOM! PLEASE!! Untie me!! Let me..Let me please you.. I..can..it’ll feel.. DAMN IT..PLEASE Tom!!..” The needy pleas poured out of the boy.
Tom inspected the slight bruise forming around his split lip. Such a tiny thing.. If it were not for the way things stood.. it would take barely a thought to heal it..
He knelt up slightly and offered the head of his cock to the boy’s damaged mouth. Harry stopped whining at once and pounced upon it. He had run his tongue around the head and sucked it into his mouth in half a second.
Tom choked slightly in an overload of sensation. Good! It felt so damn good.. He leaned forward, holding Harry’s head in both hands and fucked his mouth slowly. The boy slurped and swallowed him with eager abandon. Tom found that he had to take note of the boy’s breathing since it was abundantly clear that Harry would suck until he choked if allowed.
He couldn’t stop his own breath from speeding.. or the low moan that escaped him when the boy swallowed around the head of his cock in the back of his throat. He couldn’t last. It had been too long since he had felt anything this good.. since he had felt hot wet delicious nirvana, washing away his cares. He stroked the soft black hair through his fingers as he moved harder against him. It seemed to only excite Harry further. He groaned deeply around the thick shaft in his gullet and the sensation nearly finished Tom. He thrust hard against the soft lips once, twice.. and then he was falling, emptying his balls into the back of the boy’s throat with a low growl of release. Harry swallowed and hummed in approval. It caused another minor spasm of pleasure to ripple
through Tom as he was leaning back on one hand, his legs splayed either side of his arse on the floor, trying to catch his breath.
Harry had been..very, very, good..
Perhaps.. he had been good enough to warrant curtailing his punishment for the moment.
After all.. the room was more than adequate.. and they (HE!!) had money.. and the shower had been good... he had eaten.. The boy was a formidable cocksucker.

He sighed languidly and reached forward over Harry’s shoulder to release the slip knot binding his ankles and wrists.

Harry emitted a soft sigh of relief when it came undone and stretched his legs out with an audible crack from one knee. Tom yawned, covering his mouth with the back of one hand. It had been a very long day in the meantime. He was full and clean and sated and meant to go for the complete prize and sleep now. He had merely not yet decided whether Harry would be sleeping on the floor or whether he would allow him to share the bed.

“What did you do wrong, Harry?” he asked idly.
There was a silence for a minute. Then the boy responded softly “I spoke when you told me not to. I contradicted you in front of others. I disobeyed your order.”
Tom stroked the head which had once again been lowered to press a cheek to the carpet. “Correct. As I was in a generous mood this evening your punishment has been rather mild. Some minor discomfort and no food. Should you repeat the mistake.. I will be harsher with you.”
Harry curled his head lower, pressing his nose into the carpet. “Ok..” he whispered.

Tom frowned slightly at the response. It was accepting but it was not optimal. An optimal response would contain some trace of Sir, Master or my Lord. Still.. for the moment he was feeling rather content and sleepy. He would condition the boy to the appropriate mode of address tomorrow perhaps.

“Go and shower before you come to bed” he instructed, pulling himself to his feet wearily.

“Thank you, Tom.” Harry responded softly, truly sounding grateful.
He slipped under the sheets of the double bed, lying back and feeling his entire back unwind in the unfamiliar softness. Too often he’d slept curled in a ball against the side of a building. It felt dangerous to be this comfortable. As if something terrible might happen at any minute.
Lucius drifted into his sleepy mind again.
Something terrible could happen at any minute. If Lucius learned that Tom had killed his only heir and managed to lay hands on him.. then a lot of very terrible things would probably happen for the rest of his agonizing little life.
He groaned again at his own stupidity for forgetting the clothes.

The sound of the shower stopping half woke him again from his doze. He heard, as if from far away, the sound of the boy walking about.. the soft rustle as he rubbed his body with the towel.. as he ruffled his hair. Then the covers on the other side of the bed drew down slightly and the bed dipped a shade while another body got in.
He frowned slightly through his sleepy haze when the cool, naked, barely damp, body edged over in the bed till Harry was close by his side. At least he didn’t dare to try to cuddle him..thank Merlin.. however the boy’s presence was close enough to sense. It hovered on the periphery of his awareness.

“What were you worried about earlier?” Harry whispered softly, just as he was dropping off again. He growled under his breath and shifted in the bed, considering whether to order the boy to sleep on the floor.
“D’nt matter” he mumbled and turned his head away. “Go to sleep Harry.”

There was silence for a minute. He drifted away again.. Then he heard the soft whisper, closer by his ear.

“Tom.. I burned your things before I followed you. Then I lit the whole place on fire as I ran out the door.”

His eyes flew open. He blinked even as his entire mouth went dry. Could it be true!? Had the boy thought to do that.. Could they be safe from the immediate threat of tracking?! He turned his face in the near dark toward the shadow of the boy’s head beside him.

“You don’t need to worry.” Harry whispered. “I’ll take care of you..”

The indignation burned him for a moment even through the disbelieving relief that the boy had actually done another extremely useful thing.

“We’ll find a way to win too.” Harry whispered. His lips were a bare inch from Tom’s own. He could feel the soft puff of his breath. Delusional again.

“Trust me. We’ll take it all back.” Harry insisted. For a brief moment Tom allowed himself to enjoy the pleasant delusion. They would take back the wizarding world and he would be Lord Voldemort again.. and Lucius would roast on a spike.. Then Harry’s lips moved the final inch and brushed his own, feather light and tentative. The tingling reaction he had when he touched the boy anywhere was magnified. He ran his tongue over his own lips to soothe the itch and Harry moved against him harder, sucking at the tip of his tongue and teasing it with his own. It was...

(bliss)

...entirely presumptuous of the boy. nevertheless.. for the sake of the fact that he had burned the clothes – He allowed it as a reward. He parted his lips and kissed the boy passionately, raising a hand to stroke the sharp angular face, to comb the damp black silk from his eyes.. Harry whimpered faintly into his mouth. Slowly he withdrew..in a slew of soft brief kisses to the boy’s entirely addictive mouth.

“Sleep, Harry..” he murmured against him, turning slightly and throwing one arm over the boy’s chest, even as the other curled under his pillow.

Just before he dropped off, he heard a faint sigh that sounded suspiciously contented.
Merlin.. yes!..God..
He woke just as he was falling over the edge into a complete unexpected climax. The sensations of a mouth around his cock sucking him gently had not roused him, exhausted as he was – the gentle head at his groin had incorporated itself into his dream - A dream of green eyes. He didn’t truly become aware of his grip on Harry’s hair as the boy deep throated him from somewhere deep in the bed, until he was literally on the brink of exploding in his hot.tight.wet..mouth god.. fuck fuck fuck.. he arched, groaning, as the boy sucked every last drop out of him.

Admittedly he had denied Harry food yesterday, he thought incongruously, trying to wind his mind back in. Perhaps he had been hungry..
It was an eminently pleasing way to awaken. Calming, he ran his fingers through the boy’s soft hair, feeling breath warm from Harry’s nose flutter over his pubic hair as the boy slowly and thoroughly cleaned him.
He felt languid and wonderful and he had only been awake for a minute.
The covers shifted as Harry burrowed his way to the top of the bed again.

“Good morning..” the green eyed nymph purred. Tom actually offered him a gratified smile. It seemed that this was worth more than words could convey, by the way it was met with a delighted beam in return.
“I got you breakfast..” Harry told him quickly, leaning backward over the edge of the bed and retrieving with sublime balance that showcased his formidable abdominal muscles, a tray with two plates and a glass of orange juice.

Conflicting emotions flared inside Tom.
...Harry had brought him breakfast in bed.. and had woken him most satisfyingly.. he was a good pet, deserving of a reward.
...Harry had obviously left the room independently in order to retrieve this breakfast – he had probably taken some of Tom’s money to procure it – he was a presumptuous whelp in need of further correction.

“This place has a free breakfast” Harry told him quickly as he sat up and read the indecision on his face. “I saw it yesterday when we arrived. All I did was go down and pick it up for you. I... I didn’t talk to anyone. I.. thought.. it would be ok to surprise you maybe.. Just once.. I.. could have asked – but then I wouldn’t have been able to wake you..er..like that..”

Tom weighed the argument in his mind. It was not entirely unreasonable he supposed. And he hardly wished to have to monitor the boy’s movements constantly. It would be better if he could be relied upon to act in the spirit of Tom’s own wishes. Much like the imperius – One does not need to order every little action and response – it is sufficient to instill the affected with the general gist of what is required and, provided they are sufficiently intelligent, they then seek those ends independently.

He moved to drag himself up in the bed, turning and piling his pillows behind him.
Harry beamed again, relieved, as he placed the tray down upon his lap. He did not so much as spill the orange juice. Tom gazed down at the small plate of bacon, eggs, and a fry up with tomato, mushroom and potato. The boy had even laid a small sachet of salt and one of pepper by the side. In the other small bowl was a fruit salad that seemed to incorporate peaches, apricots, oranges and pineapple.

Good Harry, he decided.

“Have you eaten?” he enquired softly, curious.

The boy ducked slightly, nervously.

“N-no. I considered it when I went down there.. but I thought...you might not like it if I didn’t ask.. after..yesterday... I brought myself back some fruit salad and cereal...if..”

Tom smiled, pleased.

Exactly. The spirit of instructions. The boy was doing well.

“I believe you are deserving of food now Harry.” he informed him, picking up his own knife and fork with satisfaction.

He had the impression that the young wizard by his side in bed was relieved again. “Thank you, Tom..” he mumbled and turned, reaching down over the side of the bed again for a small bowl that, Tom observed subtly, did indeed include something that seemed rather bran-like, with a little juice and fruit salad mixed through it.

Harry had prepared him a large indulgent breakfast but had served himself something modest and nourishing. He added this consideration to the boy’s current tally of behaviours.

“What time is it?” he asked absently and, yes, his newest acolyte was able to answer that immediately too. He bestowed him with an approving expression as he informed him that they would return to the banks after breakfast.

Harry had woken him very early – however this was once again quite in the spirit of instructions. If he had been asked at what time he should like to rise in the morning, he would have answered as much.

It was a Sunday – In all likelihood Harry’s exploitative former employer would not yet have noticed the enormous sum missing from Harry’s bank account.

They would have the final fifteen thousand and then they could consider their next movements. Obviously it would be preferable to leave this city – if the man could trace the location of withdrawals from the account and felt strongly enough about losing his little money maker – he might have contacts here that could sniff around for the boy.

Tom had decided somewhere between the blowjob and the last piece of bacon that he was going to keep the rather useful eye candy after all. Harry had proved not entirely loathsome..

For that reason, they would collect all they could and then they would leave. At present he was leaning toward using another of his portkey beads. Several of them should be less dangerous to use than the one that had almost placed them underneath a truck yesterday afternoon – in particular the ones he was familiar with from the course of the last four years.

He had been hard pressed at the time, with the distraction before him, to think of twenty places he could use as locations which would not simultaneously constitute more dangerous environments than the one he was in. For that reason – the actual location of the arrival point might be questionable in more than one case – as it had been here.

The portkey he’d made to Marburg in Germany was in a location he had not visited for over ten years. Anything could be standing there now. Although – it was a very old city and hopefully that particular piece of architecture would still be standing unchanged.

Nevertheless It would be best to leave those particular beads for more dire circumstances in which such a risk was warranted.
He finished the last piece of pineapple with relish, closing his eyes and delighting in the sweet tart juice on his tongue. Yes... it had been perhaps a good risk to take a beer in the all-male revue bar in Sydney. Had he not, he would be likely sitting in a room with three other random muggles, in stinking clothing, eating two minute noodles out of a cracked bowl while he waited for the communal bath to be free.

Harry finished the last of his bran and automatically moved to collect Tom’s tray, placing it on the floor out of the way.

“Can we talk about...um.. how we get back into...that is.. get back control of.. the wizarding world in Britain.

Tom sighed inwardly. And the boy had been doing so well up till then. On the other hand..if he were to lose faith that his ridiculous little dream was possible, then he might decide to be difficult.

Tom had had a number of years to sample Harry Potter being difficult. The pretty, accommodating boy was infinitely preferable.

“No. We will discuss it later. Get up and dressed.” He undercut the argument before it could take place and pulled the blankets aside, getting up himself and stretching expansively, rising on his toes and throwing his arms up above him. He felt the gaze and half turned his head to find the attractive boy kneeling up on the bed behind him with an expression of utmost wonder. Once again he found the hungry attention of the whelp gratifying.

True.. he had once been accustomed to that expression from all – males and females alike. When he had been Potter’s age the world had rushed to bow down and spread itself before him. And in fact in the aftermath of his most recent restoration he had experienced a concentration of the same effect – he knew he could be intensely attractive when he was in good health and tolerable mood – but over the majority of his years, particularly those in which he was nameless.. ragged.. destitute – he had been invisible. He was aware that he was presently rather wasted – too slender.. taut through desperation rather than art. He had had neither adequate food nor the will to groom himself to beauty. It would never have occurred to him to use his body as the boy had – to entertain muggles.. He would never remotely consider allowing a Muggle to touch him. To actively incite them to arousal would be to increase the risk of that unwelcome event.

Looking down at the ..lovely.. creature kneeling as if in worship below him, he experienced a small paradoxical wistful feeling. He wished that he could look as he had looked when he was truly in his prime. If Harry desired him so desperately as he was now, how much more intense would that look of desperate lust be if he were faced with a healthy, luxuriously groomed and perfectly trained example?! He dismissed the idle want with a soft sigh and turned away.

He would take another shower. Then he would don unworn clothing from the backpack. Today was too pleasant to mar with concessions.

The collection of the remaining funds went off without a hitch. It appeared that Harry’s pimp of a boss had not had the sudden urge to check the account. They emptied it to the last dollar.

At Harry’s pleading, Tom consented to take a walk by the harbour. Although he could not principally see the point in doing so for the sake of it, Harry seemed so happy to be granted the simple reward.. and perhaps.. it did increase his own enjoyment of the rather dull overcast day to
see the exotic city refracted through the boy’s naive eyes.

“I love the smell of the ocean” Harry told him, his eyes casting out over the silvery waves. “This place is..nice.. Maybe.. someday we can come back here..”

Tom mulled the statement over. It was rather a layered construction, he decided. It included an assumption that they would be leaving here soon – which was intelligent of the boy since he had not explicitly stated as much. It also included two further less logically derivable conclusions. Firstly that they would be remaining together, wherever they went – Tom would not be killing him – and secondly that they would later have the luxury and will to return together. He suppressed a small frown.

“I know you think I’m mad for believing we can win..”
It was said very softly. The wind almost took it. Tom narrowed his eyes and prepared himself for the return of ‘difficult’ Harry Potter in the immediate future. He sighed long sufferingly.
Best to get it over with.

“Fine, Harry – I will indulge you – once. Tell me your glorious plan – How do you think to achieve this!? Without so much as the use of magic.. Lucius was the strongest of my Death Eaters – he now possesses an army of thousands and they are no doubt far more efficiently trained than the pathetic offerings of the Ministry during my time. He is well aware that we both live and continues to search for us in order to correct that state of affairs. It would be exceedingly difficult for either of us to move freely within Britain, even as muggles. Even assuming it were possible to somehow assassinate the man himself - and I personally doubt that such a task is currently within the realm of possibility even for the most highly trained assassin – the edifice he has built in the Wizarding world would prevail. The purebloods reign unchallenged. There are no halfbloods.. no muggleborns to animate to the cause –and to be honest, in my experience – those two groups were never the most driven, the most loyal or the most well resourced.
WHAT would you have me do?! Tell me and I will tell you just how mad I think you are for believing ‘we can win’.”

The boy shivered and seemed to ruffle at his hair slightly.
““Well.. Its not a plan as such... I’m not really good at plans.. Hermione is good at details and Ron is.. was.. good at plans.. I was more.. about ideas. I have some.. ideas. Maybe you can make something of them.”

Tom rolled his eyes. It was worse than he’d imagined. The boy actually didn’t have the faintest CLUE how to achieve what he wanted. He didn’t even have a rough plan, half-arsed though it might be.

““Well... with the halfbloods – most of them are dead.. so there’s not much to be done there. There are some slaves left though.. Maybe some of them might provide information if we had an ‘in’... Information can make a lot of difference. If you know what people are doing then you can work out where the best place to use your resources is.
And.. well.. there’s Azkaban.. Its full of people who oppose the current system.. You’ve broken in before. How hard can it be!??” There are hundreds of witches and wizards in there who’d probably easily be convinced to act in some kind of guerrilla warfare group

Tom actually laughed..
“Break into Azkaban without magic.. No.. not hard at all Harry. Go on. What else?!”

““Well there’s the muggleborns.. They had their magic taken away. Surely there’s some way of restoring it. If you can do something then you can undo it. I’m sure that if Hermione is still alive
she’ll..she’d be working on that. Maybe somewhere someone is..
If we could get the support of the muggleborns and halfbloods it’d be ..something..

Tom prepared to dress the little idiot down for the ridiculous lack of any scope or foresight.

“And.. I thought.. if we could infiltrate the pureblood culture... sort of... at the top..”

Turning, he fixed the boy with an incredulous stare.

“Enough. You are mad. It’s conclusive.
You are an appealing dancer, Harry – but your ideas regarding the possible and the impossible are
skewed beyond my capacity to explain. I cannot even think where to begin.
Your.. assumptions. Leaps.. You ignore the most basic facts.

Lets see – the halfbloods. At the last recording I heard there were less than twenty percent of them
surviving – and those were all slaves. They have had magical restrictions placed upon them. If
they are caught in such an endeavour they will be killed without trial.
I assure you that you will find yourself betrayed by them if you venture to place trust in that area.
The things people will do to survive cannot be underestimated, Harry – look at you and I.

With regard to the mudbloods – pardon me – muggleborns – I fail to see how you can
categorically make the assumption that something that is removed can be replaced.
Can you replace what Draco Malfoy took from you when he pushed you down on that bed in
your seventh year?! Can the soul that the dementor kisses from your body be simply returned?!
Some things cannot be fixed!
You do not even know the method by which the muggleborn’s magic was removed – and those
poor wretches are likely living safely in the Muggle world – with far less adaptation difficulty than
either of us since they are officially registered.
Even if it were possible to redeem them – I highly doubt that many would be willing to take on the
unified force of that which barely allowed them to live the last time they dealt with them!
Any muggleborn with any sense is building a life for themselves outside the wizarding world and
has no interest in your war.
Moreover – Assuming..that it were possible to restore them.. and assuming that there were more
than a handful of crazed fools willing to resist – While they may consent to follow Harry Potter –
for all his miserable failure in saving them last time – they would certainly not be willing to rally
behind Lord Voldemort. The idea is ludicrous.
Even if all of that candyfloss and fairy dust were possible – and I in some state of temporary
insanity elected to assist you silently from the background in whatever limited capacity I am able –
their naive joyful screeching of your name from the rooftops would hasten your – and thereby my
capture. I have no intention of giving up my life for you or any other.

And finally let us move on to your most foolish idea of all – How exactly are we to ..infiltrate.. the
highest levels of Pureblood society within the British Wizarding world?!?
Let us begin with the minor handicap that neither of us can utilise magic without activating the
trace – and that magic is essentially something that purebloods use for every possible task, from
the brushing of their hair to the ordering of their meal in a restaurant – I believe that it may be
somewhat noticeable to someone if two ever-so-cleverly polyjuiced wizards simply refuse to use it
at any cost.

Then there is the fact that pureblood society is at core one large overly inbred family. These
wizards have socialised with one another from birth.. they are quite capable of recognising
unusual behaviour in their closest acquaintances – in fact the very society is arranged around a
complex system of conformities to social expectations.
And aside from those rather glaring problems – the security within that domain is now beyond the
scope of reasonable action. It would be extremely difficult for a functioning hitwizard to abduct
someone from the upper levels – it would be impossible for you or I to do it.

IN conclusion – you are an impaired little fool and you have just wasted ten minutes of my life that I shall not be seeing again soon. Kindly spare me your drivel in future. Watch the pretty waves and stick to your areas of natural expertise.”

Harry pulled a sour face at the insulting dismissal.
“Well.. ok.. but.. what if we could use magic?”

“And what if the moon were made of green cheese – what if you were the queen of France?! We cannot. Be quiet now. You are spoiling what was otherwise a relatively promising day.

They had reached an area along the boardwalk around a large arc of the harbour. A tiny beach with yellow grey sand was being lapped at by small waves on their left Tall spiky trees were arranged in rows on the right Quite a few muggles were strolling just as they were – along with joggers and younger teens on inline skates. It was a pleasant area, Tom noted. He had been rather less interested in the scenery the last time he had visited this nation. It had simply been a convenient location to meet with a number of international representatives regarding his intentions for the British Wizarding world. However, unbeknownst to him at the time, Lucius had already had his fingers in the international interests prior to the day – the meeting was a blind. In essence it had been purely a prearranged time wasting endeavour to get him far away from the northern hemisphere for a day while Lucius readied the final stages of his Coup.

“Nice day for it!”

He looked aside to the bench upon which sat the overly friendly muggle who had apparently just spoken to them as they strolled past. It was a young girl – perhaps fourteen or fifteen. She had medium curly brown hair that was fastened in pigtails. With ribbons. Pink ones. She was wearing an indecently short bubblegum pink skirt with a black and white striped tank top and was eating a vanilla ice cream in a cone while she kicked her tanned legs idly. She smiled brightly at him as he scowled at her disapprovingly. Irritating little junior slattern. The girls these days started younger and younger it seemed.

“You think?” Harry responded, disobeying rule number one again! Tom’s head turned to him sharply. The boy ignored it. So this was Harry’s understanding of obedience. Perhaps he was simply aching to be punished again. For a moment Tom experienced a twinge of something approximating eagerness – impatience to drag the boy somewhere out of the public eye and physically express his dissatisfaction with him.

The horrid little teenager replied.. as if she did not even notice Tom’s unfriendly dismissal. “Sure – it’s not too hot – at least when you’re in the wind..”

Tom blinked. Harry had stopped. He turned and looked at him dubiously. He was smiling broadly at the girl like some love struck fool. Did he fancy the little thing?!
Well that would not be tolerated. If he was to endure the boy’s presence.. gratify him with his affections – he would certainly not allow him to indulge elsewhere. Did Harry imagine that this was in any way acceptable!? Was he intentionally provoking him?!

“Walk with us..” Harry told the girl. She jumped up, bubbling with energy, tossing her ice cream over her shoulder and fell into line beside him.
Tom could have spat when she grabbed hold of Harry’s hand as if they were courting. And the boy made not the slightest move to shake her off.

He gaped. His ire was too great to be expressed in a hiss or a snarl. He wanted to harm Harry. The boy had been so determined to remain with him and now he wanted this little piece of fluff?!

“Tom..” Harry said with a faint smile. “Come on. We’re all going to talk.”

He found himself shaking with fury. No. He was not going to talk.. he was going to Avada the brat in the middle of the street and then he was going to port away. No! he’d left the money.. the backpack was still in their room. He ached to curse the boy. It physically hurt to restrain himself from the impulse

“He wanted to harm Harry. The boy had been so determined to remain with him and now he wanted this little piece of fluff?!”

“Could you possibly have picked anything more provocative, do you think?!” Harry scowled at the muggle critically, his eye darting between Tom’s rage and the child grinning in blatant satisfaction.

“I’ll have you know that it’s extraordinarily useful. Do you have the faintest notion how expensive virgin blood is?! Besides.. if you knew how often the man had cruciated me.. you’d allow me a small moment of satisfaction.”

The world twisted slightly in Tom’s mind. Something was definitely not right here. Typically muggles did not complain about the expense of potions ingredients. He was almost certain that he had never met this smiling little brat before, letalone cursed her. His mind made the leap even as it rebelled against the improbability of the idea.

but now that the little girl was walking he could see that there was something not quite right about it. The mannerisms were familiar. The light brown eyes laughed at him as the girl grinned wider.

“Polyjuice?” he croaked?

“How...
They killed you.. I saw your body..
Harry.. How..
it’s Severus.. isn’t it?! How – and you knew..”

Harry seized his arm quickly, which was a good thing because Tom found that he didn’t feel so stable just right now. Severus Snape was smirking at him in a little girl’s body wearing candy coloured attire.

“How...”

They killed you.. I saw your body..
Harry.. How..
it’s Severus.. isn’t it?! How – and you knew..”

Harry seized his arm quickly, which was a good thing because Tom found that he didn’t feel so stable just right now. Severus Snape was smirking at him in a little girl’s body wearing candy coloured attire.

“It was the safest place..” the girl replied immediately. “If we were in private I promise you you’d be in agony by now one way or another. Our Lord does not like surprises.”

Tom was blinking, processing the situation taking place.

Yesterday morning he had been alone and feeling great at the thought of two hundred dollars, offering several weeks of showers and food.

This afternoon he was not only Harry Potter’s keeper – although he now wondered whether the boy’s more sycophantic behaviour could be at all believed – but he had also profited by several tens of thousands of dollars and one extremely valuable Potions Master in a little girl suit.

“It’s not polyjuice” Harry murmured close to him. “Sev.. show him..”

The little girl looked around surreptitiously and slid her hand up the side of her skirt. Tom saw the
slight brownish tinge of a wand strapped to the girl’s thigh. A moment later he felt a very mild stinging hex on the back of his hand. He looked at the other two in horror. The trace! They would come now! If one’s magical core could be hidden with polyjuice then there’d have been no point to the trace.

Harry placed his hand on top of the portkey bracelet that he was already reaching to use. “No.. you don’t need it. They aren’t coming. Trust me. This is not a first experiment, Tom. He can use it without alerting them.”

“How?!” he snapped impatiently. “How is he using his magic – I want mine back! At once! Severus – whatever you have done, I demand you share it immediately!” He bore down on the green eyed fiend at his side with a murderous snarl. As soon as he had whatever Severus was using – The boy would spend the next few hours writhing under his cruciatus. “You KNEW this, you infernal little wretch and you obliged me to continue for one further day without it?!”

Harry raised his hands in surrender. “Look.. calm down. You’re ok.. Nothing’s changed.. Except that we can get our magic back.. Oh.. and there’s a way to give the muggleborns their magic back too. But apart from that..”

“I detest you” he growled back at him. “If you do not provide me whatever potion he is using this minute I swear I shall..” He broke off, feeling a sharp painful ache of realisation. He was unable to defend himself against Severus at present. He could do nothing to Harry.

Harry leaned in close and to Tom’s utter bafflement wrapped his arms around him gently, pulling him against him comfortably. “I’m sorry.. I didn’t mean to shock you like this. I.. really.. it was a coincidence that you found me.. And.. everything else..that happened.. I really meant it.. Except Draco.. that was just bad luck. I had no idea he had any kind of tracking spell on me.. or other magic in the apartment or.. whatever. I thought that night when I took you home.. maybe you’d stay.. maybe you wouldn’t. I couldn’t risk just telling you.. I hoped you’d stay.. and then you came in.. and I thought.. I thought.. Well you know what I thought.. I told myself we’d talk..after. After yesterday.. I just realised it might be better if I called Severus and had him come and help explain the situation..

To his own irritation he had to fight to suppress the desire to pull the boy close, bury his face against his neck and scream his reaction. He would be able to use magic again. The thing he desired most in the world and Harry.. beautiful Harry.. had somehow brought that too. For a single golden moment he considered the possibility that the boy might somehow be able to deliver the moon pie he’d rambled about. Perhaps he truly had some means of carrying out his wish to reclaim the wizarding world.

“It is not as simple as merely taking a potion” the girl who was incongruously severuslike said quietly – seeming uncomfortable. Tom looked at him.. her.. with a mildly stricken expression. “How?!!.. tell me how it works..”

“Not here.” she said quietly. Let us go and collect your effects and I’ll port us somewhere safer.”

Tom nodded at once, jumping up with his arm in an iron grip upon Harry’s bicep. He fairly dragged the boy back down the street, frustrated that they had walked so far from the hostel.
Nothing further was said between them as they beat the pavement but eventually all three stood at the counter of downtown backpackers while Tom accepted the hallowed backpack of providence. He felt as if his entire body were made of glass and might crack at the slightest provocation.

The girl in the pink skirt led them both back outside and to the closest alley where an empty soda can quickly became an illegal portkey.

“Close your eyes when you arrive if you do not wish to evacuate your stomachs. The destination is under the fidelius” she murmured, holding the can out between them all. Tom gripped it for grim death. He felt Harry’s other arm, slip itself around his own tightly, as if to make certain that whatever happened, he would definitely be remaining by Tom’s side.

The world spun and he felt himself flung through the whirling abyss.

The ground slammed up at him violently as if personally offended by his presence. He landed hard, crashing to his knees and felt the boy whose arm was wrapped around his crash down beside him.

Harry groaned. “Ohhh bloody hell, Severus.. You suck at portkeys.” Tom felt a hand fumbling around blindly by his side. “Are you ok?” he was asked by the concerned boy. He caught the hand deftly and squeezed it, his eyes closed. “Yes. I’m fine” he muttered, arching his head and listening to their environment. He could hear the potion master’s strange little body pulling itself up from the floor. Beyond that, all was perfectly still. The air smelled stale. He felt grit coating the floor beneath them. This was not a place regularly visited.

“The location of safe house forty three is the basement of number eighteen Messerstrasse” the girl said quietly with a strangely familiar intonation.

Tom gingerly cracked one eye, catching the room just as it swirled into focus. They sat in a dingy broom closet of a room clad in drab brown tones. One closed door led from the empty space. He hoped to hell that there was more to the place than this.

The girl sighed and reached unceremoniously under her skirt, momentarily flashing pink and white striped knickers as she pulled out a wand that seemed huge in her delicate hand. Tom noticed with mild horror that she was also wearing pale pink nail polish. What in hades was wrong with the man?! He surely had not gone to so much trouble purely to horrify him.

“I could do with a drink” the girl said with feeling and turned on the balls of her strappy sandals, striding off through the door into the rest of the..basement. Tom could almost detect the absent but somehow indescribably implied billowing robe behind the sacharine little chit as she stalked away.

He turned to Harry, who was still on his knees beside him and was now looking at him with worry and fragile hope in his eyes again.

“I told you.. I’ll find a way. We’ll win, Tom.. I.. Please don’t be angry with me..” The green eyes looked down nervously and then back up at him. Harry wet his lips with the tip of his pink tongue.

He tilted his head, looking again at the boy who was beginning to gain a measure of respect in his eyes. He was not certain how much of this nervous servility was an act purely to ‘manage’ him, but he conceded that Harry was by no means stupid. Slowly and thoughtfully he raised a hand and slid it up into the boy’s long messy hair. Harry seemed to hold his breath in anticipation.

When Tom tightened his fingers and pulled the boy’s head back sharply by his hair, Harry emitted
a low groan and his eyes slipped closed. His hands flew up to Tom’s shoulders, clinging needily.

“God.. please.. Tom...” he murmured low, rolling his head slightly.

Tom examined his seeming arousal darkly.
“You are a skilled occlumens.. aren’t you Harry?...How much did you hide.. when I viewed your mind. I believed you had opened yourself... How much of it was simulated?!..”

“And Draco?” Tom probed.

“I..hid.. some memories.. It wasn’t always..bad with him.. Had to... had to... survive..”

Tom leaned in closer until his lips ghosted over Harry’s slightly parted ones.

“What else did you hide..little snake?”

Harry cracked open his green eyes a slit, looking up at him with dilated pupils. “Nothing that was relevant then. I’ll ...tell you everything now.”

Tom smiled thinly and brushed their lips together before releasing the other boy sharply and moving away. He climbed to his feet.

“If I find that you have lied to me again, Harry...

“I won’t. I won’t lie to you now. We need to trust each other. ..I.. do have a plan.. it’s been kind of turning over in my mind since I saw you. I’ll tell you about it.. after Severus has finished explaining.”

Tom sighed inwardly at how wretchedly appealing the boy managed to look when he was on his knees before one in supplication.

No doubt the devious little bastard knew it too and had deliberately made use of it. He had been out-Slytherin’d by a Gryffindor.. Could anything be more painfully embarrassing?!

His great ancestor would be appalled.

“Get up then” he hissed irritatedly, although his heart wasn’t in it.

Damned.. confounded... boy.. He would not be managed. As soon as he had reacquired his magic – Harry would learn who was stronger.. who was in control here. He would ensure that the boy could never deceive him again.

He stalked out of the drab dust box, leaving the wizarding world’s ‘Saviour’ on his knees.

“Get lost?” the dry inquiry sounded out of place on the young feminine purr when he walked into the richly appointed study. The space he was in now was more than comfortable – it had a certain dark masculine atmosphere to it, probably materially thickened by the book laden shelves of dark texts on all sides. There was obviously some kind of dampening spell around the room. This amount of dark magic would spike any ministry’s detectors. Tom felt himself relax into it as one slipping into a thermal spring after a tedious hike. It unwound his tense spine. He sighed in relief.

The unpleasantly pink teenaged girl lazed in a large leather recliner with her feet thrown up on a coffee table haphazardly. She was swirling a tumbler of firewhisky introspectively in a familiar manner.
Tom ignored the snipe and moved to the other leather wingback in the room, lowering himself with more satisfaction than he could begin to express. It felt..almost like coming home.. to sit in a room that felt so thick and dark.. to sit in rich buttery leather..in front of a fire.. Now if only he could use his magic to summon a glass and pour himself a measure of the firewhisky on the table.

“How, Severus?” he cut to the chase.

The girl smirked disturbingly.
“Do you know, my Lord – were it up to me – I would obliviate you and replace you in the muggle world immediately.
I recall all too well the nature and measure of your temperament.. the impossibility of satisfying you. You are a clear and immediate threat, not only to myself but to that boy panting after you foolishly.
Potter is under the impression that you are a beautiful, tragic enigma.. – a poor boy treated too unkindly by the world, much like himself.
He honestly believes that you are capable of sharing the emotions he feels for you – that you will behave as you do now, when you regain the ability to curse him with a mere thought.
As I am.. or as I was an educator.. I can almost see the value in allowing him to discover the error of his ways. It will surely be a character building lesson. He has not the faintest idea of what he is letting himself in for.”

Tom found it difficult to suppress a very small smirk. Severus had a point.
This man.. whatever his current physical form.. had been by his side for the better part of twenty years. And in the end – it was Severus’ talent.. his brilliance that had saved his life – restoring his physical form.
He realised suddenly that he was sorely glad that Severus was still alive.. and at least a portion of that gladness was not due to the imminent benefit that he was going to derive from his skills once again. No.. Severus was..at once the very opposite to.. and the closest thing he had ever had to a friend.
The years in which he’d known the man was betraying him to Dumbledore’s little Order... in which he had enjoyed the intellectual challenge of trying to trip him up and lead him to slip.. and the curses.. He had enjoyed torturing Severus. Never too much.. never so much that he would not be able to carry out his duties.. but the man suffered inspiring.. His steel cage of a mind never for a moment opened.
It had fascinated him.

“And yet.. you will tell me. It is written all over your presently quite bizarre little face, my servant. I cannot wait to learn about this latest articulation of your unparalleled genius. Enlighten me. What is the connection between a twelve year old girl and your ability to avoid the trace.”

The elfish little face scowled. “I’ll have you know she was sixteen! Truly, painfully dunderheaded but a lovely little thing all the same. I’m rather enjoying wearing her..” He flexed the fingers of the hand that was not holding the firewhisky and examined his shiny pastel pink nails. “Admittedly she lacked the upper body strength for grinding and chopping more sturdy roots – but her tiny digits are wonderfully suited to sorting. Her hands do not shake in the slightest.

Tom noted the past tense with interest.

He looked up as a silent presence lowered itself to sit on the arm of his chair. “Please just tell him, Severus” Harry asked softly.

The girl scowled mildly and took a large mouthful of the firewhisky before fixing them both with a slow even stare.

“It is not any variant upon polyjuice..my Lord, although it does feel somewhat similar in some respects.
It is...permanent.. or semi permanent at least – it can be reversed, if adequate preparation is made beforehand. I call it ‘New Skin.’

It does not merely transfigure the outer form of a person.. it essentially binds a foreign essence... a mind.. into a full and complete replication of another witch or wizard. The trace does not detect my magic now because it is her magic – it operates on the frequencies.. the modulations.. that are particular to her physiology.

It operates better than her magic because I am a more skilled and experienced wizard than she was a witch. And of course, as we know – magical potential is a function of training and development.

The potion requires a very large array of quite difficult to acquire substances from the target. Blood, sexual gametes, sweat, tears, gall, cerebrospinal fluid.. among other things.. A number of other more ephemeral substances. The finished product is taken orally in conjunction with several other suppression charms to restrict environmentally destabilising factors. Full transformation is achieved in three days and nights.

To regain the ability to use magic, you will have to cease being yourself and become.. someone else. Indefinitely.”

Tom felt an icy finger trail down his spine. He didn’t like the thought of becoming someone else. Many might have had issues of self loathing and dreamed idly to become another – he imagined that Severus would fit the profile for such an individual precisely. The man had harboured astounding reserves of self loathing. He, however, had always been quite pleased to be himself. He knew himself to be in every possible respect superior to those around him. Why would he wish to become one of the more inferior. To what end?

Well.. to the end of using magic, it would appear now, he told himself.

“And.. how do you determine.. that is.. how do you select.. who you are to become?”

The girl smiled nastily and summoned the firewhisky, topping up her glass. “We already have everything necessary to perform the process upon you, this very night, if you wish, my Lord. Potter is adamant that the candidate in question is perfect.. you will have no trouble at all acclimatising yourself..”

He looked up at the green eyed boy currently avoiding his gaze. “Who is it?” he asked but in truth he already suspected. The elements of the boy’s ‘plan’ now made more sense to him.

“Draco.” The word fell from Harry’s lips like a small leaden weight.

“I take it you were to..” he probed.

Harry nodded. “But.. I think I would be better in a different role. I...”

The girl across from them both sniggered. “Potter cannot kill. His manner of...approaching conflict.. is quite different from that employed by my late Godson.. or – indeed – yourself, my Lord.”

“And you require the wizard playing Draco to kill...Lucius.. I take it..” he murmured, feeling the deep rich warm satisfaction of the idea welling up in him already. Harry’s peripherally noted nod only deepened the dark joy.

“Among others..” the Severina added as if it were inconsequential. “In effect far more is needed
than simply the elegant dispatch of a number of problematic individuals. The one playing Draco must be capable of reading and driving the purebloods. the ministry. It will be necessary to ascend to and remain in power.

I had considered taking the part myself – however at present I am the only one capable of carrying out any of the processes involved in conversion using the ‘new skin’ potion. It is obvious that this transformation constitutes a definitive weapon for our little resistance. I cannot.. we cannot.. risk it being lost should I die.

“We. Who is we exactly. How many are you. What other plans have you in motion?!”

He recalled suddenly Harry’s hasty words to him on the park bench on the boardwalk in New Zealand. The muggleborns. They had found a way to restore their magic.

Severus sounded faintly proud when he answered. “The main body of our ranks is divided into cells of supporters.. fighters.. potioneers, ward and curse breakers and so on.. witches and wizards of various skills, most of whom stem from other nations. They are of all blood status’ – many are however purebloods who disagree with the measures enacted in Britain. All told there are perhaps three hundred of us scattered across eighty four secret kept safehouses. Every single member is thoroughly vetted with legilimency and a strong variant of veritaserum. We are most careful.”

He paused.

“There are also a large number of muggleborns who are currently in hiding, awaiting the elements they require to restore their magic. These elements must however be acquired from within the ministry of magic department of mysteries – therefore they continue to wait.”

Tom felt himself holding his breath.

Had he accidentally poisoned himself – could this all be a wonderful delirium?

Harry spoke up softly, his hand alighted on Tom’s shoulder nervously.

“I thought.. I might be a halfblood.. your halfblood.. We need to find out what is going on in that area and.. and.. I think I’d play that part better than.. I would.. Draco..”

He truly must be in some idyllic hallucination.

Not only would he have the opportunity to kill his most loathed enemy, rule the wizarding world in his stead through murder and intrigue but he would have Harry as his magically restricted bonded slave while doing so. He would be expected to correct and train the boy to perfect service. Admittedly Harry would unfortunately resemble some other unknown wizard.. and he would be forced to crawl inside the hide of the Malfoy whelp..but.. really – those were evils which could, he felt, be tolerated.

“I want to choose your physical form” he found himself saying.

Harry seemed to blink, confused and looked down at him with a silent question on his lips.

What came out however was a soft, subservient “of course..”
“Will you take the potion immediately, my Lord?” the young Severina enquired with the faintest suggestion in her voice that this would be a preferred choice on his..her.. part.

“No. Not tonight, Professor” Harry interrupted. “Tomorrow.. please. Or.. soon.. but not now.”

Tom looked up at him with irritation. The question had been addressed to him. Why should he tolerate one further day without magic?! Harry’s green eyes pled with him.

“Please.. Tom.. Just give me one night.. just one.. Before.. you’re.. him.”

He blinked, surprised.
That was the reason?..

Harry swallowed and looked down.
“I’m sorry. It’s up to you. I.. whatever you want.”

“Tomorrow then” he conceded quietly, watching the intense relief break out on the other wizards face.

“Thank you, Tom..” Harry murmured, with a single brief nervous glance up at him.

Severus.. Severina.. grimaced disapprovingly. The look made him.. her..seem like a rather tarty spoiled brat.

“Harry.. If I might speak with you.. in private..” her voice was tight.

“No Severus. You’ve said all I want to hear about it” Harry said with finality. “Go and collect the files on the prepared samples so that Tom can choose my new body. We’ll take the potion together when he takes it tomorrow.”

This seemed to disturb the girl. “Harry – that is not ..wise.. it is..complicated enough without observing both of you at once.. See reason.. Perhaps.. you might wait.. we can ensure that ..the Dark Lord.. is capable of correctly imitating Draco before you are introduced. The risk is-..”

“No. I’ll go with him” Harry said with determination. “He’ll need what I know about Draco to carry it off. We’ll share a pod..you can adjust the levels for the increased body mass. And ..I want you to begin collecting his essences later so that he can have the option of returning to his body after all this is done..”

Tom was glancing between them with interest. It was blatantly apparent that his surly former servant deferred to Harry’s judgement as law.. Severus was.. using the same manner of cajoling tone that he had not infrequently used on him when he had disapproved of some course of action Tom had resolved to take. The boy was in control here.

This was both disturbing and ...potentially... encouraging. If he controlled Harry – he would own whatever resistance forces they had amassed. It would be tantamount to collecting a ready made
death eater army if he could twist the boy to his will.

“The samples.” the young girl scowled, switching her dissatisfied expression to Tom once again. “There are...eighteen halfblood samples in total at present. Will you prefer a male or a female halfblood, my Lord?”

Tom tilted his head. “So few to choose between? A male.”

“Yes” the girl said sourly “The process may take only three days to complete – but the collection of the ingredients necessary to brew the finished potion is both invasive and time consuming so collecting the material from candidates unawares is not uncomplicated. It has taken over a year to collect the elements needed to reproduce Draco. Of course... if Harry is willing to delay his conversion – perhaps we might...shop. for the exact candidate you prefer.”

Tom debated.

“No...” Harry intervened. “One of them will do for a start. Please just go and get the files. We can look for a better choice when I’m in place if Tom isn’t satisfied. It will just mean that he’ll have to...sort of..officially kill me or sell me or something down the track so I can switch. It’ll be fine.”

The girl scowled and tossed her long legs off the coffee table, dragging herself up – blatantly annoyed with the way things were going. “Fine. You know best, I’m sure” she snarked sarcastically.

Tom looked up at Harry thoughtfully. It would be a pity to have to alter his appearance. But then... he would also prefer to be himself rather than the clone of Lucius son, given the choice. Harry gave him a tentative half smile. “You only have to put up with one of them for... for... a few weeks or...maybe a couple of months... if we can find someone else you want more within a week or so...”

The girl returned holding a small stack of brown manila folders. “These are the male halfbloods. Obviously most of the samples we’ve focused on have been purebloods. Unfortunately it is not...without problems...to attempt to transition muggleborns into these identities – they lack the behavioural awareness to carry it off. Only few of them have responded successfully enough to social training to pass muster. Some of the halfbloods have done better...”

Tom nodded absently and held his hand out for the files impatiently. Severina hesitated and then reluctantly handed them over, sighing.

He flipped open the first file curiously. The photo showed a narrow faced brown haired man in his late twenties with small pale blue eyes. He looked rather...bitter.. Tom closed the file and discarded it on the table at once. The next was little better. A slightly pudgy blonde boy in his early teens. He mowed in disgust and tossed it.

The three after that were equally unsatisfying – too old.. too unattractive.. too ginger. He came to a brunette boy with coffee coloured skin and light grey eyes. He seemed somewhat..exotic.. Admittedly his features were not..perfect.. he was not as pretty as Harry.. he seemed more masculine. Tom placed the folder to the side thoughtfully. By the time he had reached the end he was down to a choice between three candidates. Harry was leaning over his shoulder nervously, looking at the choices.

He flipped the large portrait photo over and found a full body picture followed it. The exotic looking young man had a rather attractive form.. he was moderately muscled. Of the other two – the black haired, blue eyed boy in his late teens was more attractive in face but was rather ectomorph in build.. a delicate looking specimen. Of course.. that was not necessarily a negative thing.. He would enjoy watching Harry develop
the boy’s body and it would be easier to physically dominate him in that form. The other choice – a sandy haired boy in his mid twenties had a square, stocky body. He was shorter than Tom preferred. The face was rather cheeky looking.. sunny..

Thoughtfully he turned to the next page and his jaw dropped. The files included naked images of the candidates. The cheeky faced boy was immediately discarded. He lacked..the bare minimum endowment that Tom expected. He pulled the other two files side by side and stared at the rather impressive organ of the more exotic muscled boy. The other slender candidate was more average.. Not underwhelming – but certainly not as outstanding as the brunette. The figures in the photo turned on the spot slowly for his perusal.

Almost reluctantly he turned the page and found a parchment with figures.. different values.. IQ, BMI and various medical values..magical potency..were among them. The black haired waif was magically stronger and more intelligent than the exotic. Would that have any bearing on Harry’s behaviour in the body?! He did not wish to select a weaker choice for what would apparently be his..right hand.. On the other hand – either body would be placed under magical restrictions. Perhaps it would matter little.

“Callix Gebræ” He rolled the name of the exotic well hung boy on his tongue for size.

“One of the older families” Severina supplied, making clear that this was the choice he favoured. Tom glanced up at him disapprovingly. It was his choice to make.

“The boy is obviously far more attractive..” the girl pointed out. “Draco tends to select the finest things..”
Harry spoke up softly. “He has never before been known to choose a mulatto partner. The other boy would be his choice.”

“The other boy is physically weaker..” Severus countered. “You stand a better chance of withstanding the rigors of the change in the Gebræ boy.”

Tom mused. Weaker. He had no doubt that his former servant wished Harry to occupy the stronger body in order to stand a better chance of defending himself.. But that would be Tom’s decision. He would protect Harry.. or punish him as he saw fit. He imagined the feel of the exotic creature beneath him and inclined his head. Narrowing his eyes he turned to the other file.

“James Thorwald”
He flipped back to the large portrait photo of the delicate boy’s face. He had clear blue eyes with long lashes and pale pink lips. His face was rounder than Harry’s sharp angles and bright greens. He looked softer.. more innocent.

“Eighteen..

“I’ll find it easier to remember to respond to his name” Harry nudged again quietly. “It’s my middle name.”
“I..I can improve his body, Tom..if its that...”

Tom shook his head slightly. “No. I find I prefer the boy. Very well.. You will be James Thorwald..”

“Harry..” the girl growled.
The boy perched on the arm of his chair held up a tired hand.
“Severus. It would have been my first choice too. It’s what we’ll do. Stop going on about it now. I’m going to go and make us all something for dinner, alright?! Don’t be.. Don’t provoke each
other while I’m gone. For me.. ok?!"
He jumped up off the chair and looked between Tom and the pink garbed girl.

“Fine..” she snarked and summoned her firewhiskey again.

Tom watched over his shoulder as his future slave turned and walked tensely out of the room.

“You had better be truly intending to assist us, my Lord..” the girl snarled as soon as the door was closed. Tom looked back placidly.
“If you take this opportunity and then ruin everything I’ve worked so hard to-...”

“You are too bold, Severus” he cut him off. “Harry has made the decision – and I rather suspect you lack the power to contradict him, to judge by your behaviour. Tell me.. is it a vow?”

His eyes glittered as he watched the young girl glare over her tumbler.

Tom smiled in pleasure. He had already gotten under the potions master’s skin. The man was out of practice.
“I will do precisely what you all so desperately need me to to. I will supplant Lucius.. I will rule the wizarding world. No more.. no less. That is what you are asking of me, is it not?”

The slight figure leaned forward angrily in the chair “NO! No it damn well isn’t and you know it. You are to assist us to dismantle the pureblood apparatus and then you are to withdraw control, allowing democratic and fair processes to be reinstated. This is NOT your opportunity to seize a dictatorship!”

Tom chuckled.
“Oh? My mistake then. Yes.. well I’m certain I’ll do that in that case.. What was it again? Carry out all of the dirty work.. thanklessly.. and then disappear when the threat is neutralised?”

He picked up James Thorwald’s folder again and opened it, tilting his head slightly in thought as he perused the waif’s features and traced a finger down the image’s jaw.

“I think I shall enjoy him in this form.” He glanced up at the fuming girl whose grip on the firewhisky was now white knuckled..

“Although.. I expect.. not quite as much as I shall enjoy him tonight..”

The girl leapt to her feet and heaved the glass into the fireplace.

“I believe I am finally willing to test exactly what this mark might do to me if I attempt to kill you...my Lord!”

“Severus!”

Harry’s hollow voice rang out across the room.

Tom slowly leaned to the side and looked around the back of the armchair to find the boy leaning in the door looking resigned. He turned back and smirked up at the small girl vibrating with pent up fury, the large wand in her hand.

“I forbid you to harm Tom in any way whatsoever. Sit down and stop drinking if you’re going to get like this.”

Tom’s smirk widened and he inclined his head in schadenfreude.

A vow then.
The girl sat down heavily and appeared to sulk, her eyes narrowed on the half full bottle of firewhisky.

“At least allow me to dull my awareness of this extraordinarily foolish situation” she snarled.

He heard Harry sigh in the doorway.
“Fine.. you can drink.. and not snark.. or you can leave us both in peace and go to one of the other
safehouses.”

“I will not leave you with him!”

Tom laughed softly under his breath. This was too delightful. He crossed one leg over the other
and leaned back in the armchair, stroking the arm absently and enjoying the cool waxy texture of
the old leather.

“Do you believe you will be accompanying us to bed also, old Servant?” he taunted him softly,
uncertain whether Harry was still in the doorway. “Because.. I have to tell you – your new body is
not exactly to my tastes...”

The girl was attempting to cut him to pieces with her eyes.

This was all very droll, however there were things he actually wished to know from the man.. and
it was probably unwise to provoke him much further, as he would be relying upon Severus’ skill
and support in the future.

“Tell me of the final days, Severus.. How did you survive? How did you progress from there to
..here.” He parted his hands, gesturing around at the room.

Severina shifted in her seat slightly. He could see that the rather petty man he had grown so
accustomed to over the years was debating whether to answer or whether to continue to glare and
drink in silence.

“Come now.. Don’t pout so. Harry is happy.. I am happy.. You have pleased both your masters at
once.. Surely you should be content..”

The dig was unnecessary but satisfying. He watched the loathing flicker in the girl’s innocent
eyes. It was more difficult for the man to school his expression in this body it seemed. He would
have to remember that when he occupied Draco’s body. He would need to spend a period before
the mirror observing and cataloguing the changes to his expressions.

Severus seemed to reach the reluctant decision to be halfway civil and answer the question. Tom
could see how he desperately wished to rant. He wondered what Harry’s definition of ‘snarking’
was and whether the Potions Master would be automatically forced to leave this safehouse if he
violated it.

“I knew the end was coming several weeks in advance.. I was prepared.”

Tom meditated on the fact that this preparation had obviously not included a warning to him.

“Lucius had approached me of course.. several times.. to determine whether I might yet be useful
– In the end I believe it was my blood status that decided the matter for him, despite our years
of..what could be termed close association..

He did not even do me the courtesy of killing me personally.

Severina’s face twisted in resentment and then calmed. “Of course – that worked in my favour.
No doubt it would have been more difficult to deceive Lucius than the others. I used a polyjuice
variant on Wormtail.. held him under the imperius when Travers, Glower and Wendlay came for
me..

He fought.. valiantly.. but was tragically unable to avoid Glower’s neck twisting hex.
...The hexes they utilised were all rather humane. I believe that was Lucius final gift to me.”

The girl looked bitter for a moment

“The polyjuice variant I had developed prevents a body from lapsing back to its true form post
mortem. That was the corpse you and Lucius saw.”

Tom nodded, satisfied. He had rather suspected it would be something along those lines..
“My warnings had already been sent days before the chaotic hours arrived. Having died, I left immediately for my own safehouse. That was safehouse number one. I cautiously re-established lines of contact with the others, one by one. There were far fewer of us then of course. The preparations were adequate – most of us survived intact.

The first year was rather peaceful. Everyone remained deep underground. I worked in my lab through every waking hour trying to construct something... anything that would offer us a chance of turning the tide. I hit upon the idea for ‘new skin’ after six months. Its realisation tormented me for over two years afterward. The first successful test was completed almost two years ago and a few months after that we systematically led Draco to ‘find’ Potter in Australia, in order to hopefully collect the ingredients needed from him.

It was his idea, of course. I tried to dissuade him. He insisted that it was necessary for the sadistic little bastard to continue living and acting in British wizarding society. He was adamant that he had to be the one to be with him – in order to learn all he could of the whelp’s mannerisms. Self sacrificing martyr... The boy is a damned little fool.

Tom had to agree. It was most convenient for him, really.

“The last six months have been rather more hectic” Severus went on, after a moment or two. “I have been circulating between the cells, advising upon training and allocation and working to transform each of our suitable witches and wizards who are under the trace – which is a costly endeavour both in terms of time and resources, requiring extensive prioritisation. I am yet barely a quarter of the way through, due to the fact that each must be supervised continuously during the process.

Several months ago we successfully replaced three low level purebloods within the ministry of magic and were able to ascertain the whereabouts of certain materials needed to restore the magical integrity of the muggleborns. It makes little sense to try to transform all the muggleborns – they are too numerous and have difficulty simulating purebloods. On the other hand, we have hit a wall since it is virtually impossible to infiltrate the department of mysteries itself, as the security protocols in place make imitation very difficult. They are based upon the presence or absence of a certain memory, selected randomly by a spell – one not told to the wizard in question or the administrator of the test box. We were very nearly discovered when one of our new-skinners almost submitted to the process unwittingly.

“Dinner is almost ready” Harry interrupted from the door. “It’s nothing..great.. Just pasta with Cipriani. You don’t really have a lot here... Shall I bring it in.. or do you want to eat in here?”

Tom interpreted the question as addressed to him, knowing that this would irritate Severus again.

“In here. And we will have something other than firewhisky to accompany it...James.” he smirked, trying out the new name for size.

The little girl Potions master in the other chair knocked back the bottle of firewhisky and pursed her lips at the sharp biting liquid, narrowing her eyes at him. “Don’t hurt him.” she growled softly. “I am ..aware.. of your tendencies..my Lord. Do not attempt to break him. He is not as robust as he appears. Draco was more than adequately proficient in physical and psychological torture... It was a very near thing at one or two points. If you shatter him... you destroy the future of the wizarding world... you destroy the future of all half bloods and muggleborns... your own future. If
you cannot be humane.. at least appreciate your own self serving interests in this matter.”

Tom gave no sign of having heard at all. Of course he would not destroy the boy – at least not until he had prevailed and regained power -... he would merely ensure that Harry came to understand his place – came to accept that beyond this little farce, he truly served him..and always would. When he was no longer needed.. well.. he would see where the balance lay with the little fool. Harry had been responsible for so much suffering and frustration in his life.. It grated against him to even consider forgetting the debt.

Harry’s soft footfalls on the wooden floor approached. He looked up and found the boy holding a small tray, upon which stood a plate, knife, fork and a flute of what appeared to be wine. The pasta was a simple penne with a pale apricot coloured sauce drizzled over it aesthetically, topped with a small sprinkle of parmesan. He found his mouth watering.

Harry lowered it carefully to his lap and smiled hopefully. He bit off the compliment he had been momentarily tempted to bestow.

Departing again, Harry brought Severus and his own plates without trays and, as there were but two armchairs in the room, seated himself carefully on the floor at the foot of Tom’s, bending his knees and balancing the plate. Tom glanced down at the silky black head delightedly. It was satisfying to have Harry Potter at his feet. While Severina opposite him looked on and scowled he reached out and stroked the boy’s head, running his fingers through his hair.

Harry shivered and seemed to press up against his fingers eagerly.

“I think it may be preferable to remove the gall before you eat, my Lord” The girl observed with narrowed eyes. “Unless you wish a less than optimal result should you later have the opportunity to transform back to your own form.”

Tom rolled his eyes at the petty gesture.

Harry lowered his head and sighed. “I don’t know whether he’s right or just being a git, Tom. Maybe you should..”

He frowned and reluctantly laid his meal to the side. “Place a stasis charm on my meal, Severus” he instructed dismissively. “How do you require me to position myself in order to extract it?”

The girl smirked in a bloodthirsty manner and flicked off a spell over his dinner. At least he would not have a cold meal afterward. He had become somewhat used to irritating medical examinations and procedures over the time in which he occupied the serpent venom sustained body.

“Lie down on the floor on your side”

He inspected the floor and gingerly lowered himself to his knees and then his side. To his surprise and pleasure, Harry laid aside his own meal and moved to lie opposite him, resting his head on his arm.

“It..hurts.. to remove it. Some of the ingredients he needs are a bit uncomfortable. This is one of the bad ones, I thought.” He shuffled forward till he was less than half a metre away and tentatively reached out to wrap his arm over Tom.

This kind of..coddling.. was entirely unfamiliar. No one had ever tried to hold his hand during a painful procedure.. or to cuddle him afterward. He had never received so much as a comforting pat on the knee even in his earliest childhood. He stiffened against Harry’s arm involuntarily when
his shirt was vanished without warning.
The girl padded around behind him and dropped to her knees near the middle of his back.

“This will.. pinch.. just a little.” She warned with a thoroughly satisfied tone. Something pricked his back lightly and he tried to steel himself to remain still. He had endured countless painful procedures before. This was no different.
Then the needle plunged in. It knocked the wind out of him and hurt a great deal. The pain was peculiar.. he wanted to move.. if he could just adjust his position he might relieve it. It was almost intolerable. Aching wrenching..worsening He strained to remain motionless.
Harry’s hand stroked over the skin of his shoulder and the boy wriggled slightly closer. His green eyes were tight with empathy. It took a long time for whatever Severus was filling to complete. He found himself closing his eyes and trying to slip into the old familiar meditative state he had employed when he was in reaction to the venom potion.

“It is done.” The girl muttered behind him eventually and then there was a sharp clean stabbing pain again as the needle was removed. He felt a spell seal the wound.

“What else do you require” he asked uncomfortably, feeling déjà vu at the familiar merciless ministrations of the man. “Take as much as you can now, if you would, Severus. I would prefer one long discomfort than a series of minor irritations.”

“That would suit me perfectly” Severina said smoothly.

“No.” Harry interrupted. “If you take most of them then he’ll be exhausted. I want—…”
He stopped and sighed, looking up over Tom’s shoulder at the girl kneeling behind him.
“Take them in the morning Severus. All at once. Then we’ll take the potion in the afternoon. You are going to give me this night. After everything I’ve done..”

The girl didn’t say anything but Tom felt sure he could feel the potion master’s glare on the back of his neck.

“As you insist, Potter., I don’t see I have much choice” Severina sniped and there was the sound of him..her.. getting to her feet. “I will place this in cooling. Continue your foolishness without me..”

Tom watched the green eyes follow the slight figure as she retreated before they turned back to him and suddenly seemed to burn with feeling.
“I’m sorry for contradicting you again” Harry whispered and swallowed. “I..won’t do it after we leave here.. I just..know what he wanted – he wanted you to be laid out unconscious, exhausted and unable to be with me. He thinks..” Harry broke off and blushed suddenly.
“Um.. you.. you do actually want.. to uh.. be with me, don’t you?! I mean.. if you asked because you didn’t want to..”

Tom smirked. He was positive that this insecure little stumbling was simulation. Harry was not at all an indecisive or weak creature, as evidenced by his role with the potions master. He also knew quite well how attractive he was and that Tom would willingly nail him to the bed. He had been about to do so in Sydney before he’d taken the trouble to peruse his mind.
He sat up, grimacing at the discomfort briefly. The ache remained from the drawing of the gall fluid.

“Spare me your poor acting, Harry. Yes.. I intend to have you tonight. Help me up so that I might finish the meal you have prepared.” He held out a hand and the lithe boy sprung up and eagerly
assisted him to his feet.

The pasta was delicious. He could not remember the last time he had consumed a more satisfying meal. Harry noticed his enjoyment it seemed and looked pleased with himself. Although Severus did not return and the other armchair was free, Harry had lowered himself to sit at his feet again and after he had finished and laid the tray aside, he relaxed into the deep wingback, stroking the boy’s soft black hair gently.

Abruptly the head beneath his hand turned and Harry curled up onto the, chair, to lay his face against Tom’s thigh. His cheek felt warm as he stroked it.

When Harry turned his face and nuzzled the inside of his thigh he felt himself harden. The green eyes caught the tightening of his jeans and darted up to his face hungrily. “Can I..” Harry started to ask.

“May you. And no.. you may not. Dance for me. I wish to watch you again.”

Harry’s eyes widened in surprise but he looked, if anything, even more pleased by this. Then he seemed to frown as if realising something unwelcome.

“There’s no music here...” he said, disappointed.

Tom’s expression made clear that this was not a valid reason to delay in obeying. He pushed the boy’s head away and folded his legs with an air of impatience. “I abhor repeating myself” he stated quietly with the merest hint of thumbscrews implied.

Harry’s eyes darted. “Sorry.. I.. I didn’t meant to.. I..can try to dance for you.. It..may not be..very good without music.”

He slid smoothly to his feet and stepped away toward the fire.

Tom admired the silhouette he made in the dim room as he closed his eyes and seemed to collect himself. Then.. after a moment he started to move.. subtly at first.. just his hips.. shifting his weight.

Tom watched with a pleasant frisson of anticipation as Harry slowly undulated in time with a beat only he heard and then his hands started to trace over his body in a way that was most promising. He was right – it was not as good as it had been in the bar with the throbbing sensual music playing.. but it was...engaging.

Everything was done slowly.. the movements hypnotic and serpentine.. Harry rolled his head as if in the throes of ecstasy while he subsided to his knees. He crawled with catlike grace toward him, eyes half lidded.. hazy with lust, stopping just before he reached him and arching back on his knees, fingers delving just under the edge of his tee shirt, pushing it up a little, revealing the barest line of the hard muscular abdomen below, before sliding away again and stroking up over his chest over the tee, up over his neck. Arcing with absolute control backward, he strained his body upward as one hand trailed back down his chest.. over his flat stomach and played at the button of his jeans before rubbing over the black material covering the hard raised bar below.

Tom swallowed, his mouth dry. He wanted more already. He was about to order the boy to remove his clothing but stopped himself.

By the time Harry had removed his teeshirt and demonstrated his near perfect control over his own musculature, Tom was growing impatient. The acrobatic tumbling and writhing had served to arouse his curiosity as to what else the boy might be capable of in more explicit arenas. He wanted him now. Whetting his lip unconsciously he was about to call Harry over but in that second the boy let himself fall gracefully onto his fingers and toes, lowering his belly to the ground and crawling toward him as if in the most abject grovel imaginable.

His cock ached urgently.

Harry reached him and climbed up the chair rubbing his face up Tom’s thigh as he went. Obligingly, he parted his legs further for the delicious little wanton. Harry eagerly took the opportunity and nuzzled at his groin. He could feel the hot mouth through the uncomfortably tight jeans and when Harry licked over the thick line of his cock his breath caught in his throat.
“May I?” he purred and trailed his tongue slowly up the line of Tom’s zip again.

“Yesss” he breathed “Now.. you may..”

Harry’s fingers scratched lightly up his legs until he reached forward to unfasten the top button on his black jeans with all the care of one defusing a bomb. He didn’t lower the fly. Instead he leaned in and, gripped the zip with his teeth. The sensation was hot and fluttery. Tom found himself unreasonably excited. Improperly excited. It was like being drunk.

The noise of the zip moving slowly down was loud in the quiet room and the way the boy tugged it felt like he was pulling on strings attached to Tom’s insides. Finally it was down and Harry leaned in to nuzzle over him through his boxers. Merlin.. the feeling was much stronger. Soft warm..nothing between him and the boy’s face but a thin lycra blend layer. He found himself breathing faster as hot breath huffed over his shaft through the underwear. Harry managed to unwrap him from the boxers with his lips and careful teeth. Tom spared an incongruous little thought for how often the young wizard might have practiced this skill in the past with Draco. That idea grated against him now, he realised. He did not like to share the things he possessed. If he decided to keep Harry.. he might wish to obliviate him of his prior memories when all of this was complete.

Alas.. then he would lose his dancer.. and it seemed the boy had learned a lot from his time with Draco.

Perhaps he might have to live with it. It would be a shame to diminish the boy’s value as a sexual toy.

Harry seemed to hesitate, when he had freed Tom’s cock and it stood straight and insistent before him. He wore an expression of utmost concentration, as if he were trying to remember each detail. Then he leaned in and brushed his cheek against it like a cat rubbing up against a post. Tom’s cock twitched in reaction and then Harry was already licking it, bathing it with his tongue, hot and slick.

The sensation of Harry worshipping him while wearing this avid honoured expression was even more satisfying than it had been to fuck the boy’s mouth last night. He grunted softly, breathing faster, as he was sucked into the burning wet orifice and Harry’s tongue swirled around his head rapidly.

It was very, very good.. But.. it could be better.

He placed his hand on the back of the young wizard’s head and roughly forced him deeper. It was not sufficient to be worshipped by Harry.. he wanted to own him. Any act he might desire to perform on the boy would be solely at his own discretion. Including this.

He dragged the boy up and down ruthlessly with great pleasure. Several times he held him down in place, enjoying Harry’s slow rising panic as he needed to breathe. Harry passively allowed himself to be manipulated and used. When Tom’s fingers tightened in his hair he moaned, the vibration delicious around Tom’s cock.

He wondered whether Harry was a naturally inclined submissive or whether he was still simulating.

it didn’t matter however – already at the turning point, he pulled the boy off and spilled his seed in his face, successfully managing to get it into one of his eyes. The rush of his climax was further piqued by Harry’s squinting wince of pain and barely suppressed pout of dissatisfaction. He smirked at him and wiped a finger down his face, scooping up the release. Harry reluctantly sucked the proffered finger clean with a moue of resentment.

Tom wanted to laugh. Perhaps the boy truly had no idea what he was letting himself in for. This was a generous.. even affectionate act in honour of the rather pleasant meal and the general attraction he was feeling toward him.

“Good boy” he praised him quietly and patted him on the head patronizingly. “Show me to the bedroom now, Harry...”
Harry blinked for a moment and unfolded himself nimbly to his feet, extending a hand down to
him to help him out of the chair. Tom glanced at it and waved it away.
“I am not infirm.”
The other boy looked chastened and stepped back immediately. “I didn’t mean.. I just thought.. It
wasn’t meant that way.”
Tom smiled inwardly at how easily his new entertainment reacted. He stood and stepped closer to
the half naked wizard while tucking himself back into his underwear and refastening his jeans.
“Stop dithering, Harry.”

Harry, seeming somewhat off balance, nodded and turned toward the door.
“Yeah. Sorry. It’s this way. I made it up while the pasta was boiling. The rooms are dark and the
bed’s are small but it’s the best I can do. I don’t want to go and hunt for Snape to get him to
enlarge the bed – there’d just be another bloody fuss over it.”

Tom raised a sculpted brow questioningly. No doubt Severus would already be skulking around
here somewhere in the shadows watching them. He would be very surprised if he had truly left
them alone earlier. It was probable that the man found it even easier to hide with such a tiny body.

“Severus. I know you are there. Reveal yourself.”

Harry looked at him aghast and glanced around the room suspiciously. Tom could detect a faint
blush high on his cheekbones. He marvelled to himself that the boy.. even after all he had done..
all he did in his line of work.. could still be embarrassed at the thought of Severus Snape
witnessing him performing fellatio. ...Although.. perhaps .. performing might not be exactly
accurate.. submitting to fellatio? Being taken orally?
No doubt his servant had seen that and more before. He had almost certainly watched over Harry
with Draco initially - whether the boy realised it or not.

“Severus...” Tom intoned with impatience.
The pertulant young voice emanated from empty space in the far corner of the room. “I will enlarge
your bed..and then I will retire for the evening.”
Harry’s jaw dropped and he looked horrified.
“Damn it, Snape – you complete wanker! If you ever watch me like that again I’ll.. I’ll..”

Tom rolled his eyes internally. The boy had no idea how to punish – and it seemed he could not
threaten either.

“Severus was concerned for your security, Harry. He would not have revealed himself, had I not
pressed the point – and you would have continued merrily, had you remained unawares. Severus..
I am certain you can anticipate every alteration I might wish you to make to the room. I would
prefer you did not observe us for the remainder of the evening, however if you feel you must...”

There was no comment from the corner which looked as empty as it had when the young girl’s
voice floated out of it. It was impossible to tell whether Severus had already departed. It was
possible to tell, however, that Harry was appalled. He gaped and his eyebrows drew down
reactively.

“L..it’s just wrong. And..and..messsed up! Severus – Don’t do it again!
Tom smirked and stepped close to the boy suddenly, drawing him against his body and loosely
embracing him, his hands resting on the warm silky skin of Harry’s lower back. Harry was visibly
astounded by this development, his green eyes wide as he looked up into Tom’s own dark blue
irises.

“Are you shy, Harry? What does it matter if he or any other watches?! Your attention should be
focussed upon me. My contentment..”
He stroked the skin beneath his fingers and delved slightly below the waistband of the other boy’s jeans. Harry fidgeted on his feet and swallowed.

“Yes..” he murmured. “yes.. I. But.. I can’t with Snape.. Not him..”

Tom tsked disapprovingly. Answering back in this manner could not be tolerated.

“You will do as I instruct, Harry. If I require you to perform before the minister of magic and every professor at Hogwarts – you will do it.. and you will do it without making a fuss.”

A rankled expression was displayed in response. Tom narrowed his eyes thinking again of how painfully he wished to be able to use his magic. He glanced about the room. There was nothing that could immediately serve as a passable switch to use upon the boy. Nothing he might use as a cord to bind him into an uncomfortable position. As things now stood, in his current half starved state, he knew without a doubt that Harry was physically stronger.. Any martial discipline he might wish to exact upon him would be either with restraints or with a solid assurance of the boy’s compliance. Harry had displayed such compliance earlier..and yesterday.. but he was not certain that he would remain meek and submissive if he were to receive more vigorous punishment. It would be better to wait until his own magic was accessible before disciplining the boy severely.

“On your knees.” He demanded coldly. Harry’s eyebrows turned up in mild dismay. He could see the moment of indecision waver across the young face before the pretty boy dropped to the floor and knelt.

“Crawl. Lead me to my room.”

Again that quickly sublimated resentful expression flashed across the kneeling boy’s face. Tom smiled, raising his brows in polite question. Harry dropped his head, looking at the floor from beneath a mop of silky black hair that fell across his eyes. Then, after a second he turned and crawled on his hands and knees in the direction of the door. Toms smile widened.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Reviews/comments are very motivating. I have dozens of chapters across these and several other stories. I have limited time to upload. I give priority to stories that get reviewed and upload these sooner

The long hallway was barely lit. Fat white candles flackered at intervals in alcoves set into the wall. There were no doors.
The general style of the walls and floor seemed to Tom to suggest ‘industrial basement.’ There was perhaps a boiler somewhere nearby if so.
Speculation on the location of the safehouse within Germany was pointless and he turned his attention to the swaying hips of the crawling youth in the dim corridor before him.

Harry had a manner of moving.. a lithe grace that was nearly mesmerising. The play of shadow over the muscles of his back made Tom’s mouth water.
When they reached a corner and turned, two doors were revealed a small way down the corridor. Harry was obviously moving toward the one on the left.
Tom followed slowly, enjoying the view, and when the other boy stopped in front of the door, he reached over him and turned the handle, giving it a light push inward.

The room that was revealed was spectacular. To both of them, apparently. He heard Harry’s undisguised gasp of horror.

‘Naughty...clever...Severus’ Tom thought to himself wryly as he lifted a boot and nudged the taut jean clad arse of the boy on his hands and knees before him.

Harry complied and crawled forward, but his movements were slower – his back somehow stiffer. Tom could almost smell the fear and delighted in it...although he knew pragmatically that it was counterproductive to allow himself to indulge his tastes.
At least to do so tonight would be risky... But when Harry was installed as his servant, after this ‘new skin’ procedure was carried out – that would be another matter.
It would then be his duty to train Harry in the behaviours by which he might best please his master.

The room was dark and ominous – largely due to the predominance of black, particularly silk and satin, which seemed to sheath the walls and curtain the overly large bed. The concrete floor of the corridor transitioned at the door to smooth glossy black rubber, shiny and strange underfoot. An overpowering dark shine in the room was broken mainly by silver.. the silver of rings.. manacles.. bars ... a silver surgical steel table with inbuilt cuff restraints stood off to the left in the room and beside it was placed a smaller silver trolley which offered an aesthetically pleasing array of sharply glinting blades and torture instruments.
Upon the left wall behind the table were displayed a row of black dildos and anal plugs ranging in size and shape from petite to grotesque, beneath them ranged a shorter row of urethra ‘sounding’ probes in various lengths, widths and types.
A silver shelf along the right wall carried a (...)familiar, if not glimpsed for many years now...) selection of potions, chemicals and recreational substances.
Above the shelf on the wall hung collars.. cuffs..gags...and various restriction and compression
tools while below the shelf dangled...implements - crops, whips, floggers, scourges.. some with sharp metal blades woven into the leather cord.

Severus had pulled out all the stops to frighten the boy..

Harry halted on his hands and knees in the centre of the room and was very still. He seemed to be waiting tensely.

Tom observed him with narrowed eyes and considered carefully how he might best react to this..playroom..that Severus had maliciously sprung upon them both.
At this point.. It appeared that all things within this domain..within this little resistance movement as a whole in fact.. occurred by Harry’s tacit will. That was more than apparent.
If the boy chose to change his mind regarding the insistence that Tom play the key role in his little plan – there would be little that Tom himself could do to prevent Severus from restraining, obliviating and releasing him somewhere. Most likely somewhere that would constitute an immediate threat to his survival.

“Stand, Harry” he commanded softly. He might have preferred to keep the boy on his knees as befitted his station, but this night would unfortunately need to be a night of concessions.
He did not want to remind the boy of behaviour he had required of all his marked servants prior to his fall.

The head of black messy hair did not turn. Harry rose gracefully in place and remained still.

“I will not insult your intelligence by pretending that I have not employed each of the implements and tools within this room on other occasions. .. That I would not..enjoy..exploring your limits with them.. However...I assume you are quite capable of reasoning why Severus has chosen to offer them to me now.”

The silky head gave a nod. One single curt nod.

“Look at me, Harry” he purred in a low voice. It was gratifying to see the boy in front of him shiver before he turned and the dazzling green eyes met his own uncertainly.

“I will refrain from..play..tonight.” He told him, meeting his gaze evenly. “-However things will be different when I am Draco Malfoy and you are James Thorwald.
From your memories of Draco.. a certain measure of sadism will be expected of me if I am to play the role convincingly... And clearly you are not unaccustomed to such treatment.
My tastes run considerably darker than those of Draco Malfoy, naturally. I was not in the habit of allowing my bedmates to survive more than a few nights.. but I shall moderate myself for you. You will come to no permanent harm. Do you understand, Harry?”

He watched as the boy’s adam’s apple bobbed in a nervous gulp.

“...I..I belong to you..” came the soft reply.
Tom felt an indescribably delicious shiver of delight run up his spine at the words. He tilted his head fractionally, his lips twisting in a dark smile.

Harry seemed to flinch slightly at the smile.

“My..that is.. all of our lives.. will be in your hands soon.. are already in your hands.. in a sense. What is my body compared to that?! Nothing. It’s yours. I’m..I’m yours. Do whatever you want, m-...my Lord ”

Thrilled by the stuttered honorific on the boys lips, he was not studying Harry as closely as he had
been seconds earlier and when the boy’s green eyes lowered he could not be certain whether he
had really glimpsed the naked despair that had flashed in them for a fraction of a second.
Once again he wondered how much of what the beautiful creature before him had told him was
actually true.

Had Harry truly desired him? Was this simply a means to coerce him into performing the task that
Harry’s little resistance group needed completed?!
If that was so – what else did he need to know about his current circumstances?!

He stepped forward till he stood barely half a metre from the bare chested boy and wished
fervently that he could use legilimency upon him now. After this procedure was complete it might
be too late to avoid hidden negative consequences.

Abruptly the thought rose up in his mind of a week ago Tuesday evening, which he had spent
curled up on the filthy concrete at the foot of a narrow flight of stairs down to a basement
entrance.
In the middle of the night a group of rowdy hooligans had yelled and whooped their way down
the street above, pushing over bins and roughhousing.
From the sounds, he had determined that there were at least five of them, possibly more.
He’d pressed himself into the corner of the dark recessed stairwell and pleaded with the fates that
they would not detect him. The location had been a risk when he had chosen it – it was difficult to
retreat from if found. But the wind had been so cold that night.
While he had clung to the damp concrete wall and tried not to breathe loudly, the threat had rattled
and blustered its way past overhead. It had taken a long time for him to calm himself after the
silence had returned. In the end he had found himself no longer able to sleep in the stairwell for
fear of being trapped.
He had crept up to the street and had taken himself off to sleep behind a tenement block skip bin.

This was the world.. the reality.. that he would be occupying for the rest of his.. well.. for the next
century while Lucius lived.. and perhaps a lot longer. As far as he was aware, his horcruxes
remained hidden and he would never permanently die.. but if he were captured, existence would
likely become worse than death. To avoid that, he would have to live for a very long time without
magic, without comfort, without power. He would have only the scant comfort of invisible
survival within the underbelly of muggle society.

Since finding Harry Potter, his prospects had been on the rise. Whatever negatives might be
hidden in this ‘new skin’ – he would sooner face them than spend the rest of his life sleeping
behind skip bins and avoiding ministry detection.
To be able, once again, to use magic.. It would be worth any possible downside.

Harry was still waiting, anxiously, for his response.
The knowledge that Harry willingly accepted the suffering that might be inflicted upon him
warmed Tom. To his mild astonishment he realised he had no particular appetite at present to
torture the boy, even in view of the luxury of choice arrayed around them and the boy’s willing, if
frightened, acquiescence.

Harry was salvation.
Harry might bring the chance for him to reclaim the wizarding world. He was pleased with him.
More than this.. Harry had acknowledged that he belonged to him, that Tom could do anything
that he wished to him. To do so in this place...when he knew that he held implicit power over
Tom this night.. It was worthy of a small reward.

Drifting closer still, Tom reached out a hand and, with a fingertip, traced the top button of the dark
jeans that the other boy wore.

Harry wet his lips with his tongue.
The movement drew Tom’s fascination and his finger trailed up from Harry’s jeans, over the warm corrugated abdomen, ribs, chest and then higher, leaving the warm skin and rising till it brushed feather light over Harry’s bottom lip. The attractive youth shivered at the sensation, closing his eyes and parting his lips. Gently he suckled the tip of Tom’s finger between them. As a hot slippery tongue flickered over his finger pad, Tom’s breath caught. He pressed his finger deeper, and Harry accepted it and sucked it harder, twirling his tongue and hollowing his cheeks in a suggestive reminder of the fellatio he had so recently performed.

In abrupt overwhelming impatience, Tom dragged his digit back roughly and took the final step toward Harry, bringing their bodies flush and crashing his lips against those of the other boy hungrily. Harry’s tiny excited moan went straight to his groin and he dominated the other boy’s mouth with force, plunging his tongue in as if he thought to devour him.

He found that his arms had slipped, quite automatically around Harry’s waist, gripping him and tugging their hips together. It felt unnaturally comfortable to hold him this way, some distant part of his mind observed. He thought he might enjoy it even were he not intending to sodomise the boy in the immediate future.

At that point, Harry bucked gently against him, interrupting his thoughts and Tom found himself groaning into the other boy’s mouth at the delicious friction of their jean coated erections rubbing together.

When arms wrapped themselves around his neck, pulling at him as if he might decide to leave at any moment, Tom pulled back slightly, unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the affectionate clinging. He had had many partners; some he had even kissed and held... but it had been a very long time since any had cleaved to him as Harry had just been attempting to do. Uncertainty flashed in Harry’s eyes. He didn’t need legilimency to see the boy was afraid that he had done something wrong or upset Tom in some way.

He offered him a small, tight smile. “...it is nothing” he reassured, supporting his words with a nimble hand insinuated between them that flicked Harry’s top jean button open as he had intended originally before he became distracted by his lips. The zip followed and then he was pushing away the remaining barriers around the boy’s attractive body. Harry gave an entirely unconscious little shimmy of his hips and the jeans dislodged themselves from his thighs, dropping to the ground in a soft scrunch of fabric. He reached at once for Tom’s shirt to undress him too.

“No.” Tom said quietly, catching Harry’s hands at the top button. “Go and wait on the bed.” The disappointment in the pretty green eyes was gratifying, but he...did not want...that. As much as he might wish to reward Harry... he could not do...that... Stand and undress one another with soft kisses and embraces as if they were nothing more than lovers. They were not. He did not take lovers. He was in control... always. Even if Harry held some power on this night. Particularly because Harry possessed a certain power over him tonight, he could not allow him to take the lead in any part of this. No. He would obey. He would receive pleasure, certainly – but it would be pleasure determined and dispensed by Tom. He would not tolerate Harry Potter dictating to him. He was... He was...

Was he still Lord Voldemort?

He had almost felt like himself while he had been speaking with Severus... even in such a peculiar
form. But alone with Harry...it was too easy to think as he had for the past years... to become the street rat transfixed by the presentation of an unexpected banquet. Even when he had called him ‘Lord’, the familiar sense of self had been only fleeting. A rush of shocked delight.

No.. he could not allow Harry to weaken him further with soft kisses and tender embraces. It did not matter if it felt good to hold him – it was a dangerous temptation to allow that kind of expectation to seed.

His hands absently undressing himself, Tom let his eyes drift over to the bed and paused on the last button of his shirt, his breath catching.

Harry lay splayed diagonally across the bed on his back, propped up on one elbow, his green eyes trained eagerly upon Tom as he disrobed. All the while, his other hand slowly stroked his rather impressive erection. He was a pale, beautiful animal in sharp contrast to the black satin. While Tom watched, Harry’s eyes flickered from him to the wall to Tom’s left and then back before a delicate pale rose flush spread itself over his cheeks.

He didn’t need to even look. He knew what had been arranged in rows on that wall. For a moment he considered retrieving just a few items from around the room. He steeled himself. It would be easy to begin with a mere plug and a pair of manacles and then find himself reaching for a cockring or a urethra sounding rod and then perhaps a crop. A small one. Nothing too dramatic.. and maybe just a small potion to enhance his enjoyment of the discipline.. and while he was disciplining Harry, perhaps he might just. carve his initials onto his perfect body somewhere.. It would hardly matter after all - he would not be wearing it much longer.. Of course.. if he was cutting him anyway, and scars did not matter – there was a flask of liquid fire on the shelf, he had seen.. There was acid too.. he might...

No.

He would enjoy the flawless creature before him without added distractions. It was better not to entertain his long suppressed appetites tonight. He had in the past all too often gotten carried away with his lust and curiosity. It might be advisable to procure several more expendable offerings in addition to the boy, in order that he might have somewhere to work off his more life threatening impulses. Nevertheless..If Harry was ...interested... in the tools on display here, that was all the better for them both. Severus had failed completely in his intentions for the room.

Tom peeled off his shirt, dropping it uncaring on the floor behind him and removed his jeans and boxers without ceremony, ignoring again the tiny fleeting irritation that his body had become so lean and wiry over the years. Soon, his mind reminded him morosely, it would not matter. He would be wearing the body of the youngest Malfoy. It was possible that he might never regain his present appearance. And it had been so damn difficult to get this body once more after he had lost it the first time. From the way that Harry pushed himself up with barely restrained excitement as he approached, his appearance met with approval again. More than approval in fact. Harry was nearly drooling and looked as if he might leap up and spring at him if Tom did not join him soon. Nervous tension in all of his muscles. His cock was dribbling against his abdomen.

Would that too change when he wore Draco’s body? Harry loathed the boy, didn’t he?

“Patience..” he scolded him lightly, smirking as he stalked to the bed. A peculiar thought struck him and widened his smile to malevolent proportions.

“Whatever would dear old Albus say, I wonder, If he saw you looking at me as you are now?!!”

Something flashed in Harry’s eyes for a moment and he looked down.

“I... “ Harry started and then his eyes flickered daringly. “Well.. I’d say he’d give me a speech about how disappointed he was and how disappointed my parents would be and the fate of the
wizarding world and the importance of doing what is right rather than ..what you want.. or something.. but right now..if he were here, I expect he’d be too busy ogling us both to give me one of his guilt trips.”

Receiving a quirked brow in response, Harry continued “You did know that he was gay, didn’t you?”

Tom controlled his expression only by the skin of his teeth.

No. No he had not known that. How did Harry know that?! Was he lying? He did not seem to be.. but he was so very good at behaving deceitfully these days it seemed. He’d lied to him from the beginning and Tom had not caught it. “Upon what do you base that assertion?” He enquired as casually as he could manage.

The boy did laugh. Damn him. Harry looked several years younger as he chuckled in genuine pleasure. “You didn’t know! I didn’t find out first hand or anything - he didn’t make a pass at me, thank god..” Harry grimaced, miming a dramatic shudder “I know because Professor McGonagall -“

“Minerva..” Tom interrupted with a sneer. “She was always sniffing after him even in my day. Dreadful girl. Always wore plaits. Utterly incapable of speaking to any Slytherin with courtesy. Such an ignorant, overconfident and unappealing witch would imagine that anyone who rejected her advances must be homosexual.”

Harry rolled his eyes and offered a wry smirk. “I was going to say – after he died, Professor McGonagall found his journal.. or.. he left her his journal or something. I found it in her office while I was...looking for something else.

....Doesn’t matter why I found it but apparently he and Grindelwald had been lovers in their early twenties, before the war. Dumbledore loved him but Grindelwald never truly loved him back. After he’d defeated him, he never took another lover.”

“How ridiculously Gryffindor of him” Tom responded without thinking “And ironic.. that with all the assertions that love is the most powerful magic of all, the foolish old goat never actually possessed it. You don’t believe in such tripe, do you??”

The sable haired boy frowned thoughtfully, lying back and folding both arms behind his head. The organ deflating against his thigh testified that this topic was not the most prudent to follow if Tom wished to fuck him shortly. “I don’t ...know” Harry said pensively. “I haven’t really got any basis for comparison either. A lot of people have said they loved me – even more since I’ve just been some dancer in a bar, if you can believe it.. but just about everyone that’s ever told me they loved me didn’t really know me – didn’t know anything about me - and of the ones that did.. I don’t believe some of them even knew the meaning of the word.. and the others I just never felt the same way about.”

Tom tilted his head. The words, although he would obviously never have made such an admission, could have been his own.

In his experience, love was a bizarre aberration of emotion and rational self-interest that others suffered in regard to him and which cemented their loyalty and willingness to perform tasks upon order, provided he did not allow possessiveness and resulting jealousy to develop. Of the few witches and wizards he had allowed close who had professed to love him, most – Bella a prime example among them – had had as little understanding of the concept as he himself. Others.. notably Regulus Black and Severus in his youth, may have felt some form of noble emotion for him.. but as he found himself incapable of offering more than lust and a measure of benevolence, it seemed that whatever adoration they might have had for him had soured over time.

After Regulus’ betrayal, he had ceased all intimacy with his servants and taken only disposable
toys to satisfy his lust. It had seemed to solve the problem...and then the incident with the prophesy had occurred.

He supposed, idly, that his decision likely precipitated, or at least encouraged, Severus’ later betrayal. Even as a boy, the potions master had always been susceptible to resentment and pettiness.

He had been young... very young, brilliant and damaged when Tom had seduced him. At the time, he himself had been an attractive wizard in his prime, a man of great power and darkness – already infamous and feared within the wizarding world. His reputation alone would not have pulled the physically innocent yet far from naive youth into his bed, but by that point, Tom had spent decades manipulating others. A little attention.. flattery.. temptation.. a few intense glances and the boy had fallen very quickly.

He should perhaps not have allowed him to become used to his bedchambers. The little hellion had reacted poorly to being so suddenly ignored and dismissed. In trying to avoid creating another traitorous spurned lover, he had inadvertently achieved exactly that end.

Of course...it was hardly something worth regretting now. Severus had become what he became because Tom had determined that he wished to have him.. wished to own and further develop his prodigious talent. He had created wonders over the decades; both potions and spells. Severus had restored his body.. and tomorrow he would give him not only magic.. but a new life.. a life in which he might soon rule the entire wizarding world.

No.. he could hardly regret taking him, so long ago.

His train of thought was derailed and set on fire by the soft voice of the boy lying on the bed, who now had his eyes closed and looked relaxed. His tone of voice conveyed the impression of ‘musing out loud’ – however there was a faint twist to his lips that belied any sense of idleness or unintentionality.

“I guess..when he was talking about love, I always thought Dumbledore just meant the love of my mother defeated you. But that wasn’t really love.. I mean.. if she’d just loved me and stood there, then I’d have died. It was the sacrifice – and I don’t know if it wouldn’t have worked just as well if she’d done it feeling nothing much for me but a sense of duty.”

Harry almost certainly did not see Tom’s face darken sharply, or he would surely have stopped. Glowering, Tom considered ordering the boy never to mention that particular incident again, but it was too late - he was already going on; the twist at the corners of his mouth becoming more pronounced.

“You know.. I always wondered – If sacrifice is such an old magic..and you’re supposed to be the best that Hogwarts has ever seen - how come you didn’t remember it that night?! It would have been easy enough to get around the protection. I was a baby. All you had to do was lock me in a box for a month. Or have one of your Death Eaters kill me.. or imperius a muggle to do it.. Any number of ways, really.”

Tom blinked, his face becoming expressionless.. Long festering rage bubbled constantly beneath the surface on that particular point and the brat knew it well.

Was this a challenge?!
Did Harry truly wish to experience his unvarnished ire in this particular room?!
He felt a vicious need to hear him scream. It was more than a desire.. he needed to hurt the boy now, while he was still Potter.. Fuck his own best interests!!! He could not allow this night to pass without spilling Harry’s blood.
Feeling he was losing grip on himself, he turned away sharply, stalking to the shelf of potions and bottles and looking through them for the particular bottle he would require. He would not have used this, had Harry not deliberately provoked him. And if he wished to hurt him, he could not afford not to use it. Harry was currently physically stronger. It was faintly possible that he might fight back.

“Tom?” Harry enquired in an innocent ‘i’d really like to know’ tone. It seemed that the boy truly was angling for punishment. He had called him his Lord before. Now we were back to ‘Tom.’

“I had...other matters on my mind that night.” he answered absently, scanning the bottles. “Sixteen years as a wraith proved a valuable object lesson, however.” Ah. There. There it was. Very good, Severus. Ever reliable. He palmed the phial of modified triple g while ostensibly picking up a sensitising lubricant, placed quite conveniently next to it. Modified triple g was Severus particular evolution of Gren and Gables Geas – otherwise known as liquid imperius. It had been one of his earliest modifications made upon request. Tom had complained to him that the potion, while useful, affected the mind of the subject much as the spell did – it provided a sense of general well being and pleasant fluffiness. It was less than ideal. What he wished was simply obedience without intoxication or pleasure. He wished the subject to fully experience their own pain and horror while the events occurred rather than in retrospect when the potion wore off. And Severus had delivered admirably. This potion had been invaluable over the years.

“Did you really learn though?!” Harry responded snidely from the other side of the room. “How did you manage to miss Lucius plotting to take over and kill you?! Did you have.. other matters on your mind... for the months it probably took to plan?!”

Tom’s hand clenched around the lubricant bottle as his eyes narrowed, falling heavily on the bottle of nightmare potion. No. He wanted the wretch to be fully lucid. He wanted Harry to think of him and not Draco Malfoy.. or his dead parents.. or whoever else his subconscious might conjure to terrify him. His gaze drifted to the flask of sulphuric acid. Later perhaps.

Not bothering to plaster on a smile that would only be perceived as false anyway, he turned and strode back to the bed. The attractive twenty two year old opened his verdigris eyes and looked up sleepily, with a faint smirk. “You’re coming to bed after all then?! I thought we were done for the night.. You look a bit..miffed.. Tom.. What’s wrong?!”

The smile that he offered the boy contained no trace of warmth and Harry’s own smug expression faded slightly, taking on a hint of insecurity..

“Understandably so, I imagine” he told him. “It was your intention with those rather barbed comments, was it not?! On the other hand..how could anyone remain irritated with such a physically appealing specimen as yourself, Harry?! I should not have distracted you with idle questions when you were earlier panting for me. I will not make the same mistake now.”

He climbed onto the bed quickly, enjoying the other boy’s minor flinch. Smirking wider, he crawled closer and without hesitation moved to kneel astride Harry’s upper thighs, still gripping the lubricant bottle in his hand, the triple G behind it in his palm. “We are no longer enemies, Harry – as you yourself told me, when you first attempted to lure me into your bed. After tomorrow, you will be dependent upon me not only for your own survival, but for the future well-being of the entire wizarding world.”
Punctuating the statement, he lowered himself, knees spreading, and leaned in to steal a kiss from the now uncertain boy. Harry responded limply but his eyes remained wary.

“Oh calm yourself” he jeered at him with a soft chuckle. “As you said.. you belong to me.. What is your body in comparison with what is at stake here. And I have already offered you this evening free of any of the possibilities ranged around the walls of this room.”

Harry nodded slightly and hesitantly raised his hands to stroke Tom’s sides slowly; his fingerpads ghosting over the ribs that were slightly too prominent these days. Tom couldn’t quite prevent the delicious shiver that ran through him, his eyes slipping closed for only a second, before fixing once again upon the pretty..foolish creature below him.

“I’m sorry..” Harry mumbled abruptly. “I don’t know what I was doing talking to you that way.” He grimaced then and snorted in wry, conflicted anxiety. “Well no.. I do know. I.. I.. guess yeah.. I was trying to provoke you... make you pissed at me again.

It’s.. it’s just... what you did in the hostel.. it was fucking hot. You know?! I’m ...not..as fragile as Severus seems to think I am. I like being treated ..a little roughly. When you hit me and threw me up against the wall and threatened to kill me after we arrived with the portkey.. God.. I could have dropped to my knees and sucked you right there if that prick in the truck hadn’t been calling the police.

Tom.. -or.. or.. L-Lord Voldemort..if you want! It’s not just how gorgeous you are. I.. kind of.. still fantasised about you a bit.. even when you were all.. snakey and all.”

Tom narrowed his eyes sceptically, wondering whether he was being played once again. Harry was blushing.. but the boy had blushed before. He would no longer put it past him to have developed the ability to blush at will.

And really.. what did it matter if the boy apologised.. or if he was intentionally provocative to get a rise out of him. He had succeeded. Tom felt the strong desire to hurt him now. If that was what he wanted, it did take a certain enjoyment from the process, but he would certainly not forbear to touch the boy in order to deny Harry what he apparently wanted.

“Close your eyes” he instructed Harry quietly.

The slight bump of the boy’s adam’s apple bobbed in his pale throat but his green eyes slid closed and remained closed.

Tom laid the lubricant to the side and thumbed open the triple g phial. He traced Harry’s bottom lip with two fingers, tickling the sensitive skin as he brushed over it in slow repeated movements. He could see the speed of Harry’s breathing increase slightly and then the pink lips parted an inch to allow his velvety tongue to slip out and lick. Tom had only to part his fingers slightly and tilt the phial for a half second. The tiny splash of light blue liquid that fell onto Harry’s tongue and trickled beneath his top lip was more than sufficient to ensure fifteen to twenty hours of complete compliance.

Harry’s green eyes flew open the moment that the dribble landed and he looked up in sudden horror.

“What was that?! What did you just give me?!”

Tom smiled cruelly.

“Be silent and remain still” he instructed with quiet satisfaction.

The shocked realisation in Harry’s eyes was immediately followed by a flash of fear and then a slight hazing, which might have been lust.

From the way the boy’s half inflated member promptly puffed up and bobbed, lust was quite
probable. He sneered down at him.

“Harry... if it were not for the rather unique circumstances in which we presently find ourselves, I would take great delight in killing you now. You.. dare to deride my past actions!? You think to provoke me into satisfying your masochistic tendencies, as if I were a mere instrument for your pleasure!?

Insolent little pissant!! I have killed greater wizards than yourself for thinking at me in a manner I found unsatisfactory.

I was lenient with you in the hotel, because I required you alive the following morning, and had it not been for the muggle in the truck when we arrived in that street – I would have opened your throat as you stood and left you to bleed out in the gutter!

You wish ..rough treatment.. as you put it?? You desire discipline? Good. You shall receive it! I intend to treat you....roughly. You may consider it as an introduction to your life as my slave

To his utter annoyance, the saviour-cum-stripper looked positively eager once again. He was breathing hard and his eyes were half lidded. A pearly bead sat poised on the tip of his cock. Tom snarled in frustration, getting off him and leaving the bed.

Twisted little bastard, he growled in his mind. ‘I refuse to gratify him in this.’

He stalked away in the direction of the operating table, barely glancing at it. Without magic it would be too great a risk to undertake any more involved procedure upon the boy.

His fist clenched as the thought reminded him once again, even through his rage, exactly what was at stake should he go too far.

Killing Harry was only one danger.

A more pressing hazard was that he could change his mind...

He was going to have to give the boy what he wanted.

Fuck.

He had threatened to give the boy more than he could handle. If he truly carried out that threat to his own satisfaction and actually traumatised the brat then he would lose...everything.

Fuck fuck fuck. It was not possible that he was actually going to have to cater to Harry Potter’s fetishes, was it!? HOW had he ended up in this position?!

The boy knew it too, he supposed.

That made it all even worse.

Why not carve his own testicles off right now and hand them to Potter on a plate?! Severus would no doubt provide one at the merest word.

He gritted his teeth, refocusing back upon the wall that he had been staring at for a few seconds.

At least he did not have to hear the brat now.

He could.. he could simply refuse him..

But why?!!.. why bother refusing him?! It had been several years since he had fucked a boy as attractive as Harry.. It had been several years since he had fucked anyone really – in truth, he only ever fucked attractive creatures.

Glaring, he strod closer to the wall and removed a small selection of hollow silver urethra sounding rods that seemed close to the length suitable for the boy’s organ. The anal plug he chose was one of the larger exemplars displayed. He ignored the dildos and turned back, moving to the silvery tray table and examining the scalpels and instruments upon it.

With a dark glance at the pale panting boy on the bed, whose green eyes were still trained up
toward the ceiling, unable to follow him, but who could hear every move he made, Tom selected a scalpel, a claw, several skewers, a coil of copper wire, a pair of pliers and a handheld acetylene torch.

He brought his choices back to the bed, dumping them at Harry’s side, with a heavy clinking sound, before turning on the balls of his bare feet and heading for the other wall.

Here he selected a black ball gag, a handful of toothed nipple clamps, a rattan cane, a bottle of distilled water, a phial of muscle glow – a substance normally used for soothing aching muscles through its peppery warming effect, a flask of sulphuric acid and an eyedropper.

He lingered over the small bottle of the euphoric drug he had once enjoyed partaking in while taking apart a victim, but decided against it and returned to the bed with his new haul of apparatus.

“You may move your eyes” he informed Harry.

Dark green eyes flicked immediately in his direction. Harry looked both frightened and excited. His abdomen now bore a tiny puddle of dribbled precum.

“Your limbs will remain limp while I reposition you.”

The instruction was only cursory. Tom was already pulling all of the pillows from the bed, tossing them to the floor.

He then leaned across the bed and gripped the paralysed boy’s arm, tugging him brusquely until he lay vertically in the centre of the bed rather than diagonally across it. Harry’s legs were pulled wide and his arms bent and placed so that his hands were slightly higher than his head.

With one arm wrapped around himself, the elbow of the other stemmed upon it and his finger brushing his lips, Tom considered the appealing picture made by the vulnerable youth as he smirked down at him.

Harry’s hip was touching the metal implements lying in a rough pile next to him and his eyes strained down in that direction, obviously trying and failing to see what the cold objects were.

“Open your mouth Harry..”

The obedient response occurred immediately, without the intervention of the boy’s decisionmaking apparatus. Harry looked at him with wide, mildly nervous eyes.

Tom held up the ball gag and it seemed that the anxiety calmed into relief. ‘oh is that all?!’ Harry’s eyes seemed to say.

Tom raised his own eyebrows. “You wish.. something more?!”

He smirked and turned away, going and retrieving from the wall one of the more intimidating of the oral restraints present, dismantling it and bringing it back for the boy to view more closely.

The part that he held up for Harry was a heavy leather bridle like device. The gag component of it seemed to be a large indented O ring.

Harry looked, once again, underwhelmed.

Smiling faintly, Tom ignored his response this time and walked around the bed, sitting down on the far side so that he could muzzle the boy. His hip brushed against the warm skin of Harry’s upper chest.

He fitted the restraint with a practiced ease, twisting it into place in the boy’s mouth, where it caught his teeth and prevented his jaw from relaxing from its maximal extension.

Harry blinked and then blinked again in shock, his eyes darting to Tom in discomfort. The gaping O revealed the inside of his mouth and throat where his tongue lay limp.

“Comfortable?” Tom enquired, smirking. “You may use your mouth and throat in whatever way you require and may nod or shake your head.
Harry emitted a drooly aooo sound and then shook his head quickly.

“Good. That is rather the point.” Tom’s smile widened slightly. “There are other advantages also, of course.”

He got up from his seated position and climbed to his feet on the bed, walking over it to stand on the mattress above Harry’s head, looking down at him.

With reawakening arousal, he stroked his cock perfunctorily, taking in the avid attention from below, and then dropped carefully to his knees over Harry’s head and quickly plunged himself into the ring holding his mouth open, sinking low until his balls lay upon the boy’s nose. He felt the panicked choking reaction fluttering around the head of his cock deliciously and enjoyed the smothered yell of the semi paralysed boy.

Pulling back out and resting back on his knees, he allowed Harry to gasp and regain his breath. His tongue flopped obscenely in the gaping cavern of his mouth and his green eyes were watery as they looked up at Tom in discomfort.

“Severus has provided us with a pleasing array of lust potions. I am tempted to have your throat again before we begin..”

To his astonishment, Harry nodded emphatically and then made suggestive flicking motions with his tongue. Tom snorted, mildly amused and moved forward onto his hands and knees over the boy again, reaching for his cock with one hand and guiding it into Harry’s gullet. This time he did not immediately drop down in order to choke him. This time he dipped in deepening increments, allowing the boy to tongue him and prepare himself. Harry did not choke, and the sensation of fucking the hot slippery hole had Tom breathing hard almost immediately. The breaths from Harry’s nose tickled the base of his cock.

Seeing the boy’s drooling member right in front of his face, Tom licked his lips, It was hardly punishment if he sucked the boy off.. but he was quite tempted to do so right now anyway. It was a very pretty organ, although he supposed that there was no part of Harry that was not attractive.

He could perhaps allow himself a very small taste. Purely to emphasise how different things might have been had Harry not decided to mouth off to him.

The slow trail of his tongue over Harry’s weeping slit drew a inarticulate yowl of surprise from the boy, which vibrated around Tom’s cock, causing him to still, his own head dropping in a growl of pleasure.

Harry started to make little ooo ooo ooo sounds around the cock in his mouth. Tom interpreted these as probably ‘please please please’.

His limbs felt jittery as he dropped still lower to fuck the boy’s throat as deeply as he could. The pathetic whine that followed made him smile.

Harry had tasted good.. Salty bitter, clean and pure. A very brief suckle would not be amiss. But he would not allow the boy to come of course.

Leaning closer again he traced his tongue in a circle around the darkening mushroom head. Harry immediately started to groan, the vibration making Tom’s thighs tremble in delight.

He virtually pounced upon the cock in front of him, sucking upon the head contentedly while his mind unwound in sensation.

Harry’s groans were louder, lower, driving him to distraction. He found himself sucking more and more of the boy’s cock, persuading himself that he would stop in just a moment. It was.. It was satisfying.. to taste and feel even as his own body rang and sung with pleasure. It increased his enjoyment. He could feel his climax fast approaching and hastened toward it.

He became aware with the frantic wrenching from side to side of the ring into which he was
fucking, that the sounds Harry was making had changed. He was no longer groaning. Now he was yelling frantically in panic and trying to turn his head to escape.

With the utmost reluctance, Tom withdrew from the hot wet hole he had been greatly enjoying and listened to the heching panting and whimpering of the youth as he recovered from his near suffocation.

He took the opportunity, now that he was definitely in a less generous and affectionate mood, to pick up the handful of urethra sounding tubes and compare them against Harry’s cock, selecting the best length of the selection. Reaching back behind himself he retrieved the sensitising lubricant from the bed below Harry’s left elbow. It took a matter of seconds to prepare the device.

Harry had stopped panting so urgently now. When Tom made no move to resume his previous rutting, the boy made a questioning sound. Tom answered it by gripping the cock before him and applying a long slow lick up its slit. Harry’s unmuffled gasp and excited moan puffed hot air against Tom’s balls, presently hanging over the boy’s face.

When he placed the tapered tip of the tube to the small hole, the gasp that resulted was very different however. Harry yowled inarticulate pleading that might have been no no.. or ow ow. Either way, the sound became pained yells when Tom slowly and smoothly inserted the tube into the boy’s urethra, sinking it deep until the tiny funnel on the top prevented any further movement and spread Harry’s slit wide.

The boy was still carrying on, trying to plead, when Tom got up with care and climbed off the bed again, stepping back to admire Harry’s distended lips and pained, tearful gaze.

“Don’t tell me that young Malfoy never introduced you to this..” Tom chuckled nastily. The frantic shake flung Harry’s hair from side to side. Wonderful! The boy had no idea what to think then.

“I am so glad.. two new experiences for you tonight already, Harry. Do you like it?” Again the urgent shake. Tom smirked.

“No? I suppose it requires some..adaptation.. to get used to. It is not intended to be pleasant.” He leaned over Harry and pumped the boy’s cock gently, enjoying the pained cry that resulted.

“This particular instrument does not extend into your bladder – although there are others on the wall that would, should I wish to prevent you from gaining an erection. This device will merely prevent you from ejaculating. They are called ‘sounds’ incidentally. This is a very particular kind. You cannot see it well from your current position, Harry, however it is a tube.”

He allowed the ramifications of this information to settle in. Bright, sharp fear joined the pain in the green eyes watching him. He smiled and decided to twist the thumbscrews.

“I wonder, Harry, if you have noticed the extremely strong acid that I earlier retrieved. Here.. allow me to assist you to see it”

Reaching across the splayed legs of the helpless boy, he retrieved the tightly screwed flask of sulphuric acid and brought it into view. Harry started to scream in terror and shake his head, his eyes overflowing with tears.

It was wonderful... a balm. Tom closed his eyes and revelled in it. Sighing happily after a minute, he smiled wider and shook his head slightly.

“I am not going to tip acid down your penis, Harry. I merely wondered whether you had noticed the flask. I thought you might be wondering.”
He allowed the boy to subside into messy, drooling, relieved sobbing before he continued “No.. I intend to pour diluted muscle glow into the tube. Although... from your perspective.. the sensation may be quite similar to high strength acid.”

There was a sudden stunned silence in the sobs as Harry looked up at him with wide horrified eyes, unsure if he was again simply trying to frighten him.
Tom obliged him by reaching over his body and picking out the phial of muscle glow, bringing it into the boy’s range of sight.

Harry started crying again. His tongue flopped about in his open mouth as he tried desperately to beg.
“leeee ohhh. LEEEEEE!!!! Oh! Oh oo ih!”

Tom cupped his hand to his ear and leaned in slightly. “Pardon?! I really can’t understand what you want. Do you want me to stop talking and get on with it?! Are you impatient to begin?!”

Harry shook his head, crying and repeating leeee over and over again.

“Then you wish me to wait.. to hold off on ...soothing your muscles... until we have explored some of the other toys here?”

A pitiful snivel and then a nod.

Not sure why he was doing it, Tom leaned over Harry and stroked his hair out of his eyes, petting him gently for a while.
“This was what you wanted, Harry. Have you forgotten? It was insufficient for me to simply fuck you. You allowed your mouth to get you into trouble once again.

Harry nodded and tried to rub his face against Tom’s hand.
“ohhee!! Ohheee oh ay? LEEE!!!”

With a soft inhalation, Tom pulled his hand back. He had the strangest temptation to release the boy, sweep the rest of the tools and instruments of pain off the bed and lie with him.
‘He as much as called me an incompetent fool’ his memory reminded him.
No. No.. they weren’t anywhere near finished. Harry’s cheek had been far more serious than costing him a sum of money and contradicting him in public.
...He hesitated on that count, deliberating.
No. it was worse.

Walking around the bed to the little pile of objects, he retrieved the remaining ‘sounds’ that he would not be using and cast them with a clatter to the floor. Harry’s face flinched. The rest of him remained still and prone. It was not entirely satisfying.

“you may not move your hands from where they lie. The rest of your body you may control once again. Do not resist me.”

Harry shifted his pelvis slightly and then seemed to try to buck the ‘sound’ out of his cock. He yelped when this only increased the pain and his feet scraped against the bed, his toes clenching.
It was enjoyable to watch his more animated discomfort. Looking down at his cache of tools Tom ran his fingers over the other component to the gag that Harry so disliked wearing. If he wished to apply the nasty little toothed clamps then it would probably be advisable to muzzle Harry or he would scream the house down.

It was astounding how ill prepared the boy seemed to be for punishments that were fairly tame by Tom’s standards.
His hand closed around the large black phallus. It was five inches long, two inches thick and its head was studded in pointed little spikes. A narrow curved ‘tongue’ like piece of rubber extended from the end of the head. It would hang down into the throat uncomfortably.

Tom hefted the dildo like object purposefully and half climbed onto the bed, leaning across and raising it to the gaping hole in the boy’s face. The phallus widened at its base to slot neatly into the O ring, and it had two short leather strap attachments at the end that fitted to studs on the side of the leather harness around Harry’s face.

Harry remained still and wide eyed as the cruel object was inserted carefully. He choked, gagging several times before Tom had fitted it suitably into its intended position. After it was affixed, Harry’s breathing through his nose was somewhat laboured. His eyes beseeched Tom to stop now.

No.. Not quite yet, Tom decided, his fingers drifting to the nipple clamps.

Harry’s small nipples were already pebbled, thus there was no need to suck them. He did it anyway, guiltily, telling himself that the saliva would render them more sensitive, and lingering far too long, nibbling and nipping, his hand stroking over the twitchy muscles of Harry’s abdomen and then scratching lightly down the indignant purpling cock.

Harry’s moans, though muffled, were still clearly audible. The boy had his eyes closed and his head turned and thrown back in pleasure. He made a soft disappointed sound when Tom finally pulled away again.

The muffled scream was unearthly when Tom released the clamp over the tiny bud of Harry’s left nipple. It vibrated through the boy’s entire chest. He writhed, twisting his body as if he wanted to scrape the clamp off somehow. Tom wasted little time in applying the other. The screams intensified and he could see Harry tugging at his shoulders, trying to force his hands to obey.

“Shhhh... shhhhh.... calm, Harry.. Lie back and relax.”

He knew the words would be interpreted by the boy’s potion controlled body as a command. Harry fell back limply and cried.

“you are doing well... I am pleased” he told him in a low soothing voice. It was a lie. The boy was far more innocent than he had anticipated after the memories he had seen of Draco’s abuse.

He was beginning to wonder whether some of the memories had been fabricated.

If Harry was this vulnerable, he would be eaten alive as a halfblood slave in the world he planned to infiltrate.

Tom suppressed his frown, his mind turning the puzzle around and around. Why would Harry have tried to persuade him that he was familiar with some of the more elaborate forms of sexual torture?

If Draco had not been abusing Harry.. what had he been doing?! He had seemed quite threatening as he moved through Harry’s apartment stealthily with drawn wand.

Harry was puffing hard through his nose, eyes clenched shut and brow furrowed in concentration. Tom watched as beads of perspiration fattened on the boy’s forehead.

Glancing back down at the implements beside him he determined that most of them would probably be too excessive for the boy to handle.. The skewers.. well... it would probably depend. Certainly not in the manner he had intended originally to use them.

With.. care.. he might possibly employ hot wire.. and possibly the scalpel. But he would need to wait until Harry had adjusted to the pain he was already labouring under.

Feeling mildly discontented, Tom tossed the claw and pliers from the bed and arranged the skewers, scalpel, wire and handheld blowtorch more neatly, further up the bed beneath Harry’s arm.

The boy in question, feeling his movement, opened his eyes and strained to see what had been put
near him. His eyes only managed to catch the blowtorch and he started to panic, eyes rolling in
terror, tugging at his limp immoveable hands again and trying to roll out of the bed.

“Stop that.” Tom commanded with a mild frown. The pale and pasty face that turned to him in
desperation was very different to the graceful controlled animal that had danced for him only
hours before. Harry made little screaming sounds around the fat dildo and couldn’t catch his
breath.

Seeing that Harry was on the edge of possible trauma already, Tom rose up onto his knees and
climbed over the boy, pressing his body against him lightly. Harry continued to squeak and plead.
Reluctantly, Tom wrapped his arms around him and nudged Harry’s head to the side gently,
dropping his face to the boy’s pale neck.

He was careful not to place too much weight against his chest or groin and simply applied himself
to kissing, licking, nibbling and sucking. One hand stroked Harry’s nape as it cupped him, while
the other slowly trailed up and down his side, wandering now and then over Harry’s hip.

The boy calmed slowly.
Confident that he could stop his attentions now, Tom cursed himself as a weak sexually-deprived
sot, because he did not stop. He moved lower against Harry, kissing and nibbling down his strong
chest and tonguing all around the tight pinch of the clamps.
It was encouraging to hear the low groan of pleasure when he sucked nipple and clamp into his
mouth, flickering his tongue over the angry purple tip of the bud.

“better?” he asked in a husky purr, lifting his head to see the boy’s face.

Harry nodded slowly, big eyed and uncertain. Tom returned to trailing his tongue down the firm
abdomen, nipping Harry now and then and receiving a low whimper groan each time.
His hand reached surreptitiously for the coil of copper wire...

He had to order Harry back to complete paralysis before he was able to wind the wire effectively
around the boy’s cock, leaving loops extending from the sides at intervals.
The finished product was rather aesthetically pleasing, if he did say so himself. He’d even
constructed a cage of sorts for the boy’s balls.

Harry was crying again.

Growing tired of it, he ordered him to stop. The hateful glare that replaced the tears was no better,
however and he rolled his eyes, crawling up Harry’s body and hanging over him with a stern
look.

“You are aware that I am a Slytherin, Harry?” he asked obliquely. The boy seemed confused and
thrown off guard by the question and nodded with a look that seemed to say ‘well duh’.

“And you are aware that Slytherin’s tend first and foremost to look after their own interests?”

Another ‘duh’ look.

“Is it then in my interests to injure you? It is to my advantage to harm you to a greater degree than
I know you can endure? I am certain you are capable of reason.. but are you capable of trust? I
thought it to be a Gryffindor quality...”

The green eyes widened in surprise and then the boy seemed to remember his present position.
His face twisted again into a pleading expression and he whined pitifully.

“Are you experiencing more pain than you can handle, Harry or are you merely afraid?!
This gave the boy pause again. He seemed to consider for a moment before turning his eyes in the
direction of the blowtorch he had seen and then looking back up to Tom and shaking his head
emphatically.

“You have not experienced what I intend to do with that. You are reacting to fear, rather than
pain. Give me your left hand.”

Harry fought not to do so, and did so all the same.

Tom caught the warm shaking appendage and ordered Harry not to move it from where it hung. It
took a further five minutes before Harry’s forearm was trussed in a manner similar to his cock,
little loops of copper wire protruding either side at intervals.
He reached for the blowtorch. Harry looked like he might have a heart attack at any moment. He
shook his head urgently and tugged at his shoulder, unable to retract his arm from where it hung,
vulnerable and wrapped in very conductive and, incidentally, visually appealing, wire.

The hiss and foomp of the torch igniting had Harry’s entire body shaking in terror. The little
whines he was making grew louder and he was breathing through his nose like a bellows.

Tom tilted his head and admired the view
“Harry.. don’t you trust me?” he asked with a tiny smile, lowering the torch to a small purple
flame.

The ‘no’ was emphatic. The boy looked over toward the door as if wanting to call for help.
It was a good thing he had thought to gag him.

Tom raised an eyebrow. “Your life.. have you forgotten? The fate of the wizarding world.. You
thought me trustworthy earlier. What has changed since then?! Do not forget - you asked for this...
and although I doubt you have the frame of reference to realise it – I am being extraordinarily
gentle with you. Your present discomfort is very nearly affectionate pampering in comparison
with what you would have suffered had you fallen into my hands six years ago.

Harry simply stared up at him pleadingly.
It was less enjoyable than it should have been. He narrowed his eyes and swept the purple flame
of the blowtorch slowly down the line of loops protruding from the side of the wiry gauntlet on
the boy’s arm.

Harry jerked after a second when the heat was conducted down the wires to his skin. It had not
been particularly painful, Tom was certain. He had not left the flame upon the copper long enough
to heat it significantly.
He watched the boy process his thoughts, the pasty brow furrowed. Harry’s jagged little scar
seemed to stand out more sharply than it had earlier. Tom wondered whether he had been
covering it with some powder or substance that was melting under the force of his perspiration.

“Is it unendurable?” he enquired lightly, one eyebrow raised.

With the utmost reluctance, the boy shook his head.

Tom ran the flame more slowly up the protruding loops on the inside blade of his forearm. The
flinch was sharper and Harry tensed his muscles, clenching his eyes for a while. When he opened
them again and his green eyes gazed up with less fear and uncertainty than had been resident there
before, Tom told him that he could put his arm back down where it had been before.

Harry started to puff again in fear when Tom turned his attention to his groin once more, trailing a
finger down the row of loops extending from the side of his hard shaft.
“Good boy... “ Tom murmured. “If you move, I may unintentionally burn you. I advise you to remain quite still...”

His toy whined high in the back of his throat and his entire body trembled in fright. Tom reached and gripped the silver funnel at the tip of his cock gently, holding the organ still. The purple flame hissed slowly down the orange twists of wire, a bare inch from the boy’s flesh.

A second later, Harry yowled and his whole body tensed, toes curling, knees locking. He tossed his head from side to side. It was...dazzling to watch.. Tom repeated the process on the other side and slid the flame nozzle quickly over the pieces connected to the cage around Harry’s balls, before the first bite had hit the boy.

The scream. The way that Harry arched his back...struggling for breath... Tom wanted him now... Panting, his own cock throbbed with the desire to fuck the boy ragged. He hadn’t been so turned on by so little since his final years as a Hogwarts student. Something about..this boy affected him much more than any other physically attractive toy.

He held the flame on the loops longer, intentionally searing the boy with the heated wires. Harry shrieked and struggled as the wire branded thin braided lines down the length of his cock.

Tom watched him with lust fogged eyes. Impatient, he snatched up the distilled water, pouring it down Harry’s cock to cool the wires and then tearing them off the boy impatiently and stroking him, running his thumb over the hot pink pattern embossed into his skin.

“You are...beautiful...” he whispered before he could stop himself. “So.. lovely.. in your pain.”

Harry looked at him with surprise through his exhaustion. He was still having trouble breathing and his face had flushed red with strain.

“You will not attempt to summon Severus in any way” Tom instructed breathily. Harry shook his head slightly, green eyes cloudy with the burning, aching, throbbing discomfort he was in.

Tentatively Tom crawled up his body again and reached for the fastenings on the dildo stuffing the boy’s mouth. It took a little twisting and maneuvering to remove it in light of the rubber tongue in his throat. Harry only gagged once and took in a huge gasp of air when the object was finally withdrawn. He curled his tongue which had been compressed flat under the gag.

For a moment almost changing his mind at the attractive sight, Tom nevertheless unfastened the O harness, carefully twitching and easing it free of Harry’s teeth. Harry made a surprised noise of pain when he went to close his jaw. He moved it slowly and gingerly, whimpering.

“thank you..” he croaked when he was able. It sounded a little unclear, as if he had been punched in the mouth.

“Thank you what?” Tom prompted with half lidded eyed.

“Thank you my Lord” Harry corrected, swallowing thickly. Tom smiled and leaned low, licking over Harry’s swollen lips and then kissing him, plundering his aching mouth mercilessly.

His new slave responded as well as he could, although his tongue was clumsy and weak. He tasted salty.. likely from all of his snivelling before he had been instructed not to cry, Tom surmised.

Retreating back from the boy, Harry raised his head and tried to follow, most likely merely desperate to keep him busy doing something that did not cause any pain.
Tom ignored his overture and moved back to kneel between Harry’s parted legs. The pink crisscrosses on the boy’s hard cock caught his eye again and on a whim, he dropped low and bathed the organ with his tongue.

Harry gasped and then moaned. When Tom glanced up at him, it seemed the boy was startled by his own reaction. At a prompted eyebrow, Harry slurred “Please.... please.. do that again.. Feels..”

His explanation for how it felt devolved into groans as Tom reapplied himself to licking and sucking up the sides of the mistreated member. He moaned loudly when Tom traced his teeth lightly over the skin and resumed pleading for more the moment Tom’s lips had left him.

It was enough however. He would not wait any longer. His own cock was aching now. He sat back on his knees, stroking himself placatingly and looking down at the boy he would own after tomorrow.

“Spread your legs wider for me.” he demanded greedily, his voice husky “Lift them. Offer yourself.”

Harry obeyed automatically, though his grimace and soft whimper conveyed that the position was uncomfortable with his burns and the metal impaling his cock.

The view was nevertheless stunning.. The taut little arse parted and exposed, a small pink star of wrinkles winked up at Tom. He reached for the sensitising lubricant in a fit of generosity.

His toy remained fairly still and patient while the thick slippery oil was drizzled over him and rubbed into his flesh by eager fingers. Tom circled his arse slowly and soporifically with the pad of his thumb for over a minute before pressing in and beginning the process of stretching the boy.

Harry started to respond mildly at the first thrusts of his thumb, his breath speeding up and his arse puckering and loosening around the digit. By the time he had gotten to two thrusting fingers, Harry was licking his lips and trying to rock against the fingers, making little grunts and gasps every so often. He cried out when his prostate was stroked and fell to low moans and murmured pleads. Tom distinguished the words “god.. please.. please.. fuck.. want you..” within the breathy mumbling.

Obliging the needy little whelp he stroked an oily palm over his own flesh and placed himself at the hot slick hole, pressing in slow and easy.

“Yes!!” Harry keened and bit his lip, his brow furrowed again in concentration.

Tom ignored it, pressing down on the muscled thighs and squeezing his entire length into the velvety channel. He was too preoccupied with the sensations that he should not have gone without for five whole years. It felt good... so good!! Harry was not as tight as the untouched disposable boys that Tom had enjoyed in the weeks before the coup but there was.. strangely.. something to be said for a partner who was willing and loved every moment of the act from the first. Virgins tended to cry and scream and bleed.. which was enticing in its own way, obviously. Harry, in contrast, was panting and begging for more, and it was...enjoyable. It had been so many decades since he had last had an infatuated partner.. He had quite forgotten what it felt like to be welcomed into another’s body.

He pulled back slowly, growling low in delight as the boy clenched around him as if trying to hold him inside. When he slammed back in hard, Harry gasped and swore, tugging at his shoulders again and tossing his head to the side.

Tom repeated the motion harder, wringing a cry of pleasure from his pet, and then began a slow rhythm of slam and withdraw, the sound of their flesh slapping together delicious.

Soon enough, Harry’s grunts and groans shifted and took on a frustrated note. The boy had just realised what it meant to be unable to come, apparently.
Salting the wound, Tom reached for the unwaveringly erect cock before him and stroked it firmly, drawing a slight yelp from the boy below.

“It.. hurts.. Please.. Please T..My lord!! Take it out.. please..”

Tom snarled mildly at the near mistake with his name and removed his hand from Harry’s shaft, sinking himself into the boy to his balls and then leaning down over him with a malicious smile.

“It is.. supposed to hurt, Harry..” he informed him breathily. “You will not come before I allow it. And.. you will take care.. in how you address me.” Thus warned, he reached for the clamp on the boy’s left nipple and removed it abruptly. There was a half second of surprise and then Harry screamed, struggling, his arse clamping down hard around Tom’s length as his whole body tensed.

Smiling, Tom lowered his mouth to the other boy’s chest and licked over the angry purple bud that was responsible for so much pain. Harry wailed and tried to move away. He ignored it and parted his lips, sucking at the little nub of flesh gently as he began to move again within the other boy’s body, circling his hips and revelling in the delicious hot sucking around him.

Surprisingly, Harry’s pained yowling shifted almost at once into low groans the moment he resumed fucking him. He nipped the bruised flesh experimentally and Harry bucked against him, gasping.

“fuck.. Tom.. it.. it feels so good.. when you.. when you.. oh..god.. harder..”

Harry sounded almost drunk. The mindless euphoric purr went straight to Tom’s balls. Without thinking and entirely uncaring how Harry might have addressed him, he found himself rising up to fuck him harder.. faster.. biting down hard on the muscle around the boy’s nipple. Harry squealed and shuddered.

“Let me hold you.. need to hold you. Please.. Tom.. need.. please!!

“Yes..” he growled back from somewhere in a universe of hot driving need, lost in his own miasma of wet shivery delight. “You can.. your arms.. yes.. Move!”

His eyes were closed as he licked Harry’s chest, the restless punching friction of his cock steering his mind. He hadn’t the slightest chance as a hand was clamped over his mouth while another arm wrapped around his shoulders and then the whole world shifted.

The first thought to flash through his mazed mind was alarm and expectation of immediate attack. His eyes flew open focussing with difficulty upon the dazzling boy curled over him, still holding his mouth shut with one hand. The other now held the scalpel, which he had earlier been complacent enough to leave on the bed beside him. It was pressed to his throat before he could even twitch.

“shhhh.. shhhh.. calm” Harry murmured down at him with lust blurred satisfaction on his face.

“Don’t you trust me?!”

Tom winced as an icy little twinge of pain informed him that the boy had actually cut him a little. He narrowed his eyes, remaining still for the moment. Harry could open his throat before he could tear the hand over his mouth away and command him to stop.. and Severus was not exactly sympathetic to him right now – he may not heal him.

Then Harry started to move slowly, rising and falling with a low groan. “Fuck... it feels so..much better..with you.. than I ever thought..it would..” he murmured distractedly, picking up the pace and impaling himself harder upon the cock in his arse.

Tom closed his eyes to hide the way they were almost rolling back in his head in pleasure. His
hands moved quite without his permission to the other boy’s hips. He didn’t so much as notice the scalpel nip him again as he pulled Harry up and down, fucking up into him.

When the mouth pressed itself to his own, he clutched at the youth, dragging him even nearer and kissing him ravenously.

Harry must have discarded the scalpel because his arms went around Tom’s neck and soon after there were hands delving in his hair.

He never stopped the restless bucking and grinding of his hips up into the other boy. They rolled after a while, still locked at the mouth, neither caring about gaining control in the midst of their writhing undulations. The leverage was better when Tom was above Harry. He could drive into him harder. He applied himself to that task automatically. At some point his hand was tugged at the wrist by the other boy and dragged to the warm metallic protrusion upon Harry’s right nipple.

Vaguely he remembered the clamp again and detached it from its biting hold, tossing it away in the direction of the wall. Harry wailed into his mouth a moment later and Tom dimly registered fingernails scratching down his back.

He arched away from the other boy, gasping. Seeing the other boy again he felt something akin to a kick in the stomach. Harry was absolutely ravishing... more animal than wizard, his startling green eyes hooded in lust and dark like the deep forest. He was panting and bucking, damp with sweat and lips bruised red as rubies.

“SSSuck... it...” the little heathen managed, licking his lips. Tom had no idea what he was talking about for a moment. Harry reached for him, stroking his face and gently guiding him down to his chest.

His nipple was blue and bruised. Making the connection, Tom fell upon it, tearing at it with his teeth and sucking as if he wished to uproot the little bead of flesh. Harry yelled and clamped onto him like a limpet with arms and legs. Tom fucked him harder, trying desperately to hold on.. He was so near to coming and he didn’t want to.. he wanted this to go on until they both collapsed. Felt.. so good.. Harry was ..perfect.. Better than.. than..

::Yours!!:: the boy beneath him hissed ecstatically. ::Tom!! Yours... always.. My Lord!!::

Losing it suddenly at the words that no other could understand, he felt himself sliding over the edge, unable to hold himself back any longer. It was all he could do to slither a hand between their slick bodies, grasp the metallic cup at the end of the boy’s cock and draw the tube out smoothly, flinging it away and plunging his hand back into the steamy midst to grip Harry and pump him. Harry screeched in sudden overwhelming orgasm and Tom joined him, falling apart at the first flutters of the wet velvet into which he was stabbing.

They ground and rubbed and bucked together like a clockwork toy slowly winding down, subsiding into wet panting and exhausted weak kisses.

After a moment, Tom rolled off the other boy and tossed himself down on to his back on the bed beside him.

Fuck.. sweet fucking.. Salazar.. that had been.. quite a bit better than he had remembered of his last sexual exploits. Was it simply the years of restraint that made it so?! If he had thought it would be like that he would have sought a lover now and then over the time.

“I haven’t ever come that hard before...”

Tom turned his face wearily toward the soft breathless voice. Harry sounded awestruck.

“I’ll.. I’ll trust you.. from now on. Ok?!” Dilated green eyes met his own and flickered for a moment. Tom furrowed his brow as Harry
rolled onto his side with altogether too much energy and leaned down over him. He felt a hot wet tongue graze over his throat lightly. It stung. He had entirely forgotten about that. The little bastard had cut him. He struggled and, to add insult to injury, found himself effortlessly restrained by the stronger boy.

“I’m sorry..” Harry breathed against his ear. “I only meant to scratch you.. those things are bloody sharp!” he dropped his head again and resumed gently licking at the two cuts.

“Get off!”

The licking didn’t halt for a moment. Tom felt a shivery panic edge up his spine. The amount of triple g he’d given the boy, Harry should have been following orders tomorrow at breakfast. Had he somehow simulated?! Had there been nothing but coloured water in the phial?! What would he do now?! He had branded the boy.. terrified him.. What would Harry do to take retribution?!!

The pretty black haired youth raised his head then and looked down with a faint smile.

“It wore off. Severus spent months giving me small doses of the stuff to develop a resistance. He did it with quite a few potions. Tom.. you don’t need to worry. I’m not going to hurt you.”

“You couldn’t if you tried” Tom heard his own mouth snapping in an acid tone. “Now get off me.”

Harry’s face fell slightly in hurt surprise but he complied, moving back on the bed and lying on his side, looking at Tom with an unreadable expression.

“Sorry..”

“Save it.” Tom snapped back defensively. “I have had enough mauling for the night. I wish to sleep now. Kindly push off and bother Severus for the rest of the evening.”

He turned away from the shocked dismay on the other boy’s face and reached for a pillow from the floor, dragging it up and slipping one arm beneath it.

after a few moments a warm hand touched his shoulder tentatively. He shrugged it off and closed his eyes.

“I..” the boy started, obviously upset and wanting to argue, before sighing and murmuring a sad “okay..”

The sound of Harry padding to his jeans and slipping them on was loud in the silence. There was nothing for a while and Tom imagined that the boy was standing looking at him, hoping that he might change his mind. When he continued to ignore him, the soft pats of his feet on the black rubber floor moved off toward the door and he let himself out quietly.

Tom rolled only his back, glaring at the ceiling in angry frustration. He was gone then. The last night he might have with Harry before they would both be trapped in other wizard’s skin and he had to send him away. Well.. what else could he do?! – the brat was too strong.. too unpredictable.. he had lied.. he had held a knife to Tom’s throat.. he couldn’t be trusted! Sleep while Harry lay unrestrained beside him? Impossible!

In the room in the backpackers in Wellington, he had thought the boy broken and desperate – clinging.. needing him. Harry had been so submissive and careful. Now though.. Now he knew it had all been an act that night. Harry had been dangerous from the first moment he’d met him. How could he get a wink of rest worrying that revenge might fall upon him at any moment.
He very nearly wanted to go and stem something in front of the door.

Too many times in the last years he had been hurt by those stronger than him. Beaten.. kicked.. robbed.. Once he had almost been raped – but he tried not to think about that these days. It had been two years ago. Winter. Once again it was nothing but dumb luck that had saved him. Headlights flaring over them both as the meaty muggle fumbled at his pants. Tom’s own were already around his knees as he was held hard against the wall, arms twisted up behind his back, his face turned against the cold grey concrete of the blocks. The man had leapt away from him and taken off running. Tom had crumpled to the ground but, upon realising that the headlights belonged to a police car, had found new adrenalin to pull up his clothes and leg it in the opposite direction before he was pulled in for questioning.

Harry had held him down so easily...

No. No it was better to send him away. With luck he would not return.

Pushing himself up to sit on the bed, Tom glanced behind at the implements still scattered over the other side of the bed. With a scowl he grabbed the objects in handfuls, flinging them off the bed in the direction of the other wall. He barely pulled back on his arm in time before tossing the acid. Thinking better of that, he got up and took it back to the shelf.

He scuffed back to the bed discontentedly and slipped beneath the covers, pulling them up and shivering at the cold satin. ...It had been..pleasant.. to hold Harry..when they slept together in the hostel. He hadn’t had another person close to him while he slept for... well.. since Severus. A long time.

Closing his eyes, Tom tried to forget about the prospect of Harry returning during the night and exacting revenge.
Chapter 7

“Wake up..”

The words were hissed in a breathy whisper.

familiar..

Tom shifted from asleep to wide awake in half a second and furrowed his brow slightly. The covers were gone and the air was chilly on the skin of his back, arse and thighs. He was inexplicably stretched out on his stomach with his arms ranged above his head. Tugging them in toward his body proved impossible. There was a soft clink of chain. Raising his head in shock, Tom took in the iron manacles around his wrists, attached to chains leading to the corner posts of the bed. He whipped his head around to look over his shoulder, only to find himself faced with the exact fate he had feared hours before.

Harry stood naked at the end of the bed, a dark malevolent expression on his face. He was holding.. almost fondling.. a thick birch rod.

Tom found himself, for the first time, absolutely speechless. What could he say?! He fumbled for a threat that would be effective enough to halt what appeared to be about to happen.

“Release me, Harry, or your servitude will be more painful than you can possibly fathom!” His voice quavered ever so slightly.

Harry walked with slow predatory grace around the perimeter of the bed and looked down pointedly at his own body. His chest was peppered in dark black bruises and white braided lines covered the entire length of his cock.

The gesture was sufficient. Harry was not concerned about worse treatment right now. He intended to reciprocate scars for scars.

Tom’s eyes widened and he turned his face away when the boy raised a well muscled arm and, without a moment of hesitation, brought the birch down upon his arse.

He sucked in a sharp breath, biting his tongue against the sudden stinging burn across the sensitive flesh.

The next four stripes were laid down swiftly and only inches apart, the final one landing on the faint crease between his arse and his thighs.

He did not even attempt to raise his head, unwilling to betray the sharp tears pricking at his eyes. It took more control than he expected to remain silent. It had been over sixty years since he had last received a caning as a child in the orphanage. Somehow he remembered it being easier to endure back then.

He would not give the boy the satisfaction. He would not scream and wail as Harry had.

Nothing happened for so long that Tom risked lifting his head and turning to look out of the corner of his eye.
The next blow fell just in that moment, as if Harry had been waiting.

It bit into the exact line of the first stroke and Tom’s entire body flinched in response, his hands tugging automatically at the chains in the need to grip himself and rub the horrible pricking and burning.

“Stop..” he gritted out between his teeth and received three even harder licks for it.
His legs shifted against the satin covered mattress, wanting to curl up beneath him. With effort he forced himself flat.

After the next five cracks, he had bitten into his lip deeply and his mouth tasted of blood. His eyes were clenched and his hands clung white knuckled to the chains of the manacles.

It took only three more well aimed blows before he gave the first choked yelp.
Harry did not stop then until he was screaming, raining blows upon him without pause.
He could feel hot drips trailing down into the crack of his arse, pooling in the crux of his thighs and sliding, unbearably itchy, over the sides of his hips.
It wasn’t necessary to raise his head, and thereby reveal his pitifully tearstained cheeks, to determine that it was blood.

And then there was nothing. The rod did not fall again. Rubbing his face against the silk below him, Tom tried to wipe his eyes.

The bed shifted slightly. He turned his head enough to see that Harry had laid aside the birch and placed one knee on the bed. He was stroking himself and looking down at Tom in an extremely disquieting manner.

He wouldn’t.. surely he wouldn’t dare..

The flawlessly built youth apparently would and did dare. He climbed onto the bed more fully and crawled closer, placing one warm hand upon the base of Tom’s spine just as Tom had bent his leg, bracing his hands and trying to push up and roll in the direction of the side of the bed. Instead, beneath the pressure of Harry’s hand, he was pushed down again, his foot losing traction on the silky surface.

Struggling frantically against the boy behind him, Tom tried to turn, to kick out; he pulled as hard as he could at the chains holding his arms, panic overcoming him.

“Just give in..” Harry whispered. “You won’t repel me unless you use magic.. and if you do that, you’ll bring Lucius’ little bloodhounds sniffing – I doubt that Severus would even have time to get us both out...he’d leave you here, chained to a bed, for them to find...”

Tom screamed in rage and frustration and fought even harder.

The strong body behind him suddenly covered his own, pressing him down against the mattress and subduing his kicking legs.

“Give in..” Harry breathed against his ear. “I’ll use lubricant.. I’ll stretch you. You’ll enjoy it if you let go.. If you keep fighting I’ll take you fast and dry.”

Tom dropped his face back against the bed, his eyes clenched.
“If you do this.. I will dedicate every spare moment I have to making you suffer. I will destroy you, boy!

Harry chuckled low, as if this didn’t concern him in the slightest. “So you want it dry?” he
whispered maliciously.

“No!!”

He couldn’t help himself. He wanted anything other than that. Even a continuation of the beating would be preferable – but if he couldn’t escape it then he didn’t want to be torn and abused any further either. What good would it do to request further pain?!

“No.. I.. I won’t fight anymore! Don’t.. do it that way.”

Harry licked over the shell of his ear with a soft snigger. “Very good.. my Lord..” he hissed. Cold air pricked over the fear-perspiration on his back as the warm body removed itself, retreating back down to straddle the back of his knees

He jolted as an icy liquid was poured down over the burning, throbbing cheeks of his arse. It seemed to almost evaporate on contact. Perhaps a painkiller of some kind, he speculated, as the sharp biting pain of the cuts and bruises over his arse diminished markedly.

There was some shifting and then another quite different cool liquid spilled down onto his tailbone. This one felt viscous and heavy. Fingers followed it, slipping down the crack of his arse, one hand pulling his cheek aside slightly and the other moving to massage over his rosette in a practiced businesslike manner. Tom flinched as a finger was roughly introduced into his body, forced through the tight ring and pulled in and out. It felt horribly uncomfortable and far larger than any finger should. He was suddenly poignantly aware of exactly how much it must have hurt when he had so frequently, as Harry had threatened to do, taken his innocent young toys fast and dry. The finger’s movement slowed as a second was shoved in alongside. Tom hissed and pressed his face harder against the mattress. The sharp pain dropped to an achey throb when the fingers ceased movement, buried up to the second knuckle in him.

“Don’t tell me that you have never..” Harry whispered incredulously.

Tom shook his head slightly. Of course he hadn’t. Who would he possibly bottom to?! Grindelwald perhaps.. if he had met the man at a vulnerable age... Slytherin if the man were not centuries dead and his blood relative.. No other though. He would hardly allow some ignorant fumbling wizard to make him their bumboy. From the screaming and carrying on, the process was obviously quite painful for those not blinded by delirious love and infatuation. What would he wish to subject himself to that for?! The soft kiss on the base of his spine startled him. He twitched slightly. A tongue followed the kiss, trailing up the line of his back. The hand that Harry wasn’t currently shoving into his arse stroked lightly over his shoulderblade. He flinched as the fingers inside him moved, twisting slightly and then withdrew.

Hope shone a tiny ray down. Perhaps Harry had changed his mind.

But then more oil drizzled down on his arse and the other boy’s hand slithered through it, spreading it and rubbing it in. His fingers felt much more slippery when they were shoehorned inside him this time, yet it still felt as if they were tearing him open. He had stretched innumerable boys but he had never understood that it felt like this. As if two broomsticks were slowly splitting him in two.
Harry twisted and pumped with terrible patience, now and then doing something that made Tom stiffen. It was almost becoming tolerable except for those little bursts of stabbing pain. The third finger entering made him wince and clench his fists again, tugging uselessly on his arms, wanting to bring them in against his body. It hurt!!

Slippery squirmy twisting did not feel quite as bad as the in and out movement, he observed to himself silently, hoping that Harry would get on with it soon and would not require long to come.

It hurt a few more times and then, unexpectedly, Harry’s fingers touched something that sent an electric judder up Tom’s spine. He gasped and arched, his eyes widening in surprise.

He knew quite well what it was... but he had honestly not expected it. He had experimentally felt for his own prostate a few times in his youth after observing the reactions of some of the boys he’d taken.

It had somehow been a rather underwhelming sensation when he was fifteen, curled on his bed with half a dozen dangerous wards and defenses protecting his reputation from prying eyes. He’d found the location easily enough, but the sensation evoked had not seemed something that might cause him to scream out in joy as Nathanien had the previous night, when Tom had fucked him over a desk in an unused classroom on the fifth floor. He’d decided that males likely had varying degrees of receptivity to prostate stimulation and that he was simply not physiologically suited to bottoming during sex.

That assessment perhaps required some minor revision, he thought, stunned, as Harry’s turning, pumping fingers brushed over his prostate again and the galvanic rush made his toes curl. The breathy little moan escaped him before he could catch himself.

Harry’s fingers slipped out of him only two pumps later.

Hands were placed on his hips and pulled, almost lifting him up bodily in their insistence that he rise to his knees. Reluctantly he complied, allowing himself to be pushed and positioned as desired.

He imagined, unhappily, that he resembled some worshipper before an altar. Both arms stretched above him, his face pressed down against the mattress and his arse in the air as he knelt up on widely parted knees.

One of the hands returned then to his hip and, tensing, Tom felt a warm surface press against his hole.

It did not require advanced arithmancy to calculate what it was.

Harry pushed slowly against him and it hurt again. It felt like pressure – as if the organ could not possibly fit and would punch a hole in him like a baton through a rubber sheet if the boy kept on pushing like that.

Then there was a sharp blinding pain – he really was being torn open after all - and he felt the impossibly massive appendage actually begin to drive in. It lessened after a second but it had only been the head of the boy’s cock passing his sphincter. Harry resumed pushing almost immediately and Tom could do nothing but grit his teeth and brace himself, straining against the need to cry out... the almost irresistible desire to beg the boy to stop... to please take it out.. His thighs shook as his legs fought not to straighten and throw him off the painful beam skewering him.

When Harry stopped after what seemed an hour of forward motion, Tom had his face buried against one arm, trying to hide the shame and tears.

Hands stroked over his back again. He felt Harry bend over him and stroke his head as if he were a frightened animal rather than the most infamous and hunted wizard in the world at present.

He fisted his hands and turned his mind to all of the things he was going to do to the boy the
moment that he had the ability to use magic without repercussions again.

Harry pulled back and the sensation almost felt pleasant, but then he stabbed forward again and Tom yelped in pain.
And then he did it again. And again. And again.
Tom bit his arm to hold in the feeling that if it didn’t stop he might scream.

He could hear Harry panting behind him in unmistakeable enjoyment.
A hand reaching beneath him for his cock almost had him fighting again. He restrained the urge, not wanting this to go on any longer than it had to.

Harry’s hand found him entirely flaccid. The effects of the brief unexpected prostate stimulation had wilted completely under the force of the pain that followed. ..that continued.
The thrusting slowed as if Harry were shocked and Tom cursed silently.
“Don’t stop. Just.. hurry up and finish.” He spat angrily.

The movement stopped altogether.
Ducking his head slightly, Tom inwardly called himself names for being foolish enough to speak. He should have remained silent and waited for it to be over.

“I wish you to enjoy it too..”
Harry’s soft murmur sounded faintly sad.

The hand gripping Tom’s cock stroked gently with a precise skill he would not have imagined Harry to possess. He manipulated him as if he knew exactly what Tom liked.
Even with the discomfort he was in, his arousal was quickly manufactured and stoked.

By the time the boy behind him and within him began to move again slowly, Tom was, against his will, in quite a different disposition. The addition of the slow masturbation made the pain and uncomfortable tight full feeling less wretched.
It started to feel almost..acceptable.. actually.

Harry warmed back into fucking him, slowly moving faster and harder till he was slapping hard against Tom’s arse with each thrust, making his heart beat rapidly.
When Tom finally, hating himself for doing so, began to push back subtly, rocking his hips between the hand pumping and the cock driving, Harry abruptly let go of his member and moved both hands back to Tom’s hips. They slid down to his thighs and then Tom struggled, unbalanced as his legs were tugged backward and out, parting him and dropping him lower till he lay flat on the bed, his legs spread wide and bent up at the knee.
The warm firm body of his future slave and now rapist followed him down, never actually withdrawing from his body. He felt the not unpleasant crush as Harry laid himself atop him, molding his body against Tom’s from neck to groin
Harry’s powerful thighs parted, pressing against the back of Tom’s own, even as he felt the other boy’s arms delve beneath him, curling beneath Tom’s chest and gripping his shoulders either side of his neck.

There was warm breath against the nape of Tom’s neck. He shivered as a kiss was placed there before Harry started moving once again.

It was slow..greasy..full...warm..enticing.. delicious...

Tom couldn’t help his own hips circling, rubbing against the mattress below while the unthinkable act continued. It felt wrong and it felt pleasurable and, by Salazar, he was going to come if Harry didn’t stop soon.
A hot breath across his ear made him shudder helplessly and then Harry started to nibble delicately
on his neck, slick tongue flickering up and down with maddening skill.

“damn you..” he cursed under his breath, tilting his head helplessly for more.

Harry’s arms tightened around him and he started to thrust more sharply. He seemed to be shifting and moving quite a lot until suddenly he found the angle he was looking for and Tom cried out in unexpected euphoria.

Oh god. Oh Salazar.. Oh Merlin.. it did feel a lot different like this! Fuck!

And then Harry did it again and again. Tom knew he was screaming like a brazen whore and he couldn’t help it. He wasn’t prepared for this.. It was.. too much..

The boy crushing and biting and fucking him just kept hitting him there every single time, over and over again while Tom yowled and bucked against the bed helplessly, until he fell with a breathless cry of almost-pain headlong into his climax, his cock dousing the sheets below him and Harry’s excited panting against his ear. Harry gave a low, choked groan quite soon after and seemed to clench his entire body around Tom before he sank his teeth into the muscle where Tom’s shoulder joined neck, muffling his own ecstatic yell.

In the quiet panting aftermath, Tom lay utterly spent beneath Harry’s heavy warmth. The boy seemed to have simply collapsed upon him and showed no indication that he intended to move soon.

And of course, there was the unavoidable return of rational thought. Harry Potter had just raped him. Him. As muggle as he may have been forced to live he was Lord Voldemort. Somewhere inside.

Even if he had never felt less like a Dark Lord in his life..

Yes, perhaps he had enjoyed it toward the end – that did not alter the fact that he had not wanted it.. had threatened and pleaded and fought against it.

Tom wondered if Severus would obliviate him when he learned of it. He would expect Tom to try to kill the boy for this. Rightly so.

Harry wasn’t saying anything though.. and Tom hardly wished to unintentionally alert him to the need to inform Severus. Perhaps if he simply pretended for the moment that he had wanted it all along?

In that moment Harry sighed and, slowly shifted himself, withdrawing carefully, his cock already softening. He rested upon his hands and knees and Tom could feel him looking down at him, although his own eyes were closed.

Then Harry leaned down and pressed a soft lingering kiss to his cheekbone. He started to pull away and leave the bed but seemed to change his mind and climbed back, fumbling at the manacles with a fiddly little key till he could rip them open and tug them off Tom’s wrists. Tom, who hadn’t moved since the boy had finished inside him, found himself roughly manhandled onto his back and then Harry was over him again, kissing him as if the world was ending.

Shocked and more than a little disturbed by the possible ramifications of the boy’s abrupt shift of mood, he wrapped his dead-weight arms cautiously around his neck and tried to return the kiss as if he weren’t itching to insert the closest bladed object into his sternum.

A warm wet droplet landed on his cheek, startling him. He pushed Harry away slightly to find that the boy crying silently and disconsolately. His green eyes were the darkest that he had ever seen them.
“What is it?” he asked, worried now by this development. Was the boy thinking to kill him? He wore the face of one who was going to commit an act they wished they did not have to commit.

Harry shook his head slightly and seemed to fumble for an answer. Eventually he managed a tight, high, emotional whisper. “It’s.. nothing.. I.. I’m sorry. You’re.. I shouldn’t have.. I.. You know.. you’re the only man I’ve ever loved.. I still should not have.. I.. I have to go. I’m sorry.. Please.. don’t.. tell him-“

As if pricked by a stinging hex, the green eyed boy leapt up and darted away from the bed, backing up a few horrified steps, his gaze flickering all over Tom, before turning and almost running from the room.

Tom watched the door close, his own mind seemingly in some manner of shock, his thoughts still and silent. After a few minutes he blinked and let his gaze drift back up to the distant shadowy ceiling.

Well..

Potter had said that he had fancied him for a number of years.. but love?! That was somewhat different. Love was dangerous. But during their discussion earlier.. The boy had as much as stated that he’d never experienced love..

No. No, wait. He hadn’t. He had stated that many loved him. Some of the many did not know him, others knew him but had no idea what love meant and still others he did not love back. He had said nothing whatsoever about whether he loved anyone. Then did he love Tom?! Was that possible? It was possible.. naturally.. was it probable?!

The boy had barely known him.. he had known of him.. But as one who claimed that others did not understand love or did not know him.. it seemed rather hypocritical to then fall in love with a man who was not only essentially unknown, but who had no concept of love, who did not feel the same way – and more importantly – who fully intended to kill him.

This thought dragged his mind unwillingly in a new direction. Did he wish to kill the boy now?!

Yes!!! the greater part of his mind screamed in the voice of a thousand roaring demons.

A smaller faction was primarily confused at present, wishing explanations of what had occurred. What had possessed Harry to do that?!

It had been...

Wrong, impudent, degrading, threatening..

Exciting...

Ultimately satisfying...

...Thoroughly enjoyable after the pain had faded.

He wiped a hand down his face in disgust. What was wrong with him?! Of course he would kill the boy. Chained and raped like a muggle at a revel. How dare he!! His death would come only after there was no torture left to subject the boy to. He would suffer. He would pay!!

As soon as he became Draco Malfoy.. Potter would reap his just reward.
And to think the brat was foolish enough to want to keep this little debacle from Severus, he thought to himself wryly. For what? His precious reputation as the saviour of the light?! He was certainly not a true agent of the light if he engaged in such acts. Was his reputation worth more than his life – did he have a Death wish? Or was he simply too foolish to realise that Tom would never forgive.. never allow such a debasement to go unanswered.

Harry Potter would die in miserable wriggling torment. ...Just as soon as he regained the ability to use magic without detection.

He woke in the morning when a knock upon his door threw him into immediate defensive mode, curling protectively and scanning the room for the source of the threat.

Registering that there was no immediate danger, he climbed out of the bed.
He was fully dressed. He had slept that way. After using the sheet and the distilled water to try to clean himself as best he could, he had dressed and filled his pockets with implements from around the room that would serve well as defensive weapons.
The scalpel had remained under his pillow all night.
No one would catch him in that manner ever again. If the boy tried it, he would kill him on the spot, irrespective the cost.

“Come in” he called warily, palming the scalpel beneath his shirtsleeve just in case.

The little girl was wearing blue ribbons in her pigtails today. She wore a blank expression that was unmistakeably Severus-like..
“I trust you slept well, my Lord?” she enquired, raising an eyebrow questioningly as she inspected him.

He nodded curtly.
“Well enough. I assume you are ready to harvest the other samples you require.”

The girl looked at him evenly.
“I was actually summoning you to breakfast. Potter has cooked and thought you might..”

“No.” Tom interrupted him. “I find myself not at all hungry this morning. I wish to begin the procedure as soon as possible, Severus. I will wait in your study until you are ready, if you wish to take breakfast.”

Severina looked somewhat uncertain.
“I can eat later, I suppose. Several of the items I require will have latency periods during extraction which will be more than sufficient for me to step out and refresh myself.”

Tom nodded and strode across the room with marginally less grace than he would usually have managed. He had found his body sore and particularly his behind disagreeably aching.

The little girl Potions Master wisely forbore to make any comment on whatever she observed from his presentation.

It was hours later as he lay in Severus makeshift lab, eyes closed, grinding his teeth in pain as his bone marrow was extracted, that his rapist chose to make an appearance.
“Tom?” the approaching voice called down the hall.

Severus..severina..cursed under her breath when Tom flinched at the sound. She warned him again that any movement ran the risk of snapping the needle. Tom barely acknowledged the directive, his eyes were darting to his jeans, discarded on a chair on the other side of the room, along with his shirt, his scalpel and every other means of defending himself. He pulled the sheet higher and closed his eyes again, wrapping his arms around himself uneasily.

He heard Harry walk through the doorway and stop a few feet away.

“Tom??” he tried again, seeming somewhat more worried now.

Reluctantly, he opened his eyes and looked in the boy’s general direction, focussing somewhere in the region of the sleeve of his moss green teeshirt.

“yes?” he offered dismissively.

Harry took a hesitant step nearer. In his peripheral vision Tom could see the boy looking back and forth between him and the girl seated in a swivel chair behind him operating the syringe.

“Is.. is something wrong?!”

“No. I am busy.. as you see. I would appreciate privacy.”

Harry seemed unsure what to do. He hovered, looking at Tom with worried confusion.

“I apologised. I said I wouldn’t do it again.. I.. I didn’t mean to! I didn’t think it was that big a deal..”

“LEAVE, Potter!” Tom hissed furiously, his eyes flicking for only a moment up to the distressed boy’s killing-curse eyes, before dropping again and glaring at the chair behind him.

Harry shuffled in place uncertainly.

Severina saved the day, speaking up in a soft non-negotiable tone “Potter.. several of the substances I require are rather sensitive to emotion. If you and the Dark Lord are quarrelling at present, it would be appreciated if you would toddle off and keep yourself amused elsewhere until we are finished.”

The boy left without further demur.

“Thank you, Severus.” Tom found himself saying softly.

The girl drew a deep pensive breath.

“You do realise that you will be obliged to spend quite a significant length of time in close quarters with Potter, should you be playing Draco in the near future...”

“I do.”

“And exactly how to you think to manage it if you are not even able to meet his gaze?! Just because I resemble a piece of fluff right now, does not mean that I have lost the power to see what takes place directly before me. Whatever occurred between you last night.. it appears to have altered things considerably. I will not jeopardize everything I have worked for if you cannot deal with Potter.”

“I can deal with Potter. I am greatly looking forward to it, actually.” Tom returned coolly.
“You do not have to take this role! If it is merely a matter of regaining the ability to perform magic, I will give you a body. You may become any wizard of your choice. You could take your perfectly legitimate paperwork and bank accounts and move to another country, if you wish. You would be free. There is no need for you to place yourself within Lucius’ own house with a boy who is completely incapable of sticking to a predetermined plan.”

Tom considered this seriously for a few minutes.

He was immortal. How much easier might it be to go and begin a new life as a different wizard?!.. he could start anew. Perhaps he might gain power in another.. No. It was not about the power. The power was necessary and important, yes – but it was never about the power originally. It was about Britain. His own country. It was about the fate of magic for decades and perhaps centuries to come. It was about blood, yes – but not in the way that Lucius and the inbred elitists had understood it.. They had twisted his words with their warped views and by the time he wished to correct the flaw, the purebloods had been the majority among his Death Eaters and the risk of rebellion was too great to forcibly re-educate them on his ultimate intentions.

But he had a chance now to leap to the top of the pile within the British wizarding world and take back the reins.

It was a dangerous risk to his own life, yes. Obviously. He would be safer if he were to accept Severus’ offer and build a life for himself in the Americas. But then.. he had been prepared to risk everything for his beliefs – even before the name ‘Lord Voldemort’ was even a fleeting thought in his mind.

This opportunity – becoming Lucius Malfoy’s son – it was a great risk, but it was simultaneously the most promising chance he had had thus far to grasp the prize. He need only successfully seduce and ensnare the key figures and he could seize power and exact bloody retribution upon the traitor who had betrayed him.

He might never again come this close to being able to single-handedly turn the rudder in the course of the British wizarding world. In a hundred years of waiting, the situation might only become more and more difficult to repair.

It was too great an opportunity to decline in favour of security.

“I have made my decision, Severus” he told the girl quietly. “Do not concern yourself. Potter will never again stand between me and my goals.”

The potions master did not respond but after a minute s/he removed the painful needle and set about preparing the thick pale pink substance s/he had removed.

“Would you prefer to tackle the fluids of the brain next or the intangible core substances, my Lord?!”

Tom frowned slightly. “What do the..core substances.. entail, exactly?!”

The girl walked around the medical table. She stood only as high as his head. “Well.. there is the magical core.. there is the aura – or electromagnetic sheath layers. There is also...er.. the soul..”

Tom tried to sit up quickly and crumpled back down as pain shot through him.
“What?” he managed, with more startled affront than he intended.

The girl slipped her hands in the pockets of the pale blue sundress nervously. “Well.. naturally.. it is necessary to obtain a very small sample of the soul of the wizard who wishes to be redirected into a new body.
Why do you imagine that spirits are incapable of truly occupying the bodies that they possess?!”

As Tom’s eyes narrowed, Severina’s eyes widened correspondingly in horror.

“I apologise, my Lord!.. I did not intend to be disrespectful regarding your earlier trials of fortune. Forgive my lack of good sense.
I wished to say only that it is imperative to extract a minute sliver of the ephemeral substance in order to target the binding potion.
I struggled with the process for several months, creating empty shell after empty shell before I realised that the body does not naturally house a soul purely by dint of being unoccupied. It must be rooted in the core of the structure.
The small sliver of soul that is extracted is reabsorbed by the witch or wizard when they are seeded within their new form. It is not lost in the process or retained by me. You need not be concerned.”

Tom was reassured but not entirely mollified.
“The fluids of the brain then, if you would, Severus” he responded dryly.

The blue hair ribbons bobbed as the girl stalked off to prepare the equipment capable of lobotomising him with the merest slip of the hand.

Later that evening, more exhausted than he could ever remember feeling before, Tom trudged down the dingy corridor, after the small girl in the pale blue dress, in the direction of the study.

Severus was adamant that the process should wait until the morning when he had had sufficient sleep to withstand it. To begin now, the girl conjectured, would be exponentially more dangerous than attempting to apparate in his present physiological and mental condition.
Tom had simply nodded. He didn’t care. His body hurt in ways that were entirely unnatural.. and it had been in a fair state of discomfort to begin with.

Harry was waiting for them in the study of course. He should have remembered but.. with everything.. he’d forgotten.
The boy looked like he was on tenterhooks with impatience for them to finally emerge from the lab. He sprang out of the chair and almost flew in Tom’s direction the moment that Severina led him through the door.

Tom startled dramatically and took a backward step toward the safety of the corridor, hands fumbling at his pockets for the scalpel.

Harry had stopped dead a few metres away in the face of his reaction. He looked at him in hurt confusion.

“I don’t understand! Tom.. please.. talk to me. Tell me what I can do to make it up to you! I.. I.. know you were angry last night but.. I mean.. You act like i’m going to ..to. hurt you or something. I... I wouldn’t! I said I wouldn’t! I shouldn’t have.. I didn’t mean to! It was an accident!”

Tom’s eyes flashed to the brown haired girl. The potions master was watching them both
pensively.

“There is nothing to discuss” he told his green eyed rapist coldly, avoiding looking at him. “I do not require your assurance. Do not imagine that it will ever happen again.”

Harry flinched as if he’d punched him.

“Severus... I find myself too tired to socialise at present. I have no appetite to speak of either. I would appreciate it if you would direct me to your room for the evening so that I might rest.”

He tried to ignore the reactions this provoked in both of his ‘servants’ and folded his arms over his chest.

“Tom!!” Harry yelped in a desperate tone. “You.. You don’t even want the room?!...don’t even trust me not to...to.. leave you in peace if you tell me to?! I.. don’t understand!!! Please!!!” He dropped to his knees on the spot and looked up pleadingly. “just.. just.. tell me what I need to do to fix this.. anything.. i’ll do anything, ok?!”

“Of course, my Lord” Severina cut through the bleating smoothly. The girl stepped around Harry as if he were furniture and gestured for Tom to precede him down the corridor. The gesture was another that was somehow so unmistakeably Severus, in Tom’s opinion.

He could hear the boy burst into tears behind them and stoked a warm ember of vengeful rage. Harry would do more than weep before he was done with him. But he required his magic back first. Until then, it was best to simply keep his distance.

The young girl slipped past him in the corridor and stepped up to the door opposite the one leading to the room in which he had slept last night..or.. barely slept last night. Severus room, in contrast, was very securely warded. The man always had been paranoid. The girl tapped out a little pattern on the door, pressed her hand to it and it finally swung open.

Within, the room was dark in tone - both in terms of colour and magical taint, obsessively tidy and comfortably luxurious without any hint of pretension or ostentatious excess.

Tom followed the smaller figure in and nodded while he was directed to the amenities and given a transfigured night shirt to sleep in if he wished. He did not wish. He would remain in his clothing. He accepted the nightshirt nevertheless and placed it on the end of the bed, impatient for Severus to leave him in peace.

“My, Lord..” the disturbingly rosebud little lips spoke in a tone that Tom knew all too well meant that Severus wished to probe on some matter of interest. “If we might.. perhaps.. discuss what occurred last night..”

“No.” he snapped wearily. “No.. we will not discuss anything at all. I am tired. I cannot begin to convey how tired. Please leave me, my servant. I wish to rest. Whatever you would say, can wait until the morning.”

The girl frowned slightly, her eyes worried. She nodded however and bade him a good night, removing herself with swift grace.

When the door had closed Tom closed his eyes, pinching the bridge of his nose between thumb and finger. He felt a headache coming on. It was not entirely unexpected in view of the minor brain surgery he had endured earlier this evening. He looked at the bed for only a moment before stalking into the bathroom and turning the shower on.
When he stepped beneath it, he felt a small measure of relief that had been eluding him all day. There had been no shower in the small toilet leading off from the other room he and Harry had shared. After the .. after he’d cleaned himself with distilled water, he’d had no opportunity to wash properly. The entire day he had had the lingering feeling that his body still contained traces of Harry’s emission.

He turned the dial, increasing the temperature until it was half a shade away from scalding, reaching for the no-nonsense bar of yellow soap and scrubbing himself all over.

He only felt dizzy for a few seconds and had placed his hand on the wall to steady himself, when the world seemed to drop out from beneath him, everything shifted to black and he folded like a concertina.

The feeling of someone lying next to him jolted him awake with a start and he was retreating before he’d even fully taken in that he was lying in the dark in a bed, wearing a nightshirt.

“My Lord?!” the sleepy girlish voice questioned uncertainly.

“Severus?” Tom processed after a few confused moments. “Why are you here?! In my bed? What is happening?!”

Small fingers grazed his face and he moved even further back, slipping one leg down over the edge of the bed, ready to bolt.

“It is in fact my bed, my Lord and you are in it because you were inexplicably unwilling to sleep in the other room, with or without Potter to accompany you. I am here, not least because it is my bed, but also because you collapsed in the shower earlier and I did not wish to leave you unattended in such a state. Please calm yourself now. You are in no danger... or.. at least.. no unusual or particular danger.”

Tom licked his lip and tried to still the fight or flight reaction strumming through him. Gingerly he slid back into bed, attempting to persuade himself that there was nothing to be concerned about.

Severus had never before tried to harm him, and the man had had ample opportunity in view of the sheer mass of potions made specifically for his consumption over the years.

He had no reason to be anxious that the wizard might incongruently take it into his head to molest him either.. Severus no longer possessed the requisite anatomy for such a task. He was a small teenage girl. ...

At one time.. he had slept next to Severus almost every night. The boy had become virtually a fixture within his chambers.

“What has upset you so, my Lord?” the girl murmured in subdued solicitous concern.

Tom ignored the question. “Did you betray me because I sent you from my bed, Severus?” he wondered aloud, regretting the question the moment he had voiced it.

The dark room remained silent for over a minute. Tom had decided that the question had offended the potions master after all and was turning his head to attempt to fall asleep once again when the soft female voice answered him.

“It was a very long time ago. Who can remember, my Lord?! Why did you send me away?”

He responded, for once, without thinking.
“I was concerned that you could betray me. ...As, it turns out... my wariness was justified. ...After Regulus... I could not ignore how foolishly I had been behaving. I had to protect myself.”

The silence lingered on again in the darkness. Eventually the young witch’s voice muttered, somewhat resentfully “I may not have been so affected by Lilly’s death, had I not already been ..upset.”

Silence filled the room loudly for a while as Tom considered the remark. The allusion was as much a confession as anything the man might have said. He was startled by the sudden angry railing of the young female voice

“What did you expect, you damned fool?! You plucked me out of my wretched, hellish little life like some manner of dark fairy godmother and placed me at your side.. you jaded me with forbidden wonders..and with power!..and with respect!.. I gave you everything that I was, my Lord.. and then, without a word, you pushed me aside and relegated me to the ranks as if I had not shared every moment of your days with you... shared your private thoughts with you...I loved you!.. And you?! You felt..nothing for me!..”

Tom grimaced, turning his face away. It was all exactly as he feared. And there was nothing to be done for it. Not then... and not now...

“You loved me..” he murmured barely audibly “And yet you betrayed me to those who wished me dead. ...That is why I have no use for love, Severus..”

He turned, shifting and curling himself into position to sleep, curving his arm underneath his pillow and closing his eyes.

He thought he felt a small hand against his back just as he was dropping off to sleep, but Severus didn’t speak again and he drifted off, into a restless shadowy dream in which green eyes pinned him down, screaming, and cut out his heart with a tiny silver scalpel only to force him to eat it.

He woke feeling unsettled and found himself tangled in the clinging embrace of the petite, childlike witch. Severus had his..her.. head nuzzled all the way against Tom’s neck and her legs were slung around his. He gingerly attempted to extract himself and the small form woke immediately, wide pseudo innocent eyes looking up at him silently, as if challenging Tom to chastise him for his unwanted affection.

Tom sighed and simply unwound the small arms from around his neck, sliding backward from the bed and walking to the bathroom. He closed the door behind himself and leaned against it, Shutting his eyes for a moment. For a tiny sickly second he wished that he had never run across Harry. He wondered where his backpack was.. where the portkey bracelet was.. He was trapped in between Potter and Severus.. with no way to leave.. and he was not certain which of the two might be potentially more dangerous to him. Severus was a petty, jealous..resentful man. He always had been. He held Tom’s life in his hands now.. again.

To have brought up old wounds last night was the most thoughtless, unwise thing he could have done.

He showered quickly, only to realise with irritation that he had nothing to put on except the
transfigured nightshirt.
Suppressing the irrational anxiety, he wrapped the towel around his waist, tucking it in and stepping, as confidently as he could simulate, back into the bedchamber.

The little witch Severus was sitting up in bed under the covers, with her legs bent, a book on her lap and a tumbler of firewhiskey held balanced on one knee. She glanced up briefly as he entered and then her eyes slid guiltily back up to wander over him in a way that Tom found disquieting. He had felt the interest of others often.. it was not a new sensation. However, he had never before felt exposed.
It played on his mind once again that Severus was capable of using magic while he remained, to all pragmatic end, defenceless.

The small girl smirked with wry bitterness. “You know.. If I had imagined even for a moment that the most improbable of circumstances would occur and you would suddenly be here.. about to be brought into the campaign..
...That this day would find you standing in my bedchambers...looking as you- ...as you do. Doubtless I would have selected the body I wished to occupy for the event with rather different priorities in mind…”

Tom shifted even more uncomfortably.
“You flatter me, Severus. You always were very skilled at that. Clothing, if you would be so good.”

“I could simply change my appearance again..” Severina continued, heedless. “It would take..mere days.. I could wear the boy that Potter intends to wear.. You could take the other.. the mulatto with the rather large...

Hardly as lovely as your own form, obviously, but a tolerable alternative.. unless you wished a pureblood. I have a substantial number of pureblood males on file. A suitable candidate would be found. ..Potter could play Draco, as was always the plan. He might fumble somewhat with dispatching Lucius, but he would succeed in the end. He is quite good at doing what needs to be done when no alternative remains.
You could remain with me.. I would show you the entire operation. There are few I can think of who are greater strategists than yourself, my Lord... You would be of far greater benefit behind the scenes. If you insist upon ending Lucius.. we could engineer that also perhaps. We have always...worked well together.”

Tom swallowed, the hair on the back of his neck standing on end.
“...We have already discussed this, Severus.”

The girl threw back her firewhiskey and tossed the book to the side, getting out of bed and stalking closer. She was wearing a short black chemise with tiny white bows on the straps. It was ..disturbing.

“Yes.. we have discussed it. You have decided. I recall. But I feel we should perhaps discuss it again.
Never before have I had the ability to oblige you to listen when I wish to argue with you... at least not without reconciling myself to spending the subsequent hour in agony, screaming and begging. In this instance - I wish to debate with you the relative merits of embarking upon a dangerous quest with a rather foolish boy foretold to destroy you.. in comparison with remaining here.. safe.. able to research or pursue any pastime you might wish.. with a devoted servant who will take on any appearance you desire.. who will do whatever you desire...
Surely the rational arguments are overwhelming. You could achieve more with the resources I can make available to you, than you ever could as Draco Malfoy with Potter dangling around after
you. Draco was... and is completely under Lucius’ thumb in ways you do not yet realise. Here...
you would answer to no one."

“Except yourself, Severus, apparently” Tom responded with thinly veiled distaste.
“Your wish to keep me here has nothing whatsoever to do with the ‘resistance’ or Potter’s ability or inability to carry out the tasks required.
..Give me some damn clothing now. I.. I am getting cold.”

The small witch smiled thinly.
“Perhaps you might go and retrieve your clothing from Potter.. I believe he has a satchel somewhere..”

“No.” Tom answered quickly.
“Transfigure something. It doesn’t matter that it will not last. I will be undertaking your new skin procedure today.”

Severina’s snort, chilled him.
“Will you now?! I would say that that is at my discretion, wouldn’t you?! I believe you may have to wait until Potter has completed his transformation before I am able to begin yours.”

Tom unfolded his arms in shock, gesturing wildly, fear and anger warring within him. “But that makes no sense! You are endangering your own goals by delaying in this manner. Someone will have noticed that the Malfoy boy is missing by now! There is no time to.. to.. play games!”

The little potions master had stepped closer with a mercenary determination on her innocent little face. “Fine. Let us not play games then. I will phrase it another way.. If you had to choose between.. continuing as you have been.. or regaining the ability to perform magic and remaining here with me.. which would you select?!” Severina slipped his left hand behind him and drew his wand smoothly.. it had obviously been tucked into a sheath there or held with a sticking spell upon his small back.
He had expected a confrontation.
The wand was not yet raised but the implication was obvious.

Tom became very still although his mind was racing.
“You would..force.. me to remain with you.. then?”
He felt an icy lump of fear in his stomach.

The night before last.. The night he slept in the other room.
He had been trying not to think about it.. but it was inescapably floating up in his mind.
Potter had taken the birch to him..
He had been rather preoccupied as it was taking place.. He hadn’t even noticed. The boy had brought the rod down upon him again and again, a vicious snarl of satisfaction on his face.
But he had used the wrong hand...
Potter.. Harry.. was right handed. He had seen the boy write.. hold coffee cups.. open doors..pick up objects.. Never once did he use his left hand for any task that required any degree of precision.

It was not necessary to say it – to scream the words ‘You did it! It was you! I know you did it to me!’ - the expression on Tom’s horrified face was obviously eloquent enough.

Severina’s pretty little face darkened and a flash of guilt escaped the man’s normally well controlled mask.

“I would force you.. only because you haven’t the sense to see what is best for you.” The sinister
little girl answered softly. “Had you not pushed me away.. the mistake with Potter would never have occurred.. You would have won. I would not be bound in this damned vow to a brat who may one day kill you.. I would not be made to assist him to do it.”

“You never intended to give me a new body at all.. did you?!” Tom asked in a hollow, leaden tone, feeling what tiny tin trinket was left of his heart sink.

At this, the girl frowned and looked almost petulant.
“I did actually! I disagreed with Potters decision to involve you.. but I had every intention of placing you in Draco’s body.. Then you had to flaunt the boy in front of me.. You ordered me to prepare the bed for you both.. “

The girl’s eyes glared at Tom with an intensity that was unmistakably Severus.
Let it never be said that I cannot follow orders. I hoped you would beat seven shades of shit out of the little whore with the toys I gave you...I could not watch, after you gave the boy cause to forbid me to do so – but I listened.. I monitored you via a point plotting spell.. The vow did not count that as ‘watching’..

Tom clenched his fists impotently. He had sneered that the Potions master could watch if he wished.. but he had not truly thought the man would dare..

And, what did I observe?!” The girl snarled violently, her wand sparking black “I observed you show the boy mercy.. I heard you tell him that he was beautiful.. You allowed him to take control! You.. you lost yourself with him! ..With POTTER!! The least deserving wretch in existence! I gave up everything for you! He, by contrast, has destroyed pieces of your soul, my Lord!!..

Severina controlled her face with difficulty, swallowing, her eyes glassy with unshed tears.

“Even then.. Seeing how much more Potter meant to you than I ever had.. I STILL intended to go through with the procedure. I.. simply wanted.. I wanted..” The long eyelashed eyes widened, beseeching Tom to understand.
“I wanted.. to punish you.. to hurt you as I hurt.. I..didn’t intend to pursue things further... I.. I thought.. It was...I was looking down at you...so lovely.. crying.. I have never seen you weep..I doubted you even possessed tear ducts. And.. and I thought.. It could be the last night in which you exist as you are.. as the man I loved.. however much younger you may be now than you were. I thought I might never again have the chance to lie with you.. And.. I thought it would not matter so very much if I were to take what you would never give to me. I could obliviate you.. No one but myself would ever know..”

Tom felt ill.
This.. THIS.. was why love was dangerous. Decades later and the mistakes of his youth were still coming back to haunt him.

The little girl Severus grimaced miserably and a fat tear rolled down her cheek. “But.. I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t remove the memory.” She stepped closer, dropping her wand with a clatter and raising her small hands as if to touch Tom. He retreated hurriedly, feeling the door not far behind him. The girl’s hand’s dropped and her eyes pleaded.

“You.. came apart in my arms. I.. I didn’t intend to take your innocence from you.. I could not have known that you of all men would be...
...And.. I had already begun.. and I wanted you... It seemed fitting that I should be the one to show you that pleasure.
You..enjoyed it.. I know you did. You moved against me.. You moaned...You screamed when you came.. And afterward.. you didn’t push me away.. you didn’t struggle.. you kissed me back..

“I fought you!” Tom cried furiously “I was chained!.. what other choice did you leave me?! And
after.. after you had ..finished.. What exactly was I to do?!!.. Potter is stronger than myself. He made that clear. And if I had somehow attacked and bested him.. killed him.. What would I do about you.. and about this chance to escape monitoring?! You see permission where there was only surrender!”

Severus seemed unwilling to acknowledge the protest. She continued on determinedly.
“You turned to me for protection.. You looked to me for comfort when you were frightened!”

Tom gritted his teeth. “Protection from yourself! See reason!! You attacked me!”

The small girl railed at him, exasperated and insistent.

“You are the one who refuses to see reason, my Lord! Even yesterday while I prepared the extracts... I thought to carry out the procedure with a different body.. I wished only to persuade you not to become involved in this dangerous plot – to persuade you to be safe... You would not hear of it!
I found you broken on the floor of my shower! I thought for a moment that you were dead!!!

“Tom ruffled slightly, defensively. He was perfectly rational when it came to the decision to attempt to seize control of the wizarding world. Severus and his own systems of rationality simply had different levels of priority attached to certain things.
“It was merely an accident. One that you should have anticipated, familiar as you are with the process of extracting the substances you need for the transfer. Perhaps you allowed it to occur, purely to have cause to drag my defenceless form into your bed again.”

Severina snorted, shaking her head ruefully. “I did not think you foolish enough to endanger your health by remaining in a tiled box when you were already light headed. And, on the matter of having you in my bed - You were the one who suddenly chose to speak with me as you have not for .... for many years.. You told me.. in essence that it had not been my fault! That I had done nothing to deserve it. You explained yourself!!..
To address the matter with you has been unthinkable since you shoved me out into the corridor one night without a word.. and last night.. you brought it up, out of the blue.. as if you had been thinking about me.. Perhaps even missing me!
When I curled up against you as you slept.. you put your arms around me.. you pulled me closer! I cannot let you leave again! I will not!! If I give you another body.. you will leave! You are a brilliant, foolish man and I refuse to allow you to die again!”

Tom’s eyes darted in the direction of the door and then down at the wand.
It would only take a twitch of his finger to repel Severus. Just a flick.. He could kill him..
The ugly reality was that he would never be free!... He would never again be able to use magic without fear! As wonderous as Severus’ little procedure might be.. He would never get to experience it.
No. Severus would enslave him, out of love.

“I will not stay” he growled desolately. “Return me to where you found me. I will go on as before.”

The little witch who concealed his Potions Master and former lover froze, pain twisting her pretty lips. Another two tears streaked down her cheeks as her thickly lashed eyes blinked in shock.
Then she darted for the wand.
Tom dove without thinking, as the young witch dropped and scrambled for the wand. He couldn’t allow Severus to reach it! The result could be unthinkable. Reason having failed, the man would, without a doubt, subdue him and employ a harsher mode of control. There were a number of brews that Tom could think of to temporarily or permanently enslave a wizard. Potions far more insidious than the Amortentia his own mother, a rather mediocre witch, had employed to ensnare his father. Severus had always been one of his more ruthless servants when his own interests were at stake. He would not hesitate to administer such a potion. He would likely even succeed in convincing himself that it was ‘for the best’ for Tom also.

The unexpected cry from the corner of the room near the door came too late - Tom and Severina collided, rolling in a tangle of limbs, Tom losing his towel almost immediately and not caring in the slightest. He didn’t even register hearing anything - he was in such a state of wild panic, punching and trying to restrain the smaller squirming form, whose reaching, straining hand was inches from the wooden stick on the floor.

When a pair of arms wrapped themselves around his chest from behind and dragged him backward, Tom lashed out frantically. His elbows and feet connected here and there, making his unexpected assailant grunt in reaction, but the arms around him did not let go. If anything they held him even more tightly.

“Tom! Stop! Stop now! It’s over!”

He froze as a wave of numbing aversion washed over him. Potter. Holding him down again. He couldn’t escape. It was going to happen again!

The boy’s chest pressed against his back. Tom started to shake.

Even with rational thought returning - his mind clearing again and telling him that it hadn’t truly been Harry; that it had been Severus who had attacked him - It did not stop his body from reacting automatically and paradoxically. He wanted to turn and tear Harry’s throat out. He wanted to scream. He couldn’t quite break free of the strangely helpless paralysis pinning him in place. The boy’s scent. His hands. Harry’s body against his skin. It all affected him on a level beyond reason.

“Remove yourself from my person, Potter” he gritted out in a low, icy voice, his entire form trembling.

“I could not agree more! Get your ignorant, thieving little paws off him, Potter! And release your damned command or I promise you - I shall ensure that the entire rebellion falls! You will not manage to prevent it. I have insurance already in place to that end. It was and is my campaign after all, despite your pathetic posturing.”

Tom’s eyes darted back to the little witch on the floor wiping at her bloodied face and trying and failing to touch the wand, her fingers repelled a bare inch from its surface.
Severina was glaring over Tom’s shoulder at Potter. Her eyes flicked between them both, rapidly scanning down Tom’s unclothed body with a deeply possessive expression.

Seeing Severus look at him like that while Harry restrained him was making him feel ill.

He shivered unwillingly as the arms around him loosened and withdrew. The towel was now on the far side of the witch on the floor. He did not intend to go over there to retrieve it.

Reaching for his own wrist automatically, although he knew it was bare, he remembered with rancour the minor argument he had had with Severus the previous morning. The man had insisted that he remove the portkey bracelet or risk contaminating some of the samples. Eventually, unable to sway the potions master, he had removed the bracelet and slipped it into the back pocket of his jeans. In his exhaustion after the many different painful procedures he’d submitted to, he hadn’t remembered to put it back on when he dressed.

It was his own fault for believing in the boy.. allowing himself to be brought here - seduced by fantastical dreams. To think he might escape his pureblood hunters, only to destroy them from within their midst - the very suggestion was ludicrous. He should have walked out of the bar the moment that he recognised Harry Potter on the stage.

Tom considered making a break for the door. Perhaps he might get out of here.. manage to find a door that led to the street and escape into the german muggle world. Severus could not use his wand for the moment, but that state of affairs would likely not last, considering that Potter was a principled little runt and the future of wizarding Britain would mean far more to him than Tom’s own freedom.

Fitting, Tom conceded, since he would gut the boy without a second thought if he were faced with the same choice.

Harry had spent a goodly number of years around the potions master – he should know exactly how vicious and stubborn the man could be – Severus did not threaten idly. Holding his breath, Tom glanced at the door again and wet his top lip nervously.

“You would really destroy everything over this?!” Harry asked in disbelief from about a metre behind him.

“Try me.” the witch growled bloodthirstily.

“...Severus, you fucking arse..” Harry groaned wearily. “I’ll never forgive you for this!”

Realising the boy was about to let Severus off the leash, Tom bounded over the witch on the floor as if the starting shot to a race had been fired, and almost flew at the door, tugging at it uselessly with all his strength. It was locked and warded. He could not get out. Severus was a methodical bastard as always.

There was only apparition. He would have to try to outrun the ministry hitwizards. His mind whirred, constructing a plan even as his eyes darted in wild panic.

Yes.. yes... there was no other truly feasible alternative. He would apparate, transfigure clothes as quickly as he could and then pondjump through cities to make distance, stopping at each for short dashes into the muggle throng to hopefully lose his pursuers.

He was somewhat limited by the distance he could cover safely via apparition, but he thought he saw a path. Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest, Bucharest, Istanbul, Athens, Nicosia, Cairo, Khartoum. Would that be far enough?! He was concerned about the last jump – the distance was too long and he would be rather depleted by that point. He hadn’t eaten yesterday and his health was not optimal after the invasive extractions the previous day. He had to act now. Harry would release the order any second.
“Severus – You can hold your wand, but you’re not to use it against Tom or myself. And you can’t speak.”

Tom’s breath caught. He hesitated on the bare knife edge of disapparating, pulling himself back at the last possible fraction of a second.

Harry had met Severus’ conditions in the ultimatum, but not in the way the man had wanted. In effect, he had chosen Tom over the wizarding world!
An unexpected response, all things considered.
...If there were any remaining chance of getting what the boy had promised him.. Any at all.. it would possibly be worth waiting. Could the boy perhaps order Severus into submission?
Risking an alert by using magic was no small matter. The ministry was relentless when they were trailing. It had been so damn close the last two times..

He realised the boy’s naive error at once after only a glance at the potions master – Harry had not issued any further restrictions and Severus’ intent was painted all over his pretty bruised face – however there was no time to warn the fool. The young witch vanished with a crack.

And the door was still warded.

Naturally.

Forgetting all about his own surprise and momentary hope, Tom groaned in frustrated annoyance at the brat’s stupidity. Had he no sense?! What manner of order was – do not use your wand against one of us?!
Severus could have just as easily transfigured the wardrobe into a nest of poisonous spiders.. or a charging bull.. or could have filled the room with water and denied them the spells that might have preserved their lives. In contrast to what the man might have done.. disapparating was generous. And Severus had known it too!
In all likelihood he would return with someone else’s wand and subdue Harry before he could issue any further commands and then.. then Tom himself could have the choice between certain enslavement of his mind and/or body by an infatuated servant, or endless torture and probable destruction of his physical form by Lucius and the new pureblood coalition.

Returning to plan A, Tom readied his mind once again to disapparate.

“Tom! Don’t!!” Harry cried, keeping his eyes fixed to Tom’s, his hands raised in a pseudo calming gesture. “Don’t do anything! I can fix this! I swear!”

The foolish child – again. What did he think he was playing at?! Did he truly imagine that he would be trusted after displaying his utter ineptitude and throwing away his momentary advantage over Severus!? The boy was an idiot. Let him remain here in this room. Perhaps Severus wouldn’t come back after all.. perhaps he would sulk, leaving Harry to starve. More likely, the boy would eventually try to apparate away and, no longer having the Malfoy boy to protect him from prying eyes, would be caught at once.

Harry reached into his pocket slowly. Tom narrowed his eyes, curiosity and wariness warring. He should leave now. Severus could return at any second. But what if the boy had something.. a portkey..
Yes! The charmed bracelet Tom had made. Perhaps Harry had found it and brought it with him..

“Look.. just wait! Wait, Ok?! Please! I wasn’t just sitting all day staring at the walls yesterday.. or last night either.. we’re not trapped!”

Tom raised a dubious eyebrow, his lips thinning. What was Harry going to do now to make their
situation worse?!

The boy withdrew his hand slowly from his pocket to reveal..a muggle mobile phone?!
Would the idiocy never cease?! Harry thought to call for help with a device that would not even operate within this magically saturated area?!
Tom curled his lip in disgust, tempted to use his final moments in this place to curse the boy before he left.

“It works. I promise! I used it this morning before I crept in here while Severus was checking on the lab. He does it every morning at four because of the live cultures. Just. Just wait alright.. and I’ll have Mione start working on the door. It shouldn’t take long..”

Ignoring the faint fleeting flicker of hope, Tom gestured impatiently for him to get on with it.

Harry seemed to let out the breath he was holding and pulled something open on the little silvery object in his hand, poking at it hurriedly before putting it to his ear, looking at the floor near Tom’s feet with an anxious faraway expression.

“Yeah, Come get us!... ...No..it... it was worse than that! I don’t know if... ...No, he’s gone - I fucked up, but he.....yeah....yeah ok. Hurry!...”
There was a longer pause and then Harry’s face fell sharply. “...What?!!!!...”
His wide eyes darted up to Tom and flickered in honest worry and false reassurance. Whatever it was, it was not good news.

“Fuck.. Fuck!!” Harry hissed softly into the silver box. “Well... just... just...use the backup..... ...No i’m not kidding! Fuck!... ...Yeah, I know.... ...Damnit I KNOW!!.... ...so don’t tell them.... ...Yes. I know, Mione. I helped come up with the thing.... ...No. Just find a way!... ...NO!.. ...No!.. ...I don’t care!.... ...Mione – I DON’T CARE!! Just fucking DO it!”

Harry snapped the silver box shut hard and shoved it in his pocket, starting toward Tom and stopping, hands raised again at the instinctual retreat this evoked. He looked desperate and frustrated and held out a hand beseechingly, obviously wanting Tom to take it.

“Look! We’re leaving! It’s a portkey.. You have to hold onto me or you’ll be left behind. Please Tom.. Please.. just trust me!”

The hand hung in the air, fingers outstretched. Tom weighed up the relative danger of leaping into the unknown with this wretched creature again versus leaving on his own power and attempting to elude capture.
He had run before. He could succeed again. Taking Harry’s hand would almost certainly amount to more pain and greater danger. At least Lucius and the Ministry were predictable.
Shaking his head slightly he released the apparition impulse and turned on the spot.

Nothing happened.
Well. “Nothing” would be inaccurate. He was promptly wearing Harry like a very large and heavy backpack and his eyes were roughly covered by a hand, but disapparition certainly did not ensue.

He struggled with no success to get the boy off his unclothed body and felt Harry’s legs tighten around him, locking around his waist, only moments before the unpleasant tug of a portkey gripped his intestines and dragged them both away

The sensation went on for much longer than any other portkey he’d experienced. He could feel Harry slipping slightly, as if he were being pulled off him. Preferring not to be dropped somewhere unknown, probably from a great height, Tom gripped onto the other boy’s jean-clad legs for grim death.
Harry curled tighter in response, burying his face against the back of Tom’s neck. It was... he didn’t like it.

Now was not an opportune moment to pull away, however. Tom gritted his teeth and ignored the conflicting impulses running through his body.

They landed hard. Brutally hard in fact. Rather than the dainty drift downward or even the sharp drop onto the floor that Severina’s portkey had produced, Tom had the feeling that the ground had reared up and slammed into him in a vicious attempt to shatter every bone in his body. Harry’s legs around him had protected his hips somewhat, but it only meant that his shoulders got the brunt of the blow.

Harry, his hand still firmly over Tom’s eyes, was wincing and groaning. He gave a faint cough.

“Don’t open your eyes.” his soft voice hushed against his ear. “This place is protected by more than just a fidelius. When they come – just keep quiet and don’t move. I'll fix things as soon as I can. I won’t let anyone hurt you, Tom!”

And indeed – there were people approaching somewhere. Tom could hear a door unlocking. It was apparently an extensively secured door. A number of different locks unlocked before it gave a metallic creak in opening.

He tensed in dread. Yes. It turned out there was a way for Potter to fuck things up for him just that little bit more.

Would it really..truly.. be worse to be discovered by the ministry, than to be exposed within the stronghold of those who had suffered under his own campaign.. who had lost friends and family to the death eaters and had sworn their lives to the fight?!

“Har- oh bloody hell!” a pleasantly deep male voice started and then seemed to halt in shock.

“He’s...um...”

Tom felt a charm settle upon him and his lower body was suddenly sheathed in trousers.

“Who is that?!” a new male voice demanded suspiciously. “Herman – what have you done?! The device was not to be used except in dire circumstances and it was never to be used when Harry was in the company of others. Jasper.. Devis – Get in here.”

“He insisted, Purdue!” a different male voice protested. “It was an order – and he brought ...er.. whoever that is.. on purpose. Look at the way they’re lying! Clearly it was Harry’s decision to bring him – and if Harry trusts them.. then maybe-“

“No, Herm! You know how easy it would be to fuck everything up that we’ve worked so hard to achieve. I don’t care how it looks – till we can get this sorted out – I want him put in stasis in the box.

“...Alright. You’re probably right. -Till we sort it out.”

There was a silence. Tom wished he could see what was going on.

“Herman... I’ve never..in all the years that i’ve known you, heard you agree to put someone in the box. ...What’s going on?! You know who this fucker is, don’t you?! It’s someone that you didn’t agree with bringing here. ...Out with it! If-“

Harry spoke up now – finally, in Tom’s opinion – as the boy moved away, uncurling himself from Tom’s back but leaving his hand in place over his eyes.

“Leave off, Purdue. I know I broke the protocol – but you know damn well that I set the protocol and i’m telling you – you’re not raising a hand against him. You don’t need to know who he is.
He is vital to our plans. He is trusted by me. I vouch for him. I don’t want to hear this bullshit. Stop wasting my time. Go and hunt down Snape – he’s gone rogue.”

“What?!! Why?!! What the hell happened last night?! Everything was fine at his last blip. What could make him run from you???”

“You don’t need to know that either right now. Just track his splinter now and drag him back. Don’t bother using the one he’s aware he’s got – Merlin knows what’ll come back. He’s probably extracted it and planted it elsewhere by now. Write that one off. Use the failsafe. You need to send a few people back to the safehouse to recover everything in the lab. Do it now before we lose the samples. And get me Creevey and Andros in here!”

Tom couldn’t help raising his eyebrows in surprise beneath the warm hand covering his eyes. Who was this boy?! Surely not Potter.. He sounded like an entirely different wizard. A leader.. Someone far more dispassionate, unyielding and mercenary than the pretty green-eyed stripper than he had seen dancing on a stage in a muggle bar.

The sounds of boots hurrying away gave him a momentary flash of nostalgia. His own servants had snapped to obey his commands with a similar urgent cadence.

“Harry..” the first male voice said softly, sounding worried. “You can’t give him access! He’s..”

“I know who he is, Hermione.” Harry muttered. “I think you’ll find that I can and will bring him in with us. You know that I’m planning on taking him on the mission with me. He can handle the purebloods – I’ll deal with the halfblood part.”

“HARRY!!” the wizard sounded horrified. “Malfoy is the key to everything and we only have enough extract for one generation! Think about what you’re doing!! Since you were born, he’s tried to-“

“I know” Harry placated wearily. “I know. But.. he won’t anymore, alright? We’ve reached an understanding.”

Tom wondered when exactly that understanding had been reached and why he hadn’t been invited to the occasion. He certainly still had every intention of killing the boy at the earliest convenient opportunity. Harry was a fool if he truly considered Tom his ally.

“But-“

“No, Mione. If i’m going to put my life in his hands when we’re inside Malfoy Manor – i’m going to trust him with everything. Everything”

A small knot of disquiet settled in Tom’s gut. He told himself that it was good that Harry was such a fool. It would make it easier to kill him. But..few others.. at least, few others that were sane, had ever placed so much faith in him. To place their life in his hands.. that was one thing. All of his death eaters had done that. To place the lives of their friends and family in his hands – that was much more. While his death eaters had done that too – most had not realised it and of those that did, hardly any had done it intentionally – Some who had realised it had attempted to recant their vow to him – or had tried to escape by some means or other. Lucius was a case in point. Harry, however, was offering still more than that. He was risking everything that he and countless others had worked for – risking it upon a man who had sworn to kill him.. who had tried to kill him many times in the past.. who he had reason to expect might be once again desiring his death.
Tom couldn’t decide whether it was an act of carefully considered strategy or one of lunacy. It was however more than anyone had wagered upon him before.

Harry continued issuing instructions, his voice cool.

“Snape.. well.. Snape’s a much bigger arsehole than I thought. We’ll talk about that later. For now – just get the prick back and get him under control. We need him to carry out the procedure on us both. Draco has been off the radar too long. There’s only so long that Dennis can keep up the facade – someone will notice his behaviour or catch him taking the polyjuice if he’s there long enough. Another three days will be cutting it close. Lucius and his cronies are more than familiar with polyjuice effects.

If Snape has to be obliviated – if he has to be threatened – fuck, if he has to be imperiused or tortured – he is going to flip us tonight.”

“..Ok Harry..” the other wizard responded softly. “I’ll trust you... If you-“

Another couple of people neared. Tom could hear their steps approaching the room. One of them had a particularly lazy scuffing manner of walking.

“Hey – Harry! You’re here! I’m so glad to see you!! It’s been.. gosh.. it’s been ages since you’ve last been here! What’s happening? Are you staying for a while? You wouldn’t believe what’s been going on this week!”

The new voice – another young male – was sickeningly bubbly and enthusiastic. Tom wished he could curse him.. or kick him.. or at least glare at him. On his side on the floor where he still lay, Harry’s hand over his eyes, none of those options were available.

“Hey Colin..” he heard Harry respond with a weary simulacrum of the other boy’s irritating breathless excitement. “Can you come over here for a second? There’s something I need to tell you. Mione – could you maybe tell Andros for me?”

The other boy – Andros – hadn’t said anything since he came in. Tom heard “Mione’s” quiet agreement.

A soft hum in the back of his mind told him that some manner of shielding or silencing spell had been erected around them all.

“Sure Harry” ‘Colin’ answered cheerfully. Quiet footsteps approached.

“Just.. crouch down a bit, Col’ – I need to whisper it to you and I can’t get up right now.”

Another shuffle resulted and Tom felt the other wizard’s trousered calf brush against his back. He moved slightly to remove the contact.

Harry’s whisper was too soft for him to pick up. A moment later ‘Colin’ slurred in a strangely dull.. empty.. almost dead-sounding voice “The headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix is found at twenty one degrees fifty nine North.”

A new voice spoke up a few moments later – Tom assumed it must be the wizard referred to as Andros. His voice sounded deeper, gravellier and older than ‘Colin’s’ – although equally hollow and mindless.

“The headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix is found at one hundred and fifty nine degrees, forty one West.”

Tom blinked his eyes against Harry’s hand, which had not yet moved from over them. At the feathery movement, Harry clamped down tighter and, incongruently, said in a bright voice “Thanks for all your help Colin, Andros – it was splendid to see you again.”
It was almost possible to hear the two wizard’s minds start turning again. Colin replied cheerily “You’re welcome, Harry! I wish I could help you more. Do you think that you’ll have a job for me on the next-“

Harry cut him off impatiently. “Could be, Col – Hey.. I’ll try to come and catch up with you guys later, alright. I need to help my friend get settled. He still has to be brought in and you know – you can’t be here when I call for the secret keeper.”

“Oh.. Oh.. alright, Harry – I’ll see you later then hopefully. Come on Mika, I think something was happening in the control room before we came down.” The other boy grunted a vague, disinterested response and Colin prattled on some more. The voices faded as they distanced themselves down a corridor.

Tom was unprepared for Harry to move closer to him again and didn’t quite manage to check the slight flinch in his muscles. Harry took a breath and murmured “sorry..” His hand stroked over Tom’s shoulder lightly, as if to soothe him. The actual result was the opposite. Tom growled through gritted teeth “If you could..stop.. touching me now..”

The soft sigh that Harry emitted sounded sorrowful. “I will.. In a second, ok? I promise.” He leaned even closer then. Tom felt soft lips brush against the shell of his ear and then Harry whispered. “The headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix is found one hundred and thirty four metres below the third peak from north”

Tom furrowed his brow. He could feel the faint pointillist sensation of a revealed fidelius but he still had no real sense of where exactly he was. Somewhere under a mountain peak, obviously. From the longitude and latitude.. somewhere in the pacific perhaps?

Harry pressed a light kiss against his ear before he moved back again. His hand slipped away a few moments later, almost reluctantly, as if he wished to continue touching Tom. Cautiously, Tom cracked one eyelid, seeing only white.

“It’s ok now. You can look.” Harry confirmed softly.

“What would have happened if I had looked before?” Tom wondered aloud.

“You would have suffered a seizure and slipped into a coma.” The wizard by the door answered before Harry could get a word in. “And that might have been better for everyone concerned really – Harry – I need to talk to you about this! Have you thought about what could happen if anyone finds out about him?! You’re.. you’re seriously risking the stability of the organisation here!! And WHY??! You don’t need him! You’ve already got everything arranged. We’ve been over the plan in detail and now you’re changing things at the last minute!! It’s taken years of work to get here and we have days till you have to go into the field and...and... why is Voldemort at all necessary in any way?? Why-“

Tom had turned and sat up at some point during the naggy little monologue and was now resting back on his palms, looking around the room curiously and attempting to ignore the prim and proper wizard in his late twenties who was lecturing them. The room resembled, if anything, some kind of vault. It was irregularly shaped however – its walls were curved and its ceiling rounded .. it reminded him of being inside some kind of strange white capsule. He could see a wide crack between the floor on which they sat and the walls. The door was half a metre thick and had strange holes all around its periphery. His attention was dragged back to the worried, ranting wizard – who he would have suspected,
alone from the tone and expression on the figure’s face, might actually have originally been a witch, even if he had not recognised the name ‘Hermione’ from innumerable reports on the boy saviour and his little schoolfriends.

Hermione.. Granger he presumed, now wore the body of a wizard just a few years below his prime. He had a rather skinny build and strawberry blonde hair that was pulled back in a short queue at the back of his neck. Behind his square framed glasses, his light blue eyes were bloodshot, as if he had been awake too long. He had a rather narrow face with an aquiline nose, thin pale lips, a pointy chin and he wore muggle attire - sand coloured corduroy trousers and a cornflower blue shirt. The overall impression, Tom thought, was of a political-activist cum-academic, who had not ventured out of their office in too long.

Harry seemed to have decided to just let her bluster herself out.

Tom yawned and made a circular ‘move it along’ motion with one hand, which seemed to infuriate the witch/wizard no end. sHe stopped, lips pressing together in a thin white line as sHe glared at him.

“Harry! Don’t you have anything to say?! I mean, really.. do you not see what he’s doing?! Look at him.. I mean.. really.. just look! There’s no way you can trust this. He can’t even be bothered to fake willing!”

‘Hermione’ actually folded his arms petulantly and tapped one foot.

Tom glanced to the side and found that Harry was indeed looking at him. With a faintly amused smirk in fact. The expression softened when their eyes met briefly. For a moment, something like pain shot through Harry’s eyes.

“We need to talk” the green eyed wizard said in a tone that, in contrast to that used by ‘Hermione’ only minutes prior, conveyed the impression of an absolutely non negotiable future event.

Tom shifted his gaze away again, feeling the slight scowl nest upon his features once more.

“Hermione..” Harry said with a resigned little sigh “You can tell me all about why you think i’m wrong later on and I promise I’ll give you explanations for my decisions. But for the moment – I need to take Tom to a room and make sure he’s safe and comfortable. If you could watch the Snape situation and come get me if anything happens, i’d appreciate it.”

The blonde wizard before them huffed in frustration and turned on the balls of her feet, marching out in a muttering snit.

Harry grinned faintly, watching him go.

“I know that was a bit.. er.. full-on” he chuckled in Tom’s general direction “but she really is completely brilliant. I swear. She came up with the splinter portkeys that can be reverse activated. We travelled here with one. They are readable off a master map too! It makes it so much harder to betray us if your every movement is observed and you can be pulled back here at a moment’s notice.

We chip all our members like muggles chip their pets now.”

Tom snorted dismissively. “The dark mark was superior. If I were able to risk activating the connections – I could determine the present location, health and emotional disposition of each of my servants. In addition I could inflict pain upon them..summon them forcibly to me via apparition, provided they were not behind wards preventing such movement...”

“yeah.. I know.” Harry interrupted rudely. “Hermione based the principles of the splinter upon the dark mark actually. But.. its different. Its hidden – not even the person themselves has to be aware of it. If we could chip the key players in Lucius regime – we could remove them all at once if our
plans failed. It’s our back up plan.

Harry climbed to his feet and offered a hand down to Tom.

It was met with a cool stare as Tom climbed carefully to his feet unassisted.

Again the boy heaved a quiet sigh.

“A room.. yeah. Let’s go to my room. We shouldn’t talk here.”

“Your room” Tom enquired acidly. “I will not share a room with you.”

The frustration this provoked looked painful.
“Look.. you have to, alright?! I need to make sure you’re safe here – people are curious...suspicious. If they find out about you then we might have a little problem, since everyone will suddenly have an opinion on you joining me in the mission and I’m pretty sure that a faction will definitely want to kill you. Hermione is right – it could destabilise everything. My room has unique wards – none of the others can access it. You’ll be safe there. I’ll sleep on the couch and you can sleep on the bed..”

At Tom’s sharpened glare – Harry amended himself “Or the floor.. or.. or you can tie me up if you want. Or.. I guess I could sleep somewhere else. Hermione will let me sleep in her room if only to bitch at me all night about the bad idea it was to bring you here.”

Tom didn’t respond to the issue of where to put Harry but nodded to the door to suggest the boy get a move on.
This must be what living within Gringotts would be like, Tom observed with displeasure. Everywhere metal gantries and the doors were like vault doors – or like doors in muggle ships or submarines. He had not had the opportunity (nor desired an opportunity) to examine such edifices before but he had been made peripherally aware of the things in his youth. They were very...solid... to one who could not use magic. And the strangely thick and oily feeling of Potter’s wards – wards which the boy had had to lead him through by the hand - only worsened his unease. He paced away to the bed, feeling trapped. The room was spartan. A small metallic box with a generous single bed, a tiny desk and metallic chair, a set of shelves with clothing stacked neatly within, a small narrow and unappealing sofa that seemed mere fabric covered board.

“I’m sorry!”

The incongruity of the first words to spill from the apparent ‘commander’ of the order of the phoenix stilled him in his pacing. He turned slowly, narrowing his eyes at the youth. Potter stood, visibly distressed, green eyes burning and glassy.

“What exactly are you apologising for?” Tom managed sourly.

Harry took three quick steps toward him and it was with the utmost self control that he forced himself not to take a step backward in response.

“I shouldn’t have left you.. I should have refused to go, that night. No, it was already ruined by then – really, I shouldn’t have held you down. If I hadn’t done that then you wouldn’t have made me leave and he wouldn’t have had the chance to..”

Tom glared sharply. If the boy mentioned it.. if he used the word...

Harry seemed to comprehend and stilled, looking down apologetically. Pressing his lips into a hard line, Tom considered his options.

“I agree. It was beyond unacceptable. And it is also irrelevant now. Why am I here, Potter?! Even if you manage to recapture Severus – According to his explanations to me during the extraction procedures, the transformation process is known only to him and is exceedingly complex. Assuming it were possible to draw the knowledge from him, it would not be possible to duplicate his skill, and the man himself cannot be trusted to administer it to me. I will not submit myself to unconsciousness in his presence. There is thus no reason for me to remain here. Have one of your servants prepare portkeys to each of the major cities in South America. I will take my chances as a muggle once again.”

The distressed boy before him seemed to become even more panicky. “No! Please, Tom – I’ll fix it! I’ll make him do it somehow.. or I’ll find another way. I can’t let you.. you can’t... don’t.. Please don’t leave!

Harry wrung his hands and seemed on the brink of leaping at him. “I.. I need you.. I can’t do this! They all think I can, but they’re wrong! All I know is how to dance.. how to get someone into my
bed. I haven’t got a clue about purebloods or the ministry or any of the stuff I’d need to fool Lucius Malfoy and get support from the others. I can’t do it! I can be a slave.. I’m good at that.. I can talk to the others.. I can.. I can serve you. But if you go.. If you leave – everything will fall apart because he’ll figure out that I’m not Draco and then he’ll drag the information out of me and everything will be ruined. Britain will be lost.

Look.. I know.. that you.. you can’t stand the sight of me anymore. I’m sorry! I’m so sorry!!! I can’t help that. Soon I’ll look different, though and you won’t have to ever think about that again. Please, Tom. You know it wasn’t me. Not really! It won’t be so bad if I look like that boy in the file folder – surely!

And –and if it is, you don’t have to fuck me. You can just..” Harry’s face tightened slightly and he swallowed “-torture me.. or something. Whatever you want. I’ll do it. Just stay!”

Tom felt his own lip curl slightly into something between a sneer and a snarl. This display was too similar to the simpering begging that the boy had given him in New Zealand. It had been pure deception then and the odds were good that it was equally false now.

“You are a blemish, Potter.” He hissed “Since I first laid eyes upon you, my every move has been-

He was interrupted by the dull clank of the boy dropping to his knees on the metallic floor.

“Punish me. Just.. just do whatever you need to do. I won’t ever resist again. Just.. “

Tom found his own heel lashing out at Harry’s face before he even fully registered the words. It didn’t matter if the boy was a lying little wretch – he really emphatically wished to hurt him right now.

The youth flew backward with an oof and blood bloomed from his nose, racing down his face. It was gratifying.

Bare footed, he kicked the boy squarely between his splayed knees and then raised his leg again, stamping down in the same place. Harry gave a choked cough and retched, clenching his eyes, his body curling slightly in defense as his hands cupped himself.

Tom moved forward and stamped down upon his stomach with his heel. This seemed to choke the boy further. He grunted his pain as the wind was knocked out of him. Harry’s struggling breaths, tight with agony, pushed the idea into Tom’s head further. He moved to straddle Harry’s belly, sitting down hard and thereby pinning the boy’s hands (as they were still tightly gripping his own wounded balls). Thus positioned, with unimaginable satisfaction, he wrapped his hands around the slender white throat, narrowing Harry’s airway slowly but surely. There was a new panic in the Avada green eyes as Harry wrenched them open, looking up with tear blurred terror into Tom’s face.


Harry blinked a few times and Tom felt the arms pinned beneath him struggle slightly. He smiled down at the boy and tightened his grip around his throat, appreciating the reddening flush of the hated face of his enemy.

Then the boy beneath him went entirely limp. He simply looked up at him acceptingly, eyes wide and popped with pressure. His lips formed, with difficulty the word ‘please’.

Tom held on until he passed out.

When Harry awoke with a start, he punched him in the mouth and replaced his hands over the boy’s throat. Harry panicked a little in disorientation before returning to himself and then once again going limp and acquiescent. This time he did not plead. A few tears slid down the sides of his face but he stared up into Tom’s face with something that looked disturbingly like resignation.
and trust.

After he had throttled the boy to unconsciousness for the fourth time it became tedious. He glanced about the room for something else to use on Harry. There was nothing of much interest. The room was at best functional and at worst rather reminiscent of a prison cell. Nothing was surplus here. He stood smoothly and stepped back from the prone, and now somewhat more bloodied, boy who lived.

“Get up. Do not turn over. Balance on your hands and feet. Raise your body.”

Harry struggled to comply, obviously still in considerable discomfort from his kicks. He failed to drag himself up at first but eventually, with difficulty managed to pull himself sufficiently aloft to form a relatively horizontal plane with his body. Tom narrowed his eyes. “Higher” he demanded. The boy strained his muscles and arched just a little more, lifting up a few inches.

“Remain as you are.”

Satisfied for the moment, Tom stalked to the back of the boxy room and sat down on the bed. It was suitably comfortable. He pushed himself back till he could lean against the wall and watched contentedly as the uncomfortable position the boy held became painful and then intolerable. Although it did not take more than a few minutes, the boy endured longer than he expected in light of the previous abuse, he noted with vague appreciation. When the shaking of his thighs and arms set in eventually Harry alternated between holding his head up and letting it fall back. Both positions were obviously increasingly uncomfortable for him.

“Tom...” he bit out breathlessly when his entire body was shaking in painful tension “please.. I.. can’t.”

“You will remain as you are until I choose to release you or you will go and retrieve the portkeys I require.” Tom informed him dryly.

The tightening of the ‘savior’s’ jaw as he clenched his teeth and managed to nod was quite aesthetically pleasing, he decided. Almost pleasant enough to forget how it had felt when he had... No. No he would not think of that. He did not want the feeling of helplessness to infect this quite enjoyable moment.

Harry struggled on for another few minutes. It was clear that every second was an ongoing battle for him. Tom watched as he tried to take the tension off his limbs one by one, and smiled wider, knowing that this would only increase his difficulties. When the boy’s stomach started to dip below the horizontal, Tom slid off the bed and strolled over, gripping him lightly at the waist and lifting him up to the desired height. Harry had opened his eyes and looked up at him hopefully, gratefulness hovering on the edge of his expression. When Tom let go of him again the moment that his muscles were tensed to the appropriate degree, the hope in the green eyes died again and he clenched them once more, furrowing his brows in concentration.

Tom smirked and returned to his position on the bed to watch Harry continue to battle his own body’s will to collapse.

“You may rest” he offered pseudo-generously when he observed the boy slowly subsiding in exhaustion again, his belly dipping down out of the arch.
Harry let himself drop onto the floor at once, panting, and scrunching his face in discomfort. After a few seconds his hands wandered to his thighs, trying to massage the muscles that were, doubtless, cramping and twanging in reaction.

“Enough” Tom said with great satisfaction. “Resume the position”

Harry’s eyes shot open and he looked over at him in horrified disbelief.

“Tom! I.. can’t yet. I need a minute. My legs—“

“Now. Or the portkeys. It is entirely your choice, Potter.”

Harry wailed low in frustration and forced his cramping limbs to obey, struggling back up into a lopsided and half collapsed arch. One of his legs was bouncing as the muscles in it spasmed.

He was still suffering in that state several minutes later when there was a knock at the door. Tom found himself unreasonably pleased when the pitiful wretch did not even attempt to move out of his pose and turned his head questioningly to Tom.

“Very well. Answer it” he commanded with a satisfied smirk.

Harry lowered himself more carefully this time and caught his breath. The knock at the door sounded again more loudly and there was a slightly worried cadence to it now.

“Yeah, yeah. Hold your bloody horses, Mione” the black haired boy on the floor muttered, turning slowly and lifting himself up onto rubbery limbs.

He limped to the door and unlocked it, opening it slowly.

The familiar blonde wizard on the other side looked him over solicitously – his face drawing sharply in shock.

“Oh my God.. WHAT has he done to you now?! I only left you alone for an hour and a half and he was supposed to be sleeping, wasn’t he?! Your face is covered in blood and you can barely stand! Harry! You can’t do this! I won’t let you do this to yourself!” The once-witch reached forward to try to grab Potter by the arm and drag him out of the room but her hands met the edge of the ward as if it were a solid surface.

“Harry! I’m serious – you have to come with me now. You can’t stay with him. He’ll kill you!”

Tom scrutinised the green eyed boy’s reaction. Harry seemed to sigh slightly and responded in a weary voice. “I’m fine, Mione. You’re always fussing. Tom didn’t do much to me. I’m tired because I’ve been working out and the punch – well I deserved it, anyway. I’d forgotten about the blood. I’ll wash it off in a bit. You have news about Snape.”

Tom scrutinised the green eyed boy’s reaction. Harry seemed to sigh slightly and responded in a weary voice. “I’m fine, Mione. You’re always fussing. Tom didn’t do much to me. I’m tired because I’ve been working out and the punch – well I deserved it, anyway. I’d forgotten about the blood. I’ll wash it off in a bit. You have news about Snape.”

The blonde wizard frowned, her/his eyes flicking between Harry’s weary stubbornness and Tom’s restrained smugness. It was obvious that the boy’s lie had not fooled Hermione and that she understood it to mean that Harry would not allow her to persuade him to leave. Tom tilted his head slightly, allowing his smile to widen maliciously. The blue eyes darted away from his own quickly, settling back on green orbs and hardening.

“Fine. I think you’re an idiot, Harry. But if you’re not willing to listen to reason, I’m not going to watch you self destruct. We’ve tracked Severus to Nepal but he’s put up anti portkey wards. He’s probably trying to locate and extract the splinter. He won’t be able to, but for the moment we have a choice between sending a party to recover him or waiting for him to leave the anti portkey ward. I’d recommend we go after him. If we give him enough time he’ll figure out a way to get around the splinter without removing it. I haven’t found any but that doesn’t mean that he won’t. He and I don’t exactly think alike. I’ve no idea what approaches might occur to him that I haven’t
Harry seemed to think on the matter. “I’ll go after him.” he said finally, with a grimace. “I’m the only one who can order him in.”

With surprise Tom heard himself countermanding the resolution. “No. Send others. You will remain here, Potter.”

The blonde wizard was nodding. “As much as I hate to agree with anything that he might say – you can’t go after him Harry. He’s not stupid. If he’s trying to get away from us then he’s going to be prepared for you if you come. We can’t afford the risk... maybe you should come to the control centre with me and oversee things though.

Harry however had turned when Tom had interjected and was looking at him with that damnable hope in his eyes again. “No. I’ll stay right here, Mione. You can keep me updated. Send Whitehall, Jellicote, Moorly, Anders, and Simeon. I don’t care who else goes but don’t send Switl or Banks.”

He was already closing the door on the distressed response of the blonde, locking it absenty and then turning back toward Tom. It was with a low burning determination that he slowly lowered himself to his knees and waited, his eyes fixed to Tom’s own.

It took only a slight cooling of Tom’s expression to shift the green eyes submissively to the ground, nevertheless Potter remained silent; waiting.

He examined the picture of contrite hopeful obedience before him while idly considering what else he might do to the boy. After a while, Harry shifted slightly on his sore knees before steeling himself and stilling once more.

Perhaps he could.. balance.. the feeling of being overpowered by Severus in Potter’s form. Perhaps..if he were to re-enact the event..with the roles reversed?...

Tom considered the prospect from all angles. It was not., entirely loathsome to him. He might be able to be persuaded to carry out the act without too much revulsion. The slight twitch from the region of his pants informed him that the flesh was quite willing to be a party to the idea.

“Disrobe.”

The boy did not raise his head, did not shift his eyes. He did not flinch or stiffen or display any untoward movement at all. Nevertheless relief, hope and joy streamed from him unmistakeably. His fingers moved quickly and efficiently to his robe fastenings, freeing them and then slipping the robe off his shoulders to the floor and reaching for the hem of his teeshirt. He was unclothed within seconds it seemed and his body clearly displayed the unhealed scars and bruises of their time together. The silvery lines adorning the boy’s stiffening appendage were quite aesthetically pleasing.

Tom examined his own reaction to the development uneasily. It was quite paradoxical. He had hardened further and the faint burn of desire was welling up however his stomach was swirling queasily and he knew that the speeding of his heart and the chilly prickling of his skin into gooseflesh was not a product of lust. He felt confused by the conflicting impulses within him to approach and retreat simultaneously. If anything, it was the small pull to touch the wretched boy even now that was most disconcerting. The need to escape was entirely logical to his mind.
“Clothe yourself and leave, Potter” he snarled, turning his gaze away from the exposed youth. “I have changed my mind. I wish to rest and I will not do so while you remain here.”

The kneeling wizard reacted with sudden and unexpected violence – and with strength that Tom had in no way expected him to have, in light of how weak he had appeared – he launched himself at him upon the bed, catching him off guard and bearing him down to the mattress effortlessly. It was all Tom could do to hold in the entirely improper cry of fright that had filled his throat. He struggled with frantic mindlessness, managing to knee and kick the unclothed body above him several times to no effect. Harry allowed him to do so with terrible pitiless patience, his face above Tom’s own calm and determined. Eventually in despair and frustration, exhausted, Tom stilled again, trying to catch his breath.

“Let me go” he hissed, hating the desperation bleeding through in his voice. “Get off me, Potter or I shall...” he hesitated, unable to come up with any viable threat at all. “I... I...will..” he fumbled even as unexpected hot burning tears prickled at the corners of his eyes dangerously, threatening to fall and broadcast his weakness to his worst enemy.

Harry’s voice was low and soft; unsettling him even more in its gentleness. “It’s ok, Tom. I won’t do anything. And...and I won’t leave again. Not after last time. I shouldn’t have left you alone. I’m sorry. I really am. I should have protected you better.”

Tom felt twin icy pearls of salt water escape the corners of his eyes and sear down the sides of his face, damning him. He clenched his traitorous eyes shut, grimacing, and fought to keep further moisture restrained within.

“Spare me your condescending drivel, boy. I do not require anything from you. You will arrange for me to leave this place at once.”

Even he could not ignore the contradiction in his words and the sharp bitter awareness of his own dependency upon his enemy’s generosity stabbed him again painfully.

“No.” Harry murmured sadly from close above him. “No. I won’t. I’m sorry for that too, Tom. It probably isn’t any consolation to you, considering how much you hate to lose control – but you won’t remember what happened to you soon and then-“

The former Dark Lord’s mind spun as he wrenched his eyes open in horror to meet once again the disconcertingly calm green gaze of the former ‘boy’ who lived. Harry looked reluctant and sorrowful but, equally, resolute and unwavering. He was going to have him obliviated!!

“NO!!” he gasped out desperately, interrupting what Potter was about to inform him would happen after he had had his memory reamed by some, most likely insufficiently skilled, subordinate witch or wizard. “NO! YOU CANNOT!!” he half demanded, half pleaded. And then he did plead, despising himself for it even as he was incapable of suppressing it. “Please! Potter! Harry. Do not.. don’t.. I... My mind.. I can’t...”

Harry’s face had taken on a pained tightness and his soft voice broke at first when he tried to speak. “...I don’t know how else to fix this” he confessed. “I don’t know how to help you. If you forget what happened...maybe...”

Tom shook his head urgently, beseeching with his eyes. “You would do exactly as Severus intended.. you would addle my reason to force me to submit to your will. Please.. Let me go! Let me return to the life I had before I stumbled upon you in that bar. You need never concern yourself that I will seek to harm you again. Let me live free and in possession of my faculties.”

He was frightened to realise that he meant it. If he could only return to the miserable state of bare survival he subsisted in up till last Saturday night, he would take care never to allow his path to cross again with Harry Potter or, indeed, any other from the wizarding world. He would content himself with the awareness each time he woke in the cold, that he was free to come and go as he pleased and, if careful, would not be molested, brainwashed or enslaved in any way.
“I.. need you” Harry whispered sadly. “I’m sorry.”

His lips did not move in the slightest but Tom felt the faint whispery tingle of a spell flash over him. In shock and sudden understanding he caught the other wizard’s apologetic expression and comprehended the reason for the thick oily texture of the wards he had had to be brought through to enter this chamber. Harry had been utterly certain that he would be safe here with him because the room had a selective dampening field. It was shielded from external detection or engagement and Harry’s was the only magic that would function within its confines. The boy had voluntarily submitted himself to the physical punishment that Tom had required of him, probably in the hope that this would assuage the tension between them now and bring him back to a position from which he could manipulate the Dark Lord with desire and flattery.

Tom did not even waste the effort of fighting against the partial body bind. His terror at imminent cognitive violation had given way to a paralysing mortification at his own foolishness and credulity. Potter was in no way weak. He was, rather, an even better actor than Tom himself had been at his age. The knowledge was bitter that he would shortly be forced to forget all the events that had led him to understand how completely the boy was in mastery of their situation. He would be led by the nose once again; believing himself in control; believing himself fortunate.

“You won’t believe me, but I really do regret it, Tom”
The words were indeed meaningless.

“If I thought there was another way…” Harry shook his head sadly “But we don’t have the time to waste on this. It shouldn’t have happened. I didn’t know about..” he hesitated and his face tightened marginally before he continued “-about your..uh.. history.. with Sev – or i’d have taken it into account when I was planning. He shouldn’t have had the opportunity to-“ Again the boy broke off and this time closed his eyes, bowing his head slightly with harsh recrimination on his face. When he looked up again and met Tom’s eyes, his expression was flinty and his gaze could have cut diamonds.

“No one will ever know but me, Tom. What he did - It never happened! When I get Sev back here, I’ll take the memory from him too and then it’ll be gone. No one will find out. You’ll never have to know.”

Tom shook his head slightly, wanting to shrink away from that Avada green stare. Never before had he had the slightest inkling of how others might have felt when faced with him.

“Please... don’t!” he whimpered, unable even to care that he sounded pathetic.

Harry ignored him entirely and raised one hand, placing his fingertips delicately on the plane of Tom’s forehead in a precise alignment with the four most significant pressure points, his thumb resting just above the bridge of Tom’s nose for stability.

Somewhere within his blinding panic, he was reassured that the boy at least knew what he was doing in this arena. His hand was perfectly arrayed for the least damaging form of wandless targeted-obliviation. The practiced ease with which he had found the pressure points made clear that Harry had used this tool often in the past.

He hoped that the boy had not obliviated him before. He truly had no way of knowing. With that assumption however, and the realisation that his mind was not about to be butchered, the horror gave way slightly for something almost approximating relief. The knowledge.. the memory.. of his weakness would be gone. No one would know, Potter had said. He would not have to experience that sickening fear any longer.

Not quite understanding why he was doing it, beyond the fact that he was presently so degraded that the honesty changed little, he allowed his thoughts to slip across his tongue in a whisper.

“Thank you”

This, of all things stopped the beautiful youth poised above him. He felt Harry’s fingers slip from
his skin as the hand moved from his field of vision. Cautiously, as if sudden movement might break the fragile permissiveness of the moment, Harry leaned lower and finally slowly brushed his lips against Tom’s own. The feeling was as always magnetic and pleasurable. Without thought, he parted his lips, seeking to deepen the chaste kiss he was receiving. The younger wizard allowed it and responded tentatively.

Harry’s kiss was a broken, careful thing, redolent of uncertainty, regret and sorrow and he did not try to take the lead and plunder Tom’s mouth. However, as Tom’s own tongue slipped, hot and wet, into the other’s mouth; supple muscles each slowly stroking and caressing the other; he felt Harry’s arms slide beneath him, holding him gently and protectively. His eyes slid closed and, for once, he gave himself over to the pure sensation. There was, incomprehensibly, something quite freeing in utter powerlessness. Nothing could be done against the beautiful and magically formidable wizard who was presently running his fingers tenderly through Tom’s hair, unwinding his mind with slow, pleasurable arousal. Even the disturbing feeling of not being in control was twisted into something like excitement. He had no particular will to do anything to stop Harry. He could enjoy this and know that he would not remember having done so later. It evoked a strange peace in his mind.

It was over all too quickly. Harry broke away with a pained expression, his eyes dropping in miserable, guilty aversion.

“Sorry” he whispered again, his voice thick. “I wish...”

Tom didn’t find out what Harry wished because in the next moment the distraught boy had shivered and forcibly pulled himself together. It was the harder, more resolute wizard that gazed down upon him then and placed his fingertips once more upon Tom’s forehead. “This is all I can offer you” he murmured.

Harry did not speak the incantation aloud, but Tom felt the foggy confusion settling upon him at once. He didn’t struggle against it – it would be futile to try and in truth, he no longer even wished to fight this – he embraced the sensation as the spell caught him up and dragged him down beneath the misty waters into that greater peace of unconsciousness.
"I would like to state once again how unwise I consider this course of action to be. You have no comprehension how dangerous the-

"I've already decided, Severus. I don't want to argue about it anymore. This is what we're going to do. Start the prep."

Tom, dozing lightly, furrowed his brow at the voices and drifted closer to waking.

"There is only one chance for this, Harry! I agree with the Professor! You should take the part of Draco. He doesn't even know him. He isn't going to deal well with the realities of Draco's life there and then what will you do?! You can't exactly come and go there freely as a slave! You won't even have full access to your magic! It's too great a risk to put him-"

"Shh."

"What?!"

"Tom?" Harry's voice called softly. He had moved closer than where he had been speaking from before.

"Tom I'm sorry if we woke you up. Severus is ready to start the procedure and he was just getting impatient. Another friend of mine has come to assist him with everything."

Reluctantly, Tom cracked his eyes open a slit and squinted up at the boy hovering nervously near the side of his bed. The black 'playroom' that Severus had transfigured for them to use last night had apparently been transfigured back into a nondescript white walled bedroom while he still slept... It unsettled him that the use of so much magic in his sleeping presence had not woken him.

He recalled vaguely that he was irritated with Harry. The boy had done... something... or other... last night, right at the end of their play together... Whatever it was had ruined the otherwise eminently satisfying sex and caused him to send the boy from the room... He couldn't quite recall what it was, but his mind was still uncurling from the coil of sleep.

Yawning, he stretched subtly beneath the covers and raised a brow at the wizard wringing his hands nervously now.

'Is coffee likely in the near future?' he inquired pointedly.

Harry grimaced and shook his head slightly. "'fraid not. We need to be... uh... evacuated too, before we start. No eating or drinking anything beforehand. The pod Severus designed will supply us with liquid nutrients while we are regenerating over the next three days."

"It really would be preferable for you to -" Severus' voice hailed across the room disapprovingly.
"We are sharing the Pod." Harry gritted back, interrupting her/him with clenched teeth and an irritated expression.

There was something wrong.

Tom blinked and tilted his head slightly, trying to put his finger on what exactly it was.

"You can adjust the values for the mass and Herman will help you with the second layer of the incantations. The decision is made, Snape! Stop fussing now!"

It was something about the little girl Severus, Tom decided. Something odd about the way she.. he.. appeared this morning.

He examined the thought even as his eyes rested pensively on the bobbing ponytail of the girl who was turned away talking in a hushed angry voice to another tall male with curly reddish blonde hair and glasses.

Harry broke his concentration, stepping in between him and the couple at the other side of the room and catching Tom's eye. The earnest, worried discomfort on the aesthetically pleasing face distracted his mind from the nagging conviction that something was not right with the potions master.

"Tom...My Lord...I.. I'm sorry that I..." he broke off and swallowed. "about last night.. you know.. saying those stupid things. I didn't think... It was just... just the afterglow - you know? I didn't mean... I... I'm sorry that I made you angry."

Tom hadn't the slightest notion what the boy was babbling on about. Frowning, he struggled to recall what had happened the previous evening. Most of the evening was clear and became clearer as he inspected the memory. The thoughts of what he had done with Harry were somewhat distracting however - particularly upon first waking - and he startled, mortified, at the resulting effect on his nether regions, shifting in the bed and rearranging the blanket in the hope of disguising his unintentional response.

If Harry noticed, he did not draw attention to the fact.

"We will discuss it at a more opportune time." he answered curtly, turning his mind quickly to less stimulating thoughts. "What is to happen next?"

Harry seemed relieved.

"well... right now Severus is preparing the pod in the next room it needs to...uh.. warm up or..or.. melt or something. I don't really know. Then we will wash and be thoroughly scourgified. All our hair will be removed and.."

Harry paused and pulled a mildly squeamish face
"and... um... our fingernails and teeth too unfortunately"

Tom gave a moue of distaste before nodding.

"-and then we take the initial potion and severus will position us in the pod" Harry went on, glancing distractedly over his shoulder to check on the others, who were still apparently debating something.

"Then Severus gives us the primary potion and we sleep. During that time some kind of spells need to be cast at various points to.. er.. I don't really know - this is all not my area, Tom. Herman is the one who understands these things. I just know that we take a potion and then it's really complicated with transporting
potions directly into certain areas of the pod and casting wards and movement spells, heating, drying, liquefaction, solidification, calcification... They explained it to me but its a bit above my head."

Tom peered around the green eyed wizard in front of him at the potions master in the little witch body. Again he had the feeling of not quite rightness. Something was off about him/her.

"Tom!" Harry demanded tensely. "-we should shower. The sooner we're ready, the sooner we can start and the sooner we can finish. You'll be able to use magic again! You were impatient yesterday. Are you having second thoughts?"

Tom shook his head absently, still puzzling over what was not right about what he was seeing. "No.. and you will modify your tone, Harry." He broke off his contemplation and glanced back at the apprehensive looking wizard watching him tensely. The worry on Harry's face melted away as soon as he met Tom's eyes.

"Good" he responded, sounding relieved and completely ignoring the mild chastisement. "You had me worried for a moment there. I'll show you the bathroom and check on how Severus and Herman are going It shouldn't take long."

Tom tilted his head thoughtfully. There had been a very faint note in Harry's voice when he mentioned the potions master and his assistant. It sounded hard and cold...hinting vaguely at the prospect of some unresolved conflict that had taken place while he slept. The impression tacked itself onto his growing sense of unease. Something was not as it seemed.

It would be wise, he decided, to discover exactly what it was before he was incapacitated and rendered helpless for three days.

He glanced at Harry's offered hand disdainfully and pushed back the covers, rising out of the bed unassisted and stalking in the direction of the door.

It did not escape his attention that Harry leapt to join him at his side and, seemingly coincidentally took his hand without permission, dragging his attention in his direction just as he approached the potion master-in-witch-skin. He snarled a rebuke and snatched his hand away but the entire exchange and resulting apologies was distracting enough that they were at the door before he thought to turn and glance back.

And recognised, with a sudden jolt, exactly what was 'off' about Severus.

It was the shimmer.
The very faint shimmer that one caught only out of the corner of one's eye when looking at him/her.

He was wearing a glamour. As far as Tom could tell - a full-body glamour, which in and of itself was an unusual thing to employ. Severina looked exactly as s/he had the previous evening, therefore the glamour could not be there for enhancement.

What then was the potions master seeking to disguise?!
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

grrrr.
there were a million different versions of this chapter. But none i can find on file are
the version i eventually went with. Having to recreate this one chapter from text with
corrupted formatting.

What was the Potions Master seeking to disguise?!

The troubling thought stopped him in his tracks. Long years of avoiding death in all its myriad
forms had honed his senses to a fine point and right now they were screaming and whistling bells
and alarms that he determine the precise nature of what was presently being concealed before he
allowed himself to be rendered unconscious and magically interfered with.

The prospect of being interfered with..

“Tom??”

He blinked and turned to look at Harry, who had stopped also and was looking at him with
concern.

“...We don’t have much time right now. This whole ..er...treatment.. – well it’s really risky and
everything has to happen at the right times. We need to get showered and stuff to get into the pod
on time – it’s been prepared with just enough time for us to get ready. If we hang around too long
then it’ll be ruined and we’ll have to wait for the better part of the day for a new one to be made.”

He tugged gently on Tom’s hand in a ‘come on’ gesture.

Tom glanced down at the fingers that Potter was trying to twine with his own in a revoltingly
intimate gesture. With a frown he shook the boy’s hand from his own and turned fully to dedicate
all his attention to the matter at hand that Harry obviously did not wish him to attend to.

Severus..Severina’s back was to him as s/he fussed vaguely over a large number of phials on the
small wheeled table that stood to the side. The ‘assistant’, Herman, however was watching him
with unease, wringing his hands in a manner that looked entirely unconscious.

This fellow would
not excel in muggle Poker, Tom felt.
Something was blatantly wrong here.

“Tom!” Harry’s appellation was more insistent now.

“Severus...” he purred, ignoring the boy at his side entirely. “I require a moment of your
undoubtedly priceless time. At once.”

The small shoulders stiffened in a barely perceptible manner. “My Lord?” she responded
disingenuously, still not turning to him. Now that he was fully awake and aware of his
surroundings he could hear that her voice was not quite right either.

Unwilling to tolerate any longer the unsettling ignorance of what was going on, he was at the
small girl’s side in four swift strides, before the other two in the room could react, and dragged
The oddly incorrectly textured body around by one arm. The arm in his hand was considerably broader than the one in his vision. It bore taut muscle and tensed against his fingertips as he grasped it. The eyes...

It was nearly impossible to convincingly glamour eyes. Moreover in this case he had the disturbing sensation of faint vertigo that was evoked by strong discrepancies between a glamour and the structure it covered. The figure he grasped in his hand was taller than the small girl into whose vacant lifeless brown eyes he was currently staring.

“We don’t have time for this!” Harry growled behind him tensely and Tom became aware that the strawberry blonde assistant at the side had his wand drawn and, shaking only slightly, held it upon Tom with a resolute expression.

“What is “this” exactly?!” he snarled back, without sparing the deceitful wretch a glance. “What are you hiding from me now, Potter? – Only yesterday I recall you promising to reveal all of your secrets.”

There was no immediate reply although the bespectacled blonde wizard at the side raised his wand furtheras though he meant now to cast upon Tom.

Tom narrowed his eyes still further when the visible portrayal of the rather larger specimen he currently held turned its glamoured face toward Harry - a glamoured face which was likely somewhere around the middle of the real male's chest, if he could trust what his fingertips were relaying back about the size and probable gender of the individual.

Even with its dead eyes, the expression of rancour and unvarnished hate was conveyed well enough by the glamour.

"Well? What now?! I went along with your ridiculous plan even though I already told you it wouldn't work! You can't blame me or him for this!"

The voice was not Severina's. Nor was it that of Severus, as Tom had known him. More than this though... the very articulation of the words was distinctly unlike Severus. This was not the potions master.

Yet it was very faintly familiar, he thought. Impossible to place it but he suspected he had met this person at some point in the past. Perhaps it was another of Potter's little friends - although that wouldn't explain the hate he evinced. No...The concern for Severus in this case seemed to suggest that it might be one of Severus friends, impossible as that seemed. In all the years he had known Severus, man and boy, he never had seemed to have anything more than associates. Certainly nothing that would engender actual loyalty for the man.

The 'chosen one' snarled suddenly and spat back "I can blame him for this and a lot more besides, you bloody poisonous little twat! You blew it!"

Tom actually startled slightly at the sheer magnitude of the change in Harry's appearance. It was as if he had shaken off the wheedling, pleading subservience like an old cloak. He radiated command now.

Furious, righteous wrath...and command.

It was astounding and disturbing at once. He felt himself reluctantly allocate a few more grains of respect to the green eyed creature. It was of course unforgiveable that the boy had connived him into a false sense of security again -
however it was also difficult for a consummate Slytherin to disdain such skill and finesse in manipulation, even if used upon oneself.

"If you want your master...or whatever the fuck he is to you...to survive the night, you'll get out of my sight now and get on with the rest of the prep - and don't make it worse for yourself by trying anything stupid. I'm sure Severus has told you to do something if given half a chance but I really wouldn't advise it. You will be closely watched the entire time. If you deviate from the process Severus gave us; if you so much as hesitate and someone thinks you might be planning to screw with something - there will be no mercy."

He ended the furious warning with a curt nod to the wanded male, whose wand had at some point in the last few minutes shifted to level itself upon the male glamoured as Severina.

"Go with him, Herman, and make sure he does exactly what he's supposed to do. I have to speak to Tom"

The strawberry blonde nodded uncertainly back, but his blue eyes flicked between Tom and Harry communicating clearly his reluctance to leave his commander alone.

Tom forcibly subdued his own violent seething somewhat.

Obviously explanations were to follow. A small measure of calm would be needed to acquire them without the fellow with the nervous mannerisms and twitchy wand hand hanging around to uneven the playing field.

"Har-" the blonde man started. It only took a sharp glance from Harry to cut that protest off and cause the other man's lips to thin in a frustrated and annoyed manner that Tom decided was inexplicably female in nature.

"Fine. I'm sure you know best then. Hopefully this will go better than last time you knew best..." The man muttered insubordinately before gesturing with a flick of his wand at the glamoured Severina. "Come on. You heard him. Out!"

Tom waited patiently until the door closed behind the two and then, for good measure, he waited two more full seconds before exploding.

"WHAT THE BUGGERING FUCK IS THIS?!? What was that...that... THEATRE that I was subjected to?! WHO was that, and where exactly is Severus?!? Explain to me, Harry, what PRECISELY has happened between-...."

Tom paused, considering his last clear memories carefully

"-Between your little dance in the study and the present moment?! Do you think me foolish enough to overlook the effects of obliviation? I know more of the art than you will ever have the chance to learn and I WILL HAVE ANSWERS FROM YOU!!"

The calm aura of command that the other boy displayed wavered slightly at the mention of obliviation, as if he had not expected it... Something flickered through the unnaturally bright green eyes - something that looked disconcertingly like guilt.

"Calm down." Harry said softly and continued almost apologetically. ...You need to stay calm because heightened emotions can disturb the transformation process - assuming you still do want to go through it. I've gone to some length to make it possible for you, you see. It would be a waste to find out you've changed your-"

"DON'T TELL ME TO BE CALM! -AND DON'T SIDESTEP THE ISSUE!! ANSWER MY PERFECTLY REASONABLE QUESTIONS, YOU TREACHEROUS LITTLE VIPER!"

Tom all but screamed in the wretchedly pretty face, feeling his nails cut into his palms within white knuckled fists that itched to reduce the prettiness of said face.

At this outburst, Harry did seem to flinch slightly before subsiding somewhat with a sigh...

"Okay... Okay... I'll tell you. Alright? We don't have much time - I'm not making it up - we've got about fifteen minutes to get everything done before the pod will start to spoil and I have to be in it before then, whether you choose to come along or not, so I'll explain quickly and briefly and that will either be enough for you or it won't.

...It's your choice if you do this.

I won't make you do it. I... I won't make you do anything..." He ran a tired hand through his hair and blinked in a way that Tom recognised well from his own mannerisms when circumstances had required him to remain awake and alert far beyond his natural body clock.

Folding his arms Tom met the green gaze evenly. There was very little that Harry could say now that would lead him to believe the little deceiver. What remained to be decided was merely whether he was prepared to risk whatever the little snake was keeping from him on the possibility of regaining his magic.

There was much that he was prepared to risk for the chance of that.

Nevertheless... He could hardly wait to witness the majestic artifice of sugarplum dreams that the boy would need to construct to explain away allowing him to be obliviated. It would no doubt need to be a structure to rival the floating palace of Curacao.

Harry seemed to struggle for a moment, as if he couldn't figure out where to begin or what to reveal.

"Well... Ok... I... I apologise for the...the acting and that whole...bit... It-" Harry paused again and his eyes swept the ground uncomfortably. ".-It seemed easier. I knew if you knew you'd been obliviated you'd react... a lot like this. If you thought you were going to be obliviated, you'd probably have screamed the house down and then taken off, dragging half the ministry after you."

Tom agreed privately but did not deign to gratify the insulting appraisal with acceptance. He narrowed his eyes and pulled his lips into the faintest of sneers.

Harry sighed and seemed to grapple with some large internal conflict. His decision was not favourable to him, it seemed, by the way he swallowed and then seemed to take a large breath, as if to steel himself against a coming argument.

"We're not in the safe house that you think we're in." he started, stealing a brief glance at Tom's face between his frowning inspection of everything in the room that was not his conversation partner.

"We're in the base. Er... My base, that is. It's-.."

Tom caught a fleeting dart of the green eyes that might have conveyed untruth. He couldn't be certain.

"It's ...secret kept. You witnessed the secret and some of my... my... fellow freedom fighters-" there was a faint grimace here that Tom interpreted as the boy's acknowledgement that even if he did not deign to call them so, they were his servants.
"-were unhappy about that. Unhappy that you saw the base at all really. I was.. I was advised that it could cause a split within our forces. Herman suggested that we could simply pretend that we were still in the safe house and remove the knowledge that everyone was bothered by, but still go through with the process. That would keep everyone happy enough to prevent a riot."

".It. it was necessary -" Harry shifted his weight uncomfortably at this point. "-to come to the base because Severus. er... betrayed us... that is... he betrayed me."

Tom suddenly found himself smirking more widely than was becoming in his present position as accuser and judge. Moreover he discovered that his mirth was too great to pull his expression back into the closed challenging snarl he had previously worn. If there was only one thing he had learned to rely upon over the years, it was upon Severus Snape's loyalty to his own interests. If Harry had deliberately placed himself between Severus and those interests, whatever they happened to be, then such an outcome was inevitable.

"Welcome to the exclusive club of Severus Snape's supposed masters" he offered dryly. "I had thought you were aware of Severus nature? You did comprehend that he betrayed both Dumbledore and myself in the end?"

"I thought I had him under control" Harry protested. "He had to do what I said! He literally couldn't disobey. And.. and.. he cared for my mother. And this whole movement was started by him. I thought he was loyal to something!!"

Tom snorted softly. "Under control!!.. I cruciated him to near catatonia on a regular basis for a period of years... I held the threat of death over his head since the age of fifteen and still I never truly had the man under control, evidently. ...What did you deny him then, that he desired more than the principles he had fought for or the loyalty he felt to your mother?"

He frowned suddenly as a shadow seemed to pass over his heart for a moment. Something like a faint ghost of a missing memory. As desirous of knowledge as he had always been, he found he preferred to push this odd tip of the tongue sensation away.

For the present, he told himself. He would examine it with more care later. Another time. When his position was more secure. Not now.

"I. " Harry floundered. "It doesn't matter. He didn't get it... And..we got him back. He's in a holding cell. He had an accomplice. Apparently he turned him when he was still with you and brought him out like the rest of us when Lucius launched his coup. I don't know the guy but I guess you do. Edwin Calico? He's been like an apprentice to Snape or something for the last year or so. None of us knew anything about him - he was holed up in Nepal, of all places!"

The name did ring a bell now faintly. Tom furrowed his brow.

"A skinny red haired boy? Rather large nose?"

"That's him. Bit of a bratty tosser. I'm sure they got along famously."

Tom smiled before he could stop himself. It was an apt description.

"-Anyway- He was the one who carried out the process on Snape when he wanted his own 'skin' changed. We'd all bought some bollocks about timed release spells and muggle apparatus. After Snape invented this transformation process, I guess he realised soon enough that he couldn't carry it out on himself. But luckily he already had his little ace in a pocket over there to train up and flatter into obedience."

Tom considered this. "And now you obviously intend the boy to carry out the procedure upon us
both? How many times has he completed it? What exactly are you concerned that Severus will do if you allow him to-"

With perfectly inconvenient timing, the door at the end of the room opened in that moment and they both turned, expecting Herman the nervous and insubordinate functionary or another similar character to burst in interrupting. What entered, however, was a silvery pale patronus of an otter. It swam and gambolled fluidly through the air, looking delighted with the joy of movement right up until it was within a metre of them both, at which point the loud blaring voice issued from its mouth. "HARRY JAMES POTTER! MOVE IT OR LOSE IT!"

The creature vanished like a soap bubble bursting. Tom turned back to find the other boy grinning; his expression soft and fond somehow.

"You heard the Otter" he prompted. "Moment of Truth, Tom. Do you want to do this? You can have your magic back. You can kill Lucius Malfoy. You can.." he swallowed "You can kill me, if you want, when it's all over. I won't try to stop you."

Tom snorted, tempted to roll his eyes at the brat's irritating sense of the dramatic. Obviously he was going to undergo the procedure. A risk-fraught life as a homeless muggle or a risk-fraught chance to rule the wizarding world... It was hardly a difficult decision, even with the uncertain prospect of Harry's deceit.

"After you.." he gestured at the door.

Harry smiled with visible relief. "Oh thank god. I thought I was going to have someone imperius you to do it."

Tom froze in place, eyes narrowing upon the 'Saviour's back

Harry turned, looking back over his shoulder as he reached the door.

He was grinning.

"...Your face, Tom. Brilliant. As if I'd do that. I'm not you... Come on - you can watch my fingernails be torn out. That'll cheer you up, surely."

That would have seemed a delightful prospect a few years previously, Tom mused to himself as he followed. It somehow lost its attraction when it was offered gaily by the proposed victim.

The teeth and the nails were the first step in preparing them both for the conversion. It was not quite as unpleasant as Harry had sold it, but it was hardly pleasurable. Tom leaned to the side and spat a mouthful of teeth into a metal bowl with a wet clinking sound while 'Herman' yanked at his spell loosened nails with a pair of surgical steel pliers. Those on his left hand were already lying in the bottom of the bowl with his teeth. They had been pulled while he was waiting for the tooth loosening potion to finish sinking in to his gums.

'Surely they could simply be vanished' he wanted to object, but could not as he worked his tongue around the remaining teeth in his mouth, pushing them from their soggy beds and spitting them into the bowl to join their fellows.
Across from him, Harry was undergoing the same treatment from Edwin - now no longer wearing a Severina glamour.

The boy was indeed quite reminiscent of a young Severus, Tom mused to himself. Oh not in appearance necessarily, although that nose was certainly large enough to parallel the potion master's. It was in demeanour that the resemblance lay. This gangly youth with the dark red hair wore a bitter thwarted mien like a badge of honour. The world had mistreated him and he was worthy of much more. Etcetera. It had quite suited the young Severus, who had already had a rather romantic, gothic-tragedy air to his appearance. Edwin’s appearance rendered it merely sulky and disproportionate.

"Watff ih" he sniped at the impatient Herman, who had just tugged a nail free that wasn't yet completely loose. The man in question ignored him pointedly while glaring at his remaining two nails as if the sheer force of his will could make their beds soften more quickly.

Harry grinned gummily and winked at him as he spat another tooth into his bowl.

"I'm duh' - go-ih to fower. We don' haff tih' - Juth leh- hi' yang em. You've been fru worfs"

Tom translated this mentally and scowled more deeply.

Yes.. he had possibly been through a lot worse than having a couple of nails pulled out with pliers. That didn't mean of course that he would embrace pain when a couple of minutes could avoid it completely.

Harry started tearing off his clothes uncaringly even as he walked away in the direction of the partitioned area of the lab which housed the shower.

Fuck it.

"fine." he growled somewhat indistinctly and flicked with his fingers at Herman impatiently.

"do ih!.

The resulting bloodthirsty wrench brought tears to his eyes.

"FUH!" he hissed, clenching them shut.

At least Herman didn't hang about. The second nail followed the first in quick order and then the man was getting up and dragging Edwin off toward the other end of the long room.

That end had rather fascinated Tom when he first stepped in here.

Or rather - the 'pod' had.

It was a massive semi translucent white capsule that floated, glowing, in mid air and rippled gently all over as if in reflection of some strange internal currents. It was rather attention grabbing.

His trousers were shucked with impatience en route to the shower, where he could hear Harry already washing himself.

He was leaving a trail of red droplets from his fingers and, in the past, he knew this would have bothered him greatly. One did not leave blood around where other witches or wizards might find and use it against one.

Now, however...
Well.. his body was soon no longer to be his body and there were very limited things one could do with blood if it no longer matched one's body.

Harry looked around as Tom stepped past the partition. Soaking wet, with his hair in dripping strands around his face and his healing bruises and scars on full display, he was utterly stunning..

"I withh eh wah moah tih'" Harry complained wistfully, looking back at him with a pained longing that Tom reminded himself was probably simulated.

'You sound ridiculous', he wanted to say, but knew that he would only sound ridiculous himself if he tried to articulate it without teeth. This was a horribly undignified state.

He stepped into the spray beside Harry and accepted the yellow bar of sharply astringent soap from him.

After a minute of attentively washing himself as quickly and thoroughly as he could, he once again allowed himself to take note of the other boy's avid attention.

A raised eyebrow was sufficient inquiry.

Harry seemed to sigh inwardly and shook his head slightly.

"Nuff-ih. Come oh"

At the pod, while their hair was removed and while the various extremely thorough depilation and scourging spells were being cast upon them, Herman made a final fruitless attempt to convince Harry that it was unwise to put Tom through the process at all but that if he must be, then he should be transformed separately.

"This is a bad idea, Harry! Professor Snape has only done a dual pod a few times and Edwin hasn't ever done it. An explanation of how to do it is not the same as experience!"

Harry just waved it off and ignored him.

Eventually Herman blustered himself out and stopped, although the concern remained with Tom.

This was more than usually dangerous. They were attempting a procedure which Severus himself had declared was, under ideal circumstances and undertaken singly, extremely complex and risky - he had implied that the strength of one's body could have an effect on whether one survived it - which suggested that a number of individuals had not survived it in the past and that he had learned from these unfortunate cases.

Harry had however, for whatever reason, determined that it was less risky to undergo the process with one novice potions master and one entirely untested servant than to somehow try to force Severus to carry it out.

A rather more detailed explanation of just what had occurred between Severus and Harry would be necessary as soon as this was over!

It was a little too late for second thoughts now though. Tom believed Harry that the pod they were thinking to use would..expire.. or cease to be useable if not used within a certain time frame.

The alternate options were unattractive.

He doubted that Herman would agree to allow him to use the pod and have Harry wait for another to be prepared.. There was no way that he himself would allow Harry to use the pod and take it on trust that he would be given another chance to undergo the process later.
Not to mention what ‘accidents’ might befall Tom if Harry were to be taken out of action for three
days and he were to remain here with the boy's servants.

Circumstances were apt to change suddenly. His discoveries upon waking this morning were
evidence enough of that. If he did not seize this chance now, it was possible that he might not be
granted another.

And Harry knew that. And that was why he was insisting that they use the pod together. It was
the safest way to ensure that they were both turned, and that nothing intervened in the one or the
other case.

He watched the boy around whom his life had inexplicably orbited since before the brat's very
birth. Without a micron of hesitation, Harry stepped through the gloopy surface of the pod and gave a
little half-jump, up into the gel-like medium.

Floating there with curled limbs, his eyes closed and his bald head shining, he resembled nothing
so much as a bizarre fully developed foetus.

"This is such a bad idea" Herman muttered again, giving Tom a light push on the back in direct
contradiction to his own words. "Get on with it then!! Get in so that we can spend the next three
days running ourselves ragged."

With a very small smirk, Tom complied.

Copying Harry's entry was not difficult. He found though that the medium inside the pod was not
entirely liquidlike, as he had expected it to be. Neither was it..exactly.. airy... Rather, it had a
strange webleylike consistency, as if he were floating in a glut of silk strands.

At first he had felt panic as the urge to hold his breath was overwhelming. When he had
eventually been forced to take a breath though, he found that the one great gasping breath was
sufficient. It seemed to fill his lungs with the filaments till they felt packed with cotton wool and he
did not feel the need to take another breath anymore.

Cautiously he opened his eyes.

They did not burn or hurt as they did when opened underwater. It felt strange, like warm fluttery
eyelashes against his own.

He looked up and met wide green eyes staring back at him.

Harry smiled and his smile held an edge of wonder. He reached out, tentatively, with one hand,
toward Tom's face.

"DON'T MOVE!!" came the panicked squawk from somewhere outside the pod. It filtered in as
though over distance. "AND FOR MERLIN'S SAKE DON'T BLOODY TRY TO TOUCH
EACH OTHER!! HARRY, HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW HARD IT IS TO TRY TO SET
UP DIVISION WARDS IN A SPHEROID LIQUID MEDIUM THAT IS ITSELF LARGELY
COMPOSED OF WARDS!!
JUST.. JUST... FLOAT!! GO TO SLEEP OR SOMETHING!!"

Tom watched the hand withdraw again while Harry wore again that confounded wistful longing
expression.

He closed his eyes and tried to obey Herman's directive. Sleep, and the process would be over in
the blink of an eye, surely.
When Tom eventually awoke, it was with a slow, ponderous heaviness that was entirely unlike his normal, borderline-feral alertness. He came back to himself piecemeal – becoming slowly aware of his limbs, and their orientation in space, lying on his left side, languid with relaxation and curled around a warm silky form in front of him.

“It’s just me.” an unfamiliar voice mumbled softly from just in front of his face.

“Harry” it added, almost as an afterthought.

Tom struggled to assemble himself and respond to the new information appropriately. Some twinge in the back of his mind was informing him that he, for some reason he couldn’t quite recall at present, had no wish to be this close to the other person if it was indeed ‘Harry’ in his arms. His arms nevertheless ignored his better judgement completely and tightened slightly around the other body.

It felt good. This warm, soft, silky form fit perfectly into his embrace and felt...right.

Tom frowned at the strange direction of his own thoughts and, with all too much reluctance, weakly withdrew and dragged himself to arm’s distance.

This action was met with no resistance by the unknown boy – possibly ‘Harry’. He did not speak again and Tom had the impression that he was waiting to see what Tom himself did.

It took a couple of minutes to steel himself against the will to forget wondering about his unknown surroundings, curl deeper in the bed and sleep some more – he was still so exhausted – but eventually his mind asserted itself over his body and he forced his crusted eyelids to part, that he might assess the situation more fully.

Bright light assailed him. He frowned in confusion and clenched his eyes closed again. They hurt quite badly, for some reason.

“Just stay calm, Tom, and let yourself adjust. It’ll all come back to you.”

The frown on Tom’s face deepened. In his experience, whenever someone told him to remain calm, there was a definite and justified reason for the alarm he might feel. One thing he was quite confident about – one of the very few islands in a sea of blurry abstraction – was that Tom was not how he was normally addressed. It was...an affront.. an insult to be referred to by that name. He wasn’t sure yet quite why that was the case but that hardly mattered. This unknown..(warm..perfect..) person was behaving offensively.

“Who did you say you were?”

“You’ll remember me in a few minutes. You’ve had a...a...medical procedure of sorts and we’re in a recovery room. Just lie still and let your mind build the connections naturally.

“Why are..” He wanted to ask – ‘if that is so, why are you in bed with me? I doubt it is usual practice to recover in tandem! Why was I holding you in that entirely inappropriate manner? Why in Salazar’s name did I feel disinclined to let you go?!! – why am I still tempted to draw you closer – what is WRONG with me?!!’” but all questions became redundant in the face of the argument ‘wait a little while and you will remember.’

“It is too bright in here. Lower the light” he directed instead.

“It’s only a couple of candles” came the soft reply. “The light isn’t bright – it’s just your eyes. The
Tom stilled again, filing away this new information - that he had, according to this unknown boy, undergone some form of medical procedure which had also affected his vision, causing him pain and oversensitivity to light - and applied himself to slowly trying to blink away the fuzzy burning in his vision in order to gain a better picture of the face that corresponded to the soft unfamiliar voice of the boy lying in front of him.

When his eyesight swam into focus, it was more confusing than clarifying.
“Are you a Malfoy?” he asked without thinking, snatching up a name that his memory spat out randomly. The slender and pale boy in front of him might have been in his mid teens. He had very short white blonde hair – almost stubble - on his head. At first he had thought him bald. He also had unusually large pale blue eyes with long girlish lashes and a wide mouth with delicately shaped pillowy pink lips. Beyond the vaguest sense of resemblance, the boy was a stranger to him.

There was just a hint of tension and concern to the set of the unfamiliar boy’s mouth. “Stay calm, Tom.” The quiet voice murmured entreatingly, apparently ignoring his question. “Just.. stay calm and remember everything before you fly off the handle. I can explain!”

It was probably wise advice but he was finding it increasingly difficult to calm himself. Being able to see the other boy hadn’t illuminated his situation any further – even the name that had risen in his mind was an abstract thing. Something about the boy’s hair provoked it.. The colour reminded him of something to do with that word. Malfoy.
Another word rose up tentatively at the further prodding of his memory. Abraxas.
But, for no explicable reason, he thought that this boy was not Abraxas.

The sense of disorientation and ... and.. incorrectness to everything was making him feel nauseous.
He didn’t feel well. Everything felt ...odd; Like shoes placed on the wrong feet. His body felt strange; this environment was alien.
The boy - if he truly was who he claimed to be - was not as he remembered; or at least what little he remembered that associated with the name ‘Harry’ consisted of bright green eyes behind obnoxious glasses and a messy mop of black hair.
Irrespective what the boy claimed he would remember shortly, right now he felt like he might be going mad.

“Do you remember running into Harry Potter in a bar in Sydney?”

Tom’s eyes darted slightly. He could feel the hairs on the back of his neck standing on end. The question was confusing. Was the boy now saying that he was not this Harry fellow? The offensively muggle name was even more familiar now – he was sure that he did know Harry Potter. He was increasingly confident that he disliked him.
Perhaps there had been some manner of accident and he had forgotten what had happened to Harry and how he came to be in a bed with this strange boy.
He nodded curtly, purely to avoid admitting he hadn’t the faintest idea what the other boy was talking about and looked away over the other’s head, trying to make out more of the room that he found himself in.
It was small... plain; a simple box with a door. There was little furniture and no decoration at all. He could be in a hospital or a prison for all the humanity present in the room. It was only fractionally softened by the gentle yellow light of two fat white candles that were not set in any kind of candelabra but placed standing on a very basic wooden table a few metres away from the bed.
“Do you remember running to New Zealand? Do you remember Severus Snape?!”

This seemed to jar something within Tom. A young girl with ribbons in her hair and an off-putting preference for the colour pink sprang up in his memory. Something was wrong with his mind. That wasn’t right. He was almost certain that that wasn’t right. Severus...
Severus was a boy. A gangly youth with hurt eyes like onxy stones. Wasn’t he?!
“I.. Yes.” He muttered, deciding at the last second against telling the silver eyed boy that he didn’t know exactly what he remembered right now.

“That’s good” The boy seemed relieved. “A little disorientation is normal in the aftermath while the new links are still settling, but I was worried you might have some problems with your recent memory. There were..” he hesitated uneasily and the edge of his puffy bottom lip crept between his teeth in an unconscious nervous gesture. “that is... some things were a bit unusual with the process. It.. it didn’t turn out as expected.”

This was further disturbing information for Tom. Severus had always been reliable in any treatment he had been directed to carry out. Just like that, the information about his potions master slotted back into its familiar place with only a few minor questionmarks.

“Is...was it-?” he had been about to ask whether it was one of Severus treatments and stopped; tried to rephrase to minimise the evidence of his ignorance.

“Was it?” the other boy prompted.

There was no way around it.
“What exactly has happened to me?! Where is this place?!?” he demanded in as imperious a voice as he could manage while lying on his side in a soft bed, facing a pretty adolescent boy that he inexplicably wanted to drag back into his arms and simply hold.

The tightness at the corners of the other boy’s mouth became more pronounced and he looked disappointed.
“Oh.” He said tonelessly and his eyes skidded down in something approximating guilt. “I.. ok. So...more than just a little disorientation then. I. I had hoped that you would be-...”
He shook his head slightly. “It doesn’t matter. Tom... everything is fine. Everything is going to be just fine, ok? If you stay calm, I’ll explain”

This information was more distressing than anything that had come before. It was almost irrelevant now that this boy was daring to call him Tom. There had been a process performed upon him. The process had apparently not succeeded and now his mind.. perhaps also his physical body was damaged!
How could he have allowed this to be done to himself?! Why wasn’t Severus telling him this?!.. The knowledge trickled back into his awareness in a sour little stream. Severus.. Severus was dead..
This was followed immediately by the revelation of the memory that Severus had already repaired him. He had been fully restored! His body was..
Persuaded thus into adrenalin fuelled motion, he frantically began an examination of his own person.

Hands.. yes.. quite human looking but ...incorrect. not his own hands. These were... small.. Too small.

Darting a suspicious glance up at the boy in bed beside him he continued his self-perusal.
He placed his odd hands to his face and jerked them away again in shock.
It was as if he were touching another person! His face...the lines that he knew instinctively were not merely changed – they were gone!
Was he deformed?! The very angles of his bones were altered! He had a pointed chin where his own had always been angular. His face was much narrower than it should be and his cheekbones felt too sharp.
What exactly had been done to him?! Even when he had been obliged to endure a reconstituted body perpetuated on blood and venom, he had retained his own face...
...Most of his face, at least.

Another glance at the boy beside him, who was now watching him with a pained anticipation, confirmed the presence of defined cheekbones...and a pointed elfin chin.

Fingertips wandering further up his own head, Tom found soft velvety stubble. Neither waves of silky hair, as he had always had in his own natural body, nor the scaled dome of his head in the more reptilian resurrected form.. This stubble was new...
He stroked his palm over it in confusion and increasingly horrified suspicion before ripping away the blankets covering him and peering through the overbright light down as his own body.
It was not at all his own body!! It was the body of some other unknown person – no! Not a person – a youth! It was the body of what could only be a boy in his teens!
In fact, as he pulled all the covers away entirely and kicked them off the bed with the legs that were slender and somewhat effeminate, he discovered further similarity between his own body and the boy with the silver eyes.
Not merely similarity..
It was not his own body.. it was the perfect reproduction of the body of the teenager with whom he was currently lying.
At that point he lost any composure he had been clinging to, threw himself at the youth (who passively allowed himself to be pinned to the bed, as if he were expecting such a reaction), and screamed into the thrice damned calm silver eyes. “What is this?! EXPLAIN! AT ONCE! Who ARE you - you are certainly not Harry Potter! Why...HOW..do I suddenly find myself your twin?!?!”

When no immediate response was forthcoming, he reached for his magic..
Nothing happened.
Startled and horrified he tried harder. When nothing continued to happen, in exasperation he released one wrist of the boy long enough to raise his fist
“You don’t need to do that” came the quick reply. “I’ll tell you everything. I was just.. just.. thinking about where to begin”
Tom simmered slightly and returned his hand to its grip on the limp wrist, which had not even attempted to move in its absence.

“What is wrong with my magic?!” he demanded. “Why can I not...”

Silver eyes studied him warily.
“Don’t worry. It’s not gone.” The blonde boy reassured him guardedly. “It’s just temporary – a potion. You’ll have it back tomorrow! I thought you might react such a reaction), and screamed into the thrice damned calm silver eyes. “What is this?! EXPLAIN! AT ONCE! Who ARE you - you are certainly not Harry Potter! Why...HOW..do I suddenly find myself your twin?!?!”

This threw Tom again. It slipped from his lips before he could stop himself. “...What year is it?”

The other boy swallowed. “...It’s February nineteenth, 2004. Um...I don’t know if you remember but in 1998 there was a coup within the Death Eaters, led by Lucius Malfoy –“
“I know that!” Tom interrupted impatiently, although in truth the memory had only replaced itself upon this reminder. Lucius.. the worm; the traitor. And he had always been the most loyal.. the most trusted of his servants. With horror, as the memory fully unfolded, Tom realised that he might have unwittingly summoned aurors or perhaps even his own former servants, had he successfully used his own magic upon the strange boy.

It was still galling to have his magic simply ripped from him, purely for expediency. Other questions were more important at present, however. Such as why ..and how.. did he come to be this boy’s twin?! He forcibly shunted the inner mortification at his own near blunder to the side and focused upon the matter at hand.

“Where am I now?! Why did you say you were Harry Potter?! Why do I-“

“I am me.. that is..Harry.” the other boy muttered “and if you remember the coup – then maybe you remember that you were on the run – you were living as a muggle when you found me. Actually, we both were – Neither of us could use our magic because of the tracking jinx that Malfoy had the Ministry place on our magical signatures.”

“I recall Harry Potter. I see no logical explanation for how you could possibly be him. Get to the part where you explain what in Salazar’s name is-“

“I’m getting there. Calm the fuck down, Tom. Trying to threaten me won’t change anything now, alright?!“

Tom glared and waited for the brat, who was beginning to remind him just a little of what he recalled of Harry Potter after all, to get to the point.

With a small sigh, the boy went on. “After the coup – when you fell and then Britain fell – not everything fell with you. Severus Snape faked his own death and started a resistance movement,-“

Tom felt something inside him which had been tense loosen slightly. Severus lived! He had not shed a tear at the Potion Master’s demise, and yet it soothed him in some strange way to learn that he had survived; that he continued to snipe and issue dry insulting commentary somewhere out there. Severus was one of the few wizards who managed to challenge him, and whose company he occasionally enjoyed.

“-I got out before Malfoy locked down the borders. Quite a few others did too. The support isn’t overwhelming – the majority in most nations seems to agree with the genocide and repression of all non purebloods – even if they don’t come out and say as much – but there is some support from outside and the resistance has a few hundred members now. That’s where we are right now. It’s the main base. I…-...I have a room here. You’re safe.”

Tom frowned slightly with his unfamiliar features. If that was true, then Severus certainly hadn’t made his master a part of his resistance plans. And Safe??! How could he possibly be safe in any base that welcomed Harry Potter?! That was illogical. Although.. If Potter held influence here - it was possible that the boy who lived was showing him some form of misguided mercy. It would fit his impression of the foolish sot. But Severus certainly wasn’t one for the sentiment – if he was in command of this ‘resistance’ then he perhaps did not know that his former master was here. That... or someone.. either Severus or Potter.. needed something from him..

“- also managed to create a process that would change a witch or wizards’s magical signature and allow them to hide themselves from magical detection, even within ministry controlled space..’” the boy was saying. He frowned slightly and corrected himself. “Well.. not just their signature..exactly.. More sort of their...everything. Their whole appearance and aura and...everything.”
This would be it then, Tom surmised. This would be the ‘procedure’ that had gone awry in his own.. and, apparently Harry Potter’s case – though why he and the ‘Boy Who Should Have Died’ might be together in their plight was utterly beyond him. Surely he would not have been so generous to his mortal enemy. That would be imbecilic.

“How is it that you do not appear to be expecting me to kill you, if, indeed, you are truly Potter?!

The boy stopped mid sentence – something about the complexity of the process – and looked at him in a manner that seemed, once again, disappointed.

“Tom..” he started. “you need to-“

“Cease referring to me by that repulsive muggle name - and do not presume to tell me what I have and have not to do, boy! Particularly if you intended to tell me to calm myself again. I am already calmer that this absurd situation warrants. You are to blame for the present fate of the British Wizarding World – it is you who brought us all to this by having the impertinence to exist. Without you my first rise would have continued unimpeded and tens, perhaps hundred of thousands in time - would have been better for it.

The boy sighed softly and went on, veering off onto a particularly bizarre and unbelievable tangent.

“I was dancing in a male strip-bar and you came in.” He rolled his eyes, pre-empting the natural objection Tom had just been about to make to the improbability of such an occurrence. “I was and you did. It’s just the way things happened. You followed me home.. or I invited you home and then, when you found out that I was a..a.. pet of some kind to Draco Malfoy, you were going to leave. Draco came before you could though and you killed him. You didn’t intend to take me with you when you left but I kind of left you no choice.”

Startled at the unexpected faint ring of familiarity to the tall story, Tom released his hold on the other boy’s wrists and sat back on his thighs, frowning.

The blonde gingerly reclaimed control over his own arms and massaged one wrist with the opposing hand.

“We were in New Zealand – that was where you had portkeyed us to when you left – and I contacted Severus to come and get us because I couldn’t think of a way to explain things to you without having you thinking me mad and probably flying into a rage at me again. Not that I didn’t enjoy your punishments-“ the elfin boy offered a knowing smirk that startled Tom and was perversely out of place upon his innocent features. “...-but there wasn’t enough time to ‘break it to you slowly’ with patience. I... thought having Severus in front of you would be the most humane way.. like pulling off a plaster, you know?“

Tom waved him off from explaining the function of a muggle plaster. He was not a child.

“Why would you think to tell me at all? I cannot entirely convince myself that you are that selfless and moronic. What is it that you want from me, Potter?! Why would you share with me a process intended to allow me to return to..”

He furrowed his brow in confused dismay before laughing softly.

“No... really? It cannot be, can it?! – you would have preferred me to win?! You find now that the wizarding world under my hand would have been preferable to the unrestrained domination by the Pureblood aristocracy.”

He laughed full throat at the confirmation he read in the resentful eyes of the boy beneath him.

“Harry Potter finally sees the error of his ways! Oh.. how delightful. Not quite worth all the suffering I was obliged to go through to get to this point, but it pleases me that you are capable of learning!”

The strange new ‘Harry’ scowled.
“That’s not how it is! ...Not exactly. I.. I don’t want you in control of the wizarding world any more than I want to let it stay as it is. I just.. just...”

In much better spirits now, Tom tilted his head at the fumbling fool. “Just?”

With a sigh and a shrug the boy conceded wearily
“I just didn’t think I’d be able to carry out every part of the plan the way I was supposed to.. I.. I didn’t think I could really do everything I needed to do. I needed help... and then you suddenly came along in the right moment and I thought...”

If anything Tom’s grin widened. “You needed someone who was prepared to do whatever was necessary and you thought that the enemy of your enemy might become your...friend??”

The blush this provoked was immensely satisfying.
“Not.. not exactly.. but.. well... It doesn’t matter now anyway. The plan is a wash. I didn’t expect there to be any problems. There haven’t been problems since the first few skinners came through.”

Bothered once again, Tom focussed in on the only relevant part - “What was the plan and why, exactly, is it no longer viable?! I take it that the intention was not that we become identical twins..”

Harry - and Tom was almost ready to concede that it was indeed the brat himself in a peculiar face - pulled an unhappy wry half smile.
“No. No.. this wasn’t how we were supposed to come out! But everything was already screwed before we even went in. There were some...unexpected problems with Snape. He..turned on me..that is.. us. He wasn’t supposed to even be able to but he did! ... I didn’t know that you and he had any kind of past...er-“ the boy looked abashed “...well.. any kind of.. romantic involvement or anything.
I mean he’s Snape!! Greasy-git and bastard-extraordinaire. It never really occurred to me that you would do that with him. ...Or...or with anyone really.
I guess.. I just thought you weren’t interested in sex.
Or.. or maybe I never wanted to think that you’d-” The boy trailed off, looking perturbed, and then shook his head slightly as if to dispel a daft thought.
“I was prepared for him to be hateful and vicious and try to kill you.. but..”

This line of thought was not promising. Tom wondered where this was going, and strangely found himself averse to finding out.
“Once a traitor, always a traitor, as they say” he interrupted briskly “What was the original plan, if you could manage to divert yourself from this scintillating discussion of my supposed desires or lack thereof?” Tom folded his arms and looked down at the boy as the latter squirmed slightly. And blushed.
The body that he... that they both wore was, objectively seen, quite aesthetically pleasing, although he himself tended not to select blonde male partners... If he was to wear this appearance for any great length of time, he could at least be grateful that he was not obliged to be hideous. Nevertheless – The boy was quite aware of who was within this skin! Surely the thought of his enemy should be enough to sour the fairest face?!
He raised an eyebrow and gestured for Harry to focus on the question, the answer to which he was still awaiting.

Harry seemed to struggle to think his way back to the subject they had previously been addressing.
“S-Sorry.. It’s maybe a side effect of the problems they had with the process. Short term memory problems now and then..and..and.. er..some other less important stuff. I guess..
The plan...” Harry sighed long sufferingly. “The plan doesn’t really matter anymore. We wanted to replace some of the top witches and wizards with our own people to try to take back the reigns
and steer things back to how they were, without a lot of bloodshed. I was going to play Draco Malfoy –” Harry’s light blue eyes darted up to meet his own with a faint anxiety in them. “That’s Lucius’ son. You remember him, right?”

Tom actually couldn’t deny himself the uncouth roll of his eyes and circling gesture for the boy to get on with it.

“-Yeah – well, anyway, we had the samples needed to make me into a carbon copy of him – but it all fell apart when I ran into you…”

At this the blond boy grimaced slightly and avoided meeting Tom’s gaze.

“I.. I wanted-... Doesn’t matter what I wanted, I guess. The way it played out, you killed him and it thwarted our timing. It all happened too soon. We weren’t ready to go ahead with the next stages immediately. So we had to put someone in Draco’s place under polyjuice and then Snape lost his mind and took off...and, what with everything that happened then, it all went to hell and it just took too long.

I found out when I woke up that our polyjuiced placeholder was discovered on the second day of our skin generation. He... we had to shut him down to stop them from finding out too much. ...Everything is ruined now. All of the plans are down the toilet. We’ve had to burn half our safehouses...

Lucius knows and he’s been tearing the world apart since then trying to find out what really happened to his son. He knows there’s a resistance. He thinks we have Draco! Technically.. in a sense.. we do…”

Again the boy frowned slightly. Tom elected to remain silent and wait this time.

“When I ran into you, I thought it would be better if you played Draco.. I mean – yeah, ok. I know Draco pretty well but you know all about the purebloods and about Lucius and... and.. about other things..” the boy’s eyes darkened pensively “…But then Snape went rogue. ...We found him.. Well, really, we never lost him.. We had him marked with a tracking portkey but he went and crawled off to hide behind anti-portkey wards in Nepal and we didn’t know he had a partner. We couldn’t drag him out! Not with promises or threats or…”

Harry looked as if he was occupying some internal landscape of his memory. Tom wisely remained as still as he could and tried not to distract him.

“I was ready to go in there and drag him out by his balls ..and then.. he just came back by himself! Four days later and he just turned himself in, dragging his little apprentice with him and demanded to see you! Fucking git! Wearing some pretty pureblood boy’s skin and expecting to just be ushered in to your room -probably to seduce you into staying with him like he wanted, instead of coming with me like you said we were going to.”

The rancour displayed at this prospect was extremely interesting, Tom decided. In light of the blush earlier, he was not entirely certain whether the boy was annoyed at Severus’ impudence, as any Master would be of his servant; annoyed at the thought of Severus taking Tom himself away from a task that Harry thought he needed him to perform for him; or whether he was perhaps annoyed at the thought of Severus potentially seducing him.

He had made some odd comments on that topic earlier, hadn’t he?
At the time Tom had still been putting his mind together – indeed the process continued now, but he was almost certain that the boy had expressed some manner of undue fascination with Tom’s own sexual proclivities and the possibility that he had at some point in the past entertained a more intimate form of servitude from Severus.

What exactly had happened between his enemy and himself that such things would bother Harry so obviously?! He could suppose-... but that couldn't possibly...!

“Well.. that wasn’t happening! Snape went into the box. I didn’t even bother having him interrogated – it’s not as if anyone would get anything out of him anyway. If you couldn’t get him to reveal information he wanted to keep hidden, I doubt anyone else will either.”

Tom found himself mildly gratified at this passing recognition of his own superiority. He added it
as a microscopically small positive notch on the seemingly endless black register of Potter’s debt to him.

“-Course he made a mistake bringing Calico back with him. His little red headed prat apprentice went into an interrogation chamber instead and we squeezed the details of the new skin process out of him.”

“Severus doesn’t often make foolish mistakes.” Tom responded without thinking, and then cursed himself for it. The blink and refocus of the light blue eyes upon him showed clearly that he had just derailed Harry’s quite productive train of thought.

Oh well... The harm was already done.

“Almost never, in fact” he continued. “If he brought this apprentice back with him, when you knew nothing of the fellow’s existence, then he meant for you to interrogate him. What happened after that? Somewhere, there must be some advantage to Severus in it...”

“I... I don’t know...” came the hesitant reply.

“There’s... there’s nothing. Snape was still in the box this morning. Herman checked on him. And Calico was in a locked and warded cell within ten minutes of us coming out of the pod – that is, finishing the medical process we needed him to perform. It went wrong because I made him run us both at once in one pod and it all got a bit out of control. It’s all about wards and circumlocution charms or circulocation or something. I don’t really understand it but something went wrong with the wards and our samples mixed-”

“As fascinating as that new ice floe is, Harry – return, if you would, to Severus. Are you certain that he has been incarcerated since his return? Are you positive that he is still restrained at present? There must have been some purpose to his placing himself in that position. Did his apprentice – Calico, you said...” Tom paused, brow furrowing slightly.

“Calico... was he a redhead?”

“Yes.

And yes, he was one of yours before the fall.” Came the distracted answer. Tom had a sudden twinge of de ja vu and wondered whether it was the product of the short term memory difficulties that Harry had warned him of..

“I thought I recalled the name. Did Calico attempt to vary any stage of the process as you had been given... no... wait –damn!... You are, as ever, a fool, Potter! You took the contents of the process from Calico himself, did you not? Even had you employed Veritaserum upon him, his answers would have remained untrustworthy. He was delivered to you by Severus! The contents of his mind may be assumed to be that which Severus wished you to possess.”

A pensive silence from the boy below was agreement and self recrimination at once.

“We shall have to visit dear Severus, in order to determine what he has done. It is likely that, even should I not have myself been unconscious for the duration, and had I instead an understanding of this 'conversion process' and a place from which to observe, I would still not have discerned whatever it was the dratted man did. He is infuriatingly brilliant.”

“Infuriating is right..” was the soft, somewhat bitter, response from the blonde boy lying beneath him.

Tom tilted his head, looking down at the deceptively un-potter-like youth.

“Harry...”

Pale blue eyes turned from the wall that they had been glaring at irritably, and rose, with guarded wariness to meet their mirror image.

“I am noticing a certain... how do I describe it?... a certain disgruntlement to your demeanour whenever you touch upon any point of intimate reference between Severus and myself. Could you enlighten me as to the underlying motivation behind this bizarre behaviour?”

Harry startled visibly and mumbled a vague unintelligible denial but something in his manner seemed off. As if he were still elsewhere with his thoughts.
Tom narrowed unfamiliar eyes speculatively. Had he imagined it? No.. surely not. But perhaps he lacked the context to interpret what he was seeing. Was the boy perhaps involved with Severus in some way?! Could that have provoked the reactions he had displayed? It occurred to him abruptly that he had been sitting, straddling the boy’s thighs for far too long. There was no fathomable reason to remain as he was. He could have questioned the quite cooperative boy from across the room. It was...oddly pleasant to touch Harry in this body. Not.. a sexual kind of pleasure, he thought – although that was certainly not an impossibility with such an attractive creature- but...

In sudden dismay at the direction of his thoughts he swiftly removed himself from atop the warm body. Harry reacted at once with alarm, propping himself up on his elbows and half leaning toward Tom “What?! What’s wrong?!” The question was not one that Tom was about to answer. Neither did he wish the boy to come any closer. “How is it that you awoke before me?” he asked, largely to detract from the panic he felt bubbling up inside.

It had felt comforting to touch Harry. Horrifyingly so. And now, he realised, it was proportionately disconcerting to relinquish that contact. He felt cold ...even a little vulnerable. The blonde boy on the other side of the bed seemed to be similarly affected. He appeared unsettled and turned on his side to face Tom, who now sat on the far side of the bed, against the wall. It was freezing against his bare back, but that was perfectly fine. Wonderful. Better a cold wall than the unnatural urge to drag his mortal enemy into his arms and cuddle him like a security blanket.

He had never had a security blanket. They were something that he had observed the matrons dispensing to certain other children. Weak and fussing children. And he had not thought of that in several lifetimes. How odd!

“I..woke yesterday morning” Harry admitted softly. “I’m sorry. Herman woke me as soon as he thought the risk was low enough and I was just about as disoriented as you were when you woke, only I had half a dozen panicking people yelling into my face about Lucius Malfoy and Snape. I thought I was still at Hogwarts and I had no idea who you were, in bed beside me. Luckily Herman didn’t tell me just then, although I think he was tempted. As soon as I was remembering enough to work out what was going on and I understood who you were, I had Herman lengthen your sleep a bit so that I could get some things sorted before you woke up. I had to get myself together to put out some fires. Or start some, as the case happened to be. People were waiting on my call to destroy or salvage likely compromised facilities. There were a couple of pretty awful situations where we had to...sacrifice.. a couple of our operatives because Lucius had already gotten to them. I just didn’t have enough strength in me to deal with you yelling at me from the other side too. I’m sorry.. I really am. It seemed the best option. I hoped a bit of sleep would lessen your confusion when you did wake up.”

It was unfortunately understandable and Tom waged an internal debate on whether he would have previously allowed so much tolerance toward his enemy. Or.. former enemy? Were they still enemies? It was not natural to feel this way.

“Are... are you hungry?” Harry asked hopefully, as if he were some manner of animal that might be coerced out of a corner by a rattling feed bag. “No.” he snapped. “I would like to sleep a little longer. Your presence is not required.” This provoked a much stronger display of unease from the other boy. Harry actually seemed to compress himself inward, curling slightly as if he was attempting to reduce the physical space he
was taking up – or as if he was hunkering down. The thought that Tom would attempt to physically remove him was laughable. He had no intention of touching him. Lust was one thing. Respect and even affection another.. but need?! He refused to allow himself to foster this improper attachment. It had the feel of a budding addiction. Did he wish Harry Potter chained to his side for the foreseeable future.

Something in him actually bubbled and yammered in agreement at the prospect. Tom shivered.

“L. “ Harry hesitated and seemed to be trying to rephrase whatever he wanted to say to make it more palatable. “I can’t leave you alone here. It’s not safe” was the eventual tentative attempt.

“Harry – go and...receive a briefing from your servants..or...check on Severus.. Go and eat, but go! I wish to be alone.” The small blonde boy curled slightly tighter. “I won’t Last time I left when you told me to, it made everything a lot worse. If I’d just ignored you then, we’d probably both be in Malfoy Manor by now.”

Tom gritted his unfamiliar teeth and growled under his breath. “Tell me about that time then. I cannot recall any instance that would fit those conditions..”

The blue eyes of the other boy clenched and he sighed heavily. “Nevermind. It doesn’t matter. I’ll... I’ll leave if you really want me to.” He uncurled with slow visible unwillingness and sat up, turning to sit on the edge of the bed, facing away from Tom. His head hung despondently. “I thought.. that is..I’d hoped...” he tapered off pathetically with a small headshake. Then reaching down to the floor beside the bed he retrieved a pair of the muggle jean trousers and slipped them on quickly.

The sight of the pretty, half bare form walking away from him toward the door actually caused something inside Tom to hurt. It was a dull, sickly ache in the pit of his stomach. The words to call Harry back were in his mouth, trying to burst out of him. The boy should come back and get back into bed and passively allow himself to be clung to. But the words did not escape. He bit them in with all his strength. He would not surrender to whatever this was. No doubt this was something to do with Severus. Perhaps his servant thought to secure Harry’s future safety by binding him in some uncomfortable manner to his enemy. Yes.. No, Severus would unlikely choose to do that. He berated himself inwardly for the disarray of his own thoughts. It was difficult to concentrate and so much still felt blurred or unclear.

The soft click of the door behind Harry was like a death knell. Panic flared in Tom. Blow this! He would not be discomforted in this manner, even if it meant nearing Harry Potter in an unpleasantly tender manner.

“Harry!”
He waited hopefully.

Nothing. Had the boy not heard?! He must be on the other side of the door. He couldn’t have gotten far yet. “HARRY??!!”

The boy did not re-emerge.

He called again, hating himself but preferring to quell the gnawing ache inside him.
It had no effect. The boy was gone. He had sent him away out of pure wilfulness and now he had no idea when Harry would be returning and no way of summoning him.
He could perhaps... go after him...
But the boy had said that others in his base had opposed his presence here.
Hadn't he?
Tom wasn’t sure. He vaguely recalled something like it but it felt..fuzzy.. Damn this!.. his mind was addled. Damn this transformation. Damn Severus for whatever he had done to cause ..this.

The ache had stopped worsening for the moment. No doubt, wherever Harry was, he had stopped moving away from Tom.
It was endurable... Wretched and unpleasant but endurable.
Tom moved away from the icy wall and crawled to the end of the bed to retrieve the covers. He wrapped them around himself even though they did not truly warm him – not in the way he needed.
He curled up, feeling sufficiently hidden by the blanket to wrap his own arms around himself in an empty embrace that did not still the ache, but was better than nothing.
Turning his mind inward, he set about cleaning house.

At some point after his internal ordering, he must have drifted back to sleep because he would surely have noticed the change at once, had he been awake for it.
He felt deliciously warm and comfortable once more.

There was another body in front of him again, and it was spooned with seemingly impossibly perfect fit against his own. His arm was once again curled around the other and his hand now lay gently pressed against a smooth, hairless, but unmistakeably male chest. Another hand was laid over his own, as if ensuring that he would not move away.
Harry... Harry had returned. Relieved, Tom tilted his head forward a couple of inches and laid his face against the back of the other boy’s neck.
It was not a nuzzle. He did not nuzzle or cuddle or snuggle. It was just...curiosity.

Harry’s new body smelled of clean soap and something else that was sweet and soft and slightly musky. It was extraordinarily pleasant. He inhaled it again with enjoyment and only barely caught himself from the soft kiss he had been about to place on the base of the other’s neck.

“Tom...” a voice soft with sleep murmured in something between a purr and a whine.
“Please...don’t-”

“Go back to sleep, Harry” he cut the boy off before he could learn what exactly Harry wished him not to do. He had no intention of releasing Harry to move away from him again and he was not prepared to entertain any requests to do so.
No.. If this was the way it was to be now – then this was how it would be. It hurt to allow Harry to venture too far from him – ergo, Harry would not be doing that again.
He would confront the issue of what had caused this effect later. Perhaps it could be counteracted in some way.
Obviously that would be preferable.
But in the interim.. this was not entirely awful either.

He remembered now.

Or at least he remembered as much as whoever had obliviated him had left him to remember.
He recalled the way Harry had thrown himself at him, almost from the first moment that they had encountered each other in the middle of muggle infested nowhere, on the other side of the world; Harry had told him that he had recognised him in the audience in that bar; that he’d been dancing
just for Tom that night. And then, the boy’s excited enthusiasm when Tom had touched him...

The morning in the backpackers that Harry had woken him so satisfyingly was particularly clear in his memory now. He had been very content with Harry that morning.

With the exception of some persistent fuzziness toward the very end that had infuriated him when he had examined it, he remembered quite well how Harry had come apart in his arms when he had taken him in the black room that Severus had transfigured for them.

Of course... he also recalled the irritating ease with which Harry had slipped off the veil of submissive supplication and revealed himself as the conniving and capable leader of a fairly sophisticated resistance movement.

But he rather suspected that Harry, given any encouragement, would default back to his previous tactic of using deference and seduction to steer Tom in the direction he preferred. As tactics went, he preferred that to the steel that Harry was evidently capable of producing when necessary.

There would be punishment eventually for the memory that was stolen from him – for Harry’s part in cornering him in a place where he was made vulnerable; for allowing his mind to be injured. But even that misfortune could be twisted to his own favour, he thought.

He had decided to ‘remember’ events prior to the transformation only up to the point of that obiviation. There was nothing to be gained in acknowledging his discovery of Harry’s pathetic little ruse.

No, it gave him far more options if they were both pretending that Harry was obedient to him. Clearly the boy preferred that mode of manipulation.

Undoubtedly, pushing him too far would force him to drop the act again, but, if Tom was careful, this little habitual tactic of Harry’s could easily lose him control of the movement..and the resources he presently controlled.

That being said... there was no reason not to give in to the inclinations of his body at present. He had every plausible excuse to do so...

He allowed himself to gently press the small kiss to the base of Harry’s neck that he had been wanting to place there since he woke.

The boy in his arms shifted slightly in his, no doubt simulated, sleep and gave a contented mmm. Tom tightened his arm around Harry ever so slightly and let his head drop back down onto the pillow. As disappointing as the failure of Harry’s plan might be, from his own perspective all was far from lost. Relative to his previous way of life this could only be viewed as a success. He had Severus back from the dead, slipperier and more intriguing than ever; he had Harry Potter at his beck and call and if he offered the child another plan to infiltrate the powers in control of the British wizarding world - something that aligned with Tom's own intentions anyway - then Harry would no doubt begin to defer to him and offer himself as willing sacrifice once more; would throw himself beneath Tom's lash if desired. And most pleasing of all - when he woke, whatever potion had been used upon him would have passed from his system and he would be able to use magic again! For the first time in...too many years...he would be able to freely curse someone when they irritated him!

It was with a smile that he closed his eyes, let the tension slip from his limbs and gave himself over to Morpheus care.
Tom eased back into awareness gently, feeling wonderful. Well.. aside from the not-quite-right feeling of this body, to which he was beginning to accustom himself - he felt wonderful.

He lay on his back in a comfortable, warm bed. The covers were only cotton but they were clean and smelled of some type of muggle washing powder. His new body was still languid with sleep, but he had the feeling that a small part of that softness was due to the body itself. It was softer..silkier..than his own had ever been.

‘Weaker’ a dark corner of his mind spat, but he ignored it.

Opening his eyes, he found himself gazing up at the shadowy orange recesses of the ceiling above, still tinted by the light from the perpetually lit candle. He allowed himself a quiet sigh of something that was, if not satisfaction itself, then at least a distant relative of that rare emotion. He felt warm... almost safe!! And in his gut was the twist of new hope and promise. For the last years he had usually woken cold and stiff, a gnawing hunger in his belly and the ever present alertness.

It wasn’t fear obviously. He was not weak!! It had been merely...vigilance. Wariness. Not...fear. Now though! Now it seemed he was back within hand’s grasp of everything he had lost.

Against his shoulder he could feel slow warm breaths. He didn’t even need to glance in that direction to know that it was Harry – the other boy was either sleeping or giving a decent simulation of such.

He didn’t need to check because he could feel that it was Harry. The warm feeling was so much stronger when Harry was near.

Not to say that he approved of that – but he acknowledged and accepted the new complication. He was somehow more connected to the slippery brat since the new skin procedure. Perhaps the process had failed due to some remnant of the old connection he had once shared with Harry. Though it had been silent and unresponsive for many years, something may have been left. Perhaps the scar had disrupted whatever wards or spells had been cast. He had never had the chance to examine Harry’s curse scar in detail. There had never been the time or opportunity for such delicate spellwork upon the rabid little twit.

He conceded to himself that he hadn’t much cared at the time. Before Severus had managed to restore his original form, he had spent a large portion of his time attempting to regulate his cognitive state by means of venoms and potions. He had not been thinking as clearly as he should have been. He had known only how to twist and use the connection...but now he wondered upon what exactly it had rested? Had it truly been a binding effect of the original deflected curse? An artificial linking of spirits – a marriage of minds, as it were? He had thought it something of the sort. It had explained why the effect resisted any tampering or efforts to break the curse, heal the jinx… Vows of that sort could only be broken by the death of one member or the combined spellwork of both parties in congress. Congress between himself and Harry Potter had never been a likely eventuality and there had already been so many reasons to desire to see the life knocked out of his impertinent eyes.

A bond also fit neatly with the observation that the effects could be partially or totally blocked with occlumency. It was a skill sometimes offered to those pursuing a very traditional wedding binding, due to the extreme lack of privacy in such pairings. He recalled that Deimos Goyle had been pressed into undertaking such a bond with his wife. The man’s ability to close his mind to his master; originally no more than a flimsy barrier; had increased significantly over the years of his
marriage. Had he cared to, it would have been easy enough to extract further information about
the parameters of Goyle’s bond. ...Not that he would have shared his suspicions about the nature
of the link with Harry Potter. He had taken particular effort to make it less obvious to any of his
death eaters that there even existed a connection... Even when he had used the link to lure Potter
to the Ministry of Magic in order to have him retrieve his prophecy, his servants had not been
informed exactly how he was certain that Potter would be coming that night. It was none of their
concern. No – for them, Harry Potter was simply a naive brat who had a moment of almost
inconceivable luck – a brat who would soon be disposed of.
The thought irritated him anew. He turned his thoughts away from his repeated mortifying failures
to destroy Harry. That was hardly relevant now.

Who could know what might happen to the stability of his present form, should he actually kill the
boy sleeping next to him?! For all he knew, he would suffer the same fate! The unpleasant
sensation of Harry walking away from him was not something he was eager to re-experience.
What if that sensation worsened and persisted without the other boy alive and near him?!

Tom turned his head slowly, feeling the tickle of his stubble-like hair against the pillow.
The sight he was met with was, in some strange way, almost as startling as it had been the
previous day upon waking. Despite knowing that Harry now occupied the form of a slender
platinum blonde teenager, something in his mind still called up dazzling green eyes and a shock of
black hair. Something still expected Harry Potter, bane of Tom’s existence and apparent male
stripper. It was oddly...disappointing...to be met with this new creature.

Harry was...not Draco Malfoy. No. Not at all. Tom had reclaimed his memories and he had met
that pampered, pointy little princeling often enough to recognise him in all variations. Though
there was something of the Malfoy scion to Harry’s present incarnation – the resemblance was no
closer than a brother or cousin. He definitely would not be able to pass for Draco without
transfiguration or glamours.
The form he presently wore had a slender face with appealingly
symmetrical features, much like the youngest Malfoy, but he appeared somehow more innocent -
the cheekbones were softer, the brows less sharp... and there was something altogether less
pinched in the lines of the boy’s face. Obviously the other chosen candidate – the one that Harry
himself had been supposed to become – had been a halfblood with an oval face and black hair.
James.... something.

In that moment the blonde youth’s breathing faltered slightly and a mild frown tightened his brow.
Tom watched the changes with interest and when the delicate eyelids slid up, he enjoyed the
flinch and tense that Harry demonstrated as his mind caught up to reality; the slight widening of
those painfully innocent pale blue eyes.
The hair was an obvious marker of Malfoy genes. He recalled the halfblood had had blue eyes.
Lucius had once told him that Malfoys were cursed to breed true. He didn’t recall in what context
the comment had been made – it had been idly noted in passing. Perhaps it would have been
useful to have had further explanation about that statement.
It hardly mattered now, he supposed.

“To... um... Vol-Voldemort?” Harry tried nervously in the voice that was nothing like his own. It
was lighter, higher...a flute compared to Harry’s oboe

Tom offered a smirk, which only served to widen Harry’s silvery eyes further.
“Harry.” he acknowledged.

Harry opened his mouth to say something but seemed to hesitate, looking uncertain, and
eventually closed his mouth again and simply stared passively back at Tom, waiting to take his
cue from Tom’s own behaviour.
Good Harry. Tom gifted him with a look of approval.
“I remember much more now” he informed the boy softly, noting the tiny, almost unnoticeable changes this provoked. A tension in the boy’s frame, a faint hopeful twitch of his brows.

He twisted under the covers and turned to lie upon his side, facing the other boy, his smile fading as they lay watching each other in silence.

“Is it safe for me to test my magic?”

Harry’s eyes darted slightly for a moment before he seemed to steel himself and return his gaze to Tom’s face with determination.

“It should be...but we’ll have to leave this room. It’s warded against magic. ...an extra precaution.”

Tom narrowed his eyes angrily, feeling the shape of the answer that Harry did not offer. “Is it now?! How superfluous. Was there any potion at all, Harry, or did you yet again lie to me?!”

The pale grey gaze dropped and a faint hint of colour bloomed in the other boy’s cheeks.

“I... I was worried you’d insist upon leaving the room if I...” he muttered uncomfortably.

“Your excuses do not interest me. What do you want from me now, Harry? To what end are you incarcerating me in this cell...in this bed with you?!”

This startled the other boy’s gaze back up to meet Tom’s own. Harry looked wrong-footed and, surprisingly, upset.

“Come along then.” He snapped.

The blonde shook his head faintly in response and, with unmistakeable reluctance, crawled to the edge of the bed and stood up.

Tom found himself exactly eye to eye with him. They were precisely the same height. The corner of his mouth twitched up in a half smirk.

“Are we completely identical? Is this how I appear? I require a mirror, Harry. I would see with my own eyes what has been done.”

He took in peripherally the increased blush on Harry’s cheeks as he inspected the boy more closely. This new body was...delicate... and sweetly formed. Were it not so unfortunately reminiscent of the Malfoys, it was something that he himself might have had delivered to his chambers. Lean and pale and youthful. An innocent.

Absently he reached out and traced his fingertips down the other boy’s ribs.

Harry shivered and stumbled forward a half step, confusion and hope painted large on his face.

“No.” Tom told him curtly. “First things first, Harry. I would see myself and I should like to explore the magical capacity of this new body. We will...discuss...our situation afterward.”

A sighing nod and then Harry was padding off in the direction of the door. He still retained his graceful physical presence, Tom observed. However this form lacked the strength and power of
Harry’s former body. It shifted the effect somewhat from that of a stalking jungle cat to a harem catamite – a pretty boy to be draped in jewels and fucked by kings.

His amusement dimmed at the realisation that his observation may as well be about himself.

Harry had stopped by the door. For no apparent reason he dropped to his haunches and started waving his hands around near the floor. The reason became apparent when he caught and lifted aside what could only be an invisibility garment of some kind, revealing a small dark coloured pile in the shadows between the left of the door and the corner of the room. Clothing, as it turned out. He tossed some folded fabric items in Tom’s direction and set to dragging on a pair of black jeans.

Tom’s own clothes, as it turned out, were identical to those Harry put on. Black jeans and a grey t-shirts that resembled nothing more than army surplus. He scowled at the thought that he now mirrored Harry even more completely.

“Herman’s idea” Harry offered quietly. “He said it would be good if it wasn’t so easy for anyone to tell the difference between us, just in case word got out about you. They’d hesitate if they thought they might be attacking me. And if we dress the same and take care in not being seen moving through the corridors together then no one should even realise there’s two of us. Right now, there’s only three people who know you’re here; that you have new skin. I obliviated the others who saw you when we brought you here…”

Frowning slightly, Tom noted that this contradicted somewhat with the story Harry had spun him when he woke prior to the new skin procedure - When he had disguised Calico as the little girl Severus and told Tom, after he’d twigged to the ruse, that he had been obliviated because all of Harry’s little minions (whatever the boy said, that was what they were) had learned of his presence and were up in arms over it. He thought on this again. He had unquestionably been obliviated. There was a...gap. An uncomfortable gap in fact. It lay between the night he had taken Harry and the morning of the new skin procedure. And if Harry was quite prepared to simply obliviate all of his followers now, then there was no reason he should not have been able to do so at that time. Therefore it was a lie. Something had happened...during that gap of missing time. Something had happened involving Tom personally...and possibly Severus, since the man was obviously absent for the procedure which was so important that it could ‘only be entrusted to him’. Whatever had happened, it was serious enough for Harry to wish him to lose the memory entirely. Not something that could be worked through or otherwise resolved. Something disruptive to Harry’s objectives.

Again he had the disconcerting feeling that he didn’t quite want to know what had happened, even if he knew that the ignorance could, and certainly would disadvantage him significantly in his dealings with the boy. Possibly with Severus also, whenever he next saw the man – he had no doubt that he would – The man had more resilience than an armour plated cockroach.

Later. He would look into finding out what had happened later. Now was not the time. The tiny quiver of dread in his belly stilled again as he mentally backed away from the disconcerting gap in his mind.

Instead he considered the prospect of being Harry’s unknown twin from the angle of his own chances of gaining control over the resources that Harry apparently had at his disposal. It was...perhaps for the best, as the boy said. It did mean that he would need to rely on Harry rather more than he otherwise might have had to in the beginning...but in light of their recent inability to distance themselves from one another – this might work in his favour. And in the end... when he learned of a way to counteract this pull between them and had discovered enough to convincingly simulate the boy, he might simply replace him. A bloodless coup, if ever there was one.
The soft smile that the boy was giving him was entirely inappropriate. What was it for now?!
He glared back and it dropped, along with the boy’s gaze.
“Sorry” Harry mumbled, looking disappointed and chastened. “Here…” – he held out the
shimmery folds of the invisibility cloak. “You should…put this on. At least while we’re in the
corridor. Just in case we run into someone. I’ll take you to…” he paused and seemed to consider,
the edge of his puffy bottom lip slipping between his teeth in a habit that, Tom realised, must have
become unconscious.
“I’ll take you to the training room. I can kick anyone out who’s using it and secure it from the
inside. It has mirrors and if you want to throw spells, it’s one of the safest places.”

The corridor was very...military. The word insinuated itself into Tom’s mind with every step along
the dull grey metallic grating. Dimplly, below, he could spy an assortment of pipes running below
them. The gratings were welded down. It all felt suffocatingly muggle. Dark grey concrete walls
were broken by unmarked, off-white doors every so often. In one or two places he observed the
small blonde incarnation of his former enemy tense and make an effort to walk just a little more
quietly...edge just a touch further toward the opposite wall as if he were avoiding whatever was
within. Or perhaps an external ward of some type that Tom himself could not detect. Although
such a thing would have seemed an impossibility to him before the fall of his campaign, he was
prepared to concede now that there were many things he had not considered. If it was possible to
place his awareness in this new body, what else might be within the capabilities of some clever
little minion or other of Harry’s?

Blue eyes glanced back in his direction nervously and the boy bit his lip, his eyes darting slightly,
as if trying to pick out Tom’s shadow beneath the invisibility cloak – A pointless endeavour,
obviously – before he seemed to steel himself and turn around, moving more quickly now.

With the exception of their soft, slightly echoey footfalls, it was absolutely silent. Tom wondered
where everyone else might be at present. Was this perhaps a rarely used accessway? – an area of
little traffic? Possibly a dungeon, or equivalent. He wondered how large the facility might be.

“It’s here” Harry whispered, ducking his head slightly. “Just wait a sec. I’ll... I’ll check it”
He tried the handle of a door that did not look in any way different than all of the other doors they
had passed and, opening the door a short way, popped his head inside and looked around.
“No one here.” he muttered. “Not that i’m really surprised. Things are a bit... Well… nevermind
for the moment. Come inside. I’ll ward it shut behind us.”

Tom glided through the door that was held open for him, and took in a large, rather impressive
room. As training areas went, it was superior to the one he had installed in his own base – it
appeared closer to the style he would attribute to MLE aurors. The resemblance could have been
intentional. For all he knew, a lot of aurors might have deserted to the cause of the rebels. It was
not as if he had been privy to events within wizarding Britain over the last years, and even on the
rare occasion that he had managed to find some wizarding news – media reporting was biased and
patchy and he had had more than his share of other things to worry about in simply trying to
survive and remain out of sight.

Moving further inside the room, he stopped and admired. The space was grandiose in its
dimensions, rivalling the largest of ballrooms and grand halls. Along the right hand wall a bank of
full length mirrors stretched. They shimmered in a way that was ever so slightly unnatural. He
suspected that they had been charmed to be selectively reflective and would absorb spells. The
floor appeared to be concrete, but he could feel a faintly spongy give to it, even upon the few
steps he had taken into the room. It evidently had some fairly advanced cushioning charms. Basic charms would have rendered it impractical as a standing and fighting surface. These, however, seemed to be of the reciprocal variety – they reacted with diminishing inertia proportionate to the force applied. Solid enough to walk or run upon, but the equivalent of a rubber sheet should a body be thrown with force against them. At the end of the room he could see several target dummies of various sizes and shapes lined up in the corner out of the way, along with what seemed to be a metal bin holding small objects he couldn’t identify.

“Ok.. we’re warded in.”

Harry’s hesitant comment drew Tom’s attention back from his perusal. He turned, dragging away the invisibility cloak in the process and raised an eyebrow at the other boy.

“I.. I don’t have a wand for you. For either of us, really. I tried my old one but it wouldn’t work for me anymore.” Harry fidgeted a bit and Tom continued to watch him, enjoying the effect he seemed to have on the boy, whether it was simulated or not.

“There aren’t really a lot of spare wands around in general these days and I didn’t have much to do with those kind of resources here. Herman says that Snape has some kind of wand cache somewhere but she doesn’t know where it might be, and... well.. I already explained the problems we’ve been having with him.” Harry trailed off, looking uncomfortable.

“I do not require a wand, Harry. Unforgiveables?”

This seemed to startle the blonde. “er-what? Um.” He recovered quickly but his entire frame seemed tensed now, as if he were preparing to run or defend himself. “I know you didn’t need a wand before. You might or might not need one now. Why do you want to cast the unforgiveables? Best if you don’t really.”

Tom smirked. “As you have explained that you do not have a wand yourself now, and you obviously managed to ward the room only moments ago, I suspect I will manage adequately wandlessly. The unforgiveables, as distasteful as you may find them, are a good gauge of one’s magical strength, precision and endurance. The cruciatus displays the weaknesses of the caster in a particularly eloquent manner. Bella..that is Bellatrix.. I am certain you remember her, Harry... was a commendably powerful witch, with tolerable endurance, although she regrettably lacked precision, despite my every effort to foster it in her. She was a blunt instrument, as it were. It was most observable in her lack of control when using the cruciatus. This was the principal reason why she was entirely unsuitable for interrogation. She failed to extract information from her subjects in almost all cases, leaving them too damaged to be of use.

Ah... there. Rage and disgust flashed through the unsatisfyingly blue eyes. The boy controlled it and offered a bland expression in its place, but it had been there.

Tom turned away, smiling; deliberately showing Harry his back. Would he dare to attack him? The tingle of excitement danced through his veins suddenly. He did not even know yet whether he would be capable of defending himself. Why was he antagonising the boy unwisely before he had so much as flexed his magical muscles?! It was unwise. With self- chastisement, he moved further into the room, turning his attention now to the mirrors. Two identical adolescent boys were visible, their white blonde stubble-hair so pale as to seem a mere white shimmer upon bald heads. Tom’s eyes met with Harry’s in the glass before the boy’s gaze slid away from his own non-confrontationally. Although he could not find any visible anatomical difference whatsoever to distinguish them, the impressions they each made with their posture, expression and carriage varied even so. Harry was clearly well on his way to returning to the pleasant submissive persona he had used to good effect in New Zealand. He looked... softer than Tom himself. Experimentally, Tom adjusted his own body and face in the attempt to simulate him. The resemblance between them increased.
Harry frowned. “What are you doing?”

Abandoning the play for the moment, Tom waved dismissively and dropped the act. “Merely exploring this new body. But you are right. Let us see what it is capable of.” He closed his eyes and rolled his shoulders slightly, loosening his frame and shifting into a relaxed stance. When he felt adequately balanced and comfortable he turned his attention inward, looking for the phantom tug of his own magical core. It was an ephemeral thing at best, not corresponding to any of the normal senses. It was neither seen nor felt. Minutes passed and he thought that he had found it, only to lose his focus. It was not at all as it had been once, many years ago, in his own body. It was...fainter. And it felt unfamiliar and alien. His own magic had sizzled and snapped within him. This simmered. This new magic evoked the impression of warmth where his own magic had seemed ice cold. It felt mottled and impure like clay or mud. It did not feel like him. After a time he returned to himself, unsatisfied and with new trepidation.

“What’s wrong?!” Harry wanted to know at once. “You look upset. What’s... isn’t it working?! Is there something-“

“Be still” he snapped back. “I have been examining, not attempting to cast. He raised a hand uncertainly. He had not needed such a focus when he had last been using his magic, but the impression his core had left him with led him to believe it might be advisable now.

And it was. He could feel resistance even with the psychological focus of his raised hand. It was harder to cast than he could ever remember it being... it was harder to focus. He pushed his incorrect-feeling magic out like liquid through a straw and at first nothing happened. The dummy at the end of the room stood woodenly still. He concentrated harder and pulled and then it began to shake before it started to move in little grinding jumps and scrapes across the floor toward him.

This was not at all good.

He felt, more than heard, Harry pad quietly back across the room to be closer to him, the concern seemed to stream off him. All at once the dummy leapt forward and flew to the place he had intended to place it. He whirled and glared accusingly at the impertinent brat who had dared to pity him and help him out magically...as if he were some kind of near-squib. The other boy flinched back in shock and confusion.

“What?! I’m sorry. I’ll go back over there! I thought for a second that there was a problem but... but... I’m sorry. Nevermind.”

Something in the tone halted the snarled demand that he had been about to spit at the boy. Harry was sorry... but he did not seem to realise what Tom was infuriated about. Had he perhaps not seen fit to assist him out of pity? As the boy backed off again, eyes on the floor and face grim, Tom frowned in uncertainty. Perhaps it just been some manner of stutter. Perhaps Harry had experienced something similar when he had first tried to use his magic in this new body. After all, he had said yesterday that he had gone through a period of lost memory when he had first awoken. Tom’s own period had lasted a little longer, but then he had also been held in magical sleep following the procedure. For all he knew, that might have interfered with his recovery in some way.

Turning, he mustered the dummy once more, extending his hand again. A twisting hex. The cruciatus would be of no use on an inanimate object and he did not want to transfigure quite yet. The twisting hex would be adequate to gauge his strength.
He concentrated.

Again, nothing happened at first.

He could feel tiny beads of sweat break out on his brow. What if this wasn’t some kind of initial stutter at all. What if he was magically inert in this form?! What if he was a near squib?! A squib was practically a muggle!! Would Severus do this to him?! Foolish question. He had cruciated the man hundreds of times over the years. Severus had many reasons to despise him. Rendering him a squib might even be merciful in his eyes.

He pushed harder, forcing more of his magic into the hex. There was a soft creak as of wood under stress.

This couldn’t be happening. He could not be...weak…as he so obviously was. In his old body he would have torn this wooden prop in two with a mere thought.

He heard Harry’s breath catch behind him. Again he could feel the boy’s internal disarray and desire to rush forward and find out what was wrong.

It was shameful to be this weak. What if it wasn’t a temporary problem?!

“T-Tom?” Harry prompted in a small voice. “Is there something wr-“

“Yes! Yes there is something wrong, Harry.” he snapped venomously “That should be obvious. Show me your own magic. Break the dummy.”

He refused to turn and avoided the other boy’s eyes as he stood on the other practice point across the room. Harry turned away after a moment and faced the training dummy at the far end of the training room, but in his peripheral vision Tom had caught the wide-eyed worry that had been directed at him.

Harry seemed to hesitate before raising his own hand and somehow Tom knew that it was because Harry did not need to artificially channel his magic that way. He was doing so purely in order to be considerate to Tom in his present position. That only made it worse. It was not fair. Why should this boy yet again be gifted with an advantage by fate?! What possible reason could there be for two identical bodies..two identical magical cores to function so differently.

He stared unseeing as the training dummy splintered and was torn apart.

“What does it feel like?” Harry asked quietly and obliquely. He clarified after a moment of Tom’s disgusted silence. ‘I mean… when you cast. What does it feel like? What did you ‘examine’ before when you seemed to be meditating. Do you know what’s wrong?

Tom bared his teeth in infuriation and bit off the snarl he wanted to respond with. It felt like weakness. He was weaker than Harry in this body. He had no doubt that, somehow, in some way, that was intended by Severus. Impudent traitorous bastard. When he got his hands on him he’d…

He glared impotently at the floor some distance ahead. He’d what?!

Severus, while he may be presently incapacitated, was apparently still the only one who understood how this process worked. And in any regular situation, Tom suspected the potion master’s magical potency would now far outstrip his own.
This was unacceptable.

The warm hand on his shoulder startled him and he snapped his icy glare in Harry’s direction. This did not result in the flinch and withdraw he desired, which only heightened the rage he was feeling.

“It’s ok. We’ll figure out a way to fix it.” The boy had the impertinence to say gently.

Tom took a very deep breath and tried not to think about the urge to cruciate the brat – and the almost overwhelming panic that he might fail to cast the curse if he gave in to the impulse.

“Be quiet and let me think” he muttered. A thought occurred to him and he frowned slightly and then raised a hand. It had been a long time since he had needed the spell. Not since he had been re-born in the graveyard had he needed it. And even then, he had only employed it a handful of times to check his magical core had not been somehow damaged by the transfer to a new vessel. It was a healer’s spell. Used to monitor magical flow from the core to the channels. Possibly…just possibly this was a reparable ailment. Possibly he had some kind of blockage or problem directing the flow of his core. Blockages could usually be repaired with potions and misdirections with training. There was a chance, at least, that he might not be permanently weakened.

Harry seemed to understand instinctively that he had some kind of new idea and withdrew his hand, to watch quietly.

“Et Rivos Gamini” he whispered hesitantly. He had been worried the spell would fail but it snapped into place almost before he’d finished the incantation. Which was…odd, considering it was a moderately tricky spell to cast and he’d not two minutes prior had issues with a simple twisting hex. Immediately he felt the slight warming flow through his body that told him the spell was successful. His magical flows would now be visible on his body in veins and webs of light. He turned toward the mirrors and inspected the result…and was confused.

The spell reflected both magical potency – how much magic was present in the core, in the form of how bright and how thick the lines were – and magical flow – how smoothly and elaborately the lines spread.

His body was alight with magic. Shining with almost liquidlike shimmering flows, a rich regal purple. The colour was new. His own magic had always had green hues, although there was some variation. It had darkened with age and it had taken on an almost muddy olive hue when he had occupied the homunculus body. The problem was however, that the purple veins were shining brighter now than his own magical flows had been after Severus had restored his true body. That…couldn’t be right... There were no knots or dulled areas in the impressively complex web he could see and the lines were thick and bright, indicating an astoundingly potent core. And yet.. his magic had just failed. He had felt the strain on it when trying to cast the hex.

Perhaps he was missing something somewhere. He moved toward the mirror to examine the pattern more closely. But as he moved, another flood of adrenal panic flooded him. The lines were dimming! More than that – they were narrowing! …and, peculiarly, it seemed that the colour had dulled also. What had been a rich saturated purple was now a dull indigo, almost a blue tone. He stopped in place, transfixed by the change to the web superimposed over his body. It showed a perfectly mundane magical potency and transmission. Possibly slightly above the average wizard on the street, but entirely underwhelming.

Was his core in flux?! That was a dangerous condition… It could be caused by some poisons and occasionally through overexertion. Redcap bile could cause it in developing children, he recalled.
obscurely. One could actually become a squib if the condition persisted too long. It was taxing on the channels to accommodate such variation in flow. and he had never heard of hue changes associated with core fluctuation. One’s magic was depicted as a given hue based on physiological, and environmental effects. He would have to be undergoing serious changes to one of those factors to experience such a rapid shift in hue. And yet, nothing he could discern had changed in or around him.

Gingerly, Tom moved closer and gasped slightly as the light dimmed and narrowed even further, feeling the infuriating impulse to somehow grasp his magic to himself and cling to it to prevent it seeping away. It seemed that it was stable if he didn’t move. Perhaps he could just… wait here… and demand Harry to summon the best healer he had access to. He couldn’t lose it. It…it was the only thing he truly could not live without. His face, his followers, his knowledge, his memories—all these things seemed to pale in comparison with the thing that he had valued most about himself. His power. The one thing that most articulated his superiority over others. Even when he had been on the run and had been functionally a squib. He had never actually been one. He had had the power—he had merely refrained from using it. It was an act of will.

This… this was more than could be endured. What if he truly became a squib?!

He blinked. The channels of light were brightening and thickening again. This was severe core fluctuation, if that was what it was. By the degree of brightening and thickening of the coruscating lines, there was a variation in potency of almost an entire average core. This was serious. A body would not hold up to frequent fluctuations of this magnitude. The cases he had heard of had been variations of only minor degrees and in many cases this had proved too much for the wizard or witches’ body to accommodate for more than a few months, with the assistance of healers.

The veins of deep blue suddenly brightened impossibly, lightening rapidly to a brighter purple again. Just in that moment he felt the hand settle on his shoulder again.

The dark shape next to the bright one in the mirror. He hadn’t even noticed Harry approach him, he’d been so distracted.

His mind made the connection. Filled with horror and paradoxical hope he half turned to his twin. “Harry. Please walk slowly away from me.”

To the other boy’s credit—he did not even need to ask why. After all, they had both witnessed it. He might have dismissed Harry as an imbecile once but it had become apparent that his former enemy was sharper than he led the world to believe.

As the boy in the mirror retreated backward with slow measured paces, Tom watched, with equal parts relief and concern as the bright lines of light displayed over his body once again dimmed and narrowed, fading away and dulling through purples into blue.

As Harry withdrew, Tom realised that that uncomfortable ache in the pit of his stomach was returning. The spelled image did not dim any further after Harry had reached a point about ten metres away, but the ache was intensely unpleasant. He wrapped an arm around his stomach, grimacing. Although his magical potency appeared to remain stable, the pain grew. By the time Harry had reached the opposite wall, about twenty five metres away, Tom found it difficult to remain standing. The pain seemed to be reaching out tendrils and clawing through him. He clenched his eyes shut, gritting his teeth.

And then he could feel it abating again rapidly. Obviously Harry was returning. He could actually gauge the speed with which the other boy approached by the diminishing ache through his body.
“Your magic is linked to me in some way.” The boy announced superfluously from a metre behind him. Tom opened his eyes and met the gaze of the boy over his left shoulder. “So it would seem” he agreed.

“Why doesn’t it affect me that way?” Harry wondered aloud, although he seemed now to be more preoccupied with some other thought. Something that obviously worried him.

“Perhaps it does” he responded neutrally, and had been wondering the same thing. Why was the nature of reality constantly tilted in favour of the boy?! The world, in his experience typically was not anything approximating fair. Fairness was an intrinsically irrational concept, he felt. The strong rose, the weak fell, that was all there was to it. However, he conceded, it would have been a pleasant change if, for once, the world were to be unfairly tilted in his own favour.

“Teach me that spell.”

Tom rolled his eyes. “This is hardly the time for a lesson, Potter” he muttered. With Harry standing so close to him, he found he did not so much as need to raise his hand to direct the spell. It snapped into place over the boy at his mere thought and he stepped to the side to inspect their respective mirror images side to side. The boy was visibly weaker than him. It was how things should be. The natural order. Harry displayed a relatively average level of magical potency, a depressingly Gryffindor-red hued vein system and, not surprisingly, no disorders with his magical flow. Tom, next to him – glowed brightly with a rich purple network of lines.

Frowning, Harry began to distance himself – this time sidestepping away in order to maintain his distance from the mirror. The brightening of the lines on him and corresponding dimming of those on Tom made the connection clear. The hue of the boy’s magic also darkened slightly. It did not appear to be proportional, however, Tom noted. By the frown on Harry’s face he was noticing the same. After Harry had reached ten metres from him, and Tom’s core had stopped dimming, Harry’s was still brightening with distance and was a reddish purple.

He didn’t stop this time until he reached the end of the long training hall, and by that time Tom had actually sunken to his knees, wrapping his arms around his abdomen in pain.

It was with relief, he felt Harry returning finally and the aching, clenching torment abated.

“It hurts you when we’re apart.”

“Thank you for unfailingly stating the obvious” Tom gritted out, refusing to look up at the wretch who was the cause of, and only relief to, his discomfort.

“It…it doesn’t hurt me when I’m close to you though.” Harry mused. “Surely.. if our cores are connected like this, it should hurt me to be close to you…”

Tom didn’t bother to respond to the thought. It was clear to him that whatever this effect was – it was certainly not any intentional result conceived of by Severus. He doubted the potions master would intentionally cause any effect that increased his motivation to keep Harry by his side at all times. Something had gone awry with the process. This was possibly a good thing. Severus would be motivated to correct it.

“Help me up?” he asked softly.

Harry blinked, once again distracted by some disquieting thought, and reached out automatically to take Tom’s hand.
Breathing a sigh of relief, Tom incanted the proximity tether charm silently, binding it to their joined hands as Harry pulled him to his feet. He was as gentle in casting as he could manage and the boy didn’t respond in the slightest. Hopefully he hadn’t realised it was cast. Tom made a mental note to investigate something stronger…more permanent… at the soonest opportunity. He would have to be cautious and vary the permissible distance according to circumstance until then. Harry could not realise he had the power to restrain him, just in case he might know the countercharm and manage to remove it. It was an option of last resort. If Harry tried to leave, he would have a further chance to incapacitate him while he fought the restraint. Whatever happened, Harry could not be permitted to depart from his side again.

“We need to work out the exact parameters of this effect before we do anything further” he instructed. Harry was already nodding.
Chapter 14

“How bad is the pain when I leave?”

Tom pressed his lips together and looked away.

They had ‘trained’ for almost two hours and it was clear that these bodies were not yet equipped to handle any kind of prolonged physical activity. They were both sitting, leaned up against the wall now and a different kind of ache was burning in his muscles.

“You know it worsens with distance” he responded finally. “Where are you thinking to go?”

Harry’s eyes shifted slightly. “The mess hall…and I need to talk to Herman”

Tom found that he didn’t believe him. What they had learned over the past hour had changed nothing in the three basic truths that their initial mirror experimentations had revealed. Harry was more powerful when Tom was far from him, although this left Tom himself with slightly below average magical strength. Tom was even stronger when they were both in close proximity, although this left Harry himself with only middling average potency. And, worst of all, Tom was the only one affected by any physical discomfort at the changes in their proximity. The only new information they had gained consisted of their point of equivalent power, which appeared to be around five to six metres distance from one another. At that point they were both comfortably above average.

As far as he was concerned, this amounted to only one thing. – Harry would be stronger in his absence. If he were Harry – any plan he would be formulating would involve leaving Tom behind in order to infiltrate the British pureblood aristocracy alone somehow. Tom would only constitute a liability at this point.

“I will join you then. We have your cloak.”

The barely-there wince from the boy did not escape him. He could see the blonde teen preparing to make some argument against it.

“Harry…” he murmured, looking up at the other through his eyelashes. “You have been wishing me to desire your presence since this mess started. Can you not simply appreciate that you finally have your way? This body is hungry. Take me somewhere we can both eat and you can talk with your friend and then we can both rest for a while. Later, we will need to see what can be done with Severus.”

He watched the indecision flicker in the other boy’s eyes. “It’s really not safe for you there…” He hesitated. I’d rather not put you right in the middle of them.” He chewed his bottom lip. “Maybe it’s better if I don’t go either. We’ll go back to the room and I’ll call Herman to bring us something to eat there.”

“Certainly. That would be a sound course of action. …however I think we had best select a different room, Harry” Tom said as lightly as he could manage. “One without a suppression spell… For safety’s sake, obviously.”

“…Of course, Tom”

The pause before Harry’s agreement further cemented his concerns.
Tom had thoroughly sensed the room they were dining in before he had entered. He had cast two different anti-poisoning detection spells before he had begun to eat the somewhat salty goulash that Herman had brought them both. Nevertheless he was still on edge. Harry was thinking to leave him here. At present, it wasn’t decided, he concluded, or else the other would have taken more decisive and confrontational action by now, but the thought was definitely running through his mind.

He needed to persuade him that it was in his best interests to stay with him. That was the only real possibility he could see to avoid what would no doubt amount to an indefinite period spent either in stasis, or in unendurable agony. If the pain brought him to his knees when Harry was only twenty five metres away, what might it feel like if he was thousands of miles away?! He could not begin to imagine it.

He glanced up from his bowl, coincidentally meeting eyes with his mirror image, as Harry looked up in the same moment. The other smiled slightly, but Tom thought there was an edge of worry and guilt tinging it. Not the most promising sign.

“Harry…” he started softly, hesitantly, noting that the guilt seemed to increase in the other boy’s eyes. Not a good sign at all. Unless he was very much mistaken, the other was leaning strongly to the thought of leaving him behind.

“Do you think…” he paused and tried to think of how to phrase himself to achieve the desired outcome “—that we might delay our conversation with Severus slightly? Would it greatly impact what remains of your original plan?”

Harry frowned slightly. “Why? That is – well… no – there’s not really much of a plan left now. Obviously neither of us can replace Draco, looking like this. And even if we could – Lucius has twigged that there is a resistance. If we gave him any version of Draco back, you can be sure that he’d use everything he’s got to be sure it really was his son, and then we’d run the risk of him discovering the new skin procedure. At the moment he’s still in the dark about that – thank god. He’s searching for us, but we’ve got that under control now. Mostly. Or at least, the risk is contained. So – no, we don’t have to go to Severus now, but – why? Is there something else you want to do?”

Tom looked down and adopted a sombre mien. “I was hoping we might be able to return to a bedchamber and rest together for a while. I am still adjusting to this body and… its limitations.” he paused, unsure how much truth to allow out “and…it feels…cold…when we are apart. Even this small distance is like a chill that I cannot quite shake. I…do not wish to impose. I realise you must look after your affairs here, particularly in view of Severus recent betrayal. But if you do have some time for me, I would like to be close to you. He swallowed, as much for the effect as for pushing down the bile that rose up at needing to sound so humble and deferential.

When no response came, he risked glancing up. Harry was sitting back in his chair and looking torn. His face was carefully neutral, but the indecision and guilt was in the set of his shoulders. Finally, he sighed and nodded. “Sure. After you finish eating, we can go back to the bedchamber.”

Tom frowned at that. “The bedchamber which nullifies my magic, Harry?” he returned, cursing himself for the sharpness.

The other hesitated a moment too long before responding in the negative. “Of course not. There
are other bedchambers available.”

The unease in the pit of Tom’s stomach grew a little.

The chambers, when they reached them, a short while later, were reassuringly located in a different corridor than the one that Tom had initially awoken in. There were no suppression spells that he could detect on the room before he entered, and he was monitoring Harry carefully, although generally one could not cast a magic suppression spell on a space one was currently occupying, due to Leipsatz’s Law. There was however Ivanoffsky’s paradox, which stated that one could, by modifying the suppression spell, with careful preparation, cast a magic suppression spell upon a space one occupied, provided one calculated to omit one’s own magical signature. Nevertheless, with the magical interaction between them, he suspected that Ivanoffsky’s solution would not work for either of them.

Harry was standing somewhat awkwardly, now that they were both in the room, which surprised Tom, until he realised it was not uncertainty, but guardedness. Harry was just as suspicious of him as he was of Harry right now. Well, logically, he supposed, an entreating manner was not something that the other would expect from him. He was likely expecting Tom to attempt to subdue him in some way any moment.

In this instance, it was not exactly what Tom had planned, although he had considered it. That would be his last option. It would be so much better if Harry himself decided to stay with him. For that, he needed to play on the boy’s more Gryffindorish traits. He needed Harry to care more about what happened to him.

Cautiously, keeping one eye on his twin, he moved to the bed and began to disrobe, pulling off his teeshirt and sliding off his pants. When he had climbed into the bed, he turned to look at the other boy. Harry looked surprised, wary and, most promisingly, he looked wistful and longing.

“Will you join me, Harry?” he asked softly and hopefully.

With quick steps the other’s mind seemed to be made. Within seconds he’d tugged off his clothes and slipped in beside him, only to hesitate. It was obvious he had been moving forward hungrily to embrace Tom, but he had pulled back with a jolt, as if afraid.

Cautiously, Tom bridged the gap between them both, pulling the other closer and wrapping his arms around him. With a faint whimper, Harry seemed to dive forward, clinging to him tightly and burying his face in Tom’s neck.

It was wonderful. So warm. It felt like everything was as it should be. As if all things in the universe were finally perfectly aligned. How had he had been without this feeling during his entire life before this had happened?-- because he realised now that he had. As if there had always been a constant cold wind blowing upon him that had finally stilled, leaving only warm sunlight.

“Tom..” Harry whispered against his skin, and the sensation was delicious.

“Do you feel it too, Harry?” he asked softly.

There was a long pause and then he felt the lips move against his neck again, raising a shiver in him. “Yes. But…I it scares me. It feels like…an addiction.”

Tom smiled. It was exactly what he had likened it to also. “Perhaps.” He responded. “But I have never felt anything like it before. And you do not know what the pain of your absence is like…”

At that the sensation of the other boy’s lips against his skin was removed and the other boy pulled back to look at him, something very open and vulnerable in his eyes.
“I don’t. But I need to know Tom. You know as well as I do that this situation changes things.”

Sighing, Tom nodded slightly. “I know. You are thinking of abandoning me to the pain and going on alone.”

Harry flinched. “I… no. not… not exactly. Not like that at least. I… I wouldn’t do that… I mean…”

Tom smiled as sadly as he could. “You might prefer to think of it in other terms. But I understand why you are tempted to take that course. I, more than most others, can see the logic in the choice.”

He sighed again, frowning slightly “In fact, it’s probably what I’d do, in your place. You are more powerful without me, and power has… often… been a motivating factor in my choices.”

This idea seemed to discomfort the other boy. As Tom had hoped, being told his values system was akin to that of the Dark Lord was not flattering to Harry.

“It is difficult to describe what it feels like when you go away. It is… cold… aching… sharp… a stabbing, yet also strangely permeating pain that grows and grows, the farther you travel from me. It feels… desolate and hopeless. It is… unendurable. It… it may parallel the cruciatus in some ways.

The other boy’s face had been falling as he spoke and now he looked disturbed. It was tinged with a faint scepticism that bore traces of hope. Harry hoped he was exaggerating.

“I could share the memory with you” he offered on impulse, only to mentally eviscerate himself for being so foolish as to offer up his mind to any other willingly. It was this… whatever this was… between them. It ate away at his natural sense of self protection. It was as if Harry was within the small circle of trust that was himself, as opposed to outside it with the rest of ‘them’.

“You would let me legilimise you?!” Harry asked, in bemused wonder.

Tom hesitated but finally huffed out a breath. “yes. It appears I would. Consider yourself honoured. I have never willingly allowed another into my mind.”

Harry did indeed look honoured. He looked both awestruck and touched. His eyes shining wetly, he pulled back to a comfortable distance and laid his head on the pillow. Tom followed him a few beats later, uneasiness quivering in his nerves. This was horrendously dangerous. Why was he allowing a boy to do something that could lobotomise him, could obliterate him, could give him the chance to plant any number of mind altering suggestions, and least of all, could give him access to all of Tom’s knowledge and memories?!

While he had an exceptionally well ordered and compartmentalised mind, and he could choose to selectively occlude, it was a well-known fact that the outer defences were the most powerful. Inviting someone into your mind weakened the entire occlumentic array.

Harry didn’t bother to speak the words. When Tom had rested his head on the pillow and nervously met his gaze, he paused only a few seconds and then he was already slipping into Tom’s mind. It was very gentle, he found. Obviously this was not the first time the boy had utilised this art. He could feel the light pressure of another in his thoughts and then found his mind drifting to focus on the training they had been through earlier. In a certain sense, he was surprised that the boy had not exploited the opportunity to delve into something other than what he had agreed to show him.

He remembered himself standing by the mirror, Harry’s hand on his shoulder. And then Harry was moving away, the pain growing until he was brought to his knees, bent over in agony. He
could feel, in his mind, the concern and empathy of the other boy at seeing and feeling the real measure of the pain Tom was in.

He felt his mind drift slightly, indecisively, and then he was remembering being in the bedchambers with Harry after waking. He could feel his own disorientation and panic again and was mortified to be so exposed before his former enemy. And he knew Harry could feel that too. On the other hand, he could understand why Harry might want to look at this memory also. This was a room that suppressed his magic. If this pain was due to the magical interaction between them, might it not also be similarly suppressed? That would present a very easy solution to the other. If he wanted to leave, he would need only to leave Tom indefinitely in a place that rendered him a squib. Obviously a horrific proposition, to Tom’s mind, but probably far more palatable to Harry.

Fortunately or unfortunately, whatever this connection was that caused him to need to be in Harry’s presence, its basis was not entirely magical. He felt Harry realise this too, when in his memory the door closed behind the other boy and, in pain and regret, he called for him desperately to no avail, he was almost certain he felt a small spike of guilt from Harry. Tom felt almost overwhelming relief when, instead of delving further, the other wizard withdrew. He became aware of himself again, lying in a warm bed, facing an elfin face watching him sadly.

“I’m so sorry” Harry murmured.

An internal twitch of panic. What was the other boy sorry about now? Leaving him then, or leaving him now?

“You could not know” he whispered back, hoping it was the former. “But you know now. Will you abandon me to that state of torment? Or perhaps you think to place me in stasis, and remove my ability to fend for myself, on the off-chance that you will be successful and will be able to return to free me before some other discovers me and ends me utterly?”

The double blink betrayed that Harry had indeed been leaning toward that option, now that he had seen how ‘inhumane’ it would be to simply leave.

“What can I do?” he almost whined. “If we both go, we will both be vulnerable. You, even more than me. And it is obvious that this is not a normal kind of disfunction. I have never heard of any twins – or any witches or wizards for that matter - who have interconnected magical cores. Have you? It could expose everything!”

“Perhaps we should speak with Severus” he mused. “There may be something that can be done about this. But for the moment…we could sleep, and bask in this feeling a little longer. If I do not find some other way to resolve the problem to your satisfaction, possibly we may never experience this again.”

From the expression of sorrow and slight dread, this prospect was not appealing to Harry either. He was quick to move forward when Tom tugged him back into his arms. Curled around one another, Tom could feel the other as he very slowly started to relax. After a while he seemed to fall asleep. It was with the gentlest of magical touches he cast a spell to wake him if the other roused himself. Only then did he give in to the wonderfully seductive warmth that was lulling his mind to slumber.

When he woke, it was to an entirely different kind of warmth. He was half draped over a firm male body. Evidently he had not been entirely quiescent as he slept, since the skin between them both was already quite hot and slippery and his cock was sliding deliciously within the sweat
slicked valley formed from the cheeks of the other’s firm arse as he frotted himself unconsciously against him. He did not detect any objections to this from the owner of said firm arse. In fact, in that moment there was a soft gaspy little moan that was quickly stifled as if his partner were trying to be as quiet as possible.

He opened his eyes to see a blonde-peach-fuzz head with Harry’s pretty boyish face pressed into the pillow. His eyes were closed tightly and his mouth hanging open in a soft rictus of pleasure. He became aware that the body beneath him was not merely lying passively, whether sleeping or patiently enduring his attention – he could feel the way Harry shifted his own hips subtly, rubbing himself against the mattress below him even as Tom moved above him.

Experimentally he adjusted his movements to butt the head of his cock against the tiny pucker of the other boy’s rosette and watched how Harry gasped again, clenching his eyes tighter in pleasure and then quickly bit his lips together to stop himself from making any more noise. Harry was awake. And he wanted this.. He was clearly trying not to wake Tom, probably for fear that he would react badly.

Narrowing his eyes consideringly, Tom prodded harder at the tight ring of muscle barring him from the clinging warmth of Harry’s body and caught the slight twist of a wince on the pretty blonde’s face. Although Harry didn’t stop moving... Perhaps he could–.

But no. This body that Harry wore was too untried – too unfucked. It would not open itself to him without stretching or a more brutal degree of force. He could force it... tear it. It would not be unthinkable for him to have done this in his sleep. Even to the point of restraining Harry’s struggles while he did it. Certainly he had viciously deflowered enough young things without the merest care. Or he could simply hold him down against his inevitable protests and do it knowingly. He had the position of advantage here and Harry was no longer stronger than he. Their strength was in fact perfectly matched, like every other aspect of their present physical forms.

He didn’t want that right now, though. He didn’t want pain and force and, potentially, weeping and whimpering on the other boy’s part.

It was odd. He generally did enjoy those things. He could almost say he almost exclusively enjoyed those things in his sexual encounters.

Not right now though. Not with Harry. He couldn’t stomach the thought of harming him. It evoked an almost visceral aversion. He wondered if the same was true for Harry.

Harry hungered for him. He could feel it. He could almost scent the boy’s delighted lust ....and he wanted that. He wanted Harry to come apart for him...to worship him...

So he pulled himself further over Harry, crushed the other boy just a little more and began to place soft open mouthed kisses on his neck and shoulders.

At this the other boy startled and his eyes flew open. Pale blue eyes. Tom far preferred his other form. His green eyes could be mesmerising. These eyes were too wide.. too innocent. And right now they were swivelling to try to see Tom without moving and accidentally waking him, should this new behaviour be part of his accidental somnambulant molestation.

Tom tilted his head questioningly, looking back at Harry with half lidded eyes and then lowered his head once more to trail the tip of his tongue up the tendon that was now tensing in the other boy’s neck.

Harry shivered and his eyes rolled back momentarily. “T-Tom.. you’re...”

“I want to fuck you, Harry.” He murmured against the skin just below Harry’s earlobe. “You gave yourself to me... or have you forgotten?”
A flush of colour to the pale cheeks. “N- ohhh!!” his answer became a mere groan of pleasure as Tom sucked gently upon his earlobe and blew a soft breath across the sensitive nerves above it, before turning his attention to the crook of the other boy’s neck and commencing to mark a trail of tender love bites, mapping each of the places which made Harry shudder, moan or gasp. He could feel Harry had started squirming against the mattress again and smirked as he nipped the back of his neck gently. Strangely this, more than anything before, seemed to drive Harry wild. He mewled in pleasure and arched, as if begging for more.

Tom rewarded him by exploring the entire area with sucking bites, drawing shamelessly loud groans and soft inarticulate pleading in response, as the boy ground himself against the mattress beneath him. He could tell that Harry was not going to last much longer. The other boy was panting in such a way that he could hear the approach of his climax.

Leaning forward he pressed his lips flush against Harry’s pinking ear and whispered “Come for me, Harry... come and I’ll—”

He didn’t have the chance to inform the other boy that as soon as he did Tom was going to fuck him till he screamed, because Harry, like a well trained pet, came immediately on command with a desperate wail of release. It was all Tom could do to slide his hand quickly beneath the boy and capture his spasming cock – which elevated Harry’s yowl into scream territory as he jerked and shook beneath Tom, while the latter pumped his hand gently, milking him and catching the slick silky release in his palm.

When Harry seemed to have subsided, Tom carefully withdrew his now spunk filled hand, taking care to keep as much of his bounty as he could within it.

The blonde beneath him looked like he had had all of his bones vanished, so limp and languid was he as he recovered, with a dazed little smile on his plump pink lips. “I thought-“ he mumbled, his breathing already returning to normal levels “you wouldn’t want—”

Tom interrupted him silently by smearing his cum-filled hand down the crack of the other boy’s arse. This provoked wide eyed silence for a moment and then Harry picked his head up and looked back over his shoulder in shocked realisation. His expression was somewhere between dismay and excited disbelief. At the sight of his new mirror image kneeling up behind him and fisting his own cock with the remains of the cum on his hand, Harry appeared to be transfixed and unable to shift his gaze from the slow greasy movement.

“Prepare yourself for me, Harry.” Tom tossed at him, curious whether the boy would obey this too. It had been...a while - rather a long while in fact - since he had bothered to gently stretch a lover. Harry would only be saving himself pain if he complied.

And after another two beats of frozen fascination, Harry did move to comply. He dragged himself weakly up to his knees and then parted them slowly, bearing down upon the bed and placing his cheek against the mattress. It was a graceful movement into a very attractive position and Tom wondered whether he had been instructed to employ it by the Malfoy scion. He found his own eyes pinned to the delightful view before him when Harry gently pulled his own buttocks wide apart, displaying himself, and then began by smearing the thickening cum dribbles all over his rosette; stroking it in aesthetically pleasing little circles and tightening it once or twice so that it looked like it was blowing kisses at Tom. Then he began the business of actually sliding first one and then two fingers into himself. It looked a tight fit. Tom forced himself to stop touching himself as he realised his lubing had actually become wanking at some point while watching Harry. He took his hands away and forced them to his side.

By the time Harry was working a third finger into himself Tom could not deny that his own breath
was beginning to speed and he was more than impatient to drive himself into the dark pink hole that Harry was pulling and probing at for his viewing pleasure

“It’s enough.” He told Harry impatiently, hoping that it was. He couldn’t wait any longer. He wanted.

Harry’s fingers obligingly withdrew and he stemmed both hands against the mattress either side of his head, as if bracing himself.

Tom could see the nervous tension in the other boy’s slender back. Finding himself hypnotised, even in his lust, by the slender line of Harry’s spine, he leaned down over the body that seemed to his estimation to be small and delicately formed, even though he knew that it was in fact no more so than his own body at present, and slowly licked a swathe up the corrugated line up to Harry’s neck.

Thus curled around Harry – a position he would never have considered employing upon any of the toys he had fucked prior to the fall of all things – he reached down for his own shaft and positioned himself at the entrance to the other boy’s body.

When he pressed forward, Harry’s face pinched slightly, and it was clear that he was trying not to whimper.

To his utter astonishment, Tom found himself withdrawing. He could not recall a single instance when he had drawn back from penetration due to the discomfort of his partner. Not a single occurrence. Not even when he had been in school. It was rather a given that there would be pain for the submissive partner initially.

Harry, on the other hand, seemed to panic at his moving away. Clearly the other boy thought he had changed his mind. He rose up and half turned, with an expression of one about to beg.

Tom soothed him with a gentle shake of his head and stroking of his back. When he pressed again on Harry’s shoulder, urging him back down, the blonde looked like he wanted to weep with relief.

This was indeed a day for firsts of all kinds, Tom was realising, because it was not normally his practice to place his mouth on the arse of any of the boys he fucked, and now he found something in him very much wanted to do so with Harry. It was with a bizarre mix of disgust and fascination that he cast a silent spell to clean the area. At that, Harry gasped and moaned in surprised arousal, realising too what he intended. He turned his face against the pillow, but Tom could see that he was virtually panting in excitement.

The problem was, however, that wanting to do this, and having the first idea of how to begin to do it, were not the same. Should he just dive in and French kiss the other boy’s arse? Would it be better to romance his arse a little first? Give it a few pecks on the cheek, as it were?! To delay the issue, he rose up on his knees again and curled over the other boy, till he could return to licking and sucking on his neck. This drew pleased little groans and whimpers and Harry stretched himself, to give him better access. From there, he began to meander his way slowly down his spine, licking and kissing, till he abruptly found himself once again before the little wrinkled star. He could feel Harry trembling now in anticipation. Sighing and closing his eyes, he continued down over the cheek of the other boy’s arse, adding a small nip every now and then.

It was quite satisfying to bite there. He was very tempted to do it harder. Perhaps another time.

He moved further down to the crease of Harry’s thigh and then moved inward, stroking his balls
with the tip of his nose, and then following it with a swipe of his tongue. “Tom…” Harry whispered. “Please!… Please – I need.”

His words dissolved into a low moan when Tom leaned in and sucked his balls into his mouth gently, laving them with his tongue. He released them a short while after, to a slight whine of disappointment from Harry, and then it seemed natural to lick a long slow stripe backward and upward, till he reached his original destination.

Surprisingly, the feeling of disgust he’d felt at the idea of this practice, was quite significantly diminished by the act itself. As it turned out, the feeling of running his tongue over the delicate rills of the tight little hole was not very different to running it over Harry’s balls. And the effect on the other boy was dramatic. Harry had whined in the back of his throat and his entire spine was tensed in a slight arch. Experimentally he placed his entire mouth over the soft pink rosette and actually attempted to French kiss it. Harry gave a small muffled squeal and bucked, pushing back against his mouth, only to then pull back as if fearfully restraining himself. Tom suspected he might actually be biting the pillow. He smirked against him and put his hands on the other boy’s hips, pulling him back in, and devoted himself more to the kiss.

Harry responded well to nibbling. By the time he was pushing in two fingers alongside his tongue, the other boy was groaning almost continuously in little half coherent sentences. “Ohgodyes. Just like. Oh.. you’re so. Please Tom! Ohfuck..I can’t.. ohhh. So fucking…”

He lingered, indecisively and then pushed in a third finger, and after a much longer period of twisting and licking, tried to slip his pinky in too. It was a very tight fit, and Harry did whine softly at first at that one.

Finally, he was hopeful that the other boy was sufficiently stretched. With a final long stab of his tongue in the other boy’s hole, he drew back and moved to his knees behind him.

The disappointed groan at the apparent end to his tonguing became a gasp and an eager growl when Harry felt a cock pressed against him. He was already pushing back eagerly. Tom smirked and teased him with it for a bit, pushing lightly against him and pulling back again. Watching the pink head of his cock nudge against the little wrinkled star, he considered it judiciously and then generously waved a hand, casting a further lubrication charm, to add to the saliva.

When he slid against him the next time, his head nudged in further past the resistance and Harry emitted an eager little whimper. He watched with interest the way the other boy’s hole stretched as he pushed forward harder now, till his head was inside and the hole was stretched pink and shiny around his shaft. The tight hot pressure was overwhelming, and that feeling of warmth…of rightness was even stronger. Like a rising tide. Harry was whining and pushing back, held back only by the tight grip of Tom’s hands on his pelvic bones. He realised he himself was panting and it was difficult not to slam home into the other boy. He couldn’t remember ever wanting so badly to fuck someone into the mattress.

As slowly as he could manage he slid deeper, unable to take his eyes off the way the hot little hole swallowed him. Harry moaned and struggled impatiently. “patience” he hissed, enjoying the urgent whine this evoked.

Finally he was pressed skin to skin against the other boy’s arse. The slick heat and pressure undoing him more with every second. He had to close his eyes and still himself, not to come immediately. This body – it was as if he were actually an untried youth again. Its reactions so different than his own had been.

“Please Tom. Please! … you.. you have to move… I’m going to go mad if you don’t move soon. Please.. I need.”
He ignored the soft mumbling pleading and tried to focus, to separate himself from the sensations. When he eventually drew back and slammed home again with a soft slap, he could feel the pleasure in his core. From Harry’s surprised cry of pleasure, he suspected the sensation might be even stronger for him. He repeated the movement, and when he felt he would be able to master the near intoxicating feeling, he began to lay into Harry harder – to use the skills he had developed over his many years of experimentation – teasing his prostate with every stroke.

Harry was incoherent. He was squirming and writhing in delight. The sounds he was making were continuous now, and it was clear that he was utterly beyond controlling them. Tom watched him, fascinated. By adjusting his movements, he felt he could play the blonde boy like a musical instrument – a song. Small hard circling movements there evoked soft high “oh’s”. Long deep upward curves drew out lilting “ahhhh’s”. When he slammed into him hard and fast, Harry panted and groaned low, curving his neck and fisting his hands in the pillow. Curious he drew out suddenly and roughly shoved the weak boy down onto his back. Harry was disorientated with lust. It took a moment for him to even realise the cock had stopped moving in him, and by that time, Tom was already pulling the other boy’s knees up and sliding back into him.

Now though, he could see the expressions shifting over the blonde’s face. When he began to drive into him again, wet slapping ringing out, Harry’s damp face showed only rapture. His lips moving, forming expletives, interspersed with Tom’s own name.

Leaning down, he licked a bead of sweat from Harry’s neck. This drew out an entirely new sound, so he dedicated himself more to that area. Harry seemed to like the sucking bites best. When he mouthed over the delicate jaw, he felt Harry’s arms tighten around him, though he had never even noticed when the other had moved to hold him. The feeling of rightness in all things was enthrancing. Harry turned his face and caught his mouth, leading him into a long drawn out kiss. He knew, suddenly, that he could not hold out much longer. Reaching between them he felt for the other boy’s cock, fisting it and swallowing Harry’s sharp cry of pleasure in the tangling of their tongues. He felt himself losing his rhythm, slamming into Harry helplessly now. He tried to hold on, to bring the other boy with him, but it was painful to be so close to the edge and not fall. He whined in the back of his throat, eyebrows pinched with strain. It was as if the sound of his need itself viscerally affected Harry. He felt the boy beneath him arch his spine, felt him tear his mouth away, gasping for air and yowling his pleasure, felt the cock in his hand throb and gush, the hot spray painting both of their chests. Then he felt no more, as his own mind unravelled into strands of bliss. As if from far off, he could hear himself scream.

He was still collecting himself when the thought randomly leapt into his mind. He hadn’t even opened his eyes yet. It wasn’t a spell he had ever been particularly interested in. Odd that it would occur to him now. He panted, his face pressed into the damp curve of Harry’s neck. Harry seemed similarly affected. He had one hand fisted in his own hair and was working to regain his breath.

“Fuck” he heard harry gasp with feeling. “That was…” Tom could feel the vibration of the other’s heart against his own chest.

It was. He agreed. That had been rather more than expected. At least there was one benefit to their odd unbalanced connection. It appeared that Harry was disproportionately affected by his touch, just as he was by the other’s absence.

The spell…

Should he?
Was Harry still thinking to leave him?

Pushing himself up on limbs that felt rather a lot like wet noodles, he peered down at the other boy’s face judiciously.

Harry turned to look at him. There was wonder, indecision and, creeping in now, a small tinge of sadness on his face.

Not good enough. Not nearly good enough. Clearly Harry would act against his own best interests, if they were not aligned with whatever task or obligation to others he had set himself. Tom couldn’t understand that. There was no goal he could envision that would possibly take precedence over his own best interests.

He incanted the spell silently.

Harry frowned, stiffening. He had noticed the magic.

“What was that?! What did you cast?! I… you cast something on me! Damn it. I knew I couldn’t trust you for a second. Fuck. Take it off, whatever it was!”

Sighing, Tom let himself subside back down onto the hot wet body that was unfortunately now tight with tension.

“It will do you no good to take that tone with me, Harry. I won’t take it off.” He nuzzled into the warm skin, shifting his position until he was more comfortable. “I can see that, even after a truly monumental fucking, if I do say so myself, you are still thinking to leave me here helpless... I cannot reason with you – I cannot convince you that it is in your best interest to stay with me, so I shan’t try any longer. If you remain apart from me longer than a week, you will begin to weaken. If you stay away for an entire moon – you will die. Although, I suppose in this instance, It would probably be accurate to say we will die.”

“WHAT??!” Harry sat up in shock, displacing Tom to the cold part of the bed beside him.

“You’re...you’re bluffing. You wouldn’t do anything that would put your own life at risk! You’re obsessed with survival!”

Glaring up at the back of the other boy’s head, Tom huffed. He wasn’t obsessed. He had a healthy and ambitious survival instinct, that was all.

“I have other means of ensuring my survival, Harry. But I would prefer not to have to use them. It would be more agreeable if you would simply avoid leaving me here in this body, a helpless sedated squib to be killed off in its sleep.”

The other boy half turned, looking at him with horror.

“What does the spell do?!” he hissed.

Tom smirked slightly. “It must be your...our...hair that reminded me. Lucius loved to use this spell. Personally, it was never something I could value. Why would I want to ensure someone returned to my bed often?! As you know, I didn’t keep them long enough for that to be of concern to me. If anything, with the few that survived – not attempting to return to my bed would have been of more use to me. Bella, for instance, was so-to-say, the error of judgement that just kept giving.

Harry’s expression had hardened further and was promising that he would become ‘difficult’ any moment. Possibly even directly combative.

“You said that you were concerned. That it felt like an addiction, when we touched.” He smiled
thinly. “Now – it is. When you do not touch me for a while, you will experience withdrawal symptoms. These will become lethal if you persist in keeping yourself from me.”

He decided not to mention, for the moment that ‘touching’ was not all that was required by this particular spell. In effect he had made Harry dependent upon his semen to survive. That was what it boiled down to, at core. It was a dependency spell that the Death Eaters had used to bind slaves or to torture during interrogation. It did not require willing coupling to be able to use it, it could be applied during rape. The victim would eventually come around to begging and pleading as their body forced them to accept their new need. It did not require full penetration to be satisfied. If the caster so chose, simple physical contact with the caster’s ejaculate would be sufficient to still the pull. That was a condition that was not often applied by the Death Eaters, for obvious reason. Tom, however, had used it with Harry. It seemed safer to allow himself some options, on the offchance that they might need them at some point. After all, once applied, the spell could not be modified – only removed; and he had no intention of removing it anytime soon. The effects of a lethal degree of withdrawal were quite painful and unpleasant. Hence it was frequently used during interrogation. However Harry would not experience that degree of suffering. The boy was a martyr, but he wasn’t a complete idiot. That death would serve no purpose.

Besides… Tom suspected he would remove the spell rather than allow that to happen. Purely out of self-interest, obviously.

Said martyr was now leaning forward over his knees with his head in his hands. He didn’t appear to be crying, only thinking.

Tom waited for him to come to the logical conclusion that he would be best served by remaining at Tom’s side. He would give him a few minutes to get there. No doubt he would. Harry was a lot more intelligent than he had previously given him credit for. And when he had, and he was calm once more, it was definitely time for them to go and see the wayward potions master. He wanted to know just what Severus had intended to do to them both.
“When we go in – I’d like you to hold back under the invisibility cloak for a minute and let me talk to him first, ok?”

Harry was still quite angry. The request, though phrased politely enough, was bitten out tightly. The last ‘ok?’ at the end seemed to have actually cost physical discomfort to him to get out.

As Tom had no definite plan for how he wanted to deal with the traitor as yet, agreeing to this… polite demand…was no real sacrifice, and any small concession on his part could only help his case with Harry. He was willing to cooperate.

“As you wish.”

The other fixed him with a sceptical stare, holding out the cloak. “No really. I mean it. I want you to stay right out of it. He doesn’t know how the procedure went, yet. I want to see what he makes of it if I go in as Draco.”

“He will spot a glamour, you know. He is not an imbecile.”

“Yes well, maybe – but he only needs to believe it for a moment for me to see whether he expected it or not.”

Tom nodded and shrugged slightly, taking the cloak. “As you say. I will be quiet as the grave”

They prepared themselves. A few moments later, Harry, now slightly taller and more pointy of face, opened the door with a sneer of disdain. Tom glided in invisibly behind him, beneath a silencing charm.

A young man in his early twenties stood motionless in what appeared to be a glass case. He was tall and slender with pale skin and thick dark raven curls around his face. His features were refined and he had misty grey eyes. Harry was right, he was quite lovely. There was definitely that certain…gothic melancholy to his countenance, that he knew would appeal to Severus. He resembled the kind of creature that Severus had probably wished to be when he was younger. It was almost flattering to think that the traitorous old dog had, if Harry was to be believed, abandoned his crusade and transformed himself into this, all for Tom…

Well… flattering and somewhat unsettling, he corrected. Shades of Bellatrix.

Harry seemed to be fiddling about with some kind of charm on the wall, and then suddenly, the boy in the glass case took a sudden heaving breath and his expression turned to panic.

“What was that?!! Where did the others go?!” he bleated. “Let me out!”

Tom tilted his head, but a smirk was already beginning to twitch on his lips.

Harry stalked back to stand before the case, wearing a dark pitiless mien. It was much more fitting on Draco’s face than Harry’s new one. This face obviously wore that expression often. It had the lines already worn in.

“What am I to do with you…” he mused darkly. “I can’t trust you. Can’t afford to kill you. Oh… but I’d like to. What did you do?! Why did you kill him?!”

“No you fool. Tom died. Why did you have him place me in Draco’s body?!”

“What??!”

The utterance was just a yelp.

“That can’t be! I didn’t! He.. he wouldn’t… He’d never!”

Tom laughed at seeing his suspicions confirmed. This boy was not Severus. He drew off the invisibility cloak, evoking even more horrified bafflement on the pretty youth’s face.

“Calico.” He observed wryly. Harry glanced back at him with an infuriated expression that indicated he had not needed to be told either. Obviously he had just realised that he’d been duped by Severus before the procedure. The man had played on his fears and insecurities, and had led him to exactly where he wanted Harry to be.

It was astounding how good Severus was at that, Tom mused. It was such a pity he couldn’t be trusted. He was a formidable Slytherin.

“So where did you put Calico then?” he prompted.

Harry frowned and then began to look uncertain, and then outright worried. “Not somewhere as secure as here.” he muttered, stalking to the wall and slamming his hand down on the charm. The attractive real-Calico in the box reached out, as if to yell stop, and promptly froze in place, like a statue.

“Come on. I… I need to get you somewhere safer.” He brushed away the glamour like so much mist, and stepped up to Tom, grabbing his arm. Tom was about to shake him off for manhandling him, when a familiar voice toned out “Don’t move”

It was said quietly and casually. It was the voice of one who was utterly confident that his order was going to be obeyed. Tom would have enjoyed disappointing that voice, except for the regrettable fact that he now found himself unable to move. He hadn’t felt any magic. What was this? Thinking countercurses seemed to achieve nothing, although Harry was close by, and he was certain that they were working.

Harry did not appear to be similarly affected. He had spun in place to face the source of the voice, who seemed to be standing at a point two to three metres over Tom’s right shoulder, near the corner of the room.

“Snape, you bastard. Let him go!”

There was a soft chuckle. Tom did not, however, find himself able to move again.

“You are always so predictable, Potter. It would be laughable if it were not so tragic. Let me spell it out for your purile Gryffindor mind – I have not been obligated by that vow for years. It was broken the first time I performed the procedure upon myself. I merely chose to let you continue to assume you were in control, as there was nothing to be gained from disabusing you of the notion. You were always much easier to direct when you imagined that you had made the choice yourself.

Now, though, there is something I want very much, and you will not prevent me from taking it. I have given you enough – given your mother enough – of my life. Now I would have something for myself.”
“You can’t take him. You’ll kill us both!”
Harry sounded desperate, Tom realised, with rising concern. Why was he not fighting? He had certainly leapt into the fray at every opportunity when it came to confrontations with Tom himself.

“No. Just you.” Severus countered softly. “I will protect him. I will love him. And in time, he will forget all of this, and will feel as I would have him feel for me. He will live. We will be free.”

Tom felt himself starting to panic. The feeling expanded to fill him completely as he saw Harry crumple limply to the floor out of the corner of his eye. Yet he could not cry out, could not so much as blink. There were soft footsteps approaching from behind him. A hand stroked over his head gently, as if he were made of elfin crystal.

“It is time for us to leave, my Lord.” Severus whispered from behind him, in a voice that he now realised was slightly too high – not yet roughened by years of firewhiskey and cruciatus.

He felt a taller form step up behind him, and then arms wrapped gently around him. The last thing he heard was a murmured ‘Portus’, before the world exploded into agony.
Chapter 16

Screaming and writhing. Urgent. Electrified. As if he were a single nerve extracted and pinned in place over an endless cold aching void.

...

The hazy dullness of potions. Someone fluttering about him in frantic concern.

...

Pain!!

Painpainpainpainpainpainpainpainpainpainpain

On and on.

...Time outside time...

Only torment

...

More potions. Blackness for a time.. and then the pain. Always the pain.

...


Someone holding him down, forcing him to swallow.

Pain.

PAIN.
Begging! begging for it to end. Even death…even death!

When he first became aware of himself again, it was with an automatic shriek, and a curling motion against the razors and freezing ache that had become his entire world now. It took almost a minute of someone’s soft anxious cosetting and stroking before he even realised that the pain was gone. That…he was…warm.

He was so relieved that Harry was here, that he didn’t even have the presence of mind to be embarrassed as he burst into tears and clung to him desperately.

“I’m sorry! I’m so sorry!” Harry’s lovely voice whispered against his ear. “I found you as soon as I could. I… I knew it would be bad... I should have tried harder. I should have-”

Tom shook his head, uncaring. Harry was here now. That was all that mattered. That Harry didn’t go away again.

He turned his snivelling face tighter into Harry’s neck and clenched his arms around him like a vice.

“T-Tom..” Harry coughed. “-Choking me!”

Another voice in the room spoke up irritably. “Calm yourself now”

It was as if the emotions overwhelming Tom were like toys abruptly packed up into their boxes with magic. He felt himself forcibly become composed. The sensation that remained was one of being off balance. Wrong footed. As if he had woken up from an imperius curse.

“Snape. I’m warning you..” the boy in his arms growled low. “Leave him alone. The state he is in is completely your fault, and if he needs time to get himself sorted – you’ll damn well give it to him. Don’t command him again.”

“I cannot see him like this.” Severus spat petulantly “He is not a…a... child, Potter! He has endured more than you will ever know. Now let go of him.”

Tom reluctantly raised his head, blinking blearily through tear swollen eyes. A crop of white blonde hair feathered down around the face of the boy he had previously held. Harry. Absently he reached a hand up to touch his own head, to find a similar mop. How much time had passed?!

Harry was watching him with concern. There was something soft in his eyes that hadn’t been there the last time he remembered seeing him. With a gesture that looked like it had become automatic for the other boy, Harry reached a hand up to stroke down the side of Tom’s face. “I’m so glad you’re back” he whispered. “I thought I’d lost you.”
Tom blinked, confused, and turned his head to look at the other occupant of the room. He found a face that was vaguely familiar. The same lines as he’d once known from Severus…but younger. Much younger. In fact… it could almost be Severus, as he’d once known him many years ago. … but there was something different about the nose.. the brows. Similar but not the same. But..it was…almost a boy he thought he knew. The hair was wrong. This youth had black hair, but he thought, he might remember it being red..coppery red.

And of course there was the fact that this boy looked so very afraid and exposed, now that he was looking at him. He looked vulnerable. Severus had never looked ….well.. had certainly not looked vulnerable for many many years.

As if the thought called him forth, the youth approached him quickly now. Before Tom could even flinch back, he had thrown himself on his knees before him.

“I am sorry, my Lord. I did not recognise that there had been an error in the process. It is…quite complex, even through the many trials, there are some factors I have not yet understood fully. I failed to take into account the nature of your connection with the boy, prior to the procedure. It had been quiescent for several years… I had thought it no longer of concern.. I…should have waited. I should have sought further information before I-“

Tom found his mouth twisting into a snarl as his mind fully caught up with events.

“You should have waited to abduct me against my wishes?! You should have sought more information before attempting to incapacitate me and addle my mind, Severus?!!” He struggled to disentangle himself from Harry, who had reached to embrace him again. He snapped his head back and glared at the boy. “Desist. I am not incoherent and I am not unreasonable. I am going to kill him now. It is long overdue and part of the blame for our present position rests on myself for putting off the inevitable. In view of recent events, I am no longer interested in anything he might offer – I would sooner have the peace of mind that he will not be waiting with yet another dagger for my back. You can watch if you wish, but if you attempt to stop me, I will be very short with you!”

Harry looked uncomfortable and lowered his eyes.

“Um.. yeah. About that…” He trailed off ominously.

“…Harry…” it was a growl. But he could somehow feel the shape of what the other was going to tell him and just the mere suspicion of the shadow of it looming overhead was enough to leave him incandescent with rage.

“You can’t.” the blonde whispered weakly. “He made sure of that when he tweaked the procedure. It didn’t work so well for me though, so maybe I could have… but he made me take a bloody vow before he’d even let me near you. I…I had no choice. I had to agree. I couldn’t leave you to suffer. He… he’s kind of got us both by the balls. A bit.” Harry grimaced, before raising his eyes to meet Tom’s sternly. “Even if you could – you couldn’t. Severus is the only one who understands the new skin process. He needs to survive. Why do you think this was all such a big deal?! – we could have killed him remotely, if killing him was ever an option. It’s complicated, because of his…um…well…let’s call it a fixation…on you. I’ve tried to talk to him, but he’s not really very rational about it. He…he added some kind of potion to the pod. I don’t really understand enough about it, but it’s like some kind of old potion that used to be used to bond slaves. It didn’t work how he planned because we ended up sort of – mixing together…a bit, during the process. He told me he was worried at one point that only one body would come out of it.”

Tom felt the bottom of his stomach drop out. He barely heard anything after the word slave had casually fallen from Harry’s lips. Severus commanded him?…owned him? Like a slave? This
couldn’t be happening.

He resisted the urge to turn his head and look back at his former servant. He couldn’t bear it if the boy were to be wearing that thin, aloof, somehow implicitly smug expression Severus had often worn when he had gotten one over on someone.

“…So. It comes to this then.” He muttered finally. “I am at your mercy, Severus. I cannot so much as disobey you, or attempt to defend myself. Even I allowed you that much freedom.” He couldn’t manage to preserve the cool detached expression he wanted. He felt his face betray the rictus of dread he was wearing on the inside.

“What will you do to me?”

The familiar unfamiliar face dropped, as Severus hung his head.

“I…” he began waveringly, before shaking his head and slumping further. “I…am so urgently tempted.” He glanced up miserably before his gaze dropped once more. “You can’t know how… easy it would be to…simply order you to…”

He sighed.

“to order you to…care.. To desire me once more. To…to..”

Beside him, he felt Harry huff. “We’ve discussed this, Snape. You know it wouldn’t be real. Do you want to turn him into a puppet?! I thought you admired him?! You told me you admired him. Was it just this body you admired about him? Was that it? – because if you start directing him about, ordering him into your bed, commanding him to desire you, worship you, love you – it won’t be him. Just a puppet in a blonde meat suit.

Tom stiffened.

That was what was at stake here?

Severus hung on the precipice of using him as some sort of living sex toy?! No! Worse… requiring him to love him?!

This was preposterous.

“I don’t even believe in love!” he muttered. “You of all people should know that. We have discussed it at length. Even the brat knows how I feel about such ridiculous twaddle.” He shook his head, flabbergasted at what his life had so abruptly become. He had been living on the street like a muggle, wearing a pair of jeans so worn and filthy that they stood up by themselves, and filching wallets to survive. Now he was lying on a soft bed, in what appeared to be some kind of rustic dusky pink themed bedroom of the type commonly inhabited by old ladies in small villages, and contemplating not only being forced into sexual servitude by his formerly dead servant, but also being obliged to spout idiocy about his feelings while he did it, purely to soothe the bitter old traitor’s long held resentment for being spurned over fifteen years ago.

Severus looked up and there was something both sheepish and furtive in the way he avoided Tom’s gaze.

“I realise that, My Lord. But I am now in a position to change your mind on that topic.”

“Snape! Don’t!” came the unhelpful yelp from his side.

Tom clenched his teeth. This was beyond a joke now. What had happened to reclaiming the wizarding world?! Destroying that presumptuous fop Lucius and stealing his kingdom back?! It could not end like this! He would not have it! …He thought quickly…

“Harry. If he takes my reason – I wish you to kill me. If you will not do that, leave here and travel as far as you are able. I would sooner go back to mindless agony than lose myself to soothe his ego. I am not the toy of Severus Snape, or any other man!”
Severus, on his knees before him, seemed to crumple as if he had been kicked. “No..” he whispered. “You… would not.. the way you have suffered, these past months. Caring for me surely cannot be worse than that…”

He felt Harry’s hands on him clench in shock too. With admirable self-control the boy gave no other sign of the turmoil the order had evoked in him. “If…if it’s what you want, Tom” he murmured softly.

“No.” came the tortured moan from a point even closer to the floor now. After a moment, the man drew himself up again, though he kept his face turned down. “No…We…we can discuss… negotiate… some outcome that is beneficial to us all. I…I apologise, My Lord. I was tempted, but I see my foolishness now. Please forgive me. You must be tired. I will…I will remove myself and think on the magnitude of my error.”

Severus moved to stand. This was the moment… possibly the only chance, Tom saw. If Severus left, he would think and he would plot, and when they returned – he would manage to gain some measure of what he originally wanted. No.. it would be now or not at all.

“Stop.” He barked, summoning as much of his old self as he could manage to scrape together.

“That is not good enough, Severus. We will negotiate now, my slippery old friend. Remove your control over me, or I will instruct Potter to leave and never return.”

The thin shoulders stiffened and the other man paused in his movement toward the door. Tom could almost hear the wheels in his mind turning. “I could place anti movement wards up before he manages to escape” he countered tentatively. “Perhaps. But while you are preoccupied with that, it would be a small matter for me to explode my own heart in my chest, apply a quick avada, or any number of other spells you would find it impossible to counteract. If I felt Harry might not succeed in escaping, such a desperate course of action may be warranted. It may be…some time…before I am able to regain a body again – however I am sure you realise that this is not a matter of life and death for me. There are circumstances I am prepared to tolerate in the pursuit of my goals, and others I am not.”

He allowed that argument to sink in for a moment.

“I may be prepared to agree to…forgive…your actions against me, if you release me. I might even willingly make a vow – not one as foolish as the one you blackmailed Harry into accepting, obviously. But possibly a vow not to attack you unless in defense…not to attempt to claim your life without due provocation.”

Severus turned, and despite the fact that he wore a marginally different face, the calculation was oh so familiar. He tilted his head slightly and narrowed his eyes, considering. Then, as if he were putting on a familiar old uniform, he clasped his hands behind his back and paced slowly nearer.

Tom steeled himself not to shiver and considered what he had offered once more. Were there any holes in it? Could Severus have spotted one that he himself did not? Yes. Yes there was one. The man commanded him. He need only find the right words to prevent him from taking any action at all.. or to render him unconscious. That would give him all the time he needed, to act to restrain Harry.

It was a surprise to feel the other boy’s hand press suddenly upon his chest over his heart. He had forgotten the boy was nowhere near as foolish as he sometimes gave the impression of being. He
was being so quiet… but he was watching. Thinking.
Tom realised exactly what he was doing. Good Harry.

“I’ll end him before you can stop me, Snape. Unlike you – I respect his wishes.”

Severus stopped, brows furrowing as he tried to calculate around this new variable.
“You wouldn’t. You’d risk dying along with him. Unlike Our Lord, you have no back up plans, Potter.”

“Try me”

A caught breath silence stretched, in which Severus eyes flicked between Harry and Tom himself in increasing frustration. Finally, the man seemed to concede.
“A vow then” he offered. “But I will require more than you have offered. I would have your vow that you will not leave me. That you will remain by my side.”

Tom thought on this a moment and then smirked.
“Very well. I will even give you some means by which you can find me.”
His smirk widened slightly.
“A familiar method. I would not wish you to have to adapt too much.”

Dark eyes widened. “No. Not that. A vow! I will not take your mark again!”

Harry’s hand bit into his chest slightly. “Tom… This is a fresh start. You’re not…him anymore. Don’t even think about it.”

“I am me, Harry. I was me then, and I am not someone else now just because I look like Lucius Malfoy’s bastard son. It was a good tool with which to remain in contact with my servants then – and there is no reason it should not be equally valuable now.”

He was expecting a response full of bile and recrimination. Almost looking forward to it, in fact. When it didn’t come, he arched his head back to glance at his twin. Harry was blinking slowly, his jaw slack. He seemed to be very preoccupied with the horrid floral wallpaper on the other side of the room, as if the mysteries of life were being projected there.

“Harry?” he nudged him after a moment.

The pale blue eyes snapped to his own and the other boy looked suddenly excited.

“Potter – have you lost the developmentally challenged paramecium that passes for your mind again?” Severus snapped, but Tom recognised the sulky tone well.
Harry had effectively derailed their ‘negotiation’ – had taken all of Tom’s attention from him, with nothing more than a silence and a gormless expression.

“Hurry up and finish your dramatic standoff” Harry chirped. I’ve just had an idea for how we might be able to recycle the old plan – you know – the one you bollocksed up for us, Snape! So just… vow.. or mark or..kiss and make up or whatever you’re going to do. We don’t have any more time for this rubbish.”

Tom wanted to be irritated with him. He really did. He just couldn’t seem to manage it. Harry was right. …and it was quite difficult to be annoyed with him these days, particularly when touching him.

“After you, Severus” he smirked.

The other grimaced humourlessly. “Oh no.. after you, My Lord, else I doubt there will be a vow,
merely a charred spot on the carpet.

He considered it. Severus was right, of course. On the other hand, he couldn’t see any disadvantage to making his vow first. Ah… but the wording. The wording was very important. It was good that they had not yet had a chance to pin down exactly what he would be vowing. He would have to remind himself to reward Harry for that later.

“Very well. If you prefer, Severus.” He paused to concentrate, stilling himself and focussing upon his magic.
“…I Thomas Marvolo Riddle, also known as Lord Voldemort, do swear upon my magic that I shall not attempt to attack or kill Severus Snape unless acting in the protection of myself or of Harry James Potter. So Mote It Be!”

“That was not what we agreed!!” the other wizard was quick to object. “No mention was made of including this blemish in your vow!”

Tom chuckled lightly. “Harry and I are very closely linked, Severus – as you well know. Without the other, neither of us can survive. It is only fitting that I include him in such a vow. Now – fulfil your part of our agreement.

“You did not vow to remain with me!”

“and neither did I agree to make a vow to that affect. I offered to mark you once more, that you might always find me. But if you are insistent that you will not take it – you will accept that I go or stay where I please. I have reconciled myself to remaining within six metres of the boy who lived for the rest of my time in this body, but I am not obliged to offer the same to you – and particularly not in view of your latest attempted offence against me.”

The dark haired boy fumed. “You will not be remaining together with Potter! I will resolve the connection between you and then Potter can toddle off to save the world. You can use your skills to greater effect with me!”

Tom snarled “What skills would those be?! The same you would have me ply on command for you?”

Severus actually growled, fisting his hands in his hair. “You wilfully misunderstand me. I refer to your mind. Your astounding inventiveness, your patience, your ability to understand how to apply forces to achieve the outcome desired. Do you know what awaits you if you place yourself within the grasp of Lucius?!! Did you ever spare the attention to note what went on in the Manor that once housed you?!”

Wrong-footed, Tom blinked and tried to recall. That time was so foggy with the venom and the many potions, the revels, blood, cold, icy marble halls, suffocating velvet. He hadn’t the slightest idea what the man meant.

“If you would die before you would be kept by me – a man who worships you - you will be ill accustomed to deal with the reality of life as any figure within the orbit of Lucius Malfoy. His cruelty and corruption defies description. Narcissa was only a trinket acquired purely to the end of producing a son, and destroyed when no longer of use. Draco, his son, was enslaved to him from earliest childhood! The boy was broken before he was walking upright. Lucius had eleven years of peace and prosperity in your absence, with few opportunities to express his darker desires, as he had become accustomed under you. Draco was his primary preoccupation throughout that period! At last reports prior to his death, he was still being summoned to his father’s bedchambers no less
than twice weekly. Draco served Lucius...in every sense of the word. This was the role Potter would have graciously allowed you to take!!"

Tom felt a shiver pass through him.
Was it true?! Would Harry have sent him, ignorant, into that kind of web?! He wanted to disavow it, but it had the ring of truth to it.
But Severus was very good at manipulation. Exceptional, in fact.

“Harry?” he asked, hating how unsure his voice sounded.

The hand on his chest shook and then moved away to wrap around him. He felt a blond head drop against his shoulder.
“I’m sorry. I...didn’t want to do what they all needed of me. I was terrified. I...I couldn’t face it. And then you came along like a gift from the gods! My enemy. Someone who had even more reason to want Lucius dead. I...thought I could pretend I hadn’t known. I told myself it would be fair – after all, you killed so many people I loved. I told myself you’d be able to deal with it better than I could – you’d handle yourself. But...I didn’t really know you then. I had no idea you were...innocent, in some ways. When the process failed, I was actually relieved. I’m so sorry, Tom!”

Cold...even within the terrible seductive warmth – this biological effect...potions mishap...
He felt so cold.
“Get away from me.”

“Tom! Please. You have to-“

“I have to do nothing! Severus - remove him!”

“NO!”
A hand on his heart again, the other at his throat. He froze.
“Snape! Take it off! Take it off now or I swear I’ll kill him. Don’t think I missed that – you pulling out that bloody wedge just when you needed a distraction. You are the biggest bastard of them all. Congratulations – you take the bastard prize! You left Draco there with Lucius, even though you saw what he was doing! You led Draco to me – left me with him for three months before you took up contact with me. You would have put me in his place! It was your fault my parents and Sirius died – your fault that Tom had no idea what Lucius was planning before the end. And after what you did to Tom in Berlin – if you think I’m leaving him with you, think again!

Berlin?

Tom made the connection. The gap in his memory. Something had happened. Something dire enough for him to be obliviated. And it had happened in the safe house – not the base.
The younger Severus looked like he was sucking a lemon, Tom found himself thinking, incongruently.
He should have stayed in the hostel that night. He should never have set foot in that club.

“You wouldn’t do it. It’s clear you care for him.”

Tom gasped and jerked as his heart spasmed violently. He clawed at the hand on his chest, struggling. It had only been meant as a threat – a power play. He didn’t want Harry to actually kill him.

“STOP! POTTER!! WHAT ARE YOU-“
“FREE HIM!!”

Struggling to breathe, he pulled at the arms holding him, but his hands weren’t working properly anymore. He thought he might be actually having a heart attack. The room was folding up as his eyes rolled back.

#@@@#@@@#

“I’m sorry…”

The voice was a warm vibrato against his chest. He became aware of himself again folded warmly into the embrace of another body.

The memories were unpleasantly swift in returning and he began to struggle against the brat – the confounded deceiving curse who had yet again lulled him into a foolish sense of trust, only to pull the rug out from beneath his feet. The other boy clung desperately against his efforts to free himself from his touch.

“Tom.. I’m so sorry. I really am.” Plaintive. Earnest.

Liar.

“let go of me Harry” he gritted out between clenched teeth.

The whispered “I…I don’t want to. Please don’t make me” changed nothing.

When the other boy still refused to withdraw, it took Tom feeling around and eventually plunging his arm between them both until he could grip the other’s balls and give a brutal squeeze, to pry himself away.

Harry curled up with a whimper, clutching himself with both hands.

Tom was already out of the bed and examining himself. At least they had clothed him. Pajamas – what looked like children’s pajamas, in fact, if the baby blue colour and the silver rocket ships were any indication – but better than being naked. He stood weakly, looking around the room for anything that might be of use, while he tried to think of what he could do.

He couldn’t just leave, obviously. Not without taking the brat-who-betrayed-him-yet-again with him. And from the way the man had been acting earlier, he very much doubted that Severus would be amenable to them leaving. There were probably anti-apparition wards up. Thoughtfully, he turned his mind inward and tried to sense his surroundings as he had once been able to do.

Faintly he made out the hum of wards. Several wards. It took a lot longer to identify them than he was used to, but he thought there might be anti-apparition, anti-portkey, and tracking charm dispelling wards, as well as something that was possibly some form of modified fidelius. Unsurprising. Severus was a very thorough planner. Formidable in the offensive arts, but his true strength lay in defense – protection.

Of course, once upon a time, he could have simply torn through these wards with the sheer force of his power. Frowning, he turned his head to look thoughtfully at the boy who lived to be a rock around his neck – who was still holding himself in pain, but was watching Tom with wary blue eyes. When
he had been touching Harry, his power had been...formidable. Equal or greater than his own former impressive reserves. Perhaps he need only go and take the boy’s hand and rip through the wards to take them both out of here.

But what would leaving achieve...? He tilted his head and mused on it. Severus was here somewhere. Sulking and plotting, certainly. He clearly could not be trusted. And yet – he was arguably the greatest resource Tom had ever had at his disposal. He had been much relieved to learn the man still lived. Despite the infuriating situation he now found himself in – he could not argue with the dry observation that he was alive now and able to freely (mostly freely) use magic, solely due to the art of Severus Snape’s inventiveness.

Well that was it then.

He had an inkling what the brat might be thinking of, when he mentioned repurposing the original plan, but it was far...far... less appealing now. To put himself within grasp of Lucius, knowing what he now knew...looking as he now looked.

And yet – it remained the only fleeting chance of gaining access to that Gringotts vault of a manor. Nothing short of blood and lust would persuade Lucius to relax his security for even a moment. Without these far too young, far too weak bodies, without the diluted Malfoy blood running through their veins, they wouldn’t get within ten miles of the place.

And it was telling how that ‘we’ had just insinuated its way back into his mind.

“Stop overacting, Harry, and go and get me something to eat. Bring Severus back with you when you return. It is time we set ourselves to planning.”

He felt a mild smug satisfaction when his twin uncurled promptly, expression wavering between repentant and guilty, and excited and hopeful. “Thank you, Tom” he said softly, earnestly,, before crawling off the bed in the direction of the door.

He hesitated, halfway across the room and turned, indecision painting his face before he seemed to steel himself.

“I...really meant what I said you know. I am sorry. I should never have even thought about-“

Tom felt his top lip curl into a snarl and, with effort, managed to master his expression back into flatness.

“Harry. We are not going to have a touching moment over your latest betrayal. Do not insult my intelligence. Just go and do what I asked, for once.

The other boy swallowed, then nodded and was gone.

He huffed out a breath as the ache made itself immediately known in his gut.

And worsened.

Grimacing, he finally crawled back onto the bed and curled himself around a Pillow. It didn’t help much.

This was going to be hell.

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