Master and Slave

by sollardragon

Summary

Two months into his fourth year, Harry finds out that not everything is as it seems and he’s been lied to since first year at Hogwarts. Voldemort isn’t the ‘big bad man’ he’s been led to believe, some his friends aren’t really friends but out to serve their own ends… What happens when he finds out the pureblood families put up their children in an ancient ceremony offering up them to a game of master and slave – a ceremony he underwent when he was born?
I, unfortunately, own nothing of this universe... no matter how I wish it was different.

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 1 – Truths revealed

Wednesday, October 5, 1994

Harry blinked as the hood was taken off his head. The room he was in now was one he didn't recognize, though to be fair - since the room was mostly shrouded in darkness - that wasn't surprising. Just what was going on? What did they want with him? Who were they?

The last thing he remembered before the blindfold had been dropped onto his head was heading down the corridors of the school, needing to get away from Ron and Hermione's bossiness. He'd been accosted shortly after leaving the common room. At first he'd been able to keep track of where they were taking him, but soon lost his way after a while with all the twists and turns, going up and down stairs.

"Mr. Potter," a familiar voice drawled from the shadows. Harry stiffened in surprise as he recognized the silky tone, realizing that Snape was standing in the shadows, watching him. "It's time you found out what really goes on in the Wizarding world where the pureblood families are concerned."

“I don’t understand,” Harry mumbled in confusion.

“Of course you don’t, Mr. Potter,” Snape drawled with a smirk on his face. “If you did, we wouldn’t have needed the subterfuge to bring you here.”

“Where is here?” Harry asked, frowning as he looked around him. The little he could see didn’t reveal anything. Was Snape going to torture him before killing him now? Hand him over to Voldemort?

“Before anything is revealed to you, I require a Wizarding oath,” Snape murmured after a few minutes of silence. “Swear on your magic that what we discuss here will remain secret.”

“Excuse me?” Harry asked in shock. “Why the hell would I want to keep this meeting a secret?”

“Because, Potter,” Snape growled out, glaring at him. This was nothing new and helped Harry get some semblance of balance in a situation that was completely out of his control. “There are more people at stake here than just you and I. Swear or leave.”

Harry debated with himself on whether or not he should leave... but if he left, he would never know why Snape had had him brought here and all he had to look forward to was more of Hermione’s and Ron’s drivel which had driven him from the common room in the first place. Knowing he would probably regret it, Harry pulled his wand out and made the oath Snape was patiently waiting for. “I swear upon my magic that I will not reveal anything I learn tonight to anyone,” he said with a sigh. There was a slight flash as the oath was accepted before he put his wand away.

“Very good, Potter,” Snape sneered in contempt. “There might be hope for you yet.”

Harry glared at the man but refrained from snapping back. “So, where am I and why am I here?”
“You are currently in the Room of Requirement,” Snape murmured as he led Harry towards a table and chairs that suddenly appeared to one side of the room.

A young boy of eleven appeared suddenly, carrying a tray.

Harry was shocked to realize the boy wore no clothes but an intricate set of chains. Around the boy’s neck, there was a delicate chain from which a leash hung down to drag on the floor. There was another set of chains that hung from the boy’s chest like tinsel, though there didn’t seem to be anything holding it in place. Another set of tinsel-like chains draped the boy’s hips, barely hiding his privates. Wide bands that looked like manacles were around the boy’s wrists and ankles. The boy wore a mask and never looked up so Harry didn’t recognize him…

Snape’s chuckle drew his gaze from the boy and he flushed as he realized that Snape was amused by his reaction. “What the hell is going on here, Snape?” he demanded with a glare.

Snape didn’t lose his amused look as they were served tea by the boy. “The pureblood families have old customs that people like Dumbledore and the Ministry have been trying for years to infiltrate and have never succeeded. This is one of them. The children of the pureblood families are given up to those customs at birth. Not all the children, of course, but the first and sometimes second born of each family. Your father was one such person.”

“Given up?” Harry asked, frowning in confusion. Why couldn’t the man speak plainly? Why did he always have to talk in riddles?

“In this case, some of the children are given up to slavery for the continuation of the ritual.”

Harry’s eyebrows rose in horror. “You’re trying to tell me my father placed me into a club of slaves?!”

“Yes and no,” Snape murmured before taking a sip of his tea. “The children are used as servants until they reach the age of five. At that time, they are divided into two groups. The parent’s – usually the mother – former status determine which group their offspring will be placed in.”

Harry was confused again. “What?”

“Each generation,” Snape continued as if Harry hadn’t spoken, “goes into the group opposite of the parents’. In your case, Lily wasn’t one of us but James was. Your father, when he was born, was placed in the group for slaves. As his son, you will be placed in the group for masters. Now, the question becomes: are you willing to honour your father’s pledge to the ancient customs of the pureblood families?”

Harry blinked at the Potions master. Was he really asking him to join their little group of masters and slaves? Despite the horror the thought of it brought, Harry had to admit that he was intrigued by the prospect…

He knew what Ron’s and Hermione’s reaction to this would be. They’d forbid him to have anything to do with this kind of thing… Hermione because it was barbaric and Ron because he’d be jealous to not be included… so he wasn’t really surprised when he heard himself answer. “Yes.” Despite his initial feeling, Harry was curious about what happened in this group.

“Good, now we can continue to the next part of the night,” Snape said brusquely, putting his tea down.

He blinked in surprise when more adults came forward. He was even more surprised when he realized he knew who these adults were: Lucius Malfoy, Remus, Sirius, and a tall lanky man he
didn’t recognize was standing to one side.

“Sirius,” Harry murmured happily as he jumped to his feet to hug his godfather.

“Well done, pup,” Sirius murmured, hugging him back just as tightly. “I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you about this sooner, but we all took oaths. I had to wait.”

“What a touching reunion,” Lucius Malfoy drawled mockingly.

“Enough,” Snape snapped out before Sirius could retaliate. “We have a lot to divulge tonight and not nearly enough time to do it in.” As he spoke, the lights in the Room of Requirements grew brighter and Harry was surprised to see that they were in a small glass room – a sort of reception room – and beyond it were students of all ages, from first year to seventh year.

He could see there were two distinct groups: the Masters, who wore loose fitting pants and were bare-chested for the boys and a strapless bikini top for the girls, and the slaves who were garbed just as the boy who’d served him tea. The younger slaves wore masks over the top part of their faces, which made them all look identical, but the older years didn’t. It took him a few seconds to realize there were two students who looked to be in his year who still wore masks and knelt apart from everyone else… he wasn’t quite sure what that meant.

It became apparent to Harry very quickly what master owned which slave because where a master lounged, a slave was leashed beside him or her. It also seemed that they didn’t care who watched them as they kissed or played with their slaves… then he became aware that it wasn’t all one sided. Even the slaves enjoyed playing with their masters.

“This is a safe place for these students to continue their education in this game,” Snape told him, gesturing at the students around the room. “Since the Room of Requirements only allow those welcomed into its room when in use, there’s no worry of being caught.”

“How long has this been going on in the school?” Harry asked in surprise.

“Since the school was founded. There is another place created for our use. You’ll be taken there this summer. That’s where slaves of age are bound to their masters. For now, however, we’ll concentrate on teaching you what you need to know in this setting.”

“Sirius,” Harry turned to his godfather with a confused frown as a thought occurred to him. “I thought you didn’t like Snape?”

“Professor Snape, Harry,” Sirius chided gently, “be respectful. Here, there are no personal or house rivalries. There’s no room for it. Outside of this room, there are appearances to maintain but in here we’re free to be who we truly are. Severus and I – even your father when he was alive – are friends. There’s no such thing as fighting when you’re either a master or a slave.”

“Precisely,” Snape murmured. “In here, there is only respect for each other. Although, I would much prefer for us to be more civil towards each other in the school as well.”

“Wouldn’t that arouse suspicions?” Harry asked with a slight frown. “I mean, you usually go out of your way to make my life hell in school, especially in class.”

Snape looked at him with a thoughtful look on his face. “If I were to make an effort to be more civil in the school would you agree to be more respectful towards me in the same setting?”

Harry looked up at his teacher – the one man who’d made it his mission to make his life miserable in school – and wondered if he could do that, be civil towards the man everyone considered a ‘greasy git’. Then he remembered all the times Snape had saved his life in the years since he
started at Hogwarts. Quite frankly, he realized he wanted some peace between himself and the Potions master. “Yes, sir.”

“Good, then I require one more promise from you, Mr. Potter,” Snape murmured, still looking down at him.

“What’s that?”

“I want you to work at bringing your grades up, in potions especially.” A sudden smirk graced his features then and Harry was instantly wary. “Perhaps I should separate you from Granger and Weasley while in class.”

“Actually,” Harry said tiredly, running a hand through his hair in agitation. “I think that might be better. I’m getting tired of listening to Ron tell me how boring the class is and Hermione trying to take over my potion making.” He looked up in time to see surprise flit across the Potions master’s face.

“What did I tell you, Severus,” Sirius said with a steady look in his eyes. “I knew something was off with those two, Ron especially.”

“Yes, yes,” Snape grumbled dismissively with a glare. “I had the similar suspicion during their first year.”

“Maybe I should’ve allowed the hat to put me into Slytherin,” Harry murmured softly, sighing slightly.

“Are you saying you argued with the hat to put you into Gryffindor instead of Slytherin?” Remus asked, proving his hearing was better than everyone else’s.

“Um… Yeah,” Harry said a little sheepishly. “At the time, I didn’t know any better. I allowed someone else’s prejudice to influence me into going into Gryffindor.” He shifted uncomfortably when the adults just looked at him in surprise and dumfounded amazement.

Sirius was the first to recover. He gave a bark of laughter. “Somehow, I’m not really surprised to hear Dumbledore was trying to influence you from the start.”

“I think that is a discussion best left for another day,” Snape murmured with a shake of his head. “For now, we need to explain things to you. In here, masters and slaves learn about each other, what they like and dislike.”

“Is it all one sided?” Harry asked in curiosity as he watched the younger children sitting together. The masters talked together, separate from the slaves, though they, too, were in their own little groups. It seemed the slaves, especially the younger ones, were more servant than slave. When they were around the masters, their eyes were downcast and they didn’t speak. With the older students, the slaves were milling around the masters, on hand for heavy petting or make-out sessions. He realized that was as far as it went.

“No,” Lucius murmured as he looked at all the students around the room. “In fact, the slaves have as much power as the masters, more so, in fact. The masters can order their slaves to do something but if the slaves aren’t comfortable doing so; they have the right to refuse. The masters have to listen or pay the price.”

Harry did a double take when he noticed Neville kneeling beside a girl who was obviously a master… mistress? He wasn’t sure what they were called…

He was distracted from the sight by the most beautiful girl moaning as two others touch her, her
body writhing between them, their mouths traveling the perfectly flawless skin while a boy sat beside them, watching them with a small smile on his face… then realized he knew who the two boys were! Fred and George?!

Further among the older group, he noticed two boys lying together, kissing and touching each other intimately, bringing a slight blush to his cheeks. The boys didn’t seem to care that they were the center of attention in their group.

Harry felt slightly flushed at the display, confused by his reaction as he found he couldn't look away from the sight. With a chuckle, Sirius led Harry away.

“As you can see, here, there are very little by way of rules, but there are rules,” Snape murmured in amusement. “Masters are prohibited from taking things too far here. Slaves have to be a certain age before they can be initiated as a sex slave. Had James survived, your own verbal training would have begun at age four in the privacy of your home. Sirius wanted to do it instead but no one could find you. The Dursleys were asked if you were there but they denied your existence and told us not to come back.”

“By the time the children are four years old, they're introduced to the whole group, though they're used only as servants and never touched by anyone. At this time their education is all verbal and, unless both parents are in the group, the spouse is never told of this group. The child spends the years leading to Hogwarts learning what their expectations are, whether they're the master or the slave.”

“You said that the parent’s… I don’t know, status, I guess you would call it, dictates what the child will be. How does that work?” Harry asked, watching the older students again.

“Usually it’s the mother that determines what the child will be. If the mother is a master, then the child will be a slave,” Remus said as he followed Harry’s gaze, smiling slightly as he realized Harry was watching Fred and George again.

“Does it still hold the same if both parents are in this?”

“Yes. If the parent was in this and married outside the purebloods, like your father did, then the child would follow his or her status.”

“Each year, new members can be sponsored to this group,” Lucius told him, looking at his snake head walking stick as if it was the most interesting thing ever. “That was the only way to get in and every adult has to be in agreement. The sponsored are always slaves because they have nothing to fall back on. This allows us to train them properly so that they can then train their children.”

“Normally, you would’ve learned all about this by now,” Sirius said sadly and Harry realized his godfather had been watching him carefully. “It’s going to take some time, but you’ll soon be taking all of this in stride.”

“We all went through this when we were younger,” Remus murmured softly from Harry’s other side. “Not many come into this at your age, but it’s happened before.”

“I knew your parents wouldn’t want you in the Dursleys’ house,” Sirius explained with a helpless shrug. “But I was arrested on some bogus charges the year after you vanished and I was tossed into Azkaban until last year so I couldn’t keep looking for you.”

They entered the main room and Harry was surprised that there were a lot of quiet conversations being held between both groups. “Those who wear masks are the ones who haven’t chosen a
master yet. The others of your year have already made their choices and will be formally linked to their masters this summer,” he was told as Snape nodded to the two children still wearing masks to come forward. “Any questions?”

“Why did no one tell me about this when I started first year?” Harry asked with a frown on his face.

“It was deemed safer at the time for everyone concerned to keep you ignorant of all this,” Lucius told him with a nod. “It was a wise decision considering how closely Dumbledore was keeping an eye on you.”

“For now,” Snape said, intruding into their conversation. “It seems when it became known amongst the groups that we would be revealing this to you, two slaves chose you as their master. You’ll be able to choose your slave. The way to choose your slave, Potter, is to kiss them both. The one who feels right to you will be the one you choose. Once the choice is made, it is for life. Let’s go.”

Harry watched as the girl and boy crawled over to them, their movements sensual. “Why the masks?” he asked, tearing his eyes away from them. Out of the two of them, he already knew which one he wanted. Ever since his kiss with one of Dudley’s friends, more like forced to, he’d realized that he didn’t really like girls. That meant he lucked out with being able to claim the boy as his own. He blinked in surprise as he realized there was another boy standing a slight distance from them, waiting patiently for what was about to happen.

“They are so the masters won’t be biased in their choice,” Lucius answered, face carefully blank. Harry didn’t understand why Lucius was there in the first place. Surely, Draco had already been chosen by a slave. “Not many masters are actually given this opportunity. The slaves choose their masters, not the other way around. Slaves choosing the same master doesn’t happen often.”

When the slaves were kneeling a couple of feet in front of Harry, he looked up at Sirius with a question in his eyes. Now what?

“Present yourselves,” Snape answered instead, speaking to the slaves.

The girl rose gracefully to her feet first and stepped up to Harry. He could see her trembling in anticipation as she leaned into him, her lips soft against his. He hesitated slightly before he kissed her back.

“Enough,” Snape ordered and the girl moved back, reluctance clear in her movements. As soon as she was kneeling again, the boy rose to his feet. With the mask, Harry couldn’t tell who it was. There was no hesitation in him when the boy’s lips brushed his playfully.

Everything seemed to fade for him as he deepened the kiss. The masked boy moaned softly, body leaning into Harry’s. Snape’s chuckle seemed to break the spell between them and the boy knelt before him. “The choice has been made,” the Potions master drawled with a mocking look in his eyes. Harry blinked as he realized the girl – Pansy Parkinson – was now kneeling beside the other boy.

“Let’s go sit down again and discuss this some more,” Lucius murmured, leading the way to a table set in the far corner. Harry was surprised to realize the slave boy was also following them as they strolled over to the table.

The older slave took the tray from the younger slave and proceeded to serve them tea, ending with Harry. When everyone was served, he knelt beside his chair, head bowed. Since he hadn’t removed the mask, Harry didn’t know who his slave was but refrained from asking his name. He
'figured he’d find out soon enough…

“We meet here Monday, Wednesday from seven to nine, and all day Saturday. Try not to be late and don’t bring anyone not involved in our circle,” Snape instructed him.

Harry frowned as a thought occurred to him. “What about the holidays and summer, sir?” he asked, looking at each man in turn, from Remus, who was sitting on his right, to Lucius, to Snape, and lastly to Sirius.

“Since you can’t live with the Dursleys and learn what you need, alternative accommodations will have to be set up for you,” Snape told him.

“Unfortunately, that leaves me out,” Remus murmured with a slightly sad smile. “Werewolves aren’t allowed to take in wizarding children.”

“Stupid law,” Harry grumbled, looking into his cup.

“Stupid it may be, but we don’t want to arouse suspicions. Let us worry about that for now,” Lucius murmured softly, eyes narrowed slightly. In second year, Harry would’ve wondered about that look but something told him that Lucius wasn’t a danger to him anymore.

“It’s time for the evening to end,” Snape said brusquely and looked at Harry’s new slave. “Reveal your identity to your master, Slave,” he ordered sharply. “So that he may know you tomorrow when he meets you for tutoring.”

Harry’s head whipped around to look at his slave and waited with bated breath for the boy to remove his mask. He inhaled sharply when he realized who he was looking at. With the mask gone, the black hair turned pale blonde… there was only one boy in school with hair that colour…

The boy looked up, eyes betraying his nervousness to Harry.

Draco Malfoy!!!

* * *

Later that night, Harry lay on his bed, his mind reeling from the revelations. By the time he’d gotten in, Ron and Hermione had pounced on him demanding to know where he’d been, but Neville had saved him from being hounded by telling them Harry had been with him.

“Harry?” Neville whispered softly.

“Yeah, Neville?”

“Can we talk?”

“Sure,” Harry murmured as he sat up, not surprised when Neville sat at the foot of his bed.

“What’s up?”

Looking around at the other boys sleeping, Neville closed the curtains, created a ball of light and cast a Silencing spell before looking back at Harry. “What did you think of tonight?”

“It’s a lot to take in,” he said honestly.

“I’ll bet,” Neville murmured with a grin. “I wanted to pick you as my master, too, but I think it would’ve been too weird considering we’re in the same house and all.”

“Is anyone else in our house in this?” Harry asked with a frown.
“Maybe one or two of the lower years and Fred and George, of course, but most of the pureblood children are in the other houses so, not really.” Harry nodded as he thought that over. “You know, Harry,” Neville said a little hesitantly. “If you ever have questions you want answered that you don’t feel comfortable asking Professor Snape or the others, you can always ask me.”

“Thanks, Neville,” Harry said with a grateful smile. “I appreciate that. What are you?”

“Oh, slave,” Neville said with a dismissive shrug. “Gran taught me after my parents died and since both of them were masters it was kind of obvious I would be a slave.”

“I remember them telling me that we could marry within the group,” Harry said with a slight frown. “What happens if both are men? Or women?”

“There are strict rules about that,” Neville said with a nod. “You can marry but heirs still have to be provided. So, let’s say two boys were to marry; they each have to produce a male child to continue their last names. There’s no exception to that rule. It makes sense, though. If every same sex couple didn’t procreate, there wouldn’t be anyone left to continue the bloodlines.”

“What about this bonding thing Snape was talking about?”

“Ah, yes, that. This coming summer, we’ll be taken to the club where the new masters will take their slaves.” At Harry’s confused expression, Neville grinned, obviously enjoying this. “The best way to tie a slave to a master is for them to have sex, but it’s kind of different with us. The masters have to dominate their slaves. At the end of the ceremony, a spell is cast that binds them together for life. It makes it easier for the master to call for his or her slave when they want them outside of the club meetings.”

Harry blushed to the roots of his hair at first at the thought of having sex in front of all the adults… but as he thought further on it, knowing he’d be tying Draco Malfoy to him forever, he was intrigued.

“Then, when the school year begins, it’s done again for our own groups. It reinforces the bonds between master and slave.”

“Do you wish you were a master instead of a slave?” Harry asked, his head tilting to one side in his curiosity. He wondered because Neville was so shy and a general scaredy-cat.

Neville laughed in understanding. “No, I’d rather be a slave because those are the ones who have the most control and more power than the master. For example, a master can’t force a slave to do something he or she doesn’t want to do or the whole group gets involved in dealing out punishment to the transgressor.”

“Has that ever happened?”

“My Gran told me it only happened once, when she was a little girl. What they do is enough to ensure that no one will do it again.”

“What happens?” Harry asked in confusion. What could they possibly do to someone to make everyone toe the line?

“They break the bond between master and slave, to start with, and then the transgressor is given a taste of what he’d done to the slave. It isn’t pretty.”

“I guess that would make sure no one else did it again,” Harry murmured before he shuddered.
Thursday, October 6, 1994

During his free period the next day, Harry met up with students from his new group as ordered by Snape. Draco was waiting for him with Crabbe and Goyle. He hadn’t even noticed the two burly boys last night… There were also two others from Ravenclaw but Harry didn’t know them by name.

He was aware of a lot of students stopping to stare at their group but Harry was used to being stared at. “How did it go when you got to your common room last night?” Draco asked him, his interest seeming genuine instead of being the usual mockery.

“Ron and Hermione tried to demand where I’d been but Neville told them I’d been with him,” Harry said with a shrug. “They left me alone then.”

Draco looked at him thoughtfully, a slight frown marring his usually line-free face. “Did you have any questions about what happened yesterday?”

“I did after I left, but Neville answered them.”

Draco smirked at him. “Well, it’s good to know you’re at least willing to ask questions. Which subjects do you need help with?”

“Well, this morning I went and talked to Professor McGonagall to see if I could change my class with Trelawney to something else. She suggested Ancient Runes but she wanted to know why I wanted to change so late in the year. I told her I wanted to take my studies more seriously and had someone who would catch me up in the class.”

“Easily done,” Draco said with a nod. “How good are you in Potions?”

“Don’t know. I’ve never been allowed to give it my all in class,” Harry said with a shrug. “Hermione seems to think I’m too stupid to actually do anything right in Potions class.”

“I’ll talk to Professor Snape,” Draco said as he got up to get a book. “We’re going to have to remedy the fact that Granger likes to take over everything you do. That won’t help you when you get a job later on if that’s what you want to do.”

“I think that was what Professor Snape was talking about when I asked him to move me from beside her and Ron so I can actually try to make the potion myself and see just how good or bad I am.” Draco chuckled softly when Harry’s forehead met the table top with a slight thud. “Is it so much to ask for me to figure myself out?”

“Now that Professor Snape knows this, he’ll see to it that you’re given a chance, Potter,” Draco said, patting Harry on the back. “Here’s a book on Ancient Runes. For now, this will be your new best friend.”

With a sigh, Harry sat up to look through the book Draco had placed beside him.

“Harry?” Harry stiffened in dread as he recognized Ron’s voice. “What the hell is this?”

“Malfoy has been assigned to tutor me,” he answered, wary of the rage he could see in the red-head’s eyes.

Hermione, who was standing beside him, looked betrayed. “Why didn’t you ask me to tutor you?”
“I was assigned, Granger,” Draco drawled mockingly. “Is your hearing as bad as your know-it-all attitude?”

“Shut up, Ferret!” Ron growled out, reaching for his wand.

“What is the meaning of this?” Madam Pince demanded from behind Harry’s two friends. “Are you actually intending to duel in my library, Mr. Weasley?”

“No, Madam Pince,” Hermione said, tugging on Ron’s arm, trying to drag him away from Harry and the other students at his table. “We were just looking for a quiet place to study.”

“Then I suggest you allow other students to get some work done,” the librarian ordered. “Quietly.” She glared after them until they were out of sight. “If this happens again, Mr. Potter, let me know. There’s a room you and your study mates can use that’ll keep you out of their sight.”

“Thank you, Madam Pince,” Harry said with a slightly embarrassed smile. “Could we use it, because knowing Ron, he’ll more than likely come back to cause trouble.”

“Of course,” the Librarian murmured with a gentle smile. “Follow me.” Everyone at the table quickly gathered their books and followed Madam Pince towards an unused portion of the library. “This wall hides a study room. It’s open to you and your friends, Mr. Potter. If any books are needed, simply write it on a piece of paper and burn it in one of the sconces. If the book isn’t being used by someone, it will appear in the room for you and if it is in use, the flames will tell you.”

“Thank you, Madam Pince,” Draco murmured politely, nodding in gratitude. “This will work for what we need nicely. I take it that in order to keep anyone out, all we need to do is tell the room?”

“Yes, Mr. Malfoy,” the librarian murmured with a slight incline of her head. “Exactly like the book summoning.”

“Perfect.”

Harry sighed in relief as he saw a couple of windows in one of the walls. It wasn’t that he was Claustrophobic, it was just that he didn’t like being enclosed if he didn’t have to be. At least it wouldn’t feel like a dungeon. He was pleasantly surprised to see a few tables with lamps on them to make studying at night easier. In the center of the room was a sunken couch ringing a fireplace. There were even bookshelves on this side.

It made Harry think of a library in a private office or home. It was perfect.

“You’re taking this a lot better than I expected,” Draco murmured as they settled on the couch, their book bags on the floor beside them.

“Yeah, well,” Harry sighed with a tired shrug. “I’m getting tired of always fighting with you. Besides, I’ve noticed that most of our fights only begin when Ron’s around.”

“Makes sense,” the blonde murmured with a smirk.

“Draco?” Harry asked with a frown. “Is Madam Pince part of the group?”

“She is,” Draco said with a slight nod. “I think that’s why she’s more interested in us not fighting. Professor Snape already told the group that he was going to bring you into this. She never liked the way Dumbledore kept trying to force you to do things his way.” When the silence between them lengthened, Draco looked at him searchingly. “Let’s begin.”
“Harry!” he heard Ron growl from behind him as he was heading for the common room to drop off his book bag. He’d learned a lot from Draco during his free period and couldn’t wait for the next study session. He’d never realized how much effort the blonde put into his studies until he began challenging Harry to try.

“Ron,” he said tiredly, turning to face the boy who’d been his best friend for the last three years. Maybe that had been a mistake on Harry’s part. He was beginning to get annoyed with Ron for trying to keep him from making friends with other people.

“You have some explaining to do,” the red-head growled menacingly. “Why the hell were you sitting with Ferret-face?”

“I already told you, Ron. Malfoy’s tutoring me in Ancient Runes.”

“But you’re not in that class, you’re in Divination,” Ron said with a frown.

“McGonagall allowed me to switch classes since I’m not learning anything in Divination,” Harry told him as he began walking again.

“But it’s the one class we can goof off in!”

Harry stopped, sighing in exasperation. “Did it ever occur to you that maybe I don’t want to goof off anymore? That I might actually want to learn something while we’re here at school?”

Ron gaped at him in shock and Harry took the opportunity to enter the common room and go up the stairs. He dropped his book bag on his trunk and headed out again. He needed to hurry if he was going to make it downstairs for supper.

“Hey, Harry,” Neville murmured as he caught up to him. “What happened to Ron? He seemed shocked when I came into the common room.”

“He doesn’t understand why I dropped out of Divination and took up Ancient Runes instead. He basically ranted about not being able to goof off in that class anymore. I’m tired of just coasting through my classes, Neville. I actually want to improve my grades while I have a chance so I can get a good job when I’m done school. Is it so hard to understand that?” He realized he was taking his frustration out on the other boy, but he couldn’t help it. He sighed in frustration before grinning lopsidedly at Neville. “Sorry about that.”

“No worries,” Neville said with a grin. “I understand your point. Ron seems content to make the least effort in everything he does unless it’s something that interests him completely, like Quidditch or chest. He doesn’t understand yet that the choices we make here will affect what we do later on.”

“I’m just waiting for Hermione to pounce on me next,” Harry grumbled in irritation. “She can’t understand why I didn’t ask her to tutor me in any subject.”

“So, does this mean that Malfoy is tutoring you in Ancient Runes as well as Potions?”

“Yeah,” Harry said with a lopsided grin. “I never realized how good of a tutor he really was until this afternoon. I actually enjoyed learning for once.”

“You did tell them that Malfoy was assigned to you, right?” Neville rolled his eyes when Harry nodded in exasperation. “That’s because it’s not all dry useless information delivered to you textbook style,” Neville laughed in understanding. “Potions should be just as interesting then.”
“Gods, I hope so,” Harry said with a shake of his head, making Neville laugh again. “Come on, let’s go eat.” In the Great Hall, Harry sighed as Hermione looked up at him with an injured look on her face.
“Let’s sit further up at the table,” Neville murmured, having noticed the look on Hermione’s face as well.

“Yeah, sure,” Harry mumbled, his shoulders tight with tension. He knew he was simply prolonging the inevitable, but he didn’t care right now. The meal passed well, with Dean and Seamus joking with them during the meal. Harry managed to ignore Ron’s glares and Hermione’s disappointed looks. It felt nice to actually enjoy a meal without being judged for once.

“Hey, Harry,” Dean asked as supper neared completion. “Why aren’t you sitting with Ron and Hermione like you usually do?”

“Yeah,” Seamus asked with a grin. “Not that we don’t enjoy your company but usually they don’t let you out of hearing range.”

Harry sighed, pushing down the irritated feeling that wanted to come out at being questioned by someone else. “Malfoy was assigned to tutor me in a couple of subjects. I actually learned more from him in two hours than I ever have from Hermione in three years. Ron’s out of sorts because he spotted us sitting together with a group of students in the library and tried to hex Malfoy. Madam Pince stepped in.”

“Well, that’s not really surprising that you learned more from anyone else other than Hermione. She’s just as bad as Binns for putting you to sleep,” Seamus chortled in amusement.

“So does this mean you and Malfoy are getting along now?” Dean asked with a thoughtful frown. “What about the rivalry between the two of you?”

“We’ve decided to put it behind us so we can work together,” Harry said with a shrug. “I’ve never had such a peaceful afternoon since I started school.”

“I’ll bet,” Seamus snorted. “Well, if you’re sure about this, we’re behind you, Harry.” Dean rolled his eyes at the other boy but nodded his agreement.

“Thanks, guys,” he murmured with a grateful smile. “It’s nice to know someone trusts my judgement.”

Harry wasn’t accosted until he reached the common room after supper. “Harry, we need some explanations from you,” Hermione demanded, hands on her hips.

Harry’s eyebrow rose at her attitude. “I’ll explain as soon as you get off your high horse and when I’m damn good and ready to do so, Hermione,” he growled angrily, having had enough of her demanding manner.

She jerked back as if he’d slapped her but he didn’t care anymore. He’d had his fill of her demanding answers from him.

“Don’t talk to her that way,” Ron growled out, glaring at Harry.

Harry glared right back. “I’ve had enough of this,” he told them softly, the tone dangerous. “Hermione, you’re not my keeper or my mother, so back off. I don’t have to explain myself to my friends. Ron, I can tell by your attitude that this is going to be another one of your temper tantrums. Get over yourself. If you guys can’t support me as my friends, then maybe I’m better off without you.”
“How dare you?” Ron demanded loudly, his face going red with rage. “We’ve done everything for you, been in danger because of you and this is how you repay us?!”

They were gathering a crowd as the other Gryffindor heard Ron’s words.

“The danger that I put you through?” Harry demanded angrily. “I never asked you to come with me to rescue the Philosopher stone. In fact, I told you guys to get out. Ron, you followed me into the Chamber of Secrets by your own choice. I didn’t ask you to follow me down there.”

“And this year,” Ron growled out, “with the Tri-Wizard tournament being hosted here, you’ll be the center of attention again.”

“That’s bull and you know it, Ron,” Neville snapped out, glaring at the red-head. “Harry won’t be entering it because he’ll be too busy getting caught up in his studies.”

“With Malfoy,” Ron sneered, spitting the name out as if it were a swear word or something.

“Yes, with Malfoy because I’m learning better from him than I ever have from Hermione.”

Hermione gasped, her expression hurt. “You could’ve asked me, Harry. I would’ve helped you out.”

“Malfoy. Was. Assigned!!!” he stressed out, his voice loud enough that maybe, just maybe it would sink in. “And sorry, Hermione, but you wouldn’t have helped me. You’d have either taken over or bored me to death with facts I don’t need. I appreciate the fact that you have a photographic memory but everything out of a book isn’t what I need. I can get the same facts from a book, better even, because I can skip the useless information and get straight to the facts.”

Around them, other students nodded in agreement.

“You son of a bitch,” Ron roared out, punching Harry in the face. Fred and George jumped in, grabbing hold of Ron’s arms to keep him from attacking Harry further. Harry stumbled back, landing in the arms of several students when he would’ve fallen on the floor. “After everything she’s done for you, all you can do is insult her?!” Ron demanded angrily, struggling in the twins’ hold.

“It’s not an insult, you prat,” Harry growled out, pushing himself back to his feet. “It’s a fact. Hermione can retain a huge amount of information in her head, which is amazing, but not all of it is needed for everything. Who cares that a Hippogriff can feel the air flowing through every feather it has on its body? Who cares that Hogwarts used to be a sheep hut way back when? None of it has any real bearing on what’s happening here and now. I’m not criticizing… or at least I’m not trying to, but I need to know what I’m doing in classes so that I can honestly say that I know it for myself. Plus, I’m a little too old to be told by a girl who’s what… ten months older than I am? … what to do. I don’t need a mother anymore.”

“Calm down, Ron,” George growled out as the twins struggled with their brother.

“You know what?” Harry told them, a look of disgust on his face. “Don’t worry about him. I’m done with your shit, Ronald. Stay away from me and I’ll stay away from you.”

With that, he stalked out of the common room, ignoring the calls to come back from Hermione, the twins and a few other students that he was too angry to register who it was. Not wanting to be found, he headed up towards the Astronomy tower but hesitated when he reached the seventh level. Changing his mind, he decided to go to the Room of Requirements, knowing no one would be able to enter if he didn’t want them there.
He was surprised to open the door on a heavily treed garden with a stream running across it… perfect to hide in. He hadn’t been sitting there for more than a half hour when he became aware of someone else coming in. Frowning, he turned to look behind him where he knew the door to be.

“Jeez, Potter,” he heard someone grumble before Malfoy stepped through the heavy branches. “Feel like hiding much?”

“I just needed somewhere to go where no one could find me,” Harry said with a sigh as he rested his head on his arms again before he turned back to look at the blonde with a funny look on his face. “How did you even know I was here?”

“Longbottom sent me a message by house-elf,” Draco said with a dismissive shrug, “told me you might need someone to talk to and where to find you. What happened?”

“Ron and Hermione started in on me again,” he grumbled as Draco sat beside him. “Ron seemed to think I was insulting Hermione when I told her I could get the same information from a book as I could through her, better even because then I could skip over the boring details.”

“I’m sure that went over well,” Draco drawled sarcastically.

“He punched me,” Harry said, gently touching his tender jaw, which was probably bruising nicely by now.

Draco rolled his eyes as he sighed. “That doesn’t surprise me. What are you going to do?”

Harry sighed tiredly, looking at the running water. “Sometimes I wish I could switch houses. It would make this so much easier to deal with.”

“Ah, but that wouldn’t deal with anything. It would just mean you’d be hiding from Weasley.”

“It’d be enough for now.”

They were quiet for a while, just enjoying the solitude around them. “I spoke to Professor Snape after supper, to give him an update on what’s happened today and he said he wants to talk to you.”

“You know, it might’ve been a good idea to start with that when you came in,” Harry said sarcastically as he turned to glare at an unrepentant Draco.

“You wouldn’t have been in the mood to listen to him before. You needed to talk to someone about what’s happening,” the blonde said with a shrug as he rose to his feet. “And Longbottom is too close to the situation to be of any help. Come on. He doesn’t like to be kept waiting.”

They made their way down to the Potions Master’s classroom and knocked and walked in. The professor was glaring at them as they made their way down to the front of the room. Harry felt unaccountably nervous, wondering what Snape had planned for him and if he’d be terribly cross at them being late coming down.

“I see your sense of timing has yet to improve,” Snape sneered, glaring at them.

“Sorry, sir,” Draco murmured as he perched on the nearest desk. “I didn’t tell him about your message until after he’d calmed down from Weasley’s attack.”

Snape’s eyes snapped over to Harry, narrowing angrily as he took in the bruise on Harry’s face. “What happened, Mr. Potter?”
“Ron didn’t seem to like the fact that Draco and I were studying together in the library or that Draco is tutoring me. I also told him about switching Divination for Ancient Runes. He complained about not being able to goof off in class anymore. Moreover, he didn’t like the fact that I told Hermione that I could get information faster from a book than from her after they confronted me after supper.”

“So he decided to hit you,” Snape murmured with a frown. “If it were possible, would you want to switch Houses?”

Harry sighed and rubbed at his forehead, trying to rid himself of his headache. Hadn’t he told Draco the same thing? But Draco had been right. Avoiding Ron wasn’t the solution. “No, I don’t think it’d help. In fact,” he murmured tiredly. “It might make things worse. I can handle Ron, especially with Neville, Fred and George there to help me out.”

The Potions master shrugged dismissively. “Let’s see just how well you can do with potions when Mr. Weasley and Miss. Granger aren’t around to distract you.” Harry bit back the groan as Snape gestured towards the cauldron he hadn’t noticed. He knew he needed this in order to see just how well he knew what he was doing. “Mr. Malfoy will observe quietly from the side. The instructions are on the table. Begin.”

By the time an hour had gone by, Harry was impressed at how much he’d accomplished. He was on the last part of his potion and nothing bad had happened. That in itself was an accomplishment. The fact that it was actually turning out right was another.

Snape came over to inspect his work, looking pleased with the look of it. “It would seem that we’re going to have to switch you from seat, Mr. Potter, if this is the kind of work you can do on your own.”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said with a pleased smile. “I’m glad it’s an easy fix.”

“Indeed. Say nothing to anyone,” Snape murmured with a frown. “We’re going to have to be delicate with this or we’ll be bringing more attention to this sudden change than we really want.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well done, Harry,” Malfoy murmured as they walked out of the classroom. “I’ll see you tomorrow in class.”

“Thanks, Draco.”
Chapter 2 – New Changes

Friday, October 7, 1994

At breakfast the next morning, Harry decided that sitting away from Hermione and Ron was the best thing for him… so he sat with Neville, Seamus and Dean again, closer to the twins. Ron was still in a bad mood – big surprise – and Hermione kept shooting him hurt looks as if she hoped he’d come crawling back and apologize to her.

It wasn’t going to happen.

After breakfast, he headed down to potions. Double potions, at that. This was going to be torture…

He was surprised when he walked into the classroom and the desks had been divided into two seat desks. Looking at Neville, he realized the other boy looked just as confused as he did. “Mind if I sit with you?” he asked the timid boy.

“Sure, come on.”

Snape waited until everyone was sitting and the noise had stopped before he addressed the class. “For the next six weeks, you will be paired off for a series of potion making,” he told the whole classroom. “Those who cannot make the potions will be given assignments to explain what was used in the potions and why it didn’t work. I will call out two names at a time. The second student named will rise and find the other. Silently! You will remember where you are seated for the next few classes.”

For the next ten minutes, all that could be heard in the classroom was the shuffling of feet as students moved around the room. Harry heard Ron grumble darkly as he passed him to go sit at the front of the class with Theodore Nott. Neville was paired off with Crabbe; Hermione with Pansy; Draco with Harry, and so on.

It seemed Snape wanted to completely mix up the whole class, pairing Gryffindor with Slytherin as much as possible, though he did keep some Slytherins with fellow house mates and the same for Gryffindors. The only ones who were paired off with opposite houses seemed to be the troublemakers. Ron was at the front of the classroom and Hermione was in the center as far away from Harry as Snape could put her.

It was the most peaceful class Harry had ever had! He’d never learned so much in potions as he did this day.

A quickly whispered conference between himself and Draco, they established that Harry would do most of the work on this potion to see just how much he needed to learn. So, with minimal input from Draco – instructions given only when needed – Harry brewed the potion while he shared the work of chopping or cubing the ingredients for it.

Snape made the usual rounds but refrained from making rude remarks when he came to their table, simply watching silently as Harry worked. When he saw how well the potion was turning out, he simply nodded and walked away.
Harry could feel Hermione’s gaze on him a few times during the class but he was determined to ignore her and concentrate on what he was doing. That was when he realized that by blocking her from his mind, he did better than when she constantly whispered how he was doing it wrong in his ear. He even managed to finish his potion seconds before she did!

A couple of times, he was jerked from his concentration by Snape berating a few of the other students. Ron was one such person, and so were Dean and Seamus, and Hermione, of course. Just after he’d poured some of their potion into a phial, he noticed Ron arguing heatedly with Nott just before something dropped into the cauldron before him. Harry froze in shock and before he could react, his cauldron went up.

He gasped as the warm liquid flew into the air and dropped around them. Being both seekers, their reflexes nearly saved them from being doused in the stuff, but it still managed to hit Harry in the back. He hissed as pain flared up it.

“Mr. Potter,” Snape snarled, swooping down on him, his wand slashing angrily as he glared at Harry. “What is the meaning of this?”

“Something was dropped into the cauldron, Professor,” he gasped, body held stiffly because he could feel blisters forming under the material, not knowing what Snape’s reaction would be. Would this be just like old times?

Snape frowned at him before he looked into the cauldron. Sitting in the soggy mess was an ingredient that wasn’t in the list. Looking over at Malfoy, his eyes narrowed when the blonde teen nodded, holding out the phial Harry had taken. “This is the potion, sir,” Draco said in a strong, clear voice, “we got it before something was tossed into it.”

Snape took it from him, opening it to sniff it cautiously. “Indeed. Who threw the extra ingredient into the cauldron?” he demanded as he recorked the phial, glaring at the students in the room. He smiled maliciously when no one answered him. “Thanks to this unknown student, everyone will write me a three foot essay on every ingredient we used, including Belladonna, which is now in this cauldron, and why it shouldn’t be mixed in a Healing draught.” With a swish of his wand, he healed Harry’s burns quickly and efficiently while the students groaned at the extra work. “Unless someone wants to divulge who did this? Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy are exempt from this assignment since we know they didn’t do it.”

Whispered grumbling could be heard from everyone in the room before a few hands shot into the air. “Yes, Mr. Finnegan,” Snape murmured and Harry knew he’d picked someone from Gryffindor on purpose, “is there something you would like to say?”

“Hermione tossed it into Harry’s cauldron, Professor,” he said with a glare at the witch who was looking down at her cauldron in shame. Even Pansy
was looking at her in disgust.

Harry almost felt sorry for her… almost.

“Hey, Potter,” Draco called out as they reached the top of the stairs to go in separate directions. “Don’t forget our study sessions after lunch.”

“I won’t,” Harry called out with a grin as he hurried off to his next class.

* * *

Draco sat down at the Slytherin table at noon and realized that Harry wasn’t anywhere to be seen at the Gryffindor table. Had something happened to him? He frowned in confusion, wondering what could’ve happened since he’d left the dark haired teen.

Making eye contact with the twins he arched an eyebrow at them, hoping they’d understand what he was asking. By now, everyone in their club knew he was Harry’s slave. He was relieved when they looked down the table and realized who was missing. He watched as one of them leaned down to talk to Longbottom, who turned to glance quickly at him.

He didn’t like it when the other teen shook his head minutely.

Not wanting to draw unnecessary attention to himself, he sat down and began to fill his plate, hoping Harry was simply late. It had happened before… He was surprised when a note appeared on his lap and he quickly read it, feeling his anger rise.

_Seems Ron ganged up on Harry with a couple of other boys. He’s in the library waiting for you. Neville says bring something for him to eat or he’ll wait until supper to eat if he eats at all._

He didn’t have to wonder who the note was from. Looking up, he noticed all three boys glance at him so he nodded slightly, just a dip of his head, turning it into a look down at his plate. He knew of Harry’s eating habits, just like he knew of his insomnia.

He doubted anyone realized just how much he’d watched the dark haired teen in the years since they’d started at Hogwarts. It was part of the reason why they’d fought so much… that and because of Weasley.

Granger seemed to have been put in her place today, now it might be time to do the same to Weasley. He knew Harry wouldn’t mind now, especially since he’d seen how his ‘best’ friends had now turned on him simply for having to study with Draco.

Something told him he was going to need Snape this afternoon. The note said Weasley had ganged up on Harry. It made him wonder if maybe he’d gotten beaten up or was simply pissed off at being confronted again… Making the decision, he finished his food, managed to put some in his pocket for Harry and waited for lunch to be done. He managed to catch Snape’s eye while he waited and as soon as he was able to, he made his way over to his godfather.

“Seems Weasley and a few of the other boys did something to Potter either before or after class. He’s in the library. I was hoping you could come with me just in case he needs more help than I can provide,” he said softly so they wouldn’t be overheard.

“Mm,” Snape hummed softly, frowning darkly. “Things would’ve been so much simpler if he’d been placed elsewhere, both in his first year and when his parents died.” With a sigh, he gestured for Draco to lead the way.

* * *
At first, they didn’t think Harry was in the room at all, the low lighting hiding him efficiently… of course the shelf helped as well. But they found him asleep on one of the window sills. Draco frowned as he looked at him, knowing there was something wrong but unable to say what it was.

Snape stopped him from going to him, however, shaking his head minutely. “Wait,” was all he was told when he looked up at his godfather. Draco watched as the Potions master pulled out his wand and waved it at Harry.

Snape cursed angrily at whatever was revealed and moved quickly over to the sleeping teen. With a quickly cast Lightening spell, Harry was moved over to the couch revealing the busted lip, the bruised jaw… and those were just the injuries Draco could see. What else had the three boys done to Harry?

“He has some bruised ribs and kidneys,” Snape told him angrily as if he’d heard Draco. “Sleeping as he was might’ve aggravated the ribs if he’d stayed there. Wake him up, Draco.”

As the professor stepped back, Draco moved closer to the couch. “Harry,” he said gently, shaking the other teen’s shoulder. It didn’t take him long to wake up, thankfully.

“What’s going on?” he mumbled as he tried to sit up, hissing as it jarred his sore ribs, so he laid back down.

“Professor Snape moved you to the couch so it wouldn’t aggravate your ribs. What happened, Harry?” he asked with a frown.

“Ron managed to talk a few of the guys into… protesting my new friendship with you. They were quite forceful in making their point,” Harry said with a grimace as he forced himself to sit up. Draco helped him, careful of causing him anymore pain. “They didn’t escape without injury themselves.”

“I see we’re going to have to do something about Mr. Weasley,” Snape murmured from behind Draco, bringing Harry’s attention to him.

“I plan on talking to the whole house tonight. Maybe if I explain that I want to stop fighting with Draco they’ll understand why we’re getting along better. Ron won’t have anyone to join him then.”

“Be sure not to mention what the real reason is, Harry,” Snape cautioned as he sat down in one of the chairs so he could see both of them easier. “Everyone usually enters into a binding contract that forbids any mention of the club to non-members. We haven’t done that with you yet.”

“I promise, sir,” Harry murmured as he leaned back into the couch. “I don’t plan on telling anyone, least of all Gryffindors, what I’m doing or even the club. I doubt they’d understand, anyway.”

“Good,” Snape murmured as he swished his wand over Harry. He recognized the Healing spell from the one Pomfrey had used on him several times before. “Do you have any questions for me before I go?”

“No, sir,” Harry said with a sigh of relief. “Thank you.”

Snape nodded before leaving them alone.

“Are you hungry?”
“Not really,” Harry murmured with a dismissive shrug.

Draco had known that would be the answer so he pulled out the toasts and apple he’d brought.  “You’ll study better if your stomach has something in it.” Sighing in amusement, Harry took the food from him even as he rolled his eyes. “Yes,” he answered Harry’s unspoken question, “as your slave it is my job to make sure all your needs are seen to. Just don’t make a habit of it, though.”

Harry laughed as he called his backpack to him. “What should we begin with this time?”

* * *

“But, Harry,” Dean murmured, frowning in confusion. “We understand that you don’t want inner fighting, but what we don’t understand is why.”

“Yeah, Harry,” Seamus agree seriously… and it occurred to Harry that this was actually the first time he’d ever seen this boy be anything but happy and joking.

“It’s easy, Seamus,” he explained calmly. “Since Snape assigned Malfoy to be my tutor in Potions, he’s agreed to teach me Ancient Runes, too. He didn’t have to but he agreed. We’re both tired of fighting each other simply because I’m a Gryffindor and he’s a Slytherin. Don’t we have enough to worry about with school as it is? Do we really need to keep the rivalries alive? If so, then feel free to hate me for not encouraging it. I’m done with the fighting. I’m in my fourth year at school and intend to make this year and the next three count because I have to make a living, a good one, once this is done. And Ron, if you can’t accept that I want better grades than I have right now, then we might as well sever our friendship now and head in different directions. Because it’s clear you’d prefer to goof off than study and I don’t anymore.”

“Does that mean you’re also cutting Hermione off?” Ginny asked from where she was sitting between the twins, a strange frown on her face.

Harry wasn’t sure what it meant because she was more difficult to read than Ron was. “Hermione has already been told that I want nothing to do with her because she doesn’t want to teach me, she’d rather take over what I do. I don’t learn like that and I can’t learn when someone drones on and on about every detail. Malfoy allows me to find my own answers when I need to. Only when I ask for it does he help. Besides, with the low-handed trick she pulled today, she’s pretty much told me she doesn’t want to be friends anymore.”

“Fair enough, then,” Ginny said with a sharp nod. “Besides, no amount of learning can be done in a battle zone and that’s what this school was becoming.”

* * *

As the days progressed, Harry concentrated on learning what was being taught him, both in class and in the club. Snape was impressed with the amount he was taking in with little effort since he wasn’t sitting beside Ron and Hermione, especially in Potions. In his other classes, he managed to sit beside Neville and helped him out when the other boy had trouble with the lessons.

All in all, by the time Halloween came around, bringing with it the students for Beauxbatons and Drumstrang, Harry figured the whole of the school would be more peaceful than it had been in September. Fighting had pretty much ceased completely already… though there were the occasional altercations. Harry knew it wouldn’t just be eradicated in one night.

The houses had even begun intermixing at meal time. Harry thought it was great because the Slytherins were even being included in activities happening in the school. And it was all thanks to
Draco and Harry getting along.

The only ones who seemed out of sorts because of all the changes were Dumbledore, Hermione and Ron. Harry didn’t understand why Dumbledore wouldn’t want peace in the school, but Ron was pretty easy to figure out. It was because it had changed their friendship… and of course, he blamed it on Draco.

Since it was a Saturday, Harry was in the Room of Requirements as usual. He was sitting with the adults again, though this time he was dressed the same way as all the other masters: loose fitting pants that hugged his hips. Beside his chair, Draco knelt until he was needed.

“Something’s been bothering me about this entire master and slave thing,” Harry said before anything else could be said, frowning thoughtfully. “Does Dumbledore know what goes on in here at all? Isn’t he part of a pureblood family?”

“Yes, Harry,” Snape murmured with a slight nod, an amused glint in his eyes. “He is part of a pureblood family, but his grandfather broke the rules of the club and was refused entry when he wanted to offer up his son. Once the rules have been ignored, there is no returning to the club without extreme proof that it won’t happen again. Even Molly Weasley isn’t part of the group because of something one of her ancestors did.”

“Dumbledore was never told of the club, hence the reason he isn’t included in our group,” Remus murmured from his left.

“Are there always adults accompanying the group at school at all times?”

“As a precaution, yes,” Snape murmured with a nod. “It’s to insure that nothing happens that isn’t part of the code. Three adults at all times. Any more questions?”

Harry thought about that but shook his head with a sigh. “Not right now, anyway.”

“Then it’s time to complete the oath to the club, Harry,” Sirius murmured finally.

Harry followed Draco to a corner though he wasn’t quite sure what was going to happen. “Don’t worry,” Draco murmured as he stripped Harry and led him into the pool. Harry sighed as a sponge was dragged over his skin, cleaning him carefully. “We all had to go through this when we started at the club.”

“What do I have to expect?” Harry asked quietly. He’d realizing not long after Draco had started tutoring him that he could draw on Draco’s experience to help him out. He knew everyone would be watching him today. He just hoped he didn’t make a fool of himself.

“They’re going to begin by casting a spell around you that’ll bind you to whatever oath they ask you to make.” Draco smirked as Harry looked at him in apprehension. “Don’t worry. They’ll keep it to the club. It’s just a precaution we all have to take in order to make sure the authorities don’t catch wind of what we do and get the wrong impression. Child abuse is a serious offense. What we do here isn’t because the adults don’t touch us in any way. We receive corrections but it’s verbal, not physical.”

“Did you always want this?” he asked suddenly when Draco was in front of him.

Draco looked at him in surprise. “Are you asking if I’d been given a choice would I still want this?” he asked in confusion. Harry nodded, watching him carefully. “Yes. It gives us all a sense of purpose beyond what our families dictate. Didn’t you agree to this yourself when Severus asked you?”
“True,” Harry murmured, following Draco out of the pool. He felt pampered as Draco patted him dry with a soft towel and smirked in amusement as his pants were pulled back up his legs before he was led over to the group gathered around the adults. Harry felt his nervousness climb again.

Once inside the room, Draco dropped back, keeping two steps behind him, as he walked to stand in front of Snape.

As soon as the spell began, Harry knew something was wrong. He opened his mouth to say something but no sound emerged as the room began to dim around him…

**

While Harry was busy in the Room of Requirement, Ron and Hermione were with Dumbledore having a meeting of their own.

“And Harry hasn’t confided in either of you?” Dumbledore asked with a frown.

“No, sir,” Hermione said with a disappointed sigh. “He spends most of his free time with Malfoy. I’ve asked him a few times if he needed help or needed someone to talk to and each time he brushes me off.” She hadn’t told Dumbledore what she’d done to alienate Harry in Potions. She was too ashamed to mention it, actually.

“And he’s all but left me behind,” Ron griped, glaring angrily at the Headmaster. “Too good now that he’s hanging around Malfoy,” he spat out.

“That’s most distressing. And he’s given no explanation?” Dumbledore didn’t really care that Harry didn’t trust these two but they were his only way of controlling the brat. Just what had happened to make him lose his hold?

“None, sir,” Hermione answered when Ron simply rolled his eyes at him. “He said Professor Snape assigned Malfoy to tutor Harry in Potions. After that, Harry switched Divination for Ancient Runes. He’s actually doing better than I expected. In fact, I thought he’d ask me for help since he’d never taken that class before, but he just sits beside Malfoy and actually pays attention. What did we do wrong, Professor?”

“I don’t believe you’ve done anything wrong, Miss. Granger,” Dumbledore murmured instead of yelling at her that she was too stupid for her own good… like he really wanted to do. He still needed them, after all. “While I investigate what’s happening, I believe it might be a good idea if you both try to trick Harry into divulging what his activities are. Perhaps you could follow him and see just what he and Mr. Malfoy are doing?”

“We’ll see what we can do, sir.”

As soon as the two students were gone, Dumbledore frowned, wondering just what Harry was up to and with whom. He knew the boy was still on Hogwarts grounds because if he left, the spell he’d placed on the brat when he’d placed the boy with his relatives would’ve told him where he was.

He was distracted from his thoughts as the spell around Harry shivered. Just what was the boy doing? Whatever it was, it wouldn’t be able to break his tracking spell…

**

Harry blinked back to awareness laying on his back on a soft surface. Low voices intruded into his consciousness then. “Master Snape,” Draco said from beside him and he realized that the blonde was kneeling beside him and that he was on a mattress.
“What happened?” Harry croaked as the adults moved closer to him.

“The oath spell encountered an existing spell placed on you at some point,” Snape told him with a frown. “Whoever placed it on you, did so a long time ago. Will you allow me to look through your memories to locate when it was placed and how?”

Sirius made a sound of objection but quieted quickly when Snape glared at him. “I know,” his godfather murmured, holding his hands out in a pacifying gesture. “It has to be done. It doesn’t mean I like this.”

“What kind of spell?” Harry asked, looking between them in confusion.

“We’re not quite sure but it needs to be investigated further,” Snape told him bluntly. His tone actually reassured Harry more than anything else could have. “I’ll have to stupefy you so you don’t fight me as I search.”

“Do it.”

* * *

When he resurfaced this time, his head felt like it was splitting in two. He kept his eyes closed as he took stock of himself. He was surprised when a hand touched his chest, jerking slightly at the unexpected touch.

“Master Snape,” Draco murmured from beside him. It made him wonder just how long the blonde had been kneeling beside him. “He’s awake.”

“Remain still, Mr. Potter,” Snape told him unnecessarily as Harry squinted up at him tiredly. He had no intention of moving until his head settled down… just like keeping his eyes open was doing so he closed them. “It would seem that whatever interfered with our oath ritual is linked to the Headmaster and your scar. We’re discussing how to deal with this. Slave, stay with him and make sure he doesn’t move.”

He heard the rustle of clothes as Snape walked away from him. “Here’s some water, Master,” the blonde murmured as his head was carefully brought up and a cup placed against his mouth. The title, however, told him he was still in the Room of Requirements with everyone so it couldn’t have been that long.

That was one of the rules of the club. When in this setting, Harry was the master and Draco was the slave and titles had to be used at all times.

“How long?” Harry managed to ask, wincing as it aggravated his head.

“An hour, Master,” Draco answered obediently, meaning the adults weren’t far away or Draco would’ve answered differently. “The Oath Ritual hasn’t been done yet, Harry,” the blonde whispered softly so no one would hear them. “They need to get rid of the other spell first. From what I understand, it might be painful.”

“Great,” Harry muttered as he shifted into a more comfortable position, groaning as pain flared in his head.

“Hold still, Master.”

Right. No moving, no pain. He could understand that… but why the pain in the first place? Oh, yes… Occlumency. Right. He remembered reading somewhere that it was an invasion of the
mind. If fought against, it was painful… but he hadn’t fought it, right?

“Harry,” Sirius murmured, bringing him back to his surroundings. “We’re going to move you into a different room so Severus can work on the spell placed on you. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” he whispered not even bothering to look at his godfather. He bit back the groan of pain as he was picked up, breathing through his nose so he wouldn’t be sick.

“You will sit by the wall and remain silent, Slave,” he heard Snape order Draco as he was settled onto the floor. “It will be your job to provide water to your master when instructed.”

“Yes, Master,” Draco murmured from somewhere above his head.

“Good, then let’s begin,” he heard Lucius murmur as the door was closed. It was all the warning he got before he gasped in pain as his body bloomed with pain, feeling as if he’d been hit by a live wire.

Harry groaned, frowning in confusion. His entire body ached fiercely, as if he’d been run over by the Knight Bus or something. What had happened? Where was he? “Finally awake, are we?” he heard someone drawl from somewhere to his left.

He forcefully pried his eyes open to look at the man standing there with a smirk on his face. He felt he should know who this tall blonde man was, but his mind wouldn’t focus enough for him to place the face. “What’s going on?” he forced out of his sore throat. “Where am I?”

“You’re still at Hogwarts, Mr. Potter,” the blonde mocked, wand in his hand but aimed at the floor. His memory seemed to be slow in surfacing… but he finally managed to place the man standing there. Lucius Malfoy. “We need to make sure you’re perfectly safe before we can continue.”

“If you’re quite done playing with the boy,” another man said gruffly from the shadows. Squinting in the direction, he could just make out the silhouette of him but that was it. “The testing must commence again.”

“Are you sure the old fool even placed a tracking spell on him, Severus?” Lucius asked with a smirk. “As much as I enjoy torturing the boy, I’m sure his slave would rather have him with his mind intact.”

Tracking spell? Slave?

Everything came back to him then. Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape were trying to take off the spell Dumbledore had placed on him. Why? He wasn’t quite sure what was going through the old man’s head but Dumbledore wasn’t to be trusted. They had to make sure he couldn’t be followed when he left during the holidays. Or when he took his oath to the club.

He jerked in surprise as a glass of water was produced by Draco and he took a few sips, not wanting to fill himself in case he was sick again. Each time, Snape had cleaned up the mess and Harry was pretty sure he had nothing left to throw up… Then Draco was gone again.

He didn’t hear the spell cast at him but his body began to convulse with pain, feeling as if his nerve endings had been set on fire. The Cruciatus curse by itself was painful, but when paired with another, like Legilimency, it was even worse because he couldn’t keep his magic from fighting back, to keep them out of his head… which was the point.

It seemed like forever before both spells were lifted and he groaned and panted, body twitching in pain. The reprieve was short lived as his body began convulsing again. He lost track of time as
they cast the spells on him repeatedly. By the time they stopped, he couldn’t even scream anymore, his voice gone for the moment.

“It’s done,” Severus murmured finally. “The tracking spell is no more. We’ll allow him to regain his strength before moving him. His head has to be hurting now that the scar is finally gone.”

Harry felt someone lift his head and a potion was poured into his mouth. He swallowed instinctively. The effects were nearly instantaneous. The pain melted away, his throat no longer felt as if it were on fire and his nerves settled immediately.

He drank down the next three potions pressed against his lips, not caring what they were. He was too tired and sore right now to not accept the relief they provided.

He gagged slightly on the last one, feeling a bitter film coating his mouth and throat. “Rest for a little,” Severus murmured as he was lowered to the floor again. It wasn’t like he could do much more, he realized as his body suddenly felt heavy and lethargic. Just what had he been given?

* * *

He floated to the surface some time later, feeling better than before, his body resting on a soft surface once more. His body wasn’t even sore anymore! He could feel the heat of someone’s body beside his hip and knew instinctively that it was Draco.

So they were still in the Room of Requirement, then…

“Time to rise, Harry,” he heard the Potions master order softly as he came to stand beside Harry, the snap of the cloak telling him who it was.

He blinked up at him, feeling refreshed in a way he hadn’t felt for a long time, felt more in control of himself… it was a novel experience! Even his head was clear, not feeling weighed down. Reaching up, he realized that the scar was gone. “What happened to the scar?”

“It would seem that the scar was Dumbledore’s link to you. Through it, he could keep tabs on where you were and what your moods were.”

“Wait,” Harry said as he sat up on the bed, frowning in confusion. “I thought the scar was given to me by Voldemort.”

“Voldemort?” Snape questioned with a raised eyebrow. “He died twenty years or so ago when a spell he was working on backfired. Who told you your scar was from him?”

“Dumbledore. He said it was given to me the same day he killed my parents,” Harry said as he stood up, surprised when the room didn’t even sway… he’d actually expected it to. “If he died fifteen years ago, then that would mean that he was dead before I was born. Why would Dumbledore lie about who killed my parents?”

“Harry,” Sirius said cautiously, frowning at him. “Your parents’ deaths were never solved. No one knows what happened to them. All we know is that you were found in your crib with a cut on your forehead. Then Dumbledore whisked you away before anyone could question what had happened. I thought you knew this.”

“If that’s true, then why is Dumbledore going around telling everyone that Voldemort killed them?” Harry asked in confusion. “He told Hagrid that he broke into the house and killed them before he tried to kill me, that my mother’s love protected me from the killing curse. Why lie about that?”
“Because Hagrid wouldn’t know to question the old man,” Remus murmured thoughtfully. “After all, the half-giant thinks Dumbledore is the greatest because he saved him from getting thrown out into the world without a job when he was expelled for keeping dangerous animals in the school.”

“Then what was the diary that I fought in second year?” Harry asked in confusion. “The back of it said Tom Marvolo Riddle. He told me he was Voldemort.”

“No, Harry,” Lucius murmured as they moved over to the table. “Tom Riddle was a student who vanished not long after he graduated. Voldemort was younger than him. In fact, Riddle would’ve been as old as Dumbledore, had he lived.”

“I’m confused,” Harry said with a sigh.

“Let’s get through the ritual oath before we get into anything else,” Snape murmured, rubbing at his head as if he had a headache. “Eat something first, then we’ll try it again.”

* * *

By the time Harry entered the common room, he was content that everything was going as predicted. The ritual had been completed shortly after two and now he was safe. Once the oath had been taken, the rest of the masters and slaves had welcomed him willingly.

He entered with Fred, George and Neville, laughing and joking easily. He didn’t even look over at Hermione and Ron who were sitting on the couch. He was so over the fact that Ron was out of sorts with him that he was determined to ignore his two former friends.

Upstairs, the four of them sat on Harry’s bed, a Silencing charm protecting them from being overheard. “You know this means that your real training is going to begin now, right?” Fred said with a grin.

“What are you guys, anyway?” Harry asked curiously.

“Oh, we’re both slaves,” Fred answered with a smirk.

“Yeah,” George added with a shrug. “It’s only because Bill and Charlie were the only ones who were supposed to be added to the club. Bill’s the one who got us in.”

“How old were you when you started this?”

“We kind of walked in on Bill and his slave when we were six,” George said with a grin. “When he saw we were interested, he spoke to our father. He and Charlie were given the go-ahead to start training us that same summer. We took the oath not long after.”

“And your mother has no clue this happens?” Harry asked with a frown.

“Nope,” Fred said proudly just as Ron entered the room. “Oh, look,” he murmured mockingly. “It’s Mr. Jealous.” George snickered, secure in the fact that they couldn’t be heard.

“So what are we doing tomorrow?” Neville asked curiously.

“Well,” Harry said with a rueful smirk as the others snickered at him, “Draco’s agreed to teach me more in Potions, so I guess I’ll be in the Potion classroom tomorrow morning, then we’re going to work on some assignments that I missed in Ancient Runes. Professor Babbling gave him a list of what needs to be complete in order for me to be up to date.”

“You and Draco are getting along better than I expected,” Fred said with a frown.
“Yeah, Harry,” George teased. “One would almost say you have a crush on him or something.”

“Actually, it’s the fact that we’re making an effort to be nice to each other,” Harry said haughtily. The others looked at him in shock before dissolving into gales of laughter, earning a glare from Ron.

“That’s a good one!” Fred gasped, tears running down his cheeks.

“Malfoy!” George wheezed out, clutching at his ribs. “Nice!”

“You have to admit, Harry,” Neville said, trying to control himself with an effort. “Malfoy isn’t exactly what you’d call nice.”

“Alright, so I chose the wrong word to describe him,” Harry grumbled, despite the fact that his lips were twitching in amusement. “The point is that we’re making an effort to be more civil towards each other. There’s still times where I catch myself wanting to hex him but I stop myself in time. I’m sure he has the same sentiments once in a while.”

“I think it’s time we all turned in,” Neville said a little nervously as he looked over Fred’s shoulder.

With a snort, Fred canceled the Silencing spell. “What’s wrong, Ronnikin, jealous of the fact that Harry doesn’t need you to live?” he teased in a slightly malicious tone.

“Piss off,” Ron growled as he yanked his blankets down before he climbed into his bed.

George snickered as he followed his twin out of the room. “Sleep tight, Ronald,” he called out in a sing-song tone. “Don’t let the spiders bite!” The twins laughed as a pillow was tossed at them, hitting the door as it closed behind them.

Not wanting to deal with the red-head, Harry closed the curtains on his side before getting ready for bed.

That night, Harry dreamt of a body writhing under his, hearing gasps and moans of pleasure. When he woke up, he cursed as he realized his lower body was hard from the dream. Taking his wand out, he cast a Silencing spell on his curtains so he wouldn’t disturb the other boys snoring away. With a groan, he stroked himself through his pyjama, enjoying the feel of frustration.

He thought of Draco and how it would feel to bring him pleasure like he was doing to himself. He wondered how it would feel to have the blonde’s lips surround his hard length… the mere thought had him choking back a cry as he came hard.

He couldn’t wait to try this out with Draco when it was the appropriate time…

* * *

Monday, October 31, 1994

Halloween.

Harry had forgotten how much he hated this day. It didn’t matter that students from two schools were at Hogwarts, it still sucked. It began with the Goblet of Fire being revealed the night before and went downhill from there.

At first, he’d been thrilled that there would be new students at the school, someone who didn’t know him. Then Ron got into it.
At least the Drumstrang students thought the red head was a buffoon and the Beauxbatons students turned their noses up at him.

All day, Ron picked at him, but he wasn’t getting the reaction he wanted. Instead of getting mad, Harry avoided him and spent more time with the Slytherins. It at least kept the teen away from him.

Then Halloween night, everyone was waiting impatiently for the name drawing to take place. This was the first time since Harry was told about the club that no one was in the Room of Requirements. They were told by the adults that everyone was expected to attend the drawing.

He was happy to see everyone sitting together, houses mixed still. He could also see the disgust in Dumbledore’s eyes, especially when they rested on him. Knowing what he did now, it didn’t really surprise him because the Slytherins had been the one house the Headmaster had always tried to prejudice him against… but not anymore.

At the moment, he was sitting with Draco and his friends. Even Neville and the twins were sitting with them. Funny enough, Luna and Ginny had joined them as well, Ginny and Blaise seeming to have hit it off fairly quickly.

He clapped along with everyone else as Fleur Delacour and Viktor Krum were nominated as champions for the games, laughing along with Draco at the look on Ron’s face when Krum walked past him. The look of awe on the red-head’s face was too good not to make fun of.

The Hogwarts champion was next!

And the Goblet of Fire turned red once more; sparks showered out of it; the tongue of flame shot high into the air, and from its tip Dumbledore caught the third piece of parchment. “The Hogwarts champion is…” he called out loudly, “Cedric Diggory!”

The uproar from the Hufflepuff table was too great. Every single one of them had jumped to his or her feet, screaming and stamping, as Cedric made his way past them, grinning broadly, and headed off toward the chamber behind the teachers' table. Indeed, the applause for Cedric went on so long that it was some time before the Headmaster could make himself heard again.

“Excellent!” Dumbledore called happily as at last the clamour died down. “Well, we now have our three champions. I’m sure I can count upon all of you, including the remaining students from Beauxbatons and Drumstrang, to give your champions every ounce of support you can muster. By cheering your champion on, you’ll contribute in a very real -”

But Dumbledore suddenly stopped speaking as some of the teachers stared over his shoulder, two of them actually walking down the steps, the confusion clear on their faces. The Potions master was one of them and it was apparent to everybody what had distracted them. The Headmaster whipped around to look at the goblet. The fire in it had just turned red again. Sparks were flying out of it. A long flame shot suddenly into the air, and borne upon it was another piece of parchment.

Automatically, it seemed, Dumbledore reached out and seized the parchment. He held it out and stared at the name written upon it. There was a long pause, during which Dumbledore stared at the slip in his hands, and everyone in the room stared at Dumbledore before he cleared his throat and read out…

“Harry Potter.”

There was no applause.
A buzzing, as though angry bees had made their way into the Great Hall, was starting to fill the Hall; some students were standing up to get a better look at Harry as he sat beside Draco, stunned, unable to move. It wasn’t possible!

Up at the top table, Karkaroff began to sputter angrily. Madame Maxime’s mouth opened and closed, unable to produce sound, she was so stunned.

Harry turned to give Draco a panicked look, shaking his head. “How?”

At the top table, Dumbledore had straightened up, looking through the crowd for Harry.

“How Potter!” he called again, clearly angry but trying to hide it. “Harry! Up here, if you please!”

Harry stood up, his knees shaking in reaction and set off up the gap between the Slytherin and Ravenclaw tables. You could feel the shift in the mood of everyone in the room. It wasn’t good. There had been sympathy in Draco’s eyes… but the hundreds and hundreds of eyes upon him were angry and betrayed. The buzzing grew louder and louder, until you could hear words like ‘cheater’, ‘he’s underage’ and ‘get away with it’.

It wasn’t until he was closer to Dumbledore that something happened. Lucius Malfoy stepped between them, facing the Headmaster. “I stand as witness that Harry Potter did not put his name in the Goblet of Fire, thus making his name void as champion,” the tall aristocrat said clearly. Harry hadn’t even realized the man was even in the room.

“None the less,” Dumbledore said, holding out the piece of paper for Harry to take. Something told him not to touch it, however so he simply shook his head. “The Goblet is a binding contract and it has chosen him as one.”

“Admit it, Headmaster,” Lucius drawled mockingly. “You want him in the tournament simply because it would mean you have to redraw the names, meaning the Goblet will be accessible for another day. Mr. Potter will not be accepting his name from you because someone else confused the Goblet into allowing for four names to be drawn when there are only three schools.”

Instinctively, Harry moved closer to Lucius, shoving his hands into his pockets so Dumbledore couldn’t force the piece of paper on him. Even Snape came to stand beside them. “A redraw of the names is in order, wouldn’t you say, Mr. Crouch?”

“It is indeed. This time, there will be a guard posted inside the room at all times.” The stern man nodded to someone behind him and the man left to recall the other champions into the room. “Seeing as there has been tampering with the Goblet of Fire, we will be having a redraw of the names of the Champions. The names will be chosen tomorrow night at the same time.”

Harry’s legs felt weak with relief as he closed his eyes in relief. “Thank Merlin,” he whispered softly.

“And to make sure Mr. Potter isn’t putting his name into the cup,” Crouch said, glaring at Harry. “I will be placing a guard with him at all times until after the drawing.”

“No need for a guard, Mr. Crouch,” Lucius murmured with a sly smile. “I’m going to make this my business to keep an eye on Mr. Potter. I’m sure the Headmaster can see to it that I have adequate lodgings for the night with an extra room for the student in question.”

Harry couldn’t believe his ears. Lucius Malfoy was going to get him out of Gryffindor tower for the night? That would be great. It would mean he wouldn’t have to deal with Ron tonight and
maybe get some more information on the club.

“That would be agreeable, Lord Malfoy,” Crouch said with a decisive nod, giving Dumbledore a look that said it would be done. If Harry hadn’t looked up, he probably would’ve missed the dark look the Headmaster shot at him and Lucius before it was gone.

_Things not going your way, old man?_ he thought to himself, controlling himself from displaying his glee at Dumbledore having been thwarted. He didn’t know what he’d had planned for Harry. Maybe an… unforeseen accident? Maybe death?

He hoped he wouldn’t find out.
Names Redrawn

Chapter 3 – Names Redrawn

“I’m going to use this opportunity to teach you more tonight,” Lucius murmured as he, Harry and Snape sat in the living room of the rooms Lucius had been given for the night. Even Draco was there… Harry figured it was because he was Harry’s slave or something.

“I have a question before we start, sir,” Harry murmured with a slight frown.

“And that would be?”

“Well, I understand the concept behind the master and slave thing, but just how does it work?” he asked curiously.

“That’s what we’ll discuss tonight. As a master, it’s your job to keep your slave in line. As your relationship with Draco evolves into the next stage, you’ll use sex as a way to reward or punish him depending on his attitude and behaviour.”

“And that part starts this summer?” Harry asked, trying not to show how much he was looking forward to that part.

“At some point this summer, yes,” Snape murmured with an amused look on his face, as if he knew what Harry was thinking of. “However, you have a long way to go before you’re at that point.”

“I wonder, Severus,” Lucius murmured thoughtfully. “Perhaps we should bring Harry and Draco with us Friday night. It would show him what will be expected of him and what the younglings go through before they begin Hogwarts.”

“And what’s expected of him afterwards as well,” the Potions master added with a nod. “It would make things simpler, for sure. I brought the treatment we put the adults through, though I doubt he’ll require the whole of it.”

“Treatment?” Harry asked, feeling apprehensive. It didn’t exactly sound good that was for sure.

“Is there anything I need to do?” Draco asked curiously.

“Your job tonight will be to keep an eye on your master in case he needs anything.”

“Excuse me, but… treatment?” Harry repeated nervously, eyebrows high on his forehead.

“Don’t worry, Harry,” Lucius said with a smirk. “It’s not as bad as it sounds. We simply have a way of giving new members the memories of someone who’s been through the training from age four. It’s the best way to get an adult to relive this lifestyle as if they’d always been in it. Seeing as you’re not that old, we can bypass the sexual part.”

“Though, I think we should use those of a master’s instead of a slave’s,” Snape said thoughtfully. “Since he’s not a true beginner.”

“Agreed. We’ll do this in your room,” Lucius murmured, gesturing towards the second, smaller bedroom, the one Harry would sleep in. A cot had been added after the two men had decided
Draco would remain on hand to take care of Harry.

Draco helped him change into more comfortable clothes, doing his duty as a slave. Harry wondered if it was just the setting that was the reason behind him helping or if it was expected of him. Harry still wasn’t used to being undressed in front of adults… his dorm mates, sure, but not those he would call ‘strangers’. Lucius and Snape definitely didn’t fit the criteria of ‘friends’ either.

Still not sure what to expect, Harry followed Snape into the bedroom once he was redressed, feeling unusually nervous, and forced himself to relax when he was directed to lay down on the bed.

“The way this works is that we put you to sleep, and yes, it has to be done this way,” Snape told him when he looked up at him questioningly. “Once you’re asleep, we introduce the memory as dreams. You’ll go through the whole training as if you had actually done it, but in a few short hours. Close your eyes.”

Sighing in resignation, knowing this would help him, he did as instructed…

**

Draco watched as Snape hit Harry with a Stunner, not knowing what to expect. They were told that the older, newer slaves were educated this way, but he’d never seen it done before. Another spell was cast, coming out as a ball of water that rested on Harry’s forehead. Once that one was in place, Snape placed something inside the ball.

He heard Harry sigh softly as Snape tapped the ball with his wand.

Though Draco couldn’t see what was playing, he knew Harry was living the memories as if it were his own. By the time he woke up in the morning, the memories would have merged with his own and he’d have a better understanding of what was expected of him.

He was kneeling beside a chair, listening attentively to what the man sitting beside him was telling him.

“A master’s responsibilities don’t revolve just around what they want,” the man said as he carded his fingers in his hair. “It means you’re responsible for someone else’s welfare, not just your own. When you acquire your slave, I want you to be honourable and respectful. Just because you have power over this person, it doesn’t mean you can abuse that power. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“Yes, Father,” he said softly, taking in what he was told. He wanted to make this man proud of him by doing his duty well.

**

Draco watched Harry sleep. He’d never seen him so still before. He took the opportunity to really look at him. He’d seen the scars on Harry’s back the day of the Oath taking but hadn’t asked questions. Where had he gotten them? What could Harry have done that would warrant a beating that left scars behind?

He realized now that he didn’t know as much about this boy as he’d thought he did. That would change when the holidays hit. It would be the opportunity they needed to get to know each other better. That was what the other masters were doing with their own slaves when they met in the Room of Requirements… but they at least knew something of the person they were to be linked to. Harry was coming into this new.
He would bide his time and learn what he needed as they went along. There was no other way to do it since Harry was coming into this so late…

Sighing softly so he wouldn’t disturb Harry’s training, he went back to the book he was reading. He needed to re-read his potions books so he could get Harry to redo the assignments they’d done in the earlier years. That would tell him better how much he needed to relearn.

He was brought out of the book when Harry made a slight sound of distress. He quickly went in search of the two men. Something was wrong.

* * *

Snape scowled as he taped the ball on Harry’s forehead with his wand, pausing the teaching aspect of the memory, casting another spell that would reveal what was going on in the memory. He was horrified and angry at what he saw. “Who’s memory did we use, Lucius?” he asked as he turned to look at the elder Malfoy.

“Jonathan Luxor, I believe is who I went with. Why?” Lucius asked with a frown.

“Take a look.”

He moved back to allow the other man to look at the memory that was still playing. “I see we’re going to have to teach his father a lesson,” Lucius murmured angrily.

It was one thing to play rough games with your own slave or master, but quite another to do the same thing to a child. The whole of the memory showed that this had been going on for quite a few years… “I’m going to block out those parts for Harry so that he can continue the training,” Snape murmured as he aimed his wand at the ball again, watching as certain parts were darkened so that they wouldn’t play before tapping the ball.

“Come get us if something like this happens again, Draco,” Lucius said, a hand on his son’s shoulder. “It’s good that you acted quickly. We don’t want him to believe that this is the normal procedure of the training you go through.”

“What’ll happen to Jonathan, Father?” Draco asked curiously.

The boy whose memory they had used had just started his second year. They couldn’t in good conscious allow the boy to go back to his father’s house… especially after they barred him from the club for life. It wasn’t fair to the child, who would only get the brunt end of the punishment from his father.

“His mother still lives so if I bring to this to the attention of the Aurors, once we’re done with him, of course, they’ll make sure he spends time in Azkaban for assaulting his own child,” Lucius murmured thoughtfully. “But how do we bring this to their attention without giving ourselves up at the same time?”

“I can take care of that myself,” Snape murmured as they moved into the living room. “I can say that one of the other students noticed something wrong and when I questioned the boy, he broke down and told me everything. Give me a couple of days to set everything up before you bring this up to the authorities.”

“Of course,” Lucius agreed, turning to look at Draco. “Don’t say anything about this to anyone, Draco. We don’t want this getting back to his father.”

“Of course, Father. I’ll go back to watch Harry.”
Harry was tired but he had a better understanding of what was expected of him now. It was a lot to take in and he still found himself zoning out for a few minutes at a time, but it had been worth it… he hoped.

“Hey, Harry,” Neville greeted him when they came into the Great Hall at the same time. “How was your night?”

“It was… informative,” Harry said with a twisted smile.

“Informative?” He watched as his friend blinked at him in slight confusion, stopping two paces inside the room, before he realized what Harry meant. “Ohhh.”

“Yeah, Lord Malfoy kept a good eye on me,” he said as they watched other students sit down to eat. “I’m sure even Dumbledore will be satisfied that I didn’t put my name in the cup.”

“Plotting how to put your name in the cup again?” Ron sneered as he hit into him from behind. “After all, can’t allow anyone else to get center stage, now can you?”

“Piss off, Weasley,” Crabbe growled from behind the red-head and shoved him to move him on his way. “Come on, Potter, time for breakfast. You, too, Longbottom.”

Shrugging to each other, they followed the burly student over to the Slytherin table. When Harry looked up at the head table, he realized Lucius was sitting beside Snape. “I was told by my father that you’re to have someone with you at all times, Potter,” Draco murmured as he slid into the seat beside him. “Better for you, just in case your name comes out of the cup, again. They can’t say you didn’t have any witnesses that you didn’t do it.”

“You’d think the guards they have in the room would be enough for that, but who am I to argue,” Harry said with a smirk and a shrug. “Besides, our first class is History of Magic, so we’ll be in the same class anyway.”

“It’s too bad we don’t have a more stimulating teacher in that class, but Binns’ inattention will work in our favour,” Draco murmured as he handed Harry a book written in ancient runes. “Professor Babbling wants you to translate pages seven, twenty-three and one hundred and ninety-four. That was some of the assignments last year.”

“Alright. Since Binns seems intent on only teaching us about the Goblin wars, this should be an easy thing to do.” Putting the book in his bag, Harry turned back to his breakfast.

Crouch stood up as breakfast was wrapping up, gaining everyone’s attention with the move. “We have come to the decision that the drawing of the champion names will be done at noon,” the severe man told everyone in his no non-sense tone. ”Please make sure you’re here on time if your name has been entered for the tournament. Thank you.”

That started the buzz going through the students as they began gathering their books. Soon, they were walking towards the classroom, the group of Slytherin students keeping both Harry and Neville in the center of the group. They were joined by the Drumstrang students. Harry was a little uncomfortable around them right now because they all seemed to be watching him, frowning in confusion.

“Is there something wrong?” he asked the one closest to him.
“Ve vere vondering vhy you vould place your name in the cup if you never intended to play the game.”

“But I never put my name in the cup,” Harry said, tired of defending himself. “As a matter of fact, I have witnesses that can tell you I never went near the cup, but it’s a moot point now. I had adult supervision last night and the Slytherin students are to act as my guards for the day until the drawing at noon. There should be no further disruptions to the games.”

“Ve Vill see,” the Bulgarian student murmured with a shrug and walked away from them.

Harry wanted to sigh in exasperation but knew it would do no good to protest. No one was going to believe him. He resigned himself to it, wondering if Ron was the reason behind no one believing him right now. They would see, however, when his name didn’t come out of the cup… but maybe he should hope it did because then it would prove that he hadn’t put his name in the cup.

He shook his head as it began to throb slightly. He would talk to Snape when he went to Potions in the next class. Maybe they could figure something out.

“What’s wrong?” Draco asked softly as they slid into their seats. Harry was glad that the blond would sit with him in case he had any questions about his translations. He’d noticed that since the scar and tracking spell had been removed, he was picking things up faster and understood easier. There was no struggling in learning new things.

“Just a headache but I need to talk to Professor Snape before potion class starts. I just thought of something important,” Harry whispered, spying Ron and Hermione coming into the room. The red-head glared in his direction before plunking himself into his seat beside the girl.

“Why?” the blonde teen asked him in curiosity. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m beginning to think that maybe we should hope someone puts my name in the cup again because otherwise everyone’s going to think I did put it in in the first place,” Harry whispered as he pulled Draco’s book out of his bag along with a sheet of paper and ink and quill. “Something’s going on here. More than we realize. Why put my name in the cup in the first place? There’s no logical reason.”

“You’re right,” Draco murmured with a frown. “We need to talk to Severus and my father. They might know what to do about this.”

* * *

By the time the class let out, Harry had already finished his assignments from Ancient Runes and was now reading the book on Wizarding history Lucius had given him that morning. It was actually eye opening and more interesting than listening to Binns drone on in a monotonous tone.

As soon as the bell rang, Harry shoved his book into his bag and was on his feet. “Let’s go. Maybe we can get there before anyone else.”

Crabbe and Goyle fell into step with them as they headed towards the door.

“Harry,” Hermione said in a determined tone. “We need to talk. Privately,” she said as she glanced at the three Slytherin students.

“No, Hermione,” he said as he tried to push past her, but she stood her ground. “There’s somewhere I have to be.”
“And where’s that?” Ron growled out, glaring at them. “Back to Malfoy senior?” he sneered.

“That’s none of your business, now please, move out of the way.” He sighed in exasperation when they didn’t move. He opened his mouth to say something but Crabbe and Goyle pushed past him and bodily shoved the two Gryffindor students out of the way. “Thanks, guys.”

“No problem, Potter,” Goyle grunted, waiting until Harry and Draco had moved past them before letting the two students go, following behind them. They made it to the classroom before anyone else, which was a relief, really.

Snape was frowning by the time Harry was done explaining what he’d thought of that morning. “I see what you mean but right now, we need to deal with what’s in front of us. Class is more important at the moment. We’ll deal with the tournament later. Return to your desk, Mr. Potter.”

“Yes, sir.” Biting back a sigh, Harry went to join Draco, waiting for the rest of the class to finish trickling in.

As Ron passed their table, he shoved Harry into Draco, glaring at him when Harry looked back at him in exasperation. “We’ll get our answers eventually, Potter,” the red-head growled out.

“Mr. Weasley, fifty points from Gryffindor for disrupting class. To your desk without further comment,” Snape snapped out as he stood at the front of the classroom, impatiently waiting for the students to settle down.

“Instructions are on the board. Results will be tested at the end of class. Begin,” Snape told them when the students had settled down. It took a little while for him to get his mind to stay on his task but eventually he managed to relax enough to concentrate on his potion.

Since the day Hermione had tossed something into his cauldron, Harry had come across a type of repelling spell and now used it to stop anyone from dumpling anything into his potions but himself and Draco… it was a good thing because something seemed to bounce off the shield… and right back in the direction it had come from.

Ron’s and Nott’s cauldron suddenly blew up.

“Mr. Weasley, it seems your incompetence knows no bounds. Clean your station up immediately. You will write out a three foot essay on every ingredient used today and their use in the potion,” Professor Snape growled out as he stood beside their desk. “Mr. Nott, you will redo your potion so your marks will not suffer for Mr. Weasley’s lack of intelligence.”

Ron’s face turned red in anger but he bit his tongue, knowing if he said anything it would only make everything worse. At least points weren’t taken off Gryffindor.

Finally, the end of the class produced completed potions from those remaining, which ended up on Snape’s desk. As Snape had said, three potions were tested at random, thankfully no one was poisoned by the results before students exited the room. “Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy remain behind,” Snape instructed before they could finish packing up their bags.

When everyone was gone, they moved down to join the Potions master at the front of the class. “Professor?” Harry asked politely.

“I think it best if you’re in the presence of an adult at the moment, Mr. Potter,” Snape murmured with a slight smirk. “Lucius should be here any second and wants to escort you to the Great Hall so people will know that you haven’t been left alone on your free time.”

“Precisely,” Lucius drawled from the doorway. “Are you ready, Harry?” he asked with a raised eyebrow.
“Yes, sir. Are they doing the name drawing before or after lunch?”

“I believe it’s to be done before lunch,” Lucius murmured as they moved to join the blonde man at the door.

“I believe Harry had an interesting observation earlier,” Snape murmured as they headed down the hallway. “Since his name was drawn last night, won’t it look like he put his name in the cup if it doesn’t come out today?”

Lucius frowned as he mulled that over. “It would make things slightly problematic, wouldn’t it? We’ll see what happens when the names come out. I already thought about this problem last night and steps have already been taken about discovering if the Cup was tampered with.”

“Who would’ve ever thought such a simple tournament would become as big of a problem as it turned out to be,” Harry grumbled darkly. “What happens if they say I managed to sneak away from my appointed guardians?”

“Let me worry about that,” Lucius murmured with a slight gleam in his eyes.

“Father always has a backup plan when he’s got a vested interest in the outcome,” Draco murmured softly so that only Harry would hear him. Harry refrained from asking questions about it as they neared the crowded Great Hall, making his way over to the Slytherin table.

“We will talk more about this tomorrow,” Lucius murmured as he left the two students to join the teachers at the Head Table.

Harry sighed as he joined the Slytherins, not really looking forward to this in the least. He couldn’t wait for this to be over with so he could concentrate on his classes and what he needed to learn for the group.

As had happened the previous night, Viktor Krum, Fleur Delacour and Cedric Diggory were named as champions, proving that the Cup hadn’t changed its choices in the hours since the last choosing… and as before, Harry’s name was spit out.

Harry thumped his head on the table in exasperation…

* * *

“I insist the name be ignored,” Lucius drawled from beside the judges and Dumbledore. “Mr. Potter has had someone observing him since supper last night and has not once gone near the Cup.”

“Then how do you explain his name?” Crouch demanded stiffly. “This is the second time the Cup has given his name as Champion.”

“Pardon the interruption, sirs,” a man with a thick Scottish accent said as he came to stand between Lucius and Dumbledore. “But, I managed to cast diagnostic spells on the Cup last night and though it’s a magical item, there’s a clear indication that it’s been tampered with.”

“How can you tell?” Crouch demanded curtly. “Are you an expert on these matters?”

“In point of fact, sir, yes, I am,” the stranger murmured, standing straighter. “Lionel Dunkirk, sir. I work for the Minister for Magic in America. Mr. Malfoy contacted me last night and asked if I could come here and check it out. Said something hinky was happening with the Goblet of Fire. Seeing as I’d never seen it before and fancied a looksee, I made the trip easily enough and spent
the night checking it out.”

“Can you tell who tampered with it?” Dumbledore asked with a frown.

“No, just that it’s been done in the last forty-eight hours,” Lionel said with a shake of his head. “Since it hasn’t been fixed, the Cup will continue to spit out four names because of it. Once this tournament is over with, it should return to normal on its lonesome.”

“Then that means that the fourth name must be ignored,” Crouch said with a swift nod of his head. “Potter is disqualified since there’s already a Hogwarts Champion chosen.”

“Are you sure, Barty?” Dumbledore asked questioningly. Lucius thought he saw something in the old man’s eyes but he couldn’t be sure. “After all, someone went to a lot of trouble to confuse the Cup into giving out four names. This might be how we find out who did it and why.”

“No, the decision has been made,” Crouch said decisively, moving up to gain everyone’s attention. “Seeing as there was clear tampering done to the Goblet of Fire by some unknown person, Mr. Potter will not be required to partake in the tournament despite his name having been drawn.”

“Who did the tampering?” someone called out from the anonymity of the group.

“Was it Potter?” someone else called out.

“Seeing as the tampering would be more than a fourth year would know, it is very unlikely that Mr. Potter is behind it. The Champions for the tri-wizard tournament are officially Viktor Krum of Drumstrang, Fleur Delacour for Beauxbatons, and Cedric Diggory for Hogwarts. The tournament will proceed as planned now that the Champions have been chosen.”

With that, Crouch turned and sat down at the table to eat. There was a lot of talking around the room as food appeared on the tables for the adults to eat, but since the verdict had been given, everyone accepted the decision.

Lucius shook Lionel’s hand and invited him to eat with them, an offer that was quickly accepted, before he looked over at the Slytherin table, smirking slightly at the relief on Harry’s face. It seemed the boy had a lot to learn about Slytherins…

* * *

“Thank goodness that’s over with,” Harry breathed in relief.

“I told you my father would fix things,” Draco smirked as he took a bite of his food. “Eat.”

With more appetite now that things were settled, Harry began to eat the food on his plate. “Are we still studying after supper tonight?” he asked the blonde teen.

“Yes, you still have four more sets of assignments to complete for Ancient Runes if you want to be caught up with everyone else.”

“Muggle studies is next and then Ancient Runes. Do I hand in the three I did this morning to Professor Babbling or to you?”

“You might as well hand it in to the Professor. I’ve already looked them over and you did well on them. Well done, Potter. You’re well on your way to being caught up with the rest of us,” Draco teased with a smirk.
“Bugger off,” Harry grumbled good-naturedly, pushing Draco slightly, earning a snicker from the blonde. “At least I’m trying. I guess this means that suppertime will be with the Gryffindor,” he sighed as he looked over at the table in question. He really wasn’t looking forward to the confrontation that was coming. It was, however, inevitable.

“There’s no reason for you to not join us whenever you want a break,” Nott told him with a dismissive shrug. That surprised Harry, though on second thought, perhaps he shouldn’t be, considering the group he was now a part of. He still had a lot to learn obviously.

“I guess I’ll have to wait and see how things turn out before I make any real decision,” he said after thinking it through.

“Fair enough,” Pansy murmured from beside the other boy, smirk firmly in place. “A very diplomatic answer.” Harry smiled at the obvious compliment as he and the group of Slytherins left the Great Hall for their next class. They were soon joined by Neville, Seamus, Dean and Ginny.

“Hey, Harry,” she murmured as he nodded to her in greeting. “Sorry for the way Ron’s acting. Some things never changes, huh?”

“I’m kind of getting used to it,” he told her with a dismissive shrug. “Maybe it’s for the best.”

“You’re sure about this, then?” she asked curiously. At first, Harry thought she was criticising him but when he looked at her, he realised she really was just curious. “About giving the Slytherins a chance, I mean.”

“Yes, Ginny,” he said with a slight smile. “What’s the point of only three quarters of the school being united? What’s the point of all the hatred, anyway? We’re all here to learn, right?”

“I guess when you put it that way, it makes sense,” she murmured with a shrug. “See you later, then,” she said with a pleasant smile as she headed to her next class.

“Who would’ve thought Weaslette could have such a level head,” Draco drawled in amusement. “I might have to revise my opinion of her if she keeps this up.”

“See, not all Gryffindor are a complete loss,” Harry joked as they neared the classroom. The Slytherins gaped at him in surprise before they began to snicker.

** * * **

_Friday, November 4, 1994_

Friday night was a godsend for Harry. It meant he could get away from Hermione’s and Ron’s incessant nagging. He hadn’t noticed before just how nosy they were until now. Why hadn’t it bothered him before?

He figured before it had been under best intentions, but now… Or maybe it had all been part of his scar? To keep him from noticing something was wrong?

Where was he going? Was he going to be with Malfoy? What were they doing? Only studying? On and on the questions went. Questions he had no intentions of – or, more to the point, couldn’t – answering for the most part.

Now, as he followed Snape to Malfoy Manor with Draco in tow, he felt the stress he’d been under just melt away. It seemed that the only time he got any peace from his supposed best friends anymore was when he was in the Room of Requirements… though the others in their house were beginning to get involved with keeping those two away from him.
That had surprised him, quite frankly.

“I’m glad you could come tonight, Harry,” Lucius murmured with an amused smile. “I’m sure you’ll find it quite informative.”

“I’m sure it will be, sir,” Harry said with a grin. “Anything to better understand what I’m supposed to do in my role from now on.”

“Well said,” the elder Malfoy murmured in approval as he held out his hand to his wife, already dressed for the club. “We’ll Floo directly to the club from here so that we can get settled in. You have what you and Draco need for tonight?”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said as he lifted his back pack.

“Good, you and Draco change before we leave,” he was instructed.

Draco nodded and led Harry into the nearest room to change. He smirked in amusement as Draco undressed him, placing his school robes on the couch, neatly folded, before pulling the clothes out of the back pack. “Will I have this to look forward to from now on?” he joked cheekily.

“Harry,” Draco began with a soft sigh. “You have to start taking this seriously or you’ll be kicked out.”

“That surprised him. “Really?”

“Yes, this is a lifestyle we chose to live,” Draco said as he pulled his own clothes off, placing them in a pile beside Harry’s. “Well, alright, that was chosen for us, but, like I told you before, I wouldn’t change this for anything. We learn more about how the world works here than we do in class. We learn that this world is give and take, that our reactions dictate how we see our world. This isn’t a joke. You’re now my master and I’m your slave. In this setting, this is my job. Every time you make jokes about what we do, how we interact with each other, makes things harder on me. It also makes me wonder if you think this is all just a hoax. This is more real to us than anything else.”

“I’m sorry,” Harry whispered contritely. “I didn’t realize I was doing that. It wasn’t my intention to make this into a joke. It’s just so new to me that I sometimes have a hard time realizing that this is really happening to me. A few weeks ago, I thought I was in a fight for my life against an unknown murderer and now I find out that everything I was ever told is a lie. Making jokes is my way of coping with all this change. I keep expecting someone to turn around and tell me this was all a mistake, that I’m just the end of a joke that everyone is in on. Or that I’ll wake up to find out that it was just a dream.”

“I guess this is a lot to take in,” Draco murmured as he finished dressing them, “but please, take this seriously because if you do this tonight, the people at the club might not understand your reasoning.”

“I promise,” Harry murmured as he took hold of Draco’s hands, forcing the blonde teen to look at him. “I’ll take this more seriously. No more jokes.”

Draco smiled and nodded before leading him back to where the adults waited for them. “Are we ready?” Lucius murmured, looking them over critically, satisfied with what he saw as both boys nodded. “Let’s go.”

Harry didn’t know what he’d expected to see at the club… maybe something more along the lines of whips and chains maybe, or of slaves being used like furniture, but it was actually quite
different from what he’d expected, more cozy, like a real gathering.

Harry was placed to one side where he could watch what was happening in the group, Draco kneeling beside him in his position as slave, leash in Harry’s hand, with Lucius sitting nearby. During the next hour, he watched as all the members arrived. He found it fascinating, really.

As people trickled in, they seemed to break into their own little groups. Everywhere he looked were younger children playing quietly with each other while they waited for things to begin. They were dressed the same way as the younger years at school, which didn’t really shock Harry anymore.

The younger years – four to six – migrated into their own little group, the ones from seven to ten were in another group, quietly watching everything that was happening around them, masks firmly in place, and the adults were milling around them, keeping a careful eye on the children. Some children were even serving the adults, just like when Harry had first been introduced to this.

He watched as Snape went up to speak to someone who looked to be in charge. The discussion was quiet but heated. Something was handed over to the other man before he and Snape parted. Harry lost track of Snape for a while but soon, he sat on the other side of him and Lucius, showing the others that Harry was there by their choice. This, he had been told, was so that the other adults didn’t demand his removal, and that he was there to learn what took place at the club.

His first clue that something was going to begin was when the children knelt beside their parent’s feet. Most of them were beside their mothers but Harry noticed that quite a few were sitting beside their fathers, or even both.

“It’s come to our attention,” an old man, who looked to be about as old as Dumbledore, at the front of the group said with a grave face. “That there have been some dealings against our code.” Beside him stood three others about the same age and Harry realized that these had to be the ones in charge of what happened at the club.

“What kind of dealings?” someone asked. Looking around him, Harry realized that there were quite a few people frowning in confusion. He didn’t know what was going on right now, but this had to be something out of the norm.

“Inappropriate teachings,” said the man on the left of the first man who’d spoken. “The kind that shouldn’t be taught to youngsters.”

“How old?”

“Since it’s been happening? Five. Currently? Twelve.”

“How do you know it happened?”

“As most of you know, Mr. Potter was introduced to what happens in our club a few weeks ago. Professor Snape and Lord Malfoy have taken it upon themselves to instruct him on how he is to act within our parameters. The other day, they took an opportunity offered to them to use the treatment to speed things along. The memory they chose to use, one of four that was given to them by us, happened to be of that nature. Once they realized what was happening, they blocked those parts so that Mr. Potter wouldn’t see that as part of the training given here.”

Angry grumblings could be heard from the adults. From what Harry had learned, and what Snape and Lucius had told him, everything, until their binding of the masters to their slaves, was done verbally. This type of thing wasn’t supposed to happen. The adults didn’t put up with children being abused sexually or physically.
“Since it’s come to our attention, our schedule has been changed to put things to rights.” It wasn’t until one of the old men gestured behind him that Harry realized that there was a boy standing in the shadows, body stiff and trembling with fear. “Come here, child.”

The boy’s eyes scanned the room apprehensively, looking for someone…

“Jonathan Luxor, it’s come to our attention that your father has been teaching you inappropriate things. We’ve reviewed the memories you voluntarily gave us at the start of summer. Are they accurate?”

“Y-yes, sir,” the boy whispered softly, causing everyone to strain to hear him. He cleared his throat, looking everywhere but at his father. “Yes, sir,” he repeated louder. “He said that was how it was done.”

The old man shook his head gravely, sighing in disappointment. “No, Jonathan, we don’t do it that way. Your instructions are all done verbally until you’re fifteen. Go join your mother.”

Harry watched as the boy made a wide circuit around the room so he could avoid the angry man in the center as he joined his mother, sitting on a stool beside her while she sat beside her master. After all, Harry remembered, this boy was a master, not a slave.

“Craven Luxor, please stand,” the third old man said clearly, stepping forward. The man in question stood up, glaring at everyone looking at him with varying looks of anger and disgust. “You stand accused of inappropriate teachings of a child. We even have evidence to the acts. You are allowed one chance to explain your actions before we pass judgement.”

“Jonathan is my child and I’ll do with him as I see fit. This had nothing to do with the club or the watered down rules we have here. He hasn’t suffered from my attentions, in fact,” Mr. Luxor said with his head held high, as if he were the one being wronged. “He’s benefited from what I do. Everything he learns here, he learns better because he’s experiencing it firsthand.”

“For your interference of his natural learning experience, you’ll be dealt the same things he’s had to suffer at your hand by everyone who has a child in the same station as yours,” the fourth old man said, his gravelly voice sounding like a death sentence to Harry. “Once done, you’ll be delivered to the Aurors with the evidence. Make no mistake, Mr. Luxor, your punishment won’t end here. The guards will make sure everyone in Azkaban knows why you’re there. They don’t take kindly to sexual abuse of a minor.”

“You can’t do that!” Mr. Luxor shrieked as two burly men grabbed hold his arms, dragging him from the room. Apparently the sentence wouldn’t be dealt with in front of the children but in a separate room… That was good to know. Harry didn’t think he’d be able to watch as the punishment was dealt out.

“Jonathan,” the first old man called out, gaining the boy’s attention quickly. “You’ll remain with your mother from now on. She’ll be able to teach you what you need to learn until you reach your majority. Don’t think this is your fault. Your father did something he knew he shouldn’t and now has to pay the price for his misplaced pride. Professor Snape will escort you back to school in a bit.”

“Yes, sir,” Jonathan said, leaning into his mother’s caring embrace.

At least the boy had someone else he could rely on, Harry thought with a small frown. He would be better off without the constant pain and degradation the boy’s father had apparently heaped on him.
Through the rest of the night, with things proceeding more sedately, Harry began feeling as if someone was watching him but every time he looked around, no one was looking at him. “What’s wrong, Master?” Draco asked after the fifth time of him looking around the room.

“I don’t know,” he murmured with a frown, allowing his eyes to roam again as the feeling persisted. “Eyes watching,” he whispered, making sure no one was close enough to hear him. Draco’s eyes widened slightly, the only reaction to his words, before he nodded slightly and rose to his feet.

Harry watched as the blonde teen made his way over to his father, speaking quietly to him before returning to Harry. As he watched, Lucius spoke to Snape, and then both men went to speak to one of the men in charge. Word seemed to spread around the room because all the adults were suddenly on the alert for anything out of the ordinary…

A movement at the corner of his eye told him where to look, but instead of turning towards the area in question, he looked at Draco, using his finger to mime the direction the feeling was coming from. Draco turned to look at the nearest adult.

Harry had never realized just how well organized these people were. With the bare movement of his head, Draco relayed the direction Harry had indicated. As he watched, the adults passed the message along until the one closest to the movement turned, as if he were simply turning to look at the one behind him and managed to grab hold of whoever was there.

Harry stood up to see who it was and that was when Harry realized whoever it was had to be under an invisibility cloak…

It wasn’t until they pulled it off the head of whoever was there, however, that he realized Hermione was using his invisibility cloak. “Hermione?” he asked, hurt that she would use his things to spy on him. “I guess this means I’m going to have to lock my trunk from now on,” he said in disappointment.

“What do you mean, Mr. Potter? Do you know this young lady?” one of the men in charge asked as Hermione struggled in the unbreakable hold the two men had on her.

“Unfortunately, I do, sir,” he said with a look of contempt. “She used to be my best friend until all this was revealed to me. Seems both she and Ron Weasley were instructed by the Headmaster of Hogwarts to keep me under control before that. They were keeping the other students from making friends with me. They got offended when Professor Snape assigned Draco to tutor me in Potions. What are you doing here, Hermione?”

“The better question,” Snape drawled, glaring down at the brunette, the look enough to make her look away from him and cringe slightly in fear. “How did she get here without anyone realizing it? Miss Granger?” He smirked when Hermione stubbornly refused to answer him.

Lucius took the cloak from one of the men holding her and handed it back to Harry. “You might want to keep better track of your things, Mr. Potter,” the blonde man murmured with a nod.

“Yes, sir,” Harry murmured as he accepted the cloak. “What’s going to happen to her now?” he asked, his tone indicating that he was just curious and not really concerned with what they did with her.

“That is a matter for the adults, Mr. Potter,” one of the older men said, nodding at the other two to take her away. “We’ll find out how she got here and whatever else she can tell us. Professor Snape, would you care to join us?”
“Yes, Lord Willington, but first I have to see the students back to school. I’ll return as soon as my
duties are seen to.”

“Very well. We’ll wait for you before we begin.”

With a curt nod, Snape led Jonathan, Harry and Draco towards the fireplace. They Flooed straight
to Malfoy Manor so they could change back into their school clothes, Draco helping Harry into
his clothes. This time, Harry refrained from making any jokes, allowing the other boy to do his
job.

“If anyone asks, you haven’t seen Miss Granger tonight,” Snape murmured once they were in his
quarters at Hogwarts again. “Jonathan, go back to your Common Room. Don’t mention anything
about tonight to anyone.” Jonathan nodded before he left Snape's rooms. ”Mr. Potter, I suggest
you make use of your cloak to regain your common room since it’s after curfew. We’ll discuss this
tomorrow in the Room of Requirements.” As he spoke, Snape was moving around his living
room, gathering phials that Harry couldn’t even guess at the uses, placing them in his pocket
where they would be safe.

“Yes, Professor,” Harry said with a nod and followed Draco out into the corridor. Their last sight
of Snape before the door closed was a whoosh of green flames as he went back to the club. “What
will they do to her?” he asked Draco curiously, frowning slightly.

“They’ll question her about what she was doing there, how she got there and what her intentions
were. Don’t worry, Harry,” Draco said with a reassuring smile. “They won’t touch her. She has to
be an adult before they do anything sexual to her. They might allow some of the graduating
students to play with her, but it won’t be as bad as you think it’ll be. They’re going to use her as
an example to the other kids.”

“You’re sure they won’t hurt her?” They might’ve been on the outs, but that didn’t mean he didn’t
worry about what might happen…

“Positive,” Draco told him, pushing him towards the stairs leading up. “Get some sleep. We have
a busy day tomorrow.”

“Yeah,” Harry murmured with a sigh. “See you tomorrow, then.”

Pulling his cloak over his head, Harry headed away from Draco, but not up the stairs, heading
further into the dungeons. In the last three years, Harry had pretty much memorized every inch of
certain portions of the school, routes that made his treks to class faster. He headed for one now.
This insured that he wouldn’t be spotted by anyone walking the corridors…

Of course, he kept the cloak on, just in case. No need to push his luck, after all.

It took him just ten minutes to get to the portrait hole leading to the Gryffindor tower, but he stood
outside, waiting and hoping that someone would either come in or leave… it never failed. There
was always someone sneaking around after curfew. He didn’t have to wait long.

One of the seventh year students came running up the stairs, panting the password to the fat lady
before rushing into the common room. With a grin of amusement, Harry followed behind her, just
before the portrait could close. Inside, he went directly up to bed, feeling tired now that the
excitement was over with, and waiting until he was in his room before taking his cloak off…

Taking his wand out, he shoved his cloak into his trunk, making sure nothing else was missing in
it, and concentrated on silently casting a locking charm… he’d done this when he’d been at the
Dursleys, realizing that if he did magic silently and wandlessly, it didn’t raise any flags at the
Ministry... and his uncle couldn’t prove that he was doing magic.

He’d gotten good at wandless magic but struggled with silent casting... still he kept at it, knowing that practice would make him better.

“Hey, Harry,” Neville murmured, coming in with Fred and George in tow.

Harry grinned at them and moved to join them on Neville’s bed. A Silencing charm went up, telling him they wanted to know what had happened tonight. “So how did it go?” Fred asked, leaning forward in interest.

“Mr. Luxor was taken away tonight,” he told them with a sigh. “Seems he was teaching his son things he shouldn’t be learning just yet.”

“You mean, Jonathan Luxor from Ravenclaw?” George asked with a frown. “I wondered why he was so skittish around the others in our group. Are they going to report him to the Aurors, too?”

“That’s what they said,” Harry said with a nod, then looked slightly panicky when he realized he wasn’t supposed to say anything. “I was supposed to keep that to myself!” “Don’t worry,” Fred said dismissively. “We won’t say anything.”

Harry relaxed in relief, glad he could trust these friends. “Anyway, it seems they used his memories in my treatment the other night. I don’t remember seeing anything inappropriate, though.”

“You wouldn’t,” Neville said with a shake of his head. “That’s why they have someone sit with the one going through the treatment. Once they realize something isn’t right, they alert the adults. They look into what’s going on. If it’s something like that, they usually black them out. Once blacked out, they don’t play so the treatment can continue normally.”

“Wow, Neville,” Harry murmured in amazement. “How do you know that?”

“Oh, I had to sit in with my Gran when I was five,” Neville said with a shy smile. “She explained it all to me. Your treatment wouldn’t have taken long to do since you’re still young enough to learn most of it, maybe three or four hours. When you come into this as an adult, it takes all night.”

“That’s handy to know, then,” Fred said in awe, George nodding his agreement beside his brother.

“What else happened?” Neville asked to redirect the attention away from himself.

“Oh, nothing much, seems Hermione followed us to the club.”

The others made sounds of distress and outrage. Harry let them, waiting until they were done before continuing, explaining how Hermione had stolen his cloak and somehow stowed away, of how he’d known something wasn’t right but had been unable to place what was wrong.

“So in the end, Professor Snape brought us back to Malfoy Manor so we could change back into our school uniforms, then back here. He left with a few phials. He told one of the older men that he would be back for the questioning.”

“So then we’ll be told what happened tomorrow,” George said in satisfaction.

“Do they always tell everyone what happens at the club?” Harry asked curiously.

“Only if it affects the club as a whole,” Fred said with a shake of his head. Harry felt fortunate that
these friends were part of this and helped to guide him when he couldn’t talk to Draco. “Mr. Luxor’s behavior won’t be discussed because they won’t want to draw attention to Jonathan, but Hermione’s transgressions will be discussed. The punishment might not be spoken of, but that’s okay because it’s more the adults’ business than ours.”

“Draco said they wouldn’t hurt her,” Harry said with a frown. “I hope she learns her lesson, though, because I don’t want this discussed with Dumbledore.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” George said with a laugh. “They won’t let her go before they make her take a vow not to disclose what she learned tonight. She won’t be telling anyone what she saw. Even a Pensieve won’t show what happened.”

“Well, that’s good to know,” Harry murmured in relief. He was enjoying this too much to allow one old man to ruin things for him. He’d done enough to manipulate Harry’s life as it was… It made him wonder, however, who had killed his parents if it wasn’t Voldemort.

The arrival of the other students broke up their discussion and Harry sighed as he got ready for bed. Tomorrow was going to be interesting. Already the last few weeks had been very informative. He couldn’t wait for the Christmas holidays to roll around so he could learn more… But then, what about the Yule ball? There was no way he could take Draco to it or it would create too many waves and probably draw too much attention to what was happening right under Dumbledore’s nose…

He would have to ask Snape tomorrow… maybe he and Mr. Malfoy had thought of a solution already and would explain what was to take place at that-

“Where’s Hermione, Potter?” Ron demanded as he shoved him forward onto his bed. “Why would I keep track of your girlfriend, Ronald?” Harry sneered in annoyance. “Isn’t that your job?”

“She said she was going to go after you, see just what kind of dastardly things you were doing. I even gave her your cloak so she wouldn’t be seen. Problem is, you’re back but she isn’t. Also, I didn’t see you come in, either.”

“That’s because he came in with us, little brother,” Fred said before Harry could say anything. “Why? Are you jealous that he’s got more friends now that he’s no longer being hindered by you?”

Ron glared at his brothers as they smirked at him. Ron couldn’t dispute their claim because they’d arrived in a large group…. At least that was what Harry assumed, otherwise Ron would be putting up more of a fuss than he was. “That’s beside the point, however,” Harry said with a frown. “What were you doing in my trunk without my permission?”

“I’ve never had to have it before,” Ron growled, turning his attention back to Harry.

“Well, guess what, Ronald Weasley,” Harry sneered angrily. “Stay out of my stuff. It’s locked now and you’ll never get into my trunk again.”

“This is the thanks we get for worrying about our friend?” Ron growled with a glare.

“You stopped being my friend when you accused me of insulting you and Hermione back in September. I told you then and I’m telling you now, stay away from me, don’t ask me for anything and don’t use my stuff,” Harry said in a tone that said he meant business. “I don’t have time for backstabbing turncoats anymore.”

“What the hell is that supposed to mean?” Ron snarled angrily. “We’ve done everything for you,
you ungrateful little shit. All we have to show for it is our lives being put in the path of danger
with no compensation. And all because of you.”

“Careful, Ronnikins,” George sneered mockingly. “Your greed is starting to show.”

“Bugger off, George. Everyone here knows that you’re just whoring yourself out to Potter in the
hopes that you’ll get a piece of his fortune.” The silence following those words was enough to
choke an elephant as everyone stared at the red-head.

“Um, speak for yourself, Ron,” Dean said finally, ignoring the snicker from Seamus. “Everyone
here knows that there’s nothing going on between these guys. George is too wrapped up in
Angelina and Fred likes a couple of girls from Ravenclaw.”

“Yeah, Ron,” Seamus laughed. “Poor Harry has nothing on them!”

“Thanks a lot, Seamus,” Harry grumbled teasingly, smirking at the Irish boy. “You’re doing
wonders for my self-esteem.”

“You know you can always count on me to keep you grounded, Harry.” And with that the tension
was broken as they laughed at Ron’s angry demeanor. Unfortunately for the other boy, it simply
showed his jealousy that Harry had something he didn’t have. Harry had always known Ron
hated being poor, but for him to actually come out and say so meant that he’d only been Harry’s
friend in the hopes of getting money out of it.

Harry wondered how that would’ve happened because Ron had never asked for money before…
Had Dumbledore promised some of Harry’s money to be friends with him? It seemed that was the
case. He wondered what Dumbledore had promised Hermione so she would be his friend…

Sighing tiredly, Harry climbed into bed, pulling the blankets up. Since the day Ron had snarked at
him, he’d kept his curtains closed on that side of the room so he wouldn’t have to see him at all. It
made things more bearable for him, anyway.

The next day promised to be very informative…and hopefully without drama.
Saturday had shown some of the seventh year students missing and all they’d been told was that their presence had been requested at the club and would be back in a couple of hours. Sure enough, they’d shown up two hours later but nothing had been said…

Harry had patiently waited for word of what had happened where Hermione was concerned but it had been frustratingly quiet and Harry had been unable to stop himself from fretting about the girl. She hadn’t been in the tower all weekend and had to have come in late last night because this morning she’d shown up in the Great Hall looking a little frazzled and out of sorts.

She’d avoided looking at him and had winced every time she’d sat down or moved suddenly. He’d seen Ron lean close to her, obviously demanding answers but she’d simply shaken her head and refused to answer his questions.

He’d wanted to go talk to her, but because of Weasley and Draco’s calming words to give her space, he’d kept his distance. He sighed in resignation as he sat with the other masters and slaves, attention on Snape, who stood before them with Remus and Sirius behind him.

“Now that things have been rectified at the club, I am allowed to divulge what happened this weekend,” Snape said when he had everyone’s attention. “It seems that Miss Granger followed Mr. Potter to the club on Friday-”

He was interrupted by the sounds of gasps and whispering, which quickly quieted when it became apparent he was waiting for them to settle. “She was caught before she was able to report anything to anyone.”

“How did she get there, sir?” someone from the back asked.

“That is unimportant at the moment. Suffice it to say that it will not be happening again,” the Potions master said dismissively, looking at everyone evenly. “Needless to say, however, she has been dealt with harshly and will be unable to reveal anything she saw and heard this weekend. I also don’t think she’ll be following Mr. Potter around again.”

“Have the same precautions been taken here, sir?” Theodore Nott asked with a frown.

“Yes, even if Miss Granger or anyone else wanted to enter here without permission, all they’ll see is the antechamber. Please know that if the walls remain dark, it means there’s someone there that shouldn’t be. You are to let one of the adults know immediately.”

“Yes, sir,” everyone answered and they were dismissed to go back to their earlier activities. There were a lot of discussions as to what the adults could’ve done to Hermione but no one bothered asking what that was. Everyone seemed to accept that the matter had been handled.

Harry turned to look at Draco but the blonde teen simply shook his head. “Whatever they did to her is between them and her. If she really wants to talk about it, she’ll come to you with it. Leave it as it is, Master,” he was told.
This was when Harry realized that these students simply took things at face value. Was that such a bad thing? Harry had gotten used to being deceived by Dumbledore, had learned to question what he was told because it was never the whole story he was given…

That was the difference between Snape and Dumbledore. Dumbledore gave him just enough information to get him into trouble trying to find out what was being hidden. With Snape, all Harry had to do was talk to him, ask questions and get answers – honest ones – instead of hedging. If the Potions master wasn’t able to tell him, he usually told him so.

He nodded to Draco, accepting the fact that it was the end of the matter, and smiled when the other teen seemed to relax. “Yes, I know, Slave,” he murmured in amusement. “I don’t like to leave things alone until I know what’s going on, but I’ve learned that what I don’t know usually bites me in the butt later on.”

“Understandable, Master,” Draco murmured with a slight nod.

“I’m learning to trust, though,” he murmured with a sigh. “Sometimes I just slide back into bad habits.”

“You just have to trust that Master Snape will tell you the truth when you ask him,” Draco said with a smirk. “He’s not the Headmaster.”

“That’s the truth,” Harry said with a smile. With that, they turned their attentions back to what was happening around them. Yes, Harry was going to trust that Snape wouldn’t mess with his mind the way Dumbledore did… until something changed that, anyway.

**

Tuesday, November 8, 1994

Harry was walking down to the Great Hall with Neville, Fred and George the next morning, laughing and joking as they went. He’d never had a more relaxing evening in the four years since starting Hogwarts than last night. Instead of spending it with the adults guiding him in his new role, he had spent it with the other masters and slaves. He’d learned a lot by just watching them interact with each other.

History of Magic was his first class and he knew Draco would be giving him more assignments to complete for Ancient Runes, but he found that he was looking forward to it instead of dreading it. Seemed that the weight of having Ron and Hermione around had been the reason he’d hated learning…

Not surprising.

“Harry?” Hermione said hesitantly, breaking into his musings and their conversation. “Can I talk to you for a minute? Alone?”

Harry frowned, unwilling to go anywhere with either her or Ron by himself, simply because he wasn’t sure what they were up to. “Go ahead, Harry,” Neville said as they moved far enough away that they wouldn’t overhear the conversation. “We’ll wait for you.”

“What do you want, Hermione?”

“I wanted to apologize for taking your invisibility cloak,” she murmured, not meeting his gaze, and Harry frowned in confusion.

“And what about following me?” he asked with a sneer. “Are you sorry about that?”
Now she looked up, glaring at him. “No,” she told him. “I knew you were up to no good because of Malfoy. I was right. What do you think you’re doing, Harry? Can’t you see that they’re trying to drag you down the path of evil? They’re Death Eaters, for crying out loud!”

Harry sighed and shook his head. “This isn’t the place to talk about this. Let’s meet in the Room of Requirements after supper.”

He watched as she chewed the inside of her lip… probably trying to think of a reason to refuse, but he could tell she wanted to blurt out what she was thinking and the words wouldn’t come. The vow in effect, he thought with a smirk. “Fine,” she finally ground out.

Rejoining the others, they made their way down the stairs. “What was that about, Harry?” Fred asked curiously.

“She wants to talk but can’t. Not out here,” Harry murmured, glancing around them at the other students. “We’re going to meet up after supper.” When they entered the Great Hall, Harry nodded to his three friends before he headed over to the Slytherin table. He’d promised Draco he’d sit there today.

“Granger seems to be out of sort,” Draco drawled in amusement as the girl stomped over to the Gryffindor table.

“She apologized for taking my cloak without permission,” Harry told him, shaking his head when Draco shot him a sharp look. “But not for what she did. We’re meeting in the Room of Requirements after supper. I think it would be wise to bring Professor Snape with us when we meet her.”

“We?” Draco asked in confusion before he realized what Harry was saying. “I’ll talk to Professor Snape before lunch.”

The day flew by quickly and soon enough, Harry found himself outside the Room of Requirements with Draco, a piece of paper in his pocket. After Snape had told him about Voldemort dying fifteen years ago, Lucius had presented him with a Ministry document proving that the man was indeed dead by magical incident.

Apparently he’d been trying to develop a spell that would shield against the Killing curse… something had gone wrong during the testing, though. Snape had said the man had been using an animal to test it on, not wanting to risk using a person until the results were better…

Snape had said he’d felt a disturbance in the wards of Voldemort’s home but by the time he’d gotten to the testing room, his lover had been dead. It was assumed he’d tried to test the spell out himself and it hadn’t worked and no one else was willing to try again. Snape didn’t believe it but no one wanted to hear about what he’d had to say. Understandably, Snape was still bitter about it.

Closing his eyes, Harry concentrated on what he needed… actually, he hoped he got the room with the garden. It was a peaceful setting and all that was needed to the setting was a table and chairs. Maybe the setting would put Hermione at ease…

Opening the door, he smiled as he spied a heavily treed garden with a stream running across it. Instead of being overgrown, as it had been the first time, it was well manicured with a table and four chairs set up beside the stream with dense trees around it.

“Nice, Potter,” Snape murmured in appreciation as he came up behind him, having just arrived.

“Thanks, sir,” Harry said with a grin, looking up at the Potions master. “You and Draco might
want to go in before Hermione shows up. She gave the impression that she wanted to talk to me alone."

He watched as they melted into the thick brush and turned at a sound behind him. Sure enough, Hermione was coming down the corridor, a look of determination on her face. This time, Harry was determined that she wouldn’t bully him into taking her point of view as his own. He was done with being used by her.

“Well, at least you learned to be on time,” she sniffed disdainfully as she entered the Room of Requirements. Harry’s jaw tightened in irritation, but didn’t say anything as he followed her in. A tea set appeared as they sat down at the table and they took the time to fix themselves a cup.

Harry was determined that he wouldn’t break before she did, especially since she was the one who wanted to talk to him and not the other way around. “What are you doing, Harry?” she asked finally. “Why would you willingly join up with Malfoy, of all people?”

“Because I’m tired of all the fighting, Hermione,” he murmured with a raised eyebrow. “Aren’t you? I mean, we’re supposed to be here to learn things, not begin rivalries. Is it so hard to believe?”

“If it was anyone else, I’d say no, but Harry, this is Malfoy,” she said in exasperation. “His father’s You-know-who’s right hand man. What makes you think he won’t try to kill you like he did in Second year?”

“Actually, he wasn’t behind the diary fiasco. Someone else was,” Harry told her.

“And who told you that? Malfoy senior?” She sighed in exasperation when Harry nodded. “Honestly, Harry. Did it never occur to you that he might be using you? To gain your trust? He’s a Death Eater!”

“Hermione, I would like you to stop patronizing me,” Harry growled angrily as he glared at the stupid girl. “You’re not my mother to take me to task. Now,” he said in a more controlled tone, watching as his former friend, who’s hair was just about standing up in her anger and indignation, seemed to gather herself to snap at him for his tone. “You said you had something you wanted to talk about. If all you want to do is bully me into doing what you want, I’m going to leave because I’m getting tired of you questioning my every move.”

He stood up with the intention of leaving but she stopped him before he could walk off. “That’s not the only thing I wanted to talk to you about,” she said through gritted teeth. “But I figured since I had you here, I’d use the opportunity I was given. I just can’t understand why you and Lucius Malfoy are now friends after what he did to Ginny in second year.”

“I’m beginning to think he wasn’t behind that either. I did some research,” he lied, not wanting to tell her it was information Snape had told him and Lucius had presented to him three days later to show they weren’t lying.

“You told us that he was the one behind it,” she said with a frown. “His reaction to the diary showed that he was. What’s changed your mind about it now?”

“I came in here, since I don’t own a Pensieve and the room provided me with one. I looked at the memory again and now I’m convinced he never gave the book to Ginny. When I gave him the diary, to free Dobby, he looked slightly confused that I was handing it to him. I don’t believe he gave it to her.”

“So if he didn’t give it to her, who did?” Hermione asked in exasperation, sitting back in her chair.
“I have my suspicions but no proof, so I’ll keep my thoughts to myself,” Harry told her with a
dismissive shrug. “Besides, I can’t trust you enough to tell you.”

At that, she bristled angrily. “What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“Exactly what I said,” he told her, pinning her with his eyes. “Friday night proved that you’ll do
anything to find out what I’m doing and report it back to Dumbledore. Am I wrong?” he asked
mockingly, eyebrow raised challengingly.

She glared at him, telling him that his guess had been right, especially when she didn’t deny the
accusation. “So you’re not going to stop being friends with Malfoy, are you?”

“No,” he told her with a shake of his head. “What makes you think Lucius Malfoy is a Death
Eater, anyway?”

“Dumbledore showed Ron and I a picture of Mr. Malfoy. He had a tattoo on his arm,” she said
smugly… until she looked up at him and saw the look of incredulity on his face. “What?” she
snapped angrily.

“That’s impossible,” she whispered as she blinked in shock. “Dumbledore showed us a picture of
it and told us that you had renounced you-know-who before the Potters were killed, that his
speaking on your behalf kept you out of Azkaban. How did you get rid of it?”

“Before I answer those questions, Miss Granger, I require an oath from you that you will speak of
today’s conversation with no one but the three of us,” Snape murmured, remaining where he stood
at the edge of the trees, sleeves covering his arms once more.

With a roll of her eyes, Hermione pulled out her wand and did the oath as requested before putting
it back inside her sleeve.

“The deaths of the Potters are still a mystery. No one in the Auror department has been able to
find any trace of who killed them,” Snape murmured as he moved to sit at the table with them,
Draco following behind him. He took one of the unused cups on the table and poured himself
some tea. “As for a tattoo… I used to have one, I admit, before Voldemort took it off me. He
didn’t like my skin marred by ink – especially with the picture of a naked woman – any more than
I did. The things one does when they are young and foolish.”

“Really?” Harry asked in surprise and interest, Draco perking up beside him. “How did it
happened?”

“That is none of your business and has no bearing on the current conversation,” Snape said with a
glare, causing Harry and Draco to snicker in amusement. “Suffice it to say that I have had no
tattoo on my person for twenty or more years. Also, I have never been slated to join the convicts
in Azkaban. My personal record remains unblemished, Miss Granger. Dumbledore lied to you, as
he did with Mr. Potter.”
Hermione sat there, shocked beyond words. Harry understood her reaction well. He couldn’t figure out why Dumbledore was trying to manipulate all of them the way he was. It made no sense. “Why?” she asked finally.

“That is yet unclear,” Snape murmured before taking a sip of his tea. “It would seem the Headmaster is playing games with the lives of certain students. For what purpose, I couldn’t say. It makes one wonder why he would place Mr. Potter’s life – or even yours and Mr. Weasley’s lives – in the path of arranged danger year after year. There has to be something going on that no one else is seeing.”

“He did tell me last year that there were some unexpected deaths in the Daily Prophet,” Hermione said with a frown, “but wouldn’t say whose. Were there any deaths in the papers?”

It was Snape’s turn to frown now, as he tried to recall if he’d read of any disappearances or deaths. “I believe there were three reports of missing people in the Prophet last year, one woman and two older men, but nothing more was mentioned about it.”

“Dumbledore said it was Death Eater activities,” Hermione said, rubbing at her forehead. “But that he couldn’t figure out why they would target those particular people. It doesn’t make sense. If Voldemort isn’t behind the disappearances, who is?”

Snape was quiet for a few minutes, watching Hermione carefully, obviously making the brushy haired girl uncomfortable. “I think that is enough information for you, Miss Granger. Take a few days to think about what you’ve found out tonight and come back to us when you have further questions.”

“Of course, Professor,” Hermione murmured, recognizing the dismissal for what it was. They waited until after the door closed behind her before going back to the discussion.

“Perhaps we should look into just what the diary represented, Professor,” Harry said quietly, frowning thoughtfully down at his tea. “If it wasn’t Voldemort that I fought, then finding out whoever it was might shed some light on the matter.”

“Do you still have the diary?” Snape asked him.

“No, but I know who has it and I’m pretty sure he’ll let me have it back.”

“Who has it, Harry?” Draco asked him, an eyebrow raised in mild curiosity.

Taking a deep breath to fortify himself, he steeled himself for the gushy house-elf that now worked at Hogwarts. “Dobby.”

There was an instant pop. “Harry Potter call for Dobby?” the weird creature asked happily, ears perked up.

“Yes, Dobby, do you remember the book I used to hide the sock in so you could be freed?” Harry asked, mentally cringing at the thought of what this would bring.

“Oh, yes, Harry Potter,” Dobby said enthusiastically, nodding his head so fast his ears looked to be in danger of being shaken off. “Dobby still has the book. Dobby takes real good care of it, Harry Potter.”

“I was wondering if it would be possible to borrow it for a few days,” Harry said, overriding the over-excited chatter before it could get out of hand.
“Of course, Harry Potter!” Dobby gushed happily. “Anything for Harry Potter!”

Harry sighed when Dobby popped out of the room, returning in seconds with the ruined book. “Thank you, Dobby.”

Dobby smiled and popped out again.

“That was… mildly disturbing,” Draco murmured with a slightly horrified look in his eyes.

“You have no idea,” Harry grumbled as he slid the book over to Snape. “This is the diary I told you about.”

“How old was the one who came out of it? What did he look like?” Snape asked, turning the ink soaked pages with a thoughtful look.

“The boy told me he was sixteen,” Harry told him, noticing the surprised look Snape threw him. “He spoke to me at some length before he released the Basilisk.”

“What else did he tell you?”

Harry frowned as he tried to remember all the details of what had happened in the Chamber of Secrets. “I remember him taunting me about the fact of how I — a skinny boy with no extraordinary magical talent — managed to defeat the greatest wizard of all time. He wanted to know how I had escaped as a baby with nothing but a scar, while Lord Voldemort’s powers were destroyed. Then I asked him why he would care how I escaped,” Harry said slowly. “Voldemort was after his time…”

“That would explain why you thought Voldemort was behind your parents’ deaths,” Snape murmured with a nod. “But who was the boy?”

“He told me Voldemort was his past, present, and future,” Harry said with a shrug. “Then he wrote his name in the air using my wand: Tom Marvolo Riddle. When he rearranged the letters it spelled ‘I am Lord Voldemort’.”

They sat in silence for a few minutes, watching as Snape digested the information. “Describe the teenager,” the Potions master said finally.

A tall, black-haired boy was leaning against the nearest pillar, watching. He was strangely blurred around the edges, as though Harry were looking at him through a misted window.

The memory flitted to the surface as he looked into his tea, remembering the day in the Chamber of Secrets clearly. “He was about Draco’s height, black hair, dressed in Slytherin robes,” Harry said with slight shake of his head. “I don’t know what else to tell you.”

“Voldemort had brown hair and eyes,” Snape murmured with a frown. “The one picture I’ve seen of Tom Riddle showed him with blonde hair and blue eyes. I don’t know who you saw, but it was obviously neither of these people.”

“If it wasn’t either one of them, who does that leave? Why would they use a diary that was someone else’s? Why would Dumbledore lie?” Harry asked in frustration. “It doesn’t make sense!”

Draco looked thoughtful during all this. “Dumbledore seems to be the one behind all of this, right?” he asked finally.

“What are you thinking?” Snape asked him.
“What if this is someone we never would’ve thought of,” Draco murmured as he sat back in his chair. “What if this is all about Dumbledore?”

“How so?”

“Well, Dumbledore is trying to lay plans for something,” Draco said with a slight frown. “There has to be a reason for it. What do we know about his younger years? What did he look like?”

Snape blinked in surprise, thrown by the question. “I don’t know,” he murmured finally.

“I remember him telling me his hair used to be an auburn colour when he was younger,” Harry said, frowning as he remembered a conversation he’d had with Dumbledore sometime last year. He’d found it an odd and slightly strained conversation, one he still didn’t understand.

“Well, then I guess that rules him out,” Draco said with a disgusted sigh.

“I think it might be something for another conversation but not tonight,” Snape said as he did a quick Tempus, revealing that it was nearing eight. “You both still have assignments to complete and being here isn’t getting them done.”

“Yes, sir,” the boys grumbled as they got up, getting ready to go back to their common rooms.

“Bring your books to the library and we’ll go over whatever you don’t understand,” Draco murmured as they moved towards the stairs.

“I’ll see you in the library, then,” Harry said with a sigh, knowing that getting out of the tower was going to be a chore. He was getting tired of Ron’s crap. He didn’t need to deal with that boy, if only he could avoid him… “I’ll bring Neville just so Ron doesn’t hound me about leaving the tower.”

“See you soon, then.”

* * *

As the weeks went by, Harry got better and better in his classes, surprising Snape and the other teachers when he began excelling at the lessons he’d once struggled with because he just didn’t care about – or was being distracted from – the subjects being taught.

Even History of Magic wasn’t as much of a chore… of course, it helped that he read the right books on the subject, not just on what Binns was teaching them. He realized now that there was way more than what they were learning with the ghost. Harry wondered how it was that Dumbledore justified keeping the monotonous speaking spirit around, honestly.

“So,” Draco murmured as their group sat in their little study hall in the library. “It seems that Father couldn’t talk Dumbledore into letting you leave the castle for the Christmas Holidays, so he went to Minister Fudge and told him that the old man was interfering in a student’s decisions.”

“He did?” Neville asked in surprise. “Wait, why would the Headmaster try to stop Harry from leaving the castle in the first place? Nothing says he has to stay for the holidays. I’m not, though I’ll be here for the ball.”

“Because Dumbledore’s trying to limit my interactions with those he thinks are a ‘bad’ influence,” Harry said with a roll of his eyes. “But if I wanted to go to the Burrow, he’d be fine with that.”

“Anyway,” Draco said, bringing the subject back to the topic at hand. “it would seems Father convinced the Minister to launch an inquiry of the goings-on of the school.” Draco smirked as the
**And?**” Harry asked impatiently.

“You’re to be given special permission to leave the castle for the Holidays and Dumbledore can’t say anything about where you’re going. Mr. Lupin is going to accompany you to Malfoy Manor from the train station. Father’s also launched an inquiry into Mr. Black’s incarceration without trial.”

“Has he said anything about what he’s found out?” George asked in interest.

“It would seem that Mr. Crouch is in a lot of trouble right now. I didn’t see him at the Head Table tonight,” Draco said with a shrug. “Might be that he was hauled in front of the Minister to account for the lack of justice.”

“So, Sirius might be a free man by the time Christmas rolls around,” Harry whispered, trying not to hope for it. Maybe, with his godfather no longer a wanted man, he might allow Harry to move in with him instead of going to the Dursleys like he’d mentioned last year…

“I’m sure you’ll get a letter from my cousin if everything goes according to plan,” Draco said in satisfaction.

Before joining the club, Harry would’ve been surprised to hear that Draco and Sirius were related, but he’d been getting courses from Draco – along with all the other things he was being coached in – since this weird year had begun. He now knew more about the purebloods and how they were all related in some way. Of course, with Draco and Sirius, it just happened to be because Narcissa and Sirius were actually cousins.

“I hope you’re right,” Harry murmured with a sigh as he looked down at his book. Snape had given him a book on herbs and how they reacted when mixed with other herbs. It seemed the Potions master was determined that he learn more about potions than what they were learning in class. When he’d joked about it to Neville, he’d been told that every wizard and witch was taught this in primary school. Well, that explained a lot, then… and deflated his ego a little.

“You know,” he said after a few minutes of toying with his quill, not really taking in anything he was reading. “This makes me wonder how the Muggleborns learn how to make potions or cast spells. I mean, they don’t find out about coming here until they turn eleven, right?”

The others blinked blankly up at him. “I never really thought about it,” Draco murmured, frowning as he thought that through. “Didn’t you also tell us that Granger had been practicing spells at home before school began and that she was only eleven at the time?”

“Yeah,” Harry said as he sat back. “I remember reading in one of our History of Magic books that using magic in a muggle area was forbidden. Wouldn’t she have gotten a letter from the Ministry for underage magical use?”

“I can ask Father about it, but if she was using magic in a muggle area, she had to have gotten one,” Draco said with a shrug. “Maybe she left that part out when she told you about it.”

“Maybe,” Harry murmured with a frown before he shook his head to clear it. This wasn’t getting his homework done. Then a thought occurred to him. “Does this mean I have to dance at the ball?”

The others looked at him as if he were demented. “Duh,” Goyle said with eyebrows raised. “It’s a dance, after all.”
“But I don’t know how to dance!” Harry squeaked in panic.

“Don’t worry, Harry,” Draco smirked at him. “It’ll just be something else I can teach you.” The others laughed as Harry groaned, his forehead connecting with the table with a dull thud.

* * *

True to his word, Draco began teaching Harry how to dance. “The first dance is the more formal one,” he told the dark haired teen as music began playing around them and Draco was thankful that the Room of Requirements provided a person with whatever they needed. At the moment, they were in a kind of Great Hall that was empty of everything.

Their footsteps echoed off the far walls as he led Harry to the center of the room. Turning to face the teen he would soon call his master, he took Harry’s hands, feeling the tension radiating from their contact. “Relax,” he murmured with a soft smile. “It’s just the two of us here.”

“Easy for you to say,” Harry murmured nervously. “You’ve probably been doing this since you were small.”

“True, but that doesn’t matter right now,” he told the other teen. “As your slave, it’s my job to make sure you don’t make a fool of yourself.”

Harry frowned at that. “Is that the only reason you’re doing this?” he asked finally. “Because I’m your master?”

“It’s part of it, but no,” Draco said with a smirk. “It’s because I get you all to myself while we practice.”

Harry laughed and allowed himself to be coached with a lot less nerves getting in the way. “When you waltz with someone, whether it’s a girl or a boy, your left hand holds the other’s right. Your right hand goes on their hip.” As he instructed Harry, he placed the hands where they should be. “Since you’re going to have to lead, we’ll do it as if I was the one following your lead. Do you understand so far?”

“Yeah, so far.”

“Good. I’ll call out which foot moves when. We’ll start slow.”

For the next hour, Draco patiently taught Harry how to dance and wished they were going together to the Yule ball, but propriety dictated that they not stray too far from convention. He was tempted to say to Hades with propriety and convention and go with Harry anyway, but Severus had already warned him that they would follow the rules or be separated.

Now that he’d gotten his wish and had Harry to himself, he didn’t want to jeopardize his chance. He would obey the rules.

By the time they neared the end of the lesson, Harry was more secure in how to waltz that Draco allowed himself to enjoy dancing. He’d always liked dancing, but it was completely different with Harry… more enjoyable. The next lesson would include some other dances so that they could enjoy the whole night, not just the first dance.

“Father looked into Hermione’s claim that she was practicing spells at home and said that there are several letters of reprimand in her file,” he told Harry as they walked towards the doors at the end of the lesson.
“What will that do for her when she tries to get a job?” the dark-haired teen asked.

Draco had already told him that everything that happened at and before school counted towards the future job you would get once you graduated Hogwarts. “Well, it’s not going to do her any good. It shows that she can’t follow simple rules. The amount of reprimands is what’s going to do her in. Then there’s the fact that she was caught sabotaging our cauldron in class… It’s not good for her.”

“You know, I never realized how much of an impact all those confrontations we had was going to work against us in the end,” Harry murmured with a frown. “Will we be able to get good jobs with the amounts of detentions we got because we couldn’t get along?”

Draco shrugged indifferently. “It won’t matter in the end because we stopped fighting each other. Whoever our employer is, they’ll take that into consideration. Then there’s the reason behind our fighting. They’ll see that Dumbledore was the reason behind most of the conflicts. We’ll just have to see when we get to that.”

“If you say so,” Harry said cheekily as he glanced over at him. “Of course, with the money we both have, we probably don’t have to work for a living.”

“There’s that,” Draco murmured with a smirk.

* * *

Friday, December 9, 1995

“Harry,” Dumbledore murmured as they sat in the Headmaster’s office after supper. “I hear you requested to leave for the Christmas holidays.” The look on the old man’s face was one of grandfatherly concern… which didn’t fool Harry anymore. Not since he knew there was no real concern for his well-being.

“Yes, sir,” Harry murmured with a nod. “The Minister has given me a letter stating I was allowed.”

“I don’t know if that’s such a good idea,” the old man murmured with a frown, “considering how much of a target you are for the Death Eaters. I’d rather you stayed here where we both know you’re safe.”

“No, Headmaster,” he said with a shake of his head. “I’ve made arrangement with some friends and they’re expecting me to show up. I’ll be perfectly safe with them.”

“And you still won’t tell me who they are?”

That had been the problem with Dumbledore. He wanted to know where Harry was going, who he was going to be with and what he was going to be doing. “No, sir. I appreciate the fact that you feel the need to worry, but I can take care of myself. I’ve been doing it for years.”

“Harry,” the Headmaster chided gently. “You’re a child and require supervision no matter what you think. I need to know where you’re going.”

“I’m sorry, Headmaster,” Harry said with a shake of his head. “But seeing as you’re not my guardian or parent, I don’t really have to tell you anything more than I already have. It seems someone complained to the Minister that you were taking too much of an interest into what I was doing and wanted it investigated. Minister Fudge sent me a letter last week stating that it was going to end and that I was free to make whatever plans I wanted without having to run it by you.”
The old man was quiet for a few minutes, looking at him with an unreadable look on his face and eyes. “Show me the letter, Harry,” Dumbledore murmured finally, holding out his hand for it. Knowing that this was all part of the plan, Harry readily handed the letter over, waiting while the Headmaster read the letter Fudge had sent him.

Mr. Potter,

It has come to my attention that the Headmaster of Hogwarts had become slightly obsessed with your movements and whereabouts in and out of school. I have launched an investigation into those activities and am pleased to relate to you that you are under no obligations to do as told where your free time is concerned.

It is his job to provide you with an adequate education so you can contribute to the Wizarding world, but that is as much as his job entails. He is in breach of ethics by refusing to allow you off school grounds for any and all vacations.

If this persist, please let me know and steps will be taken to put a stop to the interference.

Sincerely,
Cornelius Fudge
Minister for Magic

“I see,” Dumbledore murmured with narrowed eyes. “I find it strange that the Minister would interfere in an underage wizard’s life at school, but if this is what you really want, I guess I cannot stop you.”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry murmured as he got to his feet, holding out his hand for the letter. It was grudgingly handed back to him. “I have to go now, sir. I have three assignments that need to be gone over before I hand them over to the teachers.”

“I’m glad to see you taking a more active interest in your studies, my boy, but is it really necessary that you exclude your friends in order to do so?”

“You mean Hermione and Ron?” Harry asked with an eyebrow raised. He wanted to sigh in exasperation when the Headmaster nodded. “They’re not my friends, sir. Ron keeps me from doing well in class and Hermione just wants me to accept her views as my own and take over my work. I can’t work that way. I don’t learn anything. This way is better.”

“You don’t believe that, Harry,” Dumbledore said with a smile, and Harry had to wonder if the old man was hearing himself. It was as if Harry was too stupid to know what he was talking about! “They’ve been your friends since first year, after all.”

“Yes,” Harry murmured softly. “And I’m beginning to think that was a complete mistake on my part. Good night, Headmaster.” He turned and left before the old man could stop him again. Honestly! He couldn’t believe he’d never noticed how controlling the Headmaster was. If it hadn’t been for the letter, Harry was sure Dumbledore would’ve insisted on his remaining at Hogwarts. It was a good thing Lucius and Snape had seen fit to contact the Minister. Harry had been doubtful at first, but not anymore!

* * *

At the same time as Draco was giving Harry dancing lessons, Dumbledore lay in wait in one of the corridors, waiting for one person in particular. He watched as Hermione walked past him before coming out. “Miss Granger,” Dumbledore murmured as he came up behind her in the corridor, looking at her calculatingly. She hadn’t returned to report the goings on with Harry the
last time and had seemed to be avoiding him ever since. “I was hoping to speak with you for a moment.”

“I was on my way to the library, Headmaster,” the girl murmured, looking around her in a rather nervous way. Dumbledore frowned slightly, not wanting to alarm the girl, but he wondered just what was going on. She shouldn’t be looking for a way to avoid him… unless she suspected something was up. “To finish some of my assignments.”

“This won’t take long, my dear,” he said with a smile he didn’t feel, gesturing towards the closest classroom, which just happened to be empty. It took a few minutes, but she finally nodded and preceded him into the room, clutching at her books.

If someone had managed to turn her away from his plans, he would make sure she was back on track… even if it killed her.

* * *

Friday, December 24th, 1994

The train ride back to London was a novel experience for Harry because this was the first time he was allowed to leave the school for the holidays.

Dumbledore had always wanted to keep a close eye on him before… and he was beginning to feel a little anxious, though he didn’t know why.

“Father says he’ll be with Lupin at the train station to meet us when we get there,” Draco murmured as he sat beside him. “How do you feel?”

“I don’t know,” Harry murmured before sighing in slight frustration. “I keep feeling like something is going to go wrong somehow.”

Draco looked at him with a frown. “You said the old man stopped you yesterday to talk you out of leaving the school again?”

“Yeah, it was kind of weird, actually,” Harry said with a frown. “He wanted me to stay but it was almost like he was going through the motion. It was confusing.”

“I’ll talk to Professor Snape tonight. Maybe the old man is tampering with you again.”

“Maybe.”

Harry couldn’t explain it but the further he got from the school, the worse the feeling of wrongness got until it was all Draco and the other Slytherins could do to keep him in the compartment. “Draco,” he said finally as he paced the floor. “Hit me with a stunner.”

“Are you sure about this?” Draco asked in surprise.

“It’s either that or I jump off the train and make my way back to Hogwarts,” he said, finally sitting down again, though his whole body felt like it was twitching with too much energy. Harry watched as Draco stood up to face him, wand out. The last thing he saw was the spell coming at him and he forced himself to remain still and let it hit him…

**

“Pansy, when we pull in, find my father and tell him to come here,” Draco said as he sat down beside Harry again, wand in its holster once more. “I think if we bring him out of this before we’re
ready, he’s going to be worse than now. We’re going to need help.”

“Should we also tell our parents?” Goyle asked with a frown. “Your father might need their help, too.”

“I think the more adults here to help, the better,” the blonde teen said with a nod.

They chatted amongst themselves until the train pulled into the station and Draco watched as his friends left in search of the adults. He didn’t have to wait long. His father and Lupin were the first to arrive. “What happened, Draco?” Lupin asked, frowning at Harry.

“Apparently Harry was stopped by the Headmaster yesterday, trying to talk him into staying at school where he can keep an eye on him,” Draco began as more adults came into the compartment. “The further we got from Hogwarts, the edgier he became. Finally he told me to stun him. I didn’t want to bring him out of it until I had help.”

“That was good thinking,” Mr. Nott murmured as he frowned at the sleeping boy. “Why is Dumbledore interfering in a student’s choices?”

“We’re not quite sure, but he only seems to be interested in certain ones. Harry most of all,” Lucius murmured as he pulled out his wand, eyes narrowed. Draco watched as his father cast something that glowed blue, surrounding Harry in its gentle embrace before turning an angry red. “So,” his father murmured in exasperation. “The Headmaster has tried to replace the Tracking spell on top of a Compulsion to remain at the school. I’m surprised you didn’t have more problems than you had.”

“We need to put a stop to the old meddler,” Mr. Crabbe growled angrily. “Indeed.”

“Did the Tracking spell take?” Mr. Parkinson asked with a frown.

“No,” Lucius said with a shake of his head as he cast a Lightening spell on Harry before picking him up. “The oath prevented it from working. Let’s Apparate to the club. Something tells me we’re going to need the group to stop the old man from placing anything more on the boy.”

Harry became aware of being flat on his back, lying on a soft surface and frowned in confusion. He remembered pacing in the train compartment before telling Draco to stun him… where was he now?

“Welcome back to the world of the living, pup,” Sirius murmured jokingly when he opened his eyes.

“Sirius?” he mumbled in confusion, sitting up, noticing Draco leaning against the wall beside the bed as a blonde blur. He was grateful when his glasses were handed back to him and everything came into focus. “What happened? Where am I?”

“Lucius brought you to the club so everyone could make you safe again,” Sirius said with a sigh, watching him carefully. “How do you feel?”

“The edginess is gone,” Harry said with a shrug. “So what happened this time?”

“It would seem, Mr. Potter,” the man in the lead said as he and a group of men entered the room. “That Professor Dumbledore tried to tamper with you once more. Mr. Parker,” he murmured as he reached out to shake Harry’s hand.
“But that means we have added ammunition against the interfering old goat,” an older man growled with a deep frown as he looked Harry over critically. “We’ll be able to use this when it comes down to the trial.”

“Indeed we will, Nicholas,” Lucius murmured as he moved closer to Harry. “How are you feeling, Harry?”

“Normal, sir,” he answered with a shrug. “What did he do this time?”

“He tried putting the Tracking spell on you again then switched it to a Compulsion charm when he realized it wouldn’t take,” Nicholas answered for Lucius. “I’d be very interested in knowing why the old Headmaster is so interested in you.”

“So would I, sir, but Dumbledore never says anything that’s informative until I’m neck deep in trouble.”

“We need to get to the bottom of this machination before he ruins these young lives,” one of the old men he’d met the first time he’d come to the club said as he entered the room, obviously having heard his comment. “Lucius, Octavius, I think an investigation is in order.”

“It’s already in the works, Lord Herbert,” Parker murmured with a respectful bow to the older man. “I’ve been gathering information on the Headmaster since Lord Black hired me to clear his name with the Ministry.”

“Good, we’ll discuss this further once we’re done here. How are you feeling, young man?” Lord Herbert asked, turning his attention towards Harry.

“Better than when I left school, sir,” Harry said with a nod. “Thanks to everyone who helped, anyway. Is the Headmaster going to be able to try something like this again?”

“No,” Lord Herbert murmured with sigh. “We’ve made it so that he won’t be able to compel you to do something against your will again. Lord Malfoy will take you home now, along with young Draco. Sirius, please remain behind with Rick and Octavius. There are things we need to discuss.”

“Of course, Lord Herbert,” the men murmured and began to file out of the room.

“I’ll see you later, pup,” Sirius said as he reached out and squeezed Harry’s arm. Harry smiled at his godfather, nodding once before the man followed the others out of the room.

“Do you have dress robes, Harry?” Lucius asked as they walked down the hallway.

“No, sir,” Harry said, looking confused. “Do I need some?”

“If you’re going to attend the Yule ball, you do,” Draco said in excitement. “Can we do some Christmas shopping as well, father? I doubt Harry’s done his since Dumbledore doesn’t let him out of his sight for long and he usually only gives the Weasleys and Granger presents. This year he wouldn’t have done that since he’s been busy learning about his new role and Weasley and Granger aren’t friends with him anymore.”

“I can’t see why not,” the older man said with a smirk.

**

“So,” Lord Herbert murmured as they had all settled in the sitting room, Lucius having left with the boys. “What’s happening with trying to clear your name, Sirius?”
“Rick has some people doing research on what can be done about prisoners placed in Azkaban without a proper trial,” Sirius said with a nod towards his lawyer.

“They’re having a hard time with it, too,” Rick murmured with a sigh. “Seems it hasn’t happened often in the past fifty years and what cases they did find, there was enough evidence to incarcerate the accused without going through a trial.”

“Do you think Sirius has a good case to be cleared?” Herbert asked with a frown.

“Yes, sir,” Rich said with a nod. “I figure we should have everything settled by the end of May.”

“And what about young Harry’s living situation?”

“I’m in the process of drawing up some papers for him to sign that will make whomever he wants as his legal guardian but there’s something I find troubling.”

“And what’s that?” Sirius asked in confusion.

“I can’t find anything on who his legal guardian actually is.”

“What do you mean?” Herbert asked, needing clarification.

“When I put out some enquiries about what papers I would need to get the current guardian to sign, the ministry official in charge of such paperwork informed me that no one had been placed as Harry’s legal guardian. In fact, there are no records of him ever being placed with his muggle relatives.”

“This is most disturbing,” the old man murmured as he frowned thoughtfully. “This means he was smuggled out of the Wizarding world and no one realized it. Have you investigated why he was placed with these muggles?”

“I assumed it was because James had no living relatives and Petunia was Lily’s sister,” Sirius said with a shrug. “I didn’t think there was anything more to it, really.”

“This needs to be investigated,” Herbert said with a drawn out sigh. “Alright, Rick, as Sirius’ lawyer, you can’t take Dumbledore to trial. You’ll have to get someone else to do that-“

“I’ll do it, sir,” Octavius volunteered with a nod. “I’ll need whatever you’ve gathered so far and we can collaborate on whatever we find.” Rick nodded in agreement.

“And about these muggles, talk to Harry about them,” Herbert said when they’d settled that matter. “Depending on what he tells you, you can, once the trial with Sirius is completed, take on that case on the boy’s behalf. Right now, we need information on those people and why they ended up with a magical child. There has to be more to it than simply being blood related. After all, there are enough people in the Wizarding world who are blood related that the boy shouldn’t have had to leave our world to be raised.”

“Agreed.”

* * *

Lucius took the opportunity to watch Harry as he shopped. It became apparent very quickly that the teenager didn’t feel comfortable doing so. He’d wanted to laugh at the lost look on Harry’s face before he’d realized it wasn’t an act.

“Harry, don’t you usually buy things for yourself?” he heard Draco ask in exasperation as they
looked at all the jewelry in the shop.

“Not this kind of stuff,” Harry replied as he shoved his hands further into his pockets. Lucius frowned in confusion. He knew the Potters hadn’t been poor, so why would this teenager not buy himself some kind of jewelry? Draco had been doing so since he was five, after all.

This was worth investigating…

“What kind of things do you usually buy, Harry?” he asked as he moved closer.

“Books for Hermione and Ginny, Quidditch equipment for Ron and the twins and some candy to divide between them,” Harry told him, shrugging dismissively. However, Lucius noticed that he never mentioned his relatives. He wondered what that meant.

“Is there nothing here that draws your attention, then?” Lucius asked thoughtfully, wondering if it was just the fact that this shop catered exclusively in rare items and trinkets.

“To be honest, sir,” the teenager said as he looked around at all the displayed items, hunching in on himself. “I wouldn’t know what to do with this kind of stuff, let alone know what someone would like in it.”

“Hm,” Lucius hummed thoughtfully. “Since this is to be a change of lifestyle for you, perhaps a change is in order in your appearance.”

“What do you suggest, Father?” Draco asked, only now seeming to realize Harry was uncomfortable.

“What would be the one thing no one would expect you to do?” Lucius asked, smiling gently at the confused look on the ebony haired teen. “Jewelry, tattoo, corrected vision, new clothes…”

“Well, I doubt anyone would associate any of those with me, sir,” Harry said with a rueful smile. “Everyone knows me as I am now, baggy clothes, scruffy look and all.”

“So then, maybe we should do all of those,” Draco suggested. “You could get your ear pierced, or wear a ring or necklace, and then we could get your eyes fixed so you won’t have to wear glasses anymore.”

“And the tattoo?” Harry asked in amusement.

“I’m sure we could think of something, but it doesn’t have to be today,” Lucius interrupted before Draco could comment, though the gleam in his eyes said he knew just what kind of tattoo Harry should get.

“I’d like something that advertises that I’m not the same person I was at the start of the year, actually,” Harry said with a thoughtful look on his face. “Maybe I should get an earring, something tasteful, though. I’m not someone who likes to draw too much attention to myself, after all.”

“A simple diamond, then… or maybe something to symbolize your transformation?” Draco asked with a shrug.

“Let’s look around at what’s displayed and see if something catches your attention, Harry,” Lucius murmured with a nod.

They looked at everything that was displayed, looking for the perfect item for Harry to wear… however, it wasn’t until they reached one by the door that something caught Harry’s attention.
Leaning closer to look at the earring, Lucius was impressed by the intricate details of the smoky dragon. It almost looked like it was transitioning from something else... and was the perfect representation of what Harry was going through at the moment, changing from his old self to this new person who could be free of manipulation, pain and fear.

“This one,” Harry murmured in excitement.

It was the most animated Lucius had seen the teen be since entering the shop. “Then we’ll get it.”

“How appropriate,” Draco said from beside them.

“Excellent choice, young sir,” the proprietor murmured as he pulled it out of the case. “Would you like for my assistant to put it in?”

“Yes, please,” Harry said with a nod.

It didn’t take long for the job to be done and soon, Harry was the proud new owner of an earring.

“Where would you like to go next?” Lucius asked the two teens as they stepped outside.

“Seeing as it’s almost noon, Father,” Draco said after casting a quick Tempus, “maybe we should make a few more stops before we go for lunch. Then we can stop at Madam Malkin’s for dress robes.”

“Very well,” Lucius murmured with a nod. That worked out fine because he had a feeling this would be another place Harry was going to be uncomfortable. From what he’d seen, the teen didn’t have much for clothes beyond what he was wearing. He was going to have to talk to Madam Malkin and see if she could also send him some decent clothes...

As the morning neared noon, Lucius was more convinced that something was wrong with Harry’s habits. Oh, sure, he smiled and laughed with Draco but he seemed to look out of place in the shops they visited... which was definitely odd.

Draco managed to talk Harry into having a tattoo placed on his body and now sported a phoenix on the side of his neck. In fact, it looked like it was flying out from under the teen’s clothes and up to towards his hairline. It wasn’t a big one, but then, it didn’t need to be. It actually complimented Harry’s tanned skin.

It was when they entered Flourish and Blotts that the teen seemed to relax slightly, though he remained alert to his surroundings. Just what had Dumbledore done to this child to make him so hyper aware of what happened around him?

* * *

Sunday, December 25th, 1994

Harry found this Christmas different from all the others he’d celebrated at Hogwarts. For one thing, there were more presents than he was used to.

From Lucius, he got a potion to fix his eyes, which he took after lunch so he wouldn’t have to wear glasses for the ball. From Narcissa, he got a couple of books on transfiguration and charms. From Severus, he got a book on various potions. From Sirius, he got a snake. That surprised Harry until Sirius told him it was to annoy Ron and Hermione, then he’d laughed. From Draco, he got an intricate ring to match the earring he now wore.

He was very touched by the gifts and decided to wear the ring to the ball.
“Are we ready to go?” Draco asked as he stopped outside Harry’s door at four o’clock, looking him up and down in appreciation. “Annabelle and Rochelle will be waiting for us at the castle.”

“Are you sure about this?” he asked as he looked at his reflection one last time with a look of disgust for his hair. There was no point in trying to tame his hair since it never laid flat for him anyway. “I think I’d rather watch the shock factor on their faces when we show up together.”

“Ah, but propriety dictates that we blend in, not give people heart attacks,” Draco drawled in amusement. “No matter how much I’d rather do it. There are going to be adults from the club there to make sure no one breaks the rules. Since Annabelle and Rochelle are in the same boat we are, it simply made sense to go together. Shall we go?”

“Fine,” Harry grumbled and followed Draco downstairs where Severus was waiting to Floo them to Hogwarts via his fireplace. “We’re coming back here after the ball, right?” he asked as the thought occurred to him.

“Actually, we’ll sleep at school tonight and return tomorrow,” the blonde said with a shrug. “It makes more sense to do it that way than coming back after midnight.”

“Alright,” he said with a resigned sigh, not looking forward to spending the night in the tower with Ron.

“Looking good,” Snape murmured when they entered the foyer. “The ladies are waiting for you outside the Great Hall. Are you ready?”

“Yes, sir,” they said in unison before they stepped through the fireplace and into Snape’s quarters at Hogwarts. Walking side by side, they made their way upstairs where the two girls were, indeed, waiting for them. “Oh my god,” Harry murmured as he realized who was coming down the stairs. “Is that Ron?”

Sure enough, Ronald Weasley stopped at the top landing, looking uncomfortable in the most hideous dress robes possibly made. “Wow,” Draco murmured with an amused smirk. “I didn’t think the Victorian era was back in style. Those around them heard him and looked up at where Ron stood, sulking, and laughed.

“Is that Weasley?” Pansy asked as she came up behind them, Annabelle and Rochelle moving over to them as well.

Ron moved then, slinking into the Great Hall as quickly as he could and Harry felt sorry for him for a few seconds. It seemed his former friend didn’t have a date tonight… but then he remembered everything Ron had done to him and pushed it out of his mind. “So, who goes with who here?” he asked as he looked at the two girls who were to be their dates.

“Well,” Annabelle said with a smile as she reached out to take Draco’s arm. “Since Draco asked, I’ll go with him and Rochelle can go with you, Harry.”

“Works for me,” Harry said with a playful smile as he bowed slightly to the pretty brunette beside him, holding out his arm for her to take. “Shall we go in, Rochelle?” he asked politely.

Rochelle laughed good-humouredly as she placed her hand in the crook of Harry’s arm. “By all means, sir.”

“It’s a good thing Annabelle and Draco know we’re only kidding or we might be in a tight spot with them later,” he teased softly as he led her over to the table Draco had said they were supposed to sit at.
“I know,” she said with a soft sigh. “It’s too bad we couldn’t really go with whom we wanted to, isn’t it?”

“Ah, but the rules dictate that we not give anyone heart attacks.”

Rochelle laughed in surprise. “You know, I didn’t think of it that way.”

“Draco’s always good at pointing things in a light no one else would think of,” he said with a sly wink, making her laugh again as he pulled out the chair for her to sit. He knew that the dancing wouldn’t be until after supper so he had a little while to relax before he was required to dance.

He was nervous, but Draco had coached him expertly in a few of the popular dances and he was fairly certain he wouldn’t make a complete fool of himself.

**

Harry lay in his bed in the tower, a small smile on his face. Draco had managed to find a quiet spot for one of the waltzes and he’d gotten to dance with the blonde teen like he’d wanted to. No one but the girls had seen them, but that didn’t matter, since they’d taken the opportunity to do the same thing.

All in all, it had been a great evening.

He turned over onto his side when the door opened to allow a few of his dorm mates into the room. Ron had been the first of their year to return to the tower and had been already in bed by the time Harry had crawled into his own, tired but happy.

The curtains had been tightly closed but there had been light coming from the edges. Harry was too light hearted to care what the red-head was doing in there. Neville had come in with him and they’d joked softly as they got ready for bed.

With a contented sigh, he closed his eyes and dreamt of dancing with Draco again.
Harry was at the club, learning how to be a proper master to Draco, though they were dressed in their everyday clothes instead of the ones they were supposed to wear at the club.

Before Christmas, he’d thought that all that was required of him was just to order Draco around and stuff like that, but now, he realized that it was more like a leadership role. Sure, there he had control, but that didn’t mean as much as he’d first thought.

Draco’s role as his slave, he was learning, was more of a following role with exceptions. Snape had been right when he’d told Harry that, as a slave, Draco could still refuse to do things if he didn’t feel comfortable doing them. Harry was learning, though, that he could negotiate ways around the orders that were more comfortable for the blonde teen.

They’d been testing that for the last few days. Harry would be told to ask for something outrageous – on purpose – and Draco would refuse. At the moment, Harry was racking his brain on how to reword the simple request he’d asked for and been denied. For these exercises, they were required to sit facing each other while an adult sat to one side, watching them carefully…and it wasn’t always the same adult, either.

Currently, they were sitting with Lord Herbert and Harry had been given the task of asking for the rock in Draco’s hand. The rock was to represent odd things, from acts that would probably be fun to try once they were of age to gifts given by another master. He’d been amused at first when he realized what he was supposed to do, but now he realized just how good of a training tool this was.

Draco had told him on Christmas Eve that despite the fact that sex didn’t enter into their dynamics right now, that would change later on, once they were bound together… and it would wait until Harry turned fifteen. He thought that was a long time to wait, but those were the rules and Draco insisted that they would follow them or they’d never be allowed to be together and Harry would be kicked out of the club forever.

He found the thought of being kicked out and losing Draco’s friendship funny now, especially since they’d never gotten along before this had been revealed to him. And now that they were getting along, Harry found he didn’t want to lose that. Also, since he didn’t want to be kicked out now, he willingly followed the rules… it was a novel experience, actually. He’d never been one to care about rules thanks to Dumbledore, but not in this instance.

Another change for him was his sight. After Lucius had given him a potion, he’d taken it before the ball and had decided to forgo tricking everyone with a fake pair of glasses, not wanting to hide who he was anymore. Besides, it went well with the tattoo and earring. If Dumbledore didn’t like it, then too bad.

“You must give it to me, Slave,” he murmured, dragging his mind back to the matter at hand. He’d found his mind wondering a lot in the last few days and was getting annoyed with it.

“Why, Master?” Draco asked politely, blinking calmly at him.
“It didn’t come from me and as you’re my slave, it’s forbidden for you to accept gifts without my knowledge or consent,” Harry said just as calmly. He’d found this was an excellent way to keep his temper in check… though he’d lost it a few times in the first couple of days and had had to walk away to calm himself down. It had been suggested, in fact, the first time he’d lost it.

“As you wish,” Draco said, placing the rock into Harry’s open hand. “May I ask for it back at a later time, Master?”

“You may,” Harry said with a nod.

“Very good, Harry,” Lord Herbert said as he shifted in his chair. “You’re learning quickly how to control your temper. I thought we’d have a harder time than we did. I’m pleased with your progress.”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said with a smile. “I’m learning that losing my temper doesn’t do any good, especially when there’s nothing I can do to really change the outcome. I’m finding that I have to unlearn things I learned while living with my relatives.”

“Explain, please,” the older man said as he picked up his cup of tea.

“When I live with the Dursleys,” Harry began with a slight frown, finding it hard to talk about his life with his mother’s family. “It doesn’t matter what I do. I’m punished for every little thing that goes wrong in that house, from food falling on the floor because of Dudley to my uncle having a bad day at work. I’ve learned that if I act out before that happens, then I have a reason for being locked in my room.”

“I see,” Lord Herbert murmured thoughtfully. “And it happens often?”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said with a sigh, rubbing his hands on his pants, realizing he’d said more than he’d intended. He wisely kept the fact that he was locked in his room for days and that he was pretty much starved during that entire time to himself. They didn’t need to know that.

“I think that’s enough for today,” Lord Herbert said finally with a decisive nod. “Tomorrow night, Lucius will bring you both here so you can observe everyone again. This time it’ll be different from your first visit. There won’t be anyone following you around like last time. That way, you’ll be able to see how everyone – including the students from school – interacts with each other here. There will also be more instructions on what’s to happen this summer for master and slave bindings.”

“Yes, sir,” they answered obediently as they rose to their feet to leave. Harry placed the rock on the table beside his chair. “Thank you, sir. I really appreciate what everyone’s doing to help me.”

“You’re welcome, Harry,” the old man said with a gentle smile. “We’re enjoying having you join us.”

“You’re doing great,” Draco said as they walked down the corridor towards the Floo chamber. “Better than I’d expected, actually.”

“I’ve always been a quick study,” Harry said with a shrug. “I found it frustrating the first time, but now, I think it’s actually fun.”

“Good, if you’re having fun, then you learn better.” Harry looked at him in surprise and Draco shrugged dismissively. “It’s something I noticed a long time ago, when you were still friends with Weasley and Granger. If you were having fun with whatever you were doing, you gave it your all to learn how it worked.”
“Watching me for a while, have you?” Harry joked, grinning at the slight tinting of Draco’s cheeks.

“I was taught to watch my enemy carefully and learn his or her weakness,” Draco sniffed haughtily, making Harry laugh. “Let’s go home and relax before supper,” he said, ignoring him. “This way, if you have questions, you can ask me.”

Harry followed the blonde through to Malfoy Manor. He was enjoying his time away from Hogwarts… more so than he’d thought he would, in fact. They were in the sitting room, joking and relaxing when Narcissa joined them.

Harry smiled at the pleasant woman, realizing that, before this year had begun, he’d never really met her. “Hello, Mrs. Malfoy,” he greeted as she settled herself beside Draco. He had no fear that someone would catch them doing something inappropriate because they didn’t want to be separated or have someone say they couldn’t be trusted to be alone together.

“Please, Harry,” she murmured with a smile. “Call me Narcissa. We don’t stand on formality at home. Besides, we’re going to be close now that you and Draco are together as master and slave.”

“Of course, Narcissa,” Harry said with a nod. “How was your day?”

“Relaxing,” she murmured as she prepared herself a cup of tea. “Your father should be home soon, Draco, have you two finished the assignments you were given?”

“Yes, Mother,” Draco said with a nod. “Harry and I did them last night so they’d be out of the way.”

“Good. Harry,” she said, turning her attention towards him now. “Sirius sent a note earlier to say he would be over for supper and it seems Severus will be here as well.”

“That’s great!” Harry said in excitement. He hadn’t seen Sirius since Christmas and found he’d missed his godfather.

“The note said he have something to discuss with you,” Narcissa murmured as she took a sip of her tea.

“He didn’t say what it was about?” Harry asked with a slight frown. He wondered what could be going on now.

“Apparently, it’s something that couldn’t be added to a note,” she said with a shake of her head. “I’m sure it’s nothing to worry about, though.”

“I’m sure you’re right,” he said kindly. He’d come to like this woman during his stay here. She was always polite and even spoken. Of course, he’d yet to earn her disapproval. He was sure he’d do something to do that, considering his upbringing.

As it got closer to supper, Sirius and Remus joined them in the sitting room, then Snape. It wasn’t until Lucius came into the room that Sirius said anything, however. “I’ve hired a lawyer to begin the process of clearing my name,” he told them all.

“That’s great,” Harry said in pleased surprise. “How long do you think it’ll take?”

“Parker said it could take almost a year before anything comes out of it,” Remus answered with a slight shrug. “It depends on how long the Wizengamot decides to drag their feet.”

“I wonder if I should involve Fudge in this,” Lucius murmured with a thoughtful frown. “It might
expedite things at a faster pace.”

“I’m sure he’ll insist when he finds out that Barty Crouch placed me in Azkaban without trial,” Sirius said with a bark of humourless laughter.

“That wouldn’t surprise me,” Snape said with a nod.

“Wait,” Harry said, confused for a minute. “I thought Fudge was daft to everything that happened around him? I heard a few people say he was more of an idiot than efficient as Minister.”

“Whoever said that were being spiteful. Fudge is more involved in what happens in the Wizarding world than you realize,” Lucius told him with a shake of his head. “At the moment, he’s working hard at reversing some of the laws written by some of the more ignorant people in the Wizengamot of the past.”

“I’m confused,” Harry murmured as he rubbed at his forehead.

“It’s obvious whoever lied to you about our Minister did so to colour your view towards the man. Cornelius Fudge is neither stupid nor blind to the corruptions going through the Ministry than I am, Harry,” the tall blonde told him gently. “I think from now on, maybe you should think of things in reverse where certain things are concerned. Dumbledore, for example? Cornelius Fudge being another?”

“I’m starting to see a pattern here,” Sirius said with a troubled frown. “Seems someone is trying to limit your knowledge of how the Wizarding world really works.”

“Indeed,” Narcissa said with a sigh. “It’s time for supper,” she murmured as she noticed a house-elf standing by the door to the dining room. “Let’s go eat.”

“Professor Snape, do you think I’m caught up with my assignments yet?” Harry asked Snape as they walked together.

“Please, Harry, call me Severus,” Snape murmured as they sat down at the table. “Since we’re getting to know each other better than the last three years have allowed, I believe it would be more appropriate. And yes, you’re finally caught up with the rest of class. I might throw in a couple of potions that the others won’t be making, just to see if you have the aptitude for potion making. If I see that you don’t then I’ll keep to the school curriculum.”

“Thanks, Severus,” Harry said with a smirk.

* * *

Saturday, December 30, 1994

Harry sat in one of the chairs with Draco kneeling beside it, watching everyone as they interacted with each other. It wasn’t much different than when they were in the Room of Requirements, actually. Around him sat the friends he’d made since joining the club.

It was actually fun for a change, but then everything had changed for Harry so it wasn’t really that surprising.

Lord Herbert and two of the remaining three men who were in charge had already gone through the scheduled talks and they were just waiting for the instructions the older man had said they were going to get… and it seemed like it was going to be addressed.

“Now, I know you are all eager to go home and get some rest but there’s one last thing that needs
to be addressed,” Lord Herbert said from the front of the group. “This summer will single the
beginnings of the bond being initiated between certain masters and slaves who will be coming of
age.”

“We also understand that some of you have already reached the correct age to bring the bond to
fruition, but you’ll have to wait until the start of summer before it can be completed,” the man on
Lord Herbert’s right said with a nod towards some of the fifteen year old students.

“Since the bond is only started here, it usually takes a few days of constant contact between the
two being bonded,” the one on Lord Herbert’s left said with a smile of amusement and apology.
“Hence the reason for the wait. School is not the place to be when fulfilling the contract bond if
we wish to remain undetected.”

“Precisely,” Lord Herbert continued, taking over the conversation again. “Tonight, we are going
to take advantage of the fact that all those who turned or will turn fifteen by the time summer ends
to instruct you in how this will go. We will all take a small group of masters and slaves into
separate rooms for the instructions. Lord DaVinci,” the old man said with a nod to the man on his
right, “and Lord Visor will choose who they’ll instruct. Those left will follow me.”

As Harry watched, DaVinci and then Visor moved around the room, pointing to the odd master.
Those people rose to their feet until they were done. It became apparent to him that those chosen
would follow with their slaves, making the choices even.

As each man finished, they led their group out of the room and down the hallway. Those who
remained rose to their feet and followed Lord Herbert out of the room. They were led into a room
at the far end of the corridor and the old man waited until they had settled themselves down before
addressing the room in general.

“Once school has let out, those who are masters and are already fifteen will be bound to their
chosen slaves, providing that their slave is also fifteen. Every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night
until everyone is done, everyone of age will meet here at the club so that we may catch up. Once
everyone who’s been bound, things will die down to what would normally take place.

“Now, this is what will be expected of you during the ceremony. Those who are fifteen will help
the one who’s going through the ritual. The slaves will help the slave and same with the masters.
Potions and lotions needed for this will be provided by the adults who will be on hand to answer
any questions you will have.

“No one under the age of fifteen, with the exception of those who are to be bound this summer,
will be permitted at the club during these ceremonies. Once the body is prepared, the ones to be
bound will be led into the main chamber where the ones who’ve gone through this will be
waiting. During the purification stage, it is suggested that the one going through the ceremony
clear their mind of everything but what is to happen between master and slave. Don’t think about
the people who’ll be there to witness the bond.

“You’ll be led into the main room where the ceremony is to take place. The room will be mostly
in darkness so that you won’t be able to see everyone there. The only light will be at the front of
the room. When the slave arrives into the room, he or she is to kneel on the platform, head bowed
respectfully until his or her master arrives.

“A potion will be given to the slave by the master which will prepare the slave’s mind and body
for the binding to take place. Please remember that this first time is meant to dominate the slave.
There might be a little pain at the start, but the potion given at the beginning will take effect and
allow for pleasure to take hold not long afterwards. It will also imprint on the slave the feel of their
master’s body on theirs.
“This allows the bond to take hold. During the week that follows, the bond will grow and the slave will be able to tell when their master wants them. It also allows the master to feel how their slave feels. This can get quite interesting when the slave sleeps with someone else,” Lord Herbert joked and the teens laughed as they realized what he meant.

A hand was raised by someone Harry didn’t recognize. “Yes, Jeremy?”

“Is it also the same way for the slave? When the master sleeps with someone else, I mean,” he asked, and he was surprised by the slight blush that stained the teen’s cheeks. He’d have thought, growing up as they had, this would all be normal… guess not.

“More so than when the slave does, yes,” Lord Herbert said with a slight nod. “You must remember, the slave is there to provide – to some extent – for their master. Some masters use this to call their slaves to them. The longer the slave ignores the needs of his or her master, the more the need increases until it’s all they can think of. Some masters will actually use this as a means of punishment, tying their slaves in one place to make them stay and then allowing their own body to call to the slave. It’s one way to punish that causes no lasting pain. Yes, Zackary?”

“But what if the master is sleeping with their spouse?” another teen asked, frowning slightly.

“That’s different. Yes, it’ll heighten the slave’s libido, but that’ll be it. It simply means that when the master sleeps with their chosen partner, the slave will also get some action,” Lord Herbert said with an amused grin, making the teens laugh at the joke.

“Now, the week that follows the ceremony means that either the slave or the master stays with the other. The parents of either one will allow this since you end up sleeping together every night. Sometimes, master and slave won’t even come out of the room for the entire time. This is normal. It simply means that the bond will be deeper than most. It doesn’t happen often, but it does happen.”

That surprised Harry. He’d have thought that the master and slave would only be allowed in the same bedroom at night. Then he wondered just how many master and slave bonds were that deep… it was definitely interesting, anyway.

“Once the week is done, things will go back to normal,” the older man finished. “Are there any further questions?” When no hands were put up, Lord Herbert nodded and dismissed everyone. “Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy, please remain,” he said as everyone rose to their feet.

They stayed where they were, waiting for the crowd to dissipate before making their way to the front. “Yes, sir?” Harry asked respectfully, Draco kneeling beside him as was proper.

“Since you’re still new to this, Harry, I want you to keep coming here for the rest of Christmas break so you can learn more.”

“Yes, sir,” he said with a nod. In a way, he was glad because this meant he would learn more. The exercises in patience had been worth it, after all. He didn’t feel like he was chaffing to do something against the rules.

It was great.

“Tomorrow will begin your training again but not the day after. Everyone deserves to have New Years’ day off, I think,” Lord Herbert said with a sly wink. “Even us old folk.” Harry laughed as they bid the old man goodbye, leaving the room at the clear dismissal.

“What are you thinking?” Draco asked curiously.
“That I’m lucky I found out that Dumbledore was a fraud,” Harry said with a smirk. “I always knew he was manipulative, I just didn’t think it was this bad.”

“At least you’re no longer under his thumb.”

“Actually, until he’s no longer at school, we’re all under his thumb,” Harry said with a shrug. “Nothing we can do about it right now.”

“True.”

* * *

**Tuesday, January 3rd, 1995**

Harry stopped as he neared the doorway of the library in surprise and slight embarrassment as he took in the scene in front of him. Narcissa was pinned against a shelf, half her dress had been pulled up so that Lucius had access to the bare flesh underneath the material, her back against his front.

He meant to leave, to give them their privacy, but couldn't seem to make his legs move as he listened to her whimpers and moans as Lucius' hands caressed her, murmuring things in her ear too low for him to make out.

"Please, Lucius," he heard her cry out as she pushed back, begging with her body, the way Harry had seen slaves do with their masters at the club. "Take me as if you were my master."

Arms came around him, surprising him. However, he relaxed when he recognized Draco's scent. "Beautiful, isn't it?" Draco murmured in his ear before taking the earlobe into his mouth, nibbling on the soft flesh. "Mother willingly submits to him in a way she won't with anyone else."

Harry allowed his hands to inch back, gripping Draco's hip so he could push back against the other boy. "Will you beg me just as prettily as she does?" he whispered so they wouldn't be discovered watching the two adults in the other room.

Draco hissed in pleasure. "I always hoped I’d be able to," he murmured as looked over at where his father was currently pushing into his mother's body, knowing it was a true match between his parents. "Who knows, I might still get what they have."

He moved around Harry so that he was standing in front of him, pushing him back against the wall. "I'm not allowed to let you take me yet, but I can suck you off," he whispered seductively. "Will you, as my master, allow me to do that?" he asked, his long fingers caressing Harry’s half hard cock.

Harry gasped in pleasure, his hips coming up to push against the hand. "Do it, Draco. Show me just how well you know how to please your master," he panted eagerly. He had the satisfaction of seeing Draco's eyes widen in surprise and pleasure and he licked his lips in anticipation as he knelt down in front of Harry. His fingers trembled slightly as he undid Harry's zipper so he could pull the hardening length out.

Where Draco had pushed Harry against wall was in shadows, which allowed Harry to watch Draco's parents privately even as he bit back a groan of pleasure as he was enveloped in wet heat. He'd never felt anything quite like it and he liked that it was Draco doing it to him. He looked down at Draco, groaning softly at what he saw. He’d never seen anything more erotic in his life, made more so when he realized Draco was playing with himself at the same time.
It took all his concentration not to spill himself in Draco’s mouth, wanting to make it last. Looking up at Lucius and Narcissa, he gasped, not realizing his hips seemed to move in time to Lucius’ as the man rode Narcissa hard, watched as the woman clutched at the shelf in front of her.

His fingers threaded through the blonde lock before him, his eyes closing as pleasure spiked through him. He didn’t last long, though, biting his lip to keep from crying out as his body reached its peak, spilling himself down Draco’s throat, moaning softly.

It was a few minutes before he could get his mind to focus on anything, by that time, Draco was standing before him once more. He pulled the blonde to him, kissing him deeply, making him moan in pleasure. “Let’s go to your room,” he whispered when he finally pulled away.

With an eager nod, Draco took his hand and led the way upstairs.

* * *

Draco was sitting beside Harry, as usual, as the train took them back to school. Things were proceeding better than he’d expected. With the brunet’s upbringing, he’d actually thought they’d have more trouble convincing him that this was all real.

It was a relief, however, when it turned out that they didn’t.

All in all, everything was going well. By the end of summer, he and Harry would be bound together and if Draco were honest with himself, it was something he’d wanted since he’d first met Harry at Madam Malkin’s.

After he’d found Harry watching his parents in the library, they’d gotten quite a few make-out sessions, though nothing as heavy as that afternoon. He knew they had to be careful, which was why they didn’t give the adults reason to separate them or lose the trust they currently had.

He closed his eyes as the rocking of the train began to lull him to sleep, feeling the heat coming off Harry’s shoulder. It was strangely comforting, really.

Draco knew he had to get Harry to talk about his life with his relatives – had actually been surprised he’d said as much as he had to Lord Herbert – with the other adults guiding him, but didn’t want to push in case it made Harry clam up.

He remembered the scars Harry had on his back, knew that he had to get him to talk about it but if he pushed too soon, it would only make things worse, maybe even drive Harry away. He didn’t want that to happen. Not now that he’d finally gotten what he’d always wanted.

The funny thing was, now that he’d gotten Harry, his dreams had taken a definitely erotic twist. He wondered if the other teen was having such dreams… though he wouldn’t ask. It was too embarrassing to begin with. There was no way he was going to ask such a question, in case he was the only one having them… though at this rate, he’d have a lot of material to get his master to enact.

Just the thought of it made him shift slightly in discomfort, glad for the robes he wore. If he kept it up, it was going to turn into one long trip back to Hogwarts, he realized with a mental smirk, and it was his own fault!

* * *

Morning of February 24, 1995

Harry watched as Hedwig flew down towards him, smiling as he watched her graceful glide to the
Slytherin table. When she landed in front of him, he reached out to caress her feathers before handing her a slice of bacon. “Let’s see what this is about, shall we?” he murmured softly as she bit into the bacon, ignoring the fact that he was taking the letter from her.

“Who’s it from, Harry?” Pansy asked, though she had to know it was from Sirius… or Remus.

“Remus,” he told her as he skimmed the letter. “Seems the progression of Sirius’ pardon is going according to plan and it looked like he’ll be a free man by the end of May. I guess that means he’ll be able to petition for full custody of me. Then I won’t have to live with the Dursleys ever again.”

“Good. If that can be resolved before summer, things should go smoother for you,” Draco murmured before taking a bite of his toast. Harry sighed as he watched his owl fly out of the Great Hall, bacon eaten and another one in her beak.

Draco was right, in a way… now if only his school life were calmer instead of being chaotic…

Hermione seemed to have reverted to her earlier temperament, telling Harry that she was under Dumbledore’s thumb again. It was unclear how that had come about, but there was nothing more he could do about it. He was of two minds about that… he wanted to be friends with her again, but with her take charge attitude when it came to down to it, he also didn’t want her to be his friend. It was very confusing…

As for Ron… well, that still seemed to be a sore spot… made worse since the Yule Ball.

He’d begun noticing the difference with the other students now that the red-head wasn’t dominating Harry’s attention. He’d never realized people had kept their distance from him until Ron was no longer there. He now had more friends than he’d ever dreamed he’d ever have, from all the houses, not just Gryffindor and it wasn’t just because they were friends with the boy-who-lived, but Harry himself.

Ron was still glaring at him with a hatred Harry didn’t understand. What had he done to him that was so wrong? It couldn’t be just because he and Draco were getting along better now than before. There had to be more to it… right?

After the first time he’d been beaten up by his supposed friend, Ron had kept his distance from him but that was probably because Harry was always surrounded by people and the red head didn’t have the chance...

When everyone was done eating breakfast, they all trudged down to the lake where the champions were getting ready for the second task. Seemed it was to take place underwater. Harry had hoped that Ron had given up on his vendetta during the Christmas holidays but he was still glaring at Harry from where he was spotted on the other side of the platform.

Harry was thankful for the people between them…

Currently, he had all his new friends around him – most of which were in the club – as they waited for the whistle to blow. He was glad the Drumstrang students had finally come to accept that Harry hadn’t put his name in the goblet and now weren’t as cold-shouldered towards him as they’d been since the Hallowen mess.

That was a bonus, he guessed…

He was trying to ignore Ron and enjoy the day out… easier said than done, however. He could feel the eyes boring into the back of his head, making him uncomfortable. He had the feeling that something was going to happen, thought he wasn’t sure what it would be, or even when.
They cheered as the champions began lining up to jump into the water and soon the whistle signaled for them to jump in. “Who do you think will win?” Neville asked him in excitement.

“Don’t know.” Harry answered him with a grin. “All depends on who can swim the fastest and get up here with whatever they’re sent to retrieve, I guess.”

“Care to place a wager, Harry?” George asked him with a smirk.

“You never know, you might win,” Fred added from the other side of him.

“I suppose,” Harry said with a shrug.

“How much and on who?” George asked, pen poised over the paper in his hand.

“How about three galleons?” Harry said with a slight frown, as he thought about who had the better chances of winning. “On Krum.”

“Done!” the twins said in unison.

Time passed slowly as they waited for the champions to resurface so they sat around, joking and talking together. Excitement peaked when someone yelled out that they’d seen someone break the surface a ways out.

Everyone stood quickly, craning their necks to see over the other students.

“And the first Champion to surface is….” they heard over the excited crowd of students milling around them, “is Viktor Krum!”

The cheering around them was loud, echoing over the slight waves of the Black Lake. Harry turned to grin at his friends and realized that Ron was closer than he’d been earlier. He felt his skin crawl in discomfort but didn’t say anything to the others. “Once this is done, what are we doing?”

“Homework,” Draco told him. “Professor Snape gave me another assignment for you to complete. I’ll give you the details later,” he said with a sneer at Ron. “What do you want, Weasel?”

“None of your business, Ferret,” Ron growled out with a hateful look at Draco. Harry had almost forgotten how much Ron hated the nickname Draco had given him back in first year.

“Oh, Ron,” Ginny said in exasperation, rolling her eyes at her brother’s attitude. “Will you just stop it? Everyone else is making an effort to get along. Why can’t you?”

Without warning, he pulled back his arm and punched her in the shoulder blade, the force knocking her into Harry. In fact, if he hadn’t been standing there to catch her, she would’ve gone into the water. Ginny cried out in pain, bringing tears to her eyes. Unfortunately, this brought a reaction from everyone around them who’d seen Ron attack his sister.

Fred and George jumped first, shoving Ron away from her. The only reason he remained on his feet was because of the other students around them. “You guys are all traitors,” Ron told his siblings with a glare of betrayal. “You’ll soon see that this is a mistake. We’ll see how you treat me then.”

With that, he whirled around and pushed his way through the crowd.

“We need to take her to the infirmary,” Fred said when he tried to move Ginny’s arm and it caused her to hiss in pain.
“Let’s go,” Draco said with a determined look in his eyes, surprising the others. None of them would’ve thought that Draco would willingly take a Gryffindor to the infirmary – place them there in, sure, but not help them – least of all a Weasley.

Harry was the first one to move, knowing Draco was trying to help. “Come on, Ginny,” he murmured, gently cradling her injured side towards him so the other students wouldn’t hit into it. They managed to get her into one of the boats, the twins, Harry and Draco climbing in with her. The others piled into two others and they all made their way towards shore.

It didn’t take them long to usher Ginny into the school and up the stairs to the infirmary. “What is the meaning of this racket?” Madam Pomfrey demanded as they noisily trundled into the hospital wing. “What happened?” she asked in surprise as she took in the group of mixed houses.

“Ron punched Ginny,” Fred said, taking the lead as Harry led Ginny towards one of the beds. “Every time she moves her arm, she says it hurts.”

“Let’s assess the damage, Miss Weasley,” the Mediwitch murmured as she gestured the students to move back. She waved her wand, casting a diagnostic scan, frowning slightly at whatever it revealed. “Yes, he bruised the bone. That had to be quite the blow.”

“If I hadn’t caught her, she might have landed in the Black Lake,” Harry said, nodding when she turned to look at him.

The nurse’s lips tightened in disapproval before she walked away from them, coming back with a Healing potion. “This should take care of the pain. Your arm should be alright by morning.” They watched as Pomfrey made sure Ginny had taken the potion before putting her arm in a sling. “Try not to move it too much until then. I want to see you after breakfast, Miss Weasley.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Ginny murmured with a sigh of resignation.

“I’ll come with you, Ginny,” Blaise volunteered.

“Thanks, Blaise.”

* * *

Ron glared across the room to where Harry sat next to Malfoy.

Oh, how he hated the Ferret, always getting his way. He’d thought he’d gotten one up on the annoying teen when Harry had been placed in Gryffindor. Ron had thought he was going to get the attention now since he would be Harry’s only friend…

Dumbledore had promised him, after all, before he began his first year.

When Hermione had joined their little group, Ron had been jealous until Dumbledore had assured him that it wouldn’t change anything… and it hadn’t. In fact, Hermione had taken a liking to him last year. Ron had figured it was Dumbledore’s doing.

But then everything had gone wrong this year.

Harry had begun pulling away from him, going for walks by himself for hours, not coming back till it was late… had he been meeting with Malfoy then? He’d followed him a few times, but all Harry had done was walk around the castle and grounds before going back to the tower.

Then things had gotten even worse in October. Harry had left him behind, changing his class schedule so that he was alone in Trelawney’s class. He didn’t believe Harry when he said Malfoy
had been assigned to tutor him. After all, he would’ve gone to Hermione if he needed tutoring.

Now, however, it was worse than before because Harry wouldn’t even talk to him and Hermione. Then in November, Hermione had begun avoiding him. He couldn’t allow that to happen – he had plans for the ignorant girl – so he’d gone to the Headmaster.

It hadn’t taken long for the old man to bring her back to Ron’s side… though he could tell there was a difference in her now. He couldn’t put his finger on what it was… not yet anyway.

He was surprised out of his thoughts when a letter was dropped in front of him. As soon as he registered it, it began to fume and he hesitated slightly before opening it, knowing this wasn’t going to be pleasant.

*Ronald Weasley!* it began screaming at him.

*How dare you strike Ginny! What is wrong with you that you would attack your own sister! If I hear you’ve attacked anyone again, your father and I will step in and you won’t like what we do!*

There was complete silence in the Great Hall as the letter tore itself to pieces and Ron knew his face was turning red with embarrassment by the heat he could feel. How dare his mother berate him in public?!

Grabbing his bag, he quickly moved out of the room, heading for his first class of the day, followed by a few sniggers. As soon as the door closed behind him the noise level in the room increased and he just knew they were laughing at him for being yelled at by his mother.

He would show them!

He was sitting in Potions class when the rest of his year mates came in, staring stonily at the black board to wait for the class to begin.

“So, Ron,” Seamus said with a snigger as he walked past his desk. “Gonna attack someone again?”

The other students snickered as they heard the comment and Ron saw red. Before he realized what he was doing, he’d launched himself at the Irish boy. He’d chosen the wrong person to try and attack this time, apparently, because Seamus gave as good as he got from the angered redhead.

A strong grip on the back of his robes managed to drag him off the other boy and he glared up at the Potions master, knowing this wasn’t good but not really caring. This was the man who was behind Harry leaving him behind, he just knew it.

“Mr. Weasley,” Snape drawled with a hard look in his eyes. “Fighting again, are we?”

“He started it!” he spat out, turning to glare at Seamus, who had Harry standing in front of him, easily restraining the other teen with a light hand on his chest.

“He’s not worth it, Seamus,” he heard Harry say softly and that pissed him off even more. He tried to launch himself at his former friend but Snape yanked him back easily.

“Detention for the next week, Mr. Weasley,” Snape said with a look of satisfaction in his dark eyes. “And fifty points from Gryffindor for attacking a fellow student. Now sit down at your desk before I decide more is required to get my point across.”

When Snape released his robes, Ron yanked them back into place before he sat down in his seat,
not caring that he nearly dumped himself onto the floor with the force of it. He would get them back for this.

**

He had a plan to get back at the two boys when his mum and dad showed up before breakfast the next day. He bit back a groan as they stopped him. He’d hoped they wouldn’t hear about this for a few days so he could get his revenge, but with a sigh of frustration, he followed them up to Dumbledore’s office.

“Molly,” Dumbledore murmured after he’d been told what had been happening, looking at Ron with a look of disappointment. Well, too damn bad! The old man wasn’t keeping his promise!

“Arthur, might I speak with Ronald alone?”

“Of course, Albus,” Molly said as she rose to her feet, Ron’s father not far behind her.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” Dumbledore snapped out suddenly, surprising Ron at the change in demeanor.

“Huh?” he asked stupidly.

“You’re going to stop this fighting,” the Headmaster growled out, eyes snapping with anger, “and allow the plans I have in motion to continue or I’m going to make sure Harry not being your friend is the least of your problems. Do I make myself clear?”

“I don’t really care what you have planned, old man,” Ron snapped back, his anger coming out in the face of this verbal attack. “You promised me if I did what you wanted that Harry would be my friend and I’d be famous. Then you threw Hermione into it and said she’d be mine to do with as I wanted. She might be back now but she’s different.”

“I already dealt with Ms. Granger,” Dumbledore told him calmly, standing up to look down at him. “I see I’m going to have to do this again,” he heard and frowned at the cryptic words. Before he could question it, a spell struck him in the chest and he toppled over.

“Now, Ronald,” he heard as awareness came back to him. “I suggest you not get into any more fights,” the Headmaster berated gently and he realized that he was in the old man’s office and his parents were there. What had happened? Fight? What? “If you do, I’ll have no choice but send you home. Do I make myself clear, young man?”

“Yes, sir,” he murmured though he had no idea what he was talking about. Why would he fight?

“You’re free to go back to class now,” Dumbledore murmured as he held out a note for him to give to his teacher.

As soon as he touched the note, everything came back to him: the fight with Seamus and the detention he’d earned because of it. “I’m sorry for fighting, sir. I don’t know what came over me.”

“It’s alright, Ron,” the Headmaster said with a smile. “Just remember to keep a hold on your temper.”

“Yes, sir.”

**

* * *

Wednesday, May 10th, 1995
Sirius sat in the court room with his lawyer, facing the Minister and all the Wizengamot who were looking down at him. He understood that Barty Crouch’s own trial would be held afterwards so that this could be resolved as soon as possible.

He knew he was taking a chance, being in the Ministry, but he needed to clear his name in order to adopt Harry. He wasn’t sure if he would go back to being an Auror… of course, it wasn’t like he really needed the money, being as rich as he was. Being an Auror had simply been something to do so he wouldn’t be sitting at home doing nothing.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the Wizengamot, Minister Fudge, we’re gathered today to hear the information on Lord Sirius Black’s alleged unjust incarceration in Azkaban,” Parker said clearly as he stood in front of the table, facing the men and women above him. “I say ‘alleged’ because I prefer you to decide if his incarceration was just or not. You’ll hear how Mr. Bartemius Crouch Sr., without proof or even a trial, sent Lord Black to Azkaban for no more reason than suspicion of treason.”

Everyone shifted, murmuring softly amongst themselves as they realized what today would entail. They weren’t sure what to make of it just yet, that much was certain. It was a big deal to accuse one person of putting another in jail, made even worse because that person was a Ministry official.

“Begin,” Fudge murmured with a nod.

“Lord Black, please explain to everyone how you came to be at the Ministry on November first of the year Nineteen hundred and eighty-one,” Parker said as he turned to face Sirius.

“I received a letter from Mr. Crouch Sr. asking that I come in to clear some allegations against me that had come to his attention the day before.”

“And where were you at the time?” the lawyer asked as he paced before him, looking at the floor in front of him.

“I was at home at the time, but I went to Headmaster Dumbledore for council, leaving the letter at home,” Sirius answered clearly. “The letter didn’t explain anything, after all.”

“What happened then, Lord Black? How did you come to be a resident of Azkaban?”

“The Headmaster advised me to go to the Ministry and see what was happening. At the time, I didn’t suspect anything was suspicious, so I came here, to the Ministry, to find out what was going on, why I would be called in. When I entered, I was led to a room where Mr. Crouch Sr. was waiting for me. As soon as the door closed behind me, I was accosted by two men. Mr. Crouch ordered them to take me to Azkaban for treason.”

“No one asked you any questions? Didn’t tell you why you would be accused of such a serious charge?” Parker asked with a frown. Looking up at the men and women around the room, Sirius could see similar expressions while some clearly didn’t believe him. He didn’t blame them, really. It was hard to believe someone in a position as Barty Crouch was of doing such a thing.

“No, sir,” Sirius said with a shake of his head. “I was simply taken out of the Ministry and straight to Azkaban. When I asked the men what was happening, I was hit over the head. I wisely kept quiet after that.”

“Is there any proof?” Minister Fudge asked, cutting off whatever Parker was about to say.

“Yes, Minister,” Parker said, holding out a letter for him to take. “This is the letter Lord Black received that day.”
Everyone was quiet as the Minister read the contents before passing it on to the other members of the Wizengamot. Fudge nodded for Parker to continue.

“How did you manage to get out? With no trial, they could’ve kept you there forever, would they not?” Parker asked curiously.

Sirius knew this was for the benefit of the people in the room. He’d been coached on this for the last few days so nothing was new for the lawyer. “Summer before last, a man came to my cell door and I was hauled out. Without a word of explanation, I was loaded onto a boat and ferried across to the main land. Once there, the man told me that Mr. Crouch Sr. was setting me free, that new information had come up to prove that I wasn’t a traitor.”

“If you were set free, then why did the papers report you as having escaped?”

“I was shocked to read that. In fact, I was in Hogsmeade when I read about my alleged escape,” Sirius told the whole room. “I’d even spoken to Dumbledore the day before the report was in the papers. He’d assured me that my godson, Harry Potter, would be at school a couple of weeks after the visit and I’d be able to meet with him then.”

“Are you telling us that the Headmaster of Hogwarts knew where you were the entire time officials were looking for you and said nothing when he was asked if he knew of your whereabouts?” one member of the Wizengamot asked in shock.

“Yes, Madam,” Sirius said with a nod. “As a matter of fact, he was the one who told me to hide in the Shrieking shack until I could speak with Harry. He made sure I had blankets and food during my stay.”

“How do we know this isn’t some ploy to smear the name of a Ministry official or the Headmaster of Hogwarts?” another member, a man sitting on the right, asked, face severe as he looked down at Sirius.

“Three Pensieve memories were given as evidence for everyone to observe, Minister,” Parker said confidently, facing the podium, hands clasped behind his back. “May we play them for the room, sir?”

Fudge nodded and picked up the first one.

“This is the memory of Lord Black’s receipt of the letter and meeting with Mr. Crouch Sr.,” Parker explained to the room before the memory was poured into the Pensieve and began to play.

Everyone watched as Sirius received the letter, showing clearly that the letter that was still being circulated was indeed the one he’d received. It went on from there to Dumbledore’s office at Hogwarts where he did instruct Sirius to keep the appointment. From there it showed Sirius walking into the room for his meeting with Crouch, not even having time to sit down before he was grabbed by two men. “Take him to Azkaban with the rest of the traitors and murderers,” Crouch growled out, a look of satisfaction on his face. The memory ended with Sirius struggling and protesting his innocence as he was hauled out of the room...

“The next one is of his release from Azkaban,” Parker said as the memory was collected and the second phial emptied into the Pensieve.

This memory showed a listless Sirius turning to look at a man standing at the door to his cell, smirking in satisfaction at the grimy man before him. “Bring him,” the man ordered the two men standing behind him. Sirius was hauled unceremoniously out of the cell and down a bunch of stairs. They could see the surprise on his face when he was dragged outside and into the boat.
Every inquiry the dirty man made to find out what was going on went ignored as the boat made its way through the waves to the opposite shore. “Mr. Crouch sends his regards and says that new information has come to light that exonerates your involvement in traitorous activities,” the man in charge told him with another smirk and then his wand was tossed at his feet before the three men Disapparated. They watched as Sirius stood there, confused, staring down at his wand before bending down to pick it up...

The mood in the room was tense as they realized that Sirius had been severely wronged. He only hoped that what they planned to ask for, as reparations, would be granted without fuss, otherwise he would get nothing.

“The last memory shows Lord Black’s visit with Albus Dumbledore before the article appears in the Daily Prophet, then jumps to the next day when the Headmaster tells Lord Black where to hide along with the rest of the details,” Parker said gravely.

This memory showed a clean and well-groomed Sirius sitting before Dumbledore. They heard the Headmaster agree to let Sirius meet with Harry when school began so he wouldn’t have to go looking for the boy. They heard Sirius tell Dumbledore his intention of adopting Harry, a smile on his face as he related that the paperwork was already being worked on.

It skipped to the next day when Sirius was showing the papers to Dumbledore with his picture in it, the caption above telling everyone that he was accused of escaping Azkaban. “Dobby will take your things from Hogsmeade and take it all to the shrieking shack. Hide there until things die down, Sirius. I’ll launch an investigation and see what’s going on. I can’t see Barty doing this to you. Don’t worry, my boy;” the old man murmured as he looked down at the article. “Everything will work out.”

“As you can see,” Parker said as the memory wound down. “Lord Black was unjustly incarcerated, his name slandered across the Wizarding world, unable to visit with his godson. By rights, Mr. Crouch Sr. should be made to pay for his actions in ruining Lord Black’s life and good name.”

“What is it you’re looking for today, Mr. Parker?” a woman in the back asked thoughtfully.

“Lord Black’s name publically cleared, the details of his incarceration made public, Mr. Crouch Sr. punished for his actions and reparations made to Lord Black for the twelve years he was unjustly made to spend in Azkaban, Madam,” Parker said clearly. There was a lot of murmuring then and Sirius began to wonder if he would get what he was asking for...

“Let’s speak with Mr. Crouch and see what he has to say for his actions before we make any decision,” Fudge said as he held up his hands. “Lord Black, Mr. Parker, I would ask you to sit in the stands while we question the accused.”

“Of course, sir,” Parker said with a respectful bow. Sirius was led towards the upper seats where they would remain unseen unless someone pointed them out. “This is going better than I expected,” the lawyer murmured softly as they sat down. “Crouch won’t be able to give a good enough reason for putting you in Azkaban without trial or even proof of his allegations. The men and women might be incensed enough to grant all your demands.”

“You think so?” Sirius asked in surprise, not daring to hope that he’d be a cleared man by the end of the day. He’d been disappointed too many times to allow it.

“I do.”

By this time, Crouch was sitting stiffly in the chair before Fudge, glaring defiantly at everyone. Looking at everyone looking down at the older man, Sirius realized that the man’s attitude was
working against him.

“Mr. Bartemius Crouch Sr.,” Fudge began, tone cordial, “it has come to our attention that you have placed people in Azkaban without trial. You are asked before the entire Wizengamot to account for your actions. What do you have to say in your defense?”

“I placed people who were detrimental to the safety of the Wizarding world and this Ministry where they belong. I have done my job, Minister,” Crouch said stiffly, glaring at the people who, to his mind, were judging him. “I demand to know who would accuse me of unfair justice.”

“Lord Black has brought charges against you for putting him in Azkaban without just cause and without trial. I, for one, would like to know how that could be done,” Fudge said with a raised eyebrow.

“I received an anonymous tip that Lord Black was planning to blow up the Ministry. With that, I called the man in for questioning and had him arrested.”

“Without asking questions?” a woman from the right asked incredulously. “I’m glad no rumour has ever come about that any of us was planning something illegal otherwise we might have been sent to Azkaban without questions being asked, sir.”

Crouch glared at the woman for daring to question his methods. “I am the one who keeps us safe, Madam. I suggest you take your safety more seriously. I did what I had to do to keep a dangerous man from causing thousands of deaths.”

“Where is the proof required to sentence a person without trial, sir?” a gentlemen from the left side of the room demanded angrily. “I know of several people placed in Azkaban on mere suspicion.”

“Who are you to judge me, sir?” Crouch demanded, standing up and glaring at the man who’d spoken.

“Someone whose son you sentenced to that place without just cause. Declan came for a job interview three weeks ago and the next thing I hear he’s been carted off to Azkaban by you,” the man said, undaunted by the glare. “Minister,” he said, turning to look at Fudge. “I want to add three more charges against Mr. Bartemius Crouch.” In his hand were three sheets of papers, which were taken from him and passed along to Fudge.

“If you knew this before, Argus, why didn’t you say anything?” Fudge asked as he read the pages over carefully.

“I’ve been trying to go through the proper channels, Minister, but since there was no paperwork on Declan, I was told there was nothing to be done. There was no proof that my son was even in Azkaban.”

“Bartemius Crouch Sr.,” Fudge said as he straightened up in his chair. “Seeing as you are simply serving your own end by sending people to Azkaban without proper documentation or just cause, I see no other choice but to remand you into custody while we launch an inquiry into the inmates at Azkaban. Your sentence will determine just how many inmates are there legitimately and how many are there because you wanted them there. As for Lord Black’s requests, every one of them will be granted. I will have someone calculate just how much the twelve years in Azkaban should cost and you, sir, will pay every knut owed him. If we find others who’ve been place in that place for the same length of time, they, too, will get the same amount, the money coming out of your vaults.”

“You can’t do that!” Crouch protested as he struggled with the Aurors who had hold of his arms,
dragging him forcefully out of the room. “Those people belong in Azkaban! They’ll destroy everything we’ve worked for all these years!”

“Argus, I’ll see to it that Declan is release immediately and has a job in the Ministry,” Fudge said once there was silence in the room again. “He’ll be able to start whenever he feels ready without worry.”

“Thank you, Minister,” Argus murmured with a respectful bow.

“See,” Parker said with a smirk. “I knew we’d get everything we wanted and more. They’ll see just how many people were put in Azkaban unjustly and Crouch will probably land in there himself. Everything worked out perfectly. Now, we can use the information gained here against Dumbledore when we bring him to trial.”

“Good.” He shook hands with his lawyer, feeling a weight slide off his shoulders as it sunk in that the whole of the Wizarding world would know that Lord Black had been unjustly incarcerated, his name slandered because of someone’s vendetta… now they just needed to know who was behind it… and get rid of Dumbledore before he tried to kill Harry. “I need to let Harry know that I’m free.”

* * *

Saturday, May 20th, 1995

Snape took Harry and Draco out of school again, Flooing to Malfoy Manor for a private meeting with Sirius’ lawyer. Everyone was currently gathered in the living room, since it was the more comfortable room for everyone to sit in. Sirius and Remus were there as well. Lucius and Severus were there as witnesses. Narcissa was there as Lucius’ wife while Draco was there for moral support… and because he was curious as to what this was all about. Harry couldn’t blame him, really. He was curious himself.

“Mr. Potter,” Mr. Parker murmured as they shook hands. Harry remembered seeing him at the club. He’d been the one to take charge of Mr. Luxor when it had come out that the man was abusing his son. “Lord Black was telling me that he wanted to petition to adopt you now that he’s a free man.”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said as he sat on the couch across from the lawyer. “That’s what Sirius was saying during the Christmas holidays. I was glad to hear that he was cleared of all charges and that Mr. Crouch was being brought up on charges of false imprisonment.”

“Here’s the problem, Mr. Potter,” Mr. Parker said as he began pulling out papers. “I can find no paperwork that says your Aunt and Uncle are your legal guardians. In fact, it seems that no one was placed as your legal guardian.”

Harry blinked in confusion. “I’m sorry, but how is that possible? What does it mean?”

“It means that you were illegally taken out of the Wizarding world and secreted at your relatives’ home, Harry,” Sirius explained gently. “It means that Dumbledore took the opportunity to smuggle you out of where you could’ve been raised in complete safety and placed in a home that would insure you would be neglected and abused.”

“Alright, but what does this mean for me? Who’s supposed to take care of me?”

“Well, that’s the easy part,” Mr. Parker said, regaining Harry’s attention. “According to your parents’ will, Lord Black was supposed to take you in as your godfather. Your parents had a further contingency plan if that couldn’t happen. The Malfoys and Professor Snape were the next
choices to raise you until you reached adulthood.’’

That stunned Harry, leaving him speechless, but then he remembered that his father and Lucius hadn’t been the enemies he’d been led to believe they were.

Feeling overwhelmed, Harry rose to his feet, pacing around the room as he tried to get his chaotic mind to settle on something, messing his hair more than it was as he ran his hands through it. How could Dumbledore be a criminal? Why all the manipulations? Why was the old man trying to get him to fight someone who didn’t exist? Why all the charades?

“I also have a colleague investigating the dealings of Professor Dumbledore. He’s also a criminal lawyer, but because I’m Lord Black’s lawyer in this capacity, I’m unable to take that case. Conflict of interest,’’ Parker said with a dismissive shrug. “I can, however take one on for you. Would you like for me to investigate the dealing around your supposed adoption?’’

Harry stopped in front of a table facing the window, his gaze lost in the sunshine outside. He didn’t know what to believe anymore. Everything was so twisted… but all things considered, this year was far more peaceful than he’d ever had since starting at Hogwarts…

He looked down as he sighed tiredly… and froze as a picture on the table caught his attention. Picking it up, he felt his heartbeat speed up as he recognized the teenager in one of the photos. “Lucius?” he asked as he turned around to face everyone. They’d allowed him some space as he thought things through, but now Lucius came over to look at the picture Harry was holding out. “Who’s this?”

The tall aristocrat walked over to where Harry stood and took the photo from him. “This is Regulus Black,” he said with a frown. “He was Sirius’ brother and Narcissa’s cousin. Not long after this picture was taken, he began acting rather odd then one day, he vanished. I believe that was thirteen years ago. Why?”

Harry turned to look at Severus. “This is the boy I fought with down in the Chamber, Professor. He’s the one who said he was Voldemort.”

“You’re sure?” the Potions master asked as he stepped closer, taking the photo from Lucius.

“Positive,” Harry said with a nod before turning to look at the lawyer with a determined look in his eyes. “Do what you have to. I want to know why Dumbledore placed me with magic-hating muggles. There has to be more to this than we realize. And since your case and your colleague’s are going to be so closely related, it might be a good idea to work together. I also think Dumbledore might be the one behind my parents’ deaths.”

The lawyer wrote something down on the pad in his lap, nodding at Harry’s words. “What about who you’re going to live with? I brought the proper papers for you to sign so they’d be binding,” Mr. Parker asked as he took the relevant papers out of his briefcase. “Once signed, no one will be able to dispute where you have to live and you won’t be returning to the Dursleys, either.”

Harry nodded determinately as he went to sit down beside Draco again. Taking the quill, he wrote his name where the lawyer indicated before looking at the three men before him. Who did he want to live with?

Sirius? He was the obvious answer, since he was Harry’s godfather, but then he’d be separated from Draco… to some extent. But then that might be for the best, give them some time apart outside of the club.

Severus Snape? He didn’t really want to live with the Potions master, though he wasn’t as bad as
Lucius Malfoy? It would give him more access to Draco… but then there would be no separation between them. That could be bad because they needed to provide heirs to carry on their family names… but he’d be able to learn more about his role as Master.

This was so confusing for him. He liked all three men and couldn’t seem to choose between them. They’d taken the time to take him under their wing and teach him so much more than he’d ever thought possible…

He looked over at Draco, wondering what he’d do if he were in Harry’s situation. “Do what you feel is right, Harry. Your instincts have never led you wrong before,” the blonde teen said softly, nodding in encouragement and Harry realized there was only one option open to him in order to make this work.

On the line for legal guardian, Harry wrote all three men’s names down before handing it back to the lawyer. “Well,” the man murmured as he realized what Harry had done. “This will definitely be a first.”

Handing it over to Lucius, Mr. Parker smirked as Severus and Sirius leaned over to see what the paper said. “Can that actually be done?” Sirius asked in surprise, his eyebrows rising as far as they could go.

“The papers are binding,” the lawyer repeated with a nod. “No one ever said it only had to hold one name.”

“But then who will Harry live with?” the newly-cleared man asked in confusion. “With me, Lucius, or Severus?”

“Well,” Harry said with a smile, feeling happiness fill him as he regarded the three men. “I’ll come here during the day, so I can continue to learn what I need to learn from the Malfoys. I’ll stay with Sirius at night and I can stay with Severus when he needs to teach me about potions. This way, I don’t have to give up anything.”

“Indeed,” Snape murmured with a smirk. “Very Slytherin-esk logic. Too bad you ended up in Gryffindor instead. I think you would’ve been better off in Slytherin and this might have been cleared up sooner.”

Harry shrugged impishly. “It’s never too late to learn.” Everyone laughed at his words.

“Wait,” Sirius said, stopping in mid-laugh as what was being said registered. “You were supposed to be in Slytherin?”

“Yeah, but Dumbledore made sure I would think that all Slytherins were bad and that nothing good would ever come out of it, so I asked the hat to put me in any other house than that one. It settled on Gryffindor instead.”

“That’s another thing we can use against the Headmaster, then,” Lucius murmured as he settled himself on the couch next to Narcissa. “By right, you should be in Slytherin instead of Gryffindor, but to change that now would accomplish nothing except get you away from Ronald Weasley.”

“That’s why I’m not asking to be resorted,” Harry said with a nod. “Besides, I can learn what I was supposed to learn in first year now. In fact, I am learning a lot more than I expected now.”

“That’s beside the point, Mr. Potter,” Mr. Parker said with a troubled frown. “It raises the question of just how many students are in the wrong house because of the Headmaster’s interference. This needs to be brought up to the Minister’s attention so that a mass-resorting can be done. This is
bad."

“Wouldn’t it just confuse the whole school unnecessarily if students were to switch houses?”
Draco asked with a frown.

“It might be a moot point if the Minister decides to get involved. If it’s only one or two students,
then it won’t be as damaging,” the lawyer said with a shake of his head. “This might be worse
than Mr. Potter simply being in the wrong house. It needs to be investigated.” Mr. Parker wrote
something down on his notepad before looking at Harry again. “Now, do you remember being left
with your relatives, Mr. Potter?” Mr. Parker asked, cup of tea in hand.

Harry frowned thoughtfully, trying to think back as far as he could but he couldn’t seem to
remember a time before living with the Dursleys. “I’m sorry, Mr. Parker,” he said finally, sighing
in frustration and defeat. “I only really remember that they would punish me for everything that
went wrong in their lives.”

“What’s the earliest memory you have that you can recall?” the lawyer asked gently, smiling
calmingly at him.

“I remember getting a belt across my back until it bled for pulling out the flowers instead of weeds
from my aunt’s flower beds,” Harry said with a shake of his head. “I remember running from my
cousin whenever he wanted to beat me to a pulp. I remember a lot of things, all of them bad, but
not when I first arrived at the Dursleys.”

“They beat you?” Sirius asked, face pale. “How old were you when they started doing that?”

“They’ve always done it, Sirius,” Harry murmured with a dismissive shrug. “It doesn’t matter
anymore.”

“Actually, Harry,” Lucius said, a pinched look on his face. “It does matter. I remember you saying
your relatives were magic-hating muggles. Was that accurate?”

“Yes, when I was eleven, my aunt said that my mother was strange and abnormal and that I would
be just like her. They liked calling me ‘Freak’ every chance they got. In fact,” Harry said with a
sigh, rubbing at his forehead. He hadn’t realized they would be hashing this out today or in front
of so many people. “Until I started primary school, I thought that was my name. It wasn’t until
school that I found out that my name was actually Harry Potter.”

The quill beside the lawyer was flying as it wrote down what they were saying. Harry couldn’t
see what difference this would make. It was in the past, after all, but he trusted these men to know
what was important and what wasn’t.

“I need you to tell me what it was that your relatives made you do around their home, Mr. Potter,”
the lawyer murmured softly. “Don’t leave anything out.”

Taking a deep breath, Harry rattled off the list of chores he’d done from as far back as he could
remember. It was quite a while before he was done. The adults looked disturbed by the amount of
things Harry had been forced to do. He didn’t really see the problem. Sure, it was a lot for a kid to
do, but everyone got chores… didn’t they?

“Show them the scars, Harry,” Draco said softly. He nodded encouragingly when Harry’s head
whipped around to look at him. “They need to see this.”

“Scars?” Remus asked, coming to attention.

Harry swallowed thickly before getting hesitantly to his feet. Turning his back to the group, he
pulled his jumper over his head, not having put on any outer robes for this visit. He heard Narcissa
gasp but forced himself to remain still. He felt Draco’s hand slip into his, squeezing it in support
and comfort. It helped him keep his calm better than anything else could have.

**

An hour later, the men stood some distance from Harry, Draco and Narcissa, discussing what
they’d learned from Harry. “Do you think it would be enough to bring charges against the
Dursleys? I have a feeling that once we bring them before the Wizengamot, we’ll learn more than
we will from Harry,” Severus asked softly.

“Yes, I think so,” Parker murmured with a sigh. “It’s hard to imagine a child going through
everything Mr. Potter has had to endure at their hands.”

“And to think,” Lucius murmured, glancing over at the two teens sitting on the couch, joking with
his wife. “Dumbledore knew about it and did nothing to help him. I’m surprised he’s come
through this with his sanity intact.”

“What I don’t understand,” Sirius growled angrily, “is how adults could take pleasure in whipping
a child for something he had no control over.”

“Be glad that’s all they did, Sirius,” Remus said gently, a calming hand on his friend’s arm. “Some
wouldn’t have stopped at simply whipping him. Harry had it better than most in his position.”

“Better?” Sirius demanded harshly, eyebrows raised incredulously. “How is that better?”

“He means Harry could’ve been sexually abused on top of the physical and mental abuse, Sirius,”
Severus murmured with a nod. “The fact that his uncle didn’t means more is at play here than we
think.”

“Exactly,” Parker said with a nod. “I’m wondering if Dumbledore might not have tampered with
the Dursleys so that they would make life worse for the boy, worse than it would’ve been. Instead
of being ignored, Mr. Potter was punished and blamed for everything that went wrong in that
family. I can just imagine how that would’ve affected him mentally. The fact that he’s still a level
headed teenager speaks of his strength of character and will. Dumbledore was trying to break him
for a reason. We need to find out what that reason is.”

“Precisely.” Lucius agreed. “We need to find out what his plans for Harry were and what
Regulus’ part in all this was. Something tells me Harry might know some of it.”

“So then you still want to try the potion you had me brew back in November?” Severus asked
with a frown.

“What potion?” Remus asked before Sirius could.

“I found a potion that could either bury or bring out memories. I thought Harry might need it at
some point,” Lucius murmured with a nod of his head. He’d thought it important enough to ask
Severus to make it. Yes, he knew how to brew, but he didn’t want to take the chance that he
wouldn’t get it right. “It seems it’ll come in handy to find out what Harry knows about the day his
parents died and when he was dropped on the Dursleys’ steps.”

“You think it’s important enough to force the issue?” Parker asked in surprise, frowning deeply
when Lucius nodded. “I wonder, though, if we shouldn’t wait until after the Dursleys are brought
to trial first. It might give us more questions to ask Mr. Potter.”

“Agreed,” Severus said from beside the lawyer. “We’ll only get one shot at this. Harry’s going to
build an immunity to the potion quickly and it’ll be hard on the boy as it is. If we get two maybe three chances with the potion, that’ll be it. That’s how it’s designed to work. We need to be sure what information we want to get from him. The fight in the Chamber of Secrets is just a matter of getting a Pensieve and viewing the memory. The rest is buried too deeply for him to simply bring up.”

“Alright,” Lucius said finally. “We’ll wait until after the trial to use it.”
Chapter 6 – Brought To Justice

Monday, May 22th, 1995

Ministry Official Charged With Wrongful Convictions!

By Charles Bentley

It has come to the attention of this reporter that one Bartemius Crouch Senior has been charged with wrongfully convicting a number of Wizarding society’s citizens. It seems that you don’t have to do anything wrong to be sent to Azkaban with the most notorious villains of our society! All that has to happen is to be called in by a certain Ministry official and then be carted off to prison without a by-your-leave and a whisper of suspicion. No proof needs to be available, either.

This seems to be the case for several newly released inmates. Lord Sirius Black, as I’m sure you remember, who was accused of escaping from Azkaban prison, was one such person. [See pg. 2 for full story]

Declan Morenci, the son of Argus Morenci, a member of the Wizengamot, was another of those people. It is unclear just what Mr. Morenci was charged with because there doesn’t seem to be any paperwork on his particular case.

A full list of released prisoners can be found on pg. 8, along with the reason for their incarceration.

Knowing the reasons behind these arrests, it makes this reporter glad he was never called to the Ministry by Mr. Crouch Sr. or I might have ended up joining the ranks of inmates at Azkaban for no other reason than having been born!

Every case Mr. Crouch Sr. ever put his name to will be reviewed thoroughly by a Ministry appointed panel, making sure that those who were wrongly convicted will be immediately released from Azkaban. It’s a good thing this came to light before it became too late or nothing might have been done to help the innocents.

Lord Black, it was reported, filed grievance claims against the former Ministry worker, bringing all this to light. It remains to be seen if Mr. Crouch Sr. will be joining the ranks of prisoners at Azkaban for unjustly sending so many people to prison, though it seems more than likely at this point.

It would seem that some in the Auror department are also being held for questioning. Did Mr. Crouch succeed in bringing some of them to his side of thinking? Let’s hope not because that would mean this corruption goes much deeper than this reporter feels comfortable thinking about.

An anonymous source told this reporter that it was a good thing the Minister took this seriously before more harm was done to the Wizarding world. One has to wonder how this could have gone on as long as it has, but at least it has been brought to light.

Bartemius Crouch Senior, it is said, wanted to become Minister a few years ago. Let’s be thankful he didn’t succeed or more people might have been carted off to Azkaban prison and no one
would've been able to stop him.

Dumbledore crushed the paper as he reached the end of the article, feeling anger course through him. He cursed Sirius Black for meddling in affairs that didn’t concern him. All his plans had been circumvented because of one man. He knew he should’ve killed the bastard when he’d come here looking for Harry, but he’d figured having the man labeled as an escaped convict would work better for his plans.

He hadn’t foreseen the blasted man going to court in order to clear his name!

How had Black managed to get a lawyer willing to take on such a high-profile case? It should never have happened! He’d wanted that man under his control so he wouldn’t ruin all the plans Dumbledore had painstakingly put into motion when he’d dumped Harry with the Dursleys. He’d even paid the muggles handsomely since that day.

He was going to have to put a stop to all this or all his plans and sacrifices would be for nothing. He was going to have to pay the Dursleys a visit soon… maybe right before school let out, so he could instruct the stupid uncle on what his next move should be.

He’d watched as Harry and the Malfoy boy got closer… he didn’t know if it meant they were just friends or if it had gone beyond that. He’d seen the two boys with girls at the Yule ball, but then he knew those two girls were together in every sense of the word. He couldn’t allow Harry to be corrupted by Draco Malfoy in that way.

After all, he had plans for that stubborn boy… and it didn’t involve being with another boy.

He was going to have to do something quickly to nip this in the butt or everything would be ruined for good.

“I’m glad this came to light,” Harry murmured as he read the paper Draco had on the table in front of him as they sat in the Great Hall, looking up at all the students reading the same paper. “Hopefully there aren’t too many innocents in Azkaban.”

“Some far,” Pansy said as she read her own paper and it seemed she was on a different page than they were on. “There are fifteen people, both witches and wizards, who’ve been released from prison who were placed there by Mr. Crouch. Some of them didn’t even have formal charges filed against them. It seems ten others died before rescue could come.”

“I’m amazed at the amount of people he placed in there without anyone noticing,” Nott said with a shake of his head. “I’m glad he didn’t get to be Minister or none of this might have come to light.”

“Yeah, and Sirius would still be a hunted man,” Harry said with a sad sigh. All those years wasted for no reason…

“At least he’s a free man now,” Crabbe said in satisfaction. “Now you won’t have to worry about where you’re going this summer.”

“That’s true,” Harry said with a grin. “Do you think we’ll ever get the whole story about Barty Crouch?” he asked Draco.

“I doubt it,” Draco said with a shake of his head. “Even Father is being tight lipped about all this. Of course, it’s an ongoing investigation so he might tell us once everything’s taken care of.”
Saturday, June 24, 1995

Dumbledore sat on the bench facing the Dursley home, watching as Dudley laughed with his friends. He’d come to realize that this boy could be used instead of the father… and with the friends Dudley hung around with, they would be easy to manipulate to his advantage. With a gleam in his eyes, he followed the boys as they walked towards a copse of trees a couple of blocks from his house. It seemed the isolated spot was their hideout. Behind him, hidden under an invisibility cloak, was a boy the same age as Harry. It was just dumb luck that the boy looked almost like Harry Potter… thanks to a little magical manipulation, of course.

He needed someone to test this out on and this was the best way to ensure his plans followed the proper path.

Walking in after the boys, he used his wand to stun the lot, watching in satisfaction as each one fell to the ground, unconscious. He went from one to the other, casting the compulsion he needed enacted. He didn’t care if these boys were into other boys. This was meant to punish Harry… and since the Dursleys had already been accommodating enough to do his bidding before, they wouldn’t be adverse to Dumbledore using their child in this manner.

They owed it to him, after all.

Once he was done, he woke each boy up, watching as they stood in front of him, waiting for him to give them their orders. “I have a gift for you boys,” Dumbledore murmured with a smirk as they moved restlessly. He watched the gleam of interest come into their eyes as he pulled the invisibility cloak off the kneeling and bound teen between them. Already, he could see the evidence of their arousal as they licked their lips.

The bound teen’s eyes were huge with terror as he took in the people around him, his whimpers muffled by the gag in his mouth.

With a flick of his wand, Dumbledore cast a silencing spell around the area they were in so no one would interrupt the group. “This is for you to have as payment for what you’ll do to Potter,” he told them as two of the teens began pulling their clothes off, Dudley being one of them. “You can keep him here until you tire of him. He won’t be able to leave until then. Do what you want to him. No one will hear you, no matter how much he screams and begs.”

“Thank you, sir,” Dudley murmured, eyes glued to the bound teen as he moved closer, the others differing to him as their leader.

With a smirk of satisfaction, Dumbledore turned and left the group to play with their new toy, imagining he could hear the screams of pain as he walked down the street, though there was no sound other than the birds chirping in the sunshine.

This would teach the brat an important lesson…

Monday, June 25, 1995

Harry sat in one of the last compartments with the rest of the club members and his new friends. It was a good thing it wasn’t one with a small compartments like the one he used to sit in with Hermione and Ron. This compartment was the whole train car, allowing for the amount of people in there.
They were all joking and laughing together when Ron and Hermione showed up, looking like they were frustrated and much put upon. Harry didn’t really see them coming, having his back to the door leading to the rest of the train. It was the silence that descended around him that warned him to their presence.

“Harry, we need to talk,” Hermione said and Harry realized that this was the same as every other confrontation they’d had so far. Ron rarely did the talking, letting Hermione take the lead. “Privately.”

“No,” Harry said, turning his back to them. “Not this time.”

“Why not?” she snapped angrily, bristling at his dismissive attitude. Beside her, Ron looked ready to explode himself.

“Because I don’t need to talk to you,” Harry told her with a tired sigh. “I’m on my way home to Sirius.”

“How are you going to stay with a wanted man, Harry?” Ron bit out, glaring at him.

“Oh,” he said, looking at them in mock-surprise, as if he had forgotten to tell them something important. “Didn’t you read the Prophet back in May? Sirius was cleared of all charges and even received a pardon from the Minister? That Crouch is going to Azkaban?”

“What?” Ron asked in shock, his eyes practically bugging out of his head. “Crouch is going to Azkaban? When did this happen?”

“Honestly, Ron, you have to get your head out of the Quidditch books,” Hermione said in exasperation, eyes narrowed thoughtfully. “Although there was no mention of Crouch going to Azkaban.”

“It was confirmed yesterday,” Harry said with a nod. “Seems they liberated over sixty people that that man put in Azkaban. Reparations are already on the way for those who’ve been inside the longest.”

“You knew what was happening and didn’t tell us about it?” Ron demanded, stepping closer to Harry.

“We’re not friends anymore, Ronald,” Harry said with a raised eyebrow. “I don’t have to tell you anything, remember?”

Unfortunately for Ron, he decided that drawing his arm back to hit Harry was a good idea, never mind that they were in a compartment full of witnesses, most of which were Slytherins. Before he could hit him, however, several wands were leveled at him, along with glares from several people.

“Let’s go, Ron,” Hermione murmured as she realized they were woefully outnumbered. “This isn’t the time or place for you two to fight.”

“I wasn’t planning on fighting, Hermione,” Harry said with a smirk. “I don’t need to prove myself against a bully like Ron’s becoming.” She threw him a glare as she shoved Ron out of the train car, closing the door behind her.

“It’s never boring with you around, is it, Potter?” Nott said with a knowing smirk.

“Sometimes I wonder if that’s a good or bad thing,” Harry said ruefully, causing some of the students to snicker, breaking the tension of the compartment.
It wasn’t until they arrived at King’s Cross station that things got disruptive again. Instead of using the Floo, as Harry had thought they would, Draco led him through the doorway to the muggle train station. “What’s going on?” Harry asked in confusion as he realized there was an inordinate amount of people on the other side.

He jumped slightly when they fell in around him and Draco before one of the men came forward, bowing slightly. “Mr. Potter, my name is Auror Redford. We require you to lead us to your uncle and from there to the Dursley residence,” the man said briskly. “And please, don’t engage the man unless you absolutely need to. Let me do all the talking.”

Harry turned to look at Draco in confusion and realized that Sirius and Lucius were standing behind him. “It’s time to see some justice, Harry,” the tall aristocrat murmured as he rested a hand on Draco’s shoulder.

Nodding a little nervously, Harry led them over to where his uncle stood, impatiently waiting for him. “Let’s go, boy,” his uncle growled out angrily, his face beginning to turn red as he noticed the men around him. “I don’t have time for this nonsense!”

“Mr. Dursley,” Auror Redford murmured pleasantly, as he stepped forward. “How about we go somewhere we’ll have more privacy to talk.”

“What’s the meaning of this!” Vernon said loudly as he was taken by the arm and led towards a private room that lined the inside of the station. Harry knew his uncle wasn’t too happy with this development and when they started gathering the attention of the people around them, he pulled his arm out of the Auror’s hand and stomped angrily after them.

“What’s the meaning of this!” the large man demanded again when the door closed behind everyone, giving them more privacy. “What have you done now, boy?”

“Mr. Dursley,” Auror Redford said loudly, overriding whatever else Harry’s uncle would’ve said. “Mr. Potter has been instructed not to interact with you at this time. We require you to take us to your home so we may investigate things further.”

Vernon glared at Harry, looking like he would explode. It made Harry nervous enough that he instinctively took a step back. He was glad when Sirius came to stand beside him, reminding him that he wasn’t alone this time.

“I don’t have to do anything,” Vernon spat out before turning his attention back to Harry. “If it wasn’t for you being dropped off on our doorstep, none of this would be happening. This is entirely your fault. I knew I should’ve tossed you out when –”

“Mr. Dursley,” Auror Redford said with an impatient sigh. “I won’t ask you again. The next time we’ll do it by force. Are you going to take us to your house or not?”

With a final glare, Vernon led the way out of the room and towards his car. That was when they realized it wouldn’t work. They needed another method to bring everyone else to the Dursleys’ house.

“Why don’t they just Apparate to the house?” Harry whispered to Draco, confused, as the Aurors discussed how to go about getting to the Dursleys’ home.

“Because they don’t know where the house is.” This surprised him. He’d thought the Ministry knew where the Dursleys lived… apparently this was another lie Dumbledore had fed him.

“Auror Redford,” Harry said, stepping closer to the lead Auror. “Some of you could go with my uncle and the rest of us could take the knight bus,” he suggested, ignoring the sputtering his uncle
was doing. He already knew Vernon wouldn’t like transporting more ‘freaks’ than he absolutely needed to, but this was the best solution to the problem.

“That’s actually a good suggestion, sir,” one of the other Aurors said with a shrug. “Mr. Potter can go on the bus with the others.”

“Done,” Auror Redford said with a decisive nod. If Harry hadn’t been so numb with fear, he would’ve laughed as three Aurors piled into the back of the car with Auror Redford in the front with Vernon. They watched as the car pulled away before an Auror called for the knight bus.

“Number four, Privet Drive,” Harry said once everyone was inside and with a shot, they careened off down the road. It didn’t take long to arrive at their destination. In fact, they beat the car by a good while.

“No more freaks in this house!” she hissed when Harry tried to invite them into the house, striking him in the face. “Just wait until Vernon gets home. He won’t be happy with this!” and she slammed the door shut before anyone could react properly.

“Are these muggles always like this?” one of the Aurors asked in disgust.

“Pretty much,” Harry murmured as he led them towards the bench that was between the Dursley and Mrs. Biggs houses. “We can wait here.”

Lucius and Sirius sat while they waited for the rest of their group to arrive. They tried to get Harry to sit as well, but he couldn’t do it. He knew his uncle would want revenge for having to deal with what he called ‘abnormal’ people… and he liked nothing better than to take it out on Harry.

He usually did.

“You need to calm yourself, Harry,” Draco murmured as he stood beside him, frowning in confusion. “You’re working yourself up for nothing.”

Harry gave a mirthless laugh and shook his head, gripping his arms tightly as he crossed them, holding himself together by sheer will. He couldn’t tell them what he knew would happen once they left. Harry knew all too well what Vernon was capable of doing.

In his panic, he seemed to forget that he wasn’t staying here ever again, that he was going to live with Sirius… the panic was too all-consuming right now.

He managed to drag in a calming breath as he spotted the car coming up the road towards the house. It wouldn’t do for his uncle to see how rattled he was. By the time the Aurors had gotten out of the car, the rest of the group was waiting by the door. Harry stayed between Lucius and Sirius, just in case Vernon or Petunia decided to try something.

They were all led into the living room where Vernon glared at them, Petunia coming to stand beside him, a fearful look in her eyes as she took in the amount of witches and wizards in her house. Harry knew she had to realize that they weren’t going to go away as she’d hoped when Harry had tried to enter the house. “Who are these people, Vernon?” she whispered softly.

“I demand to know what this is all about,” Vernon growled out angrily, ignoring her question.

Harry noticed that the Aurors were looking around and it soon became apparent that it looked like Harry had never lived there in his life. There were no pictures of him growing up, no school pictures, little mementoes, nothing… but there were plenty of things to show Dudley lived there.

“Mr. Potter, if you would gather your belongings for your move,” Auror Redford said, nodding to
one of the Aurors to follow him.

Harry blinked in surprise, hesitating slightly. “Um... I don’t have anything here, sir.”

Redford, who’d been turning to face Vernon, turned back to look at him in confusion. “Where are all your clothes and whatever else you own?”

“They were in my trunk, sir. I wasn’t allowed toys and the clothes I have were all clothes my cousin outgrew,” Harry said, clearly uncomfortable with revealing so much about his life with the Dursleys.

“Where did you sleep, then?” a young Auror asked in surprise.

Harry unconsciously looked at the door under the stairs before he looked back at the Auror. “Upstairs, in Dudley’s second bedroom.”

“Show Mr. Jordan the bedroom, please.”

Harry hesitated momentarily, looking at his relatives first – not really surprised at the glare his uncle gave him – then to Lucius and Sirius, next before looking at the Auror before him again. Nodding jerkily, he turned to lead the way towards the stairs, forcing himself not to look at the door under the stairs as he went by it.

**

Draco looked back at his father when Harry went upstairs. He’d seen something in the other boy’s eyes when he’d looked at the small door with the lock on the outside of it in the hallway. “There seems to be more here than we realized, Father,” he said as he walked closer to Lucius and Sirius.

“What do you mean?” Sirius asked with a frown.

“I don’t think Harry’s room was always upstairs, Cousin,” Draco said with a nod towards the cupboard door, realizing that another Auror must have noticed Harry’s glance at the door because he was already opening the door. “When Auror Redford asked Harry where his room was, he looked over at that door. Something tells me that if we open it, we’ll find it used to be his bedroom.”

“Sir,” the Auror called out, looking slightly disturbed. “I have to agree with young Mr. Malfoy’s assessment. I don’t think his real bedroom was upstairs.”

“Mr. Kenneth, what did you find?” Redford asked, as he turned to look at the Auror standing by the open door, spying the shape and colour of a bare, old mattress on the floor but the light was so dim that it was hard to be sure.

“It would appear that Mr. Potter was indeed staying inside this thing. There are a couple of broken toys and a thin rotting mattress on the floor. No blanket or pillow.”

“Take a picture so we can show the Minister, then close the door before Mr. Potter comes down.” With a nod, the Auror did as he was told, taking out a camera he had in one of his pockets. Harry was just coming down when the Auror moved back into the living room, none the wiser of the events that had just transpired. Jordan, who had followed him upstairs, was right behind him and he didn’t look too pleased about whatever he’d found in Harry’s room.

“You have no right!” Vernon growled, beginning to sweat and fidget in discomfort. “No right at all to come into my home and presume to take over! I insist you get out before I contact that old coot and demand he hold to his promise!”
“And what promise was that?” Auror Redford asked with a raised eyebrow.

“If I took the boy in, there would be no interference from your kind,” Vernon told them with a fierce glare. “That we would raise him as we saw fit. If you’re going to take the freak from this house, then take him and go. He’s not welcomed here anymore.”

“Thank you, Mr. Dursley,” Redford murmured with a smirk. “I believe that’ll do nicely. There’s just one more thing we require of you and your wife.”

“And what’s that?” Petunia asked hesitantly from behind her husband, clutching sporadically at the fat arm in her hands.

“You’re going to have to tell all of this before the Wizengamot.” With a nod, Aurors advanced on the couple, grabbing hold of them despite their protest. That was when the door to the house banged open and closed just as loudly.

“They heard a teenage boy suddenly yell out in panic and fear. Petunia whimpered and tried to move towards the door, but the Auror closest to her wouldn’t allow it.

**

Just as Harry reached the bottom of the stairs, the door opened, admitting Dudley. As soon as the fat teenager spotted Harry, he smirked as he reached out and shoved him into the wall, pushing his considerable weight into the thinner teen with a malicious grin. “Hello, Freak. I knew you’d be home by now. I got something special planned for you,” he murmured as he pulled his fist back to hit Harry.

“I suggest you unhand Mr. Potter,” the Auror growled angrily, wand out and pointed at Dudley’s face, catching the fist that had been coming down towards Harry’s face. “Now.”

Dudley stared stupidly at the man before stumbling back. “Mum?!” he called out urgently, looking scared as he realized there were a lot of wizards and witches in the house. “There are a lot of freaks in the house! Mum?!” Fear was a good motivator, Harry realized, as he watched Dudley scampers quickly into the living room, rushing to hide behind his parents when he spotted them. “What’s going on, Dad?”

“Don’t worry, Dudders,” Petunia simpered pacifyingly, caressing the side of Dudley’s face to soothe his fear. “We won’t let them hurt you.” Some of the Aurors sneered in disgust at the woman. Harry could sympathize with them. He’d never like the way his aunt catered to his cousin but there was nothing he could do to change that… not that he really wanted to.

The Dursleys would never change.

“Are we done here?” he asked Sirius softly, just wanting to leave and never come back.

“Yes, Mr. Potter,” Auror Redford answered instead, having heard him. “I might have questions later. I assume you’ll be living with your godfather?”

“Either there or Malfoy Manor,” Harry said with a nod.

“Good,” Redford murmured, turning to look at Lucius. “I’m going to request you remain for a little, Lord Malfoy. Lord Black can take the boys home.”

Sirius nodded to Lucius before he led Harry and Draco outside. “We’ll Apparate to Malfoy Manor. Narcissa said she’d have lunch ready for us when we got there,” Sirius said softly, taking
hold of both boys’ arm. Without further comment, they were gone.

* * *

“Report,” Redford ordered the Auror who’d gone upstairs.

“Mr. Potter was right, sir,” the young man said with a stiff nod. “There was nothing in the room upstairs that would indicate he ever lived there. No pictures, toys, or clothes that would even fit the teenager’s frame, though it looks like it would’ve fit this one at one point,” he murmured, nodding towards Dudley. “And there was something else even more disturbing, sir.”

“And what’s that?” Redford asked with a frown. Lucius knew this didn’t help the Dursleys’ case one bit. It proved that Harry’s living situation was even worse than anyone even imagined. Just what had Dumbledore sanctioned? Why?

“There was a cat flap on the bedroom door with at least five different locks on the hallway side of it, indicating that they locked Mr. Potter in the bedroom. I’m unsure for how long, though since he wouldn’t answer any questions. In fact, he looked like he was in some kind of daze or shock. He didn’t say anything at all after leaving the living room until he asked Lord Black if he was done.”

Redford nodded as he turned to face the Dursleys. “Take some pictures to show the Minister then search the home for anything that proves Dumbledore may have been here before or even after Mr. Potter was left on their doorstep. When you’re done, join us at the Ministry. Jordan, remain behind, just in case something happens.”

“Sir,” Jordan answered with a nod, following Kenneth out of the room.

“I demand you all leave my house,” Vernon sputtered angrily, beyond reason now. “Immediately!”

“As for you, Mr. Dursley,” Redford said, cutting the angry man off before he could build up any steam. “All three of you will be joining us at the Ministry. Of course, you’ll all be separated and questioned until we’re satisfied you’ve answered everything we wish to know.”

“You can’t do that!” Petunia squeaked in fear, clutching at her husband and son as if someone had told her they were going to be killed or something.

“Oh, but we can,” Redford murmured with a look of satisfaction. He nodded at the Auror standing behind the woman and he grabbed hold of her arm, pulling her away from the two other muggles. She tried to resist, but her strength was no match for the Auror. Soon she was gone.

Vernon began screaming, demanding they bring back his wife and leave them in peace. He was the next one to be Apparated away. Which left only the boy…

Redford frowned as he realized there was something odd about this one, a funny odor coming off him. “Where were you that you reek, boy?” he asked in a tone he knew made people talk. This boy didn’t look like he would put up much of a fight.

He was right. Dudley began to blubber and cry as he looked up at the lead Auror, making no sense. He finally lost patience with the idiot. “Take him to the Ministry and find out what he’s been up to,” he ordered one of his men.

“Yes, sir,” the Auror said with a nod as he grabbed hold of Dudley and Disapparated.

“It’s going to be a long afternoon,” he mumbled as he turned to the rest of his group. “Let’s go.” The others began Disapparating. It didn’t take them long to get to the Ministry, Lucius following
Redford as they headed towards the Minister’s office.

“Come in!” Minister Fudge called out happily when he realized who it was. “Come in! Please, sit down. How did it go?”

“Minimal resistance, sir,” Redford reported as they sat in the chairs indicated. “It seems the living conditions of Mr. Potter were worse than we thought, Minister. They were locking him in his room when he was at home. Jordan reported that there were no less than five locks on the outside of the door with a cat flap on it. I sent him and Kenneth to take pictures. There was also a mattress in a small cupboard that we suspect Mr. Potter has lived in at some point in his life. I can’t see the woman putting her own son in the closet… I doubt he’d have fit.”

“What do you mean?” Fudge asked in confusion and alarm.

“The Dursley’s son, from what I could tell from the pictures in the room, has always been on the heavy side, Minister,” Lucius murmured, sneering in disgust. “From the way she treated the boy when he came home, it would seem that he gets whatever he wants from his parents.”

“Was there any sign that Mr. Potter ever lived in the home?” Fudge asked, looking from one to the other when they shook their heads. “Any pictures?”

“There was nothing, sir,” Redford said with a hard look in his eyes. “Every indication said there were only three people living in that home: Mr. and Mrs. Dursley and their son. There was nothing to indicate Mr. Potter has ever lived in the house. Even his room, according to Jordan, didn’t indicate that the boy lived there. As a matter of fact, Mr. Potter referred to it as his cousin’s second bedroom. I find it most disturbing, sir.”

“I agree,” Fudge murmured with a frown. “And you say that Dumbledore stole him from the Wizarding world and squirreled him away with them? Why? What purpose would it serve to place a child with these muggles?”

“That is, as yet, undetermined, Minister,” Parker said as he entered with a cursory knock, followed by another man. “It would seem that Dumbledore had been planning this for quite some time.”

“Mr. Parker,” Fudge greeted, looking troubled. “What’s the next step now that the Dursleys have been brought in?”

“Now, we try them for kidnapping, child abuse and neglect. Unfortunately,” the stranger said with a disgusted sigh, “we can’t really charge them with anything else. Mr. Goldenseal, Minister,” the stranger introduced himself, shaking Fudge’s hand.

“Ah, yes,” Fudge said as he realized who the stranger was. “You’re the one who’s bringing the charges against Albus Dumbledore on behalf of Lord Black. Are we still using the muggles against the old headmaster, then?”

“There’s a good case against him, even without the muggles’ testimonies,” Goldenseal said with a shrug. “It’ll all depend on what comes out at trial and what Mr. Potter divulges. If we can place Dumbledore at the Dursley’s home, then that might be added to the charges against the interfering old man.”

“With the way Harry shut down at the Dursleys’, it might be harder than we think,” Lucius said with a frown.

“What do you mean?” Parker asked in surprise.

“I sent Mr. Potter upstairs to show one of my men his room,” Redford murmured with a frown on
his face. “Jordan said he didn’t respond to any questions posed and looked like he was in a daze or in shock. I have to admit, though, that even before entering the muggle house, Mr. Potter did seem to have shut down. I think we need to question the couple, find out just what they know and what they’ve done to the boy.”

“If he shut down just by going into their house, perhaps we should wait to bring him into the court room until he has to be questioned. We don’t want to traumatize him more than he already seems to be,” Goldenseal murmured with a disturbed look on his face. “Unfortunately, there’s nothing we can do about the questioning he’ll be put through.”

“He might surprise us all and actually want to see some justice,” Sirius said as he walked into the office. “Harry likes to do that when its least expected.”

“Lord Black, I didn’t expect you to come in,” Parker said as he shook hands with the man.

“There wasn’t much I could do at Malfoy Manor and Mrs. Malfoy had things well in hand. Harry was quiet when we got to the Manor so I figured it was alright to check in. I left him sitting in the garden.”

“Well, let’s hope you’re right about the boy surprising us because we might need that,” Parker murmured with a sigh.

“I’m sure he will,” Sirius murmured as he stood to one side of the desk. “I watched him last year and he seems to thrive when it comes to obstacles. I think he just panicked today when we went to the Dursleys without telling him we were planning on confronting the family.”

“Very well, then, Mr. Malfoy, I’ll come over in a couple of days, after we’ve had a chance to question the Dursleys. I’ll have a better idea of what we need to know from him.”

“Sir!” Jordan said in an excited voice as he and Kenneth barged into Fudge’s office. “You’ll never believe what we found when we searched the house!” In his hand was a piece of paper, which he quickly handed over to Redford.

Frowning in disapproval of the disruption, the lead Auror took the paper from him and began to read.

January 21st, 1982

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley,

I am leaving your nephew, Harry Potter, with you as discussed last week. As per our agreement, you are to raise him however you see fit. There will be no interference from our people during his stay with you. When he reaches the age of eleven, I will send a letter that will allow him to come back into the Wizarding world.

I’m also confident that should anyone else show up looking for the boy, you’ll contact me as arranged. However, as I also managed to hide the fact of where the boy will be, no one should interfere with your methods. Just make sure he’s properly ignorant of our world.

Punishment is at your discretion.

Sincerely,

Headmaster Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

Once the letter had been passed around, everyone sat there, stunned by the information. “I didn’t
think the old man was reckless enough to put it in writing,” Sirius murmured with a shake of his head as he handed the letter to Goldenseal. “But it’s good enough to use against him and the Dursleys.”

“Indeed,” Parker said with a troubled look. “However, this seems to allude to the fact that he knew the Potters would be killed and Harry left alive. Can we use this to charge him with their murder?” he asked Redford.

“I’ll have to check the file on the Potter’s murder investigation, but it might blow that case wide open and solve the mystery of their deaths,” Redford said as he took the letter from the lawyer and made a copy of it. “The real question becomes, why kill them in the first place?”

“I’m afraid the only one who can answer that is Dumbledore,” Sirius said and frowned suddenly. “What I want to know is what Regulus had to do with all this.”


“Regulus was my younger brother. He vanished when he was nineteen. Harry said that he saw him come out of a diary that was given to the youngest Weasley child, Ginny, in his second year. That was when they had those problems up at the school.”

“Yes, I remember something happening there two years ago,” Fudge said with a frown. “Dumbledore never really explained what happened and the other teachers were tight lipped about the whole thing. What really happened?”

“You remember when there was that trouble a few years ago when the Myrtle girl was killed?” Lucius asked, waiting for the Minister to nod before continuing. “Apparently a Basilisk killed her. Mr. Potter found out where the creature was living and went down when he found out Ms. Weasley had been taken to its lair. He was confronted by a boy who apparently was Regulus Black but called himself Voldemort.”

“Wait, wasn’t he the one who died trying to test out some theory that the Killing Curse could be survived?” Redford asked with a look of remembrance on his face.

“Yes,” Sirius said, taking over the tale from Lucius. “It would seem that whoever put Regulus up to it made him think he was Voldemort. He told Harry that he was the reason the Potters were killed but there’s no proof that he killed them.”

“I find it funny,” Goldenseal said with a frown on his face, “that Dumbledore is warning Mr. Potter that a man name Voldemort is the reason behind his parents’ murders, is still trying to kill him, in fact, and then your brother is used to make it look like he’s correct in his assessment. Do we have any proof that Voldemort isn’t the man behind all this?”

“Considering the man died six months before the Potters, it’s impossible for Voldemort to be behind their deaths,” Lucius said, knowing more about the deceased man than anyone else barring Severus Snape. Now it made him wonder if Severus was right in his conviction that Voldemort had been murdered… Maybe there had been a reason behind it that no one else understood…

“Allright, I think we’ve hashed out as much as we can at the moment,” Fudge said as he stood up. “Find out what you can from the Dursleys and Mr. Potter and we’ll convene again on Friday at two.”

“I’ll let Harry know you’ll be coming over, Mr. Parker,” Sirius said with a nod to the other men, before he left Fudge’s office. Lucius wondered how this would work out and hoped they didn’t destroy the boy in the process.
“Sir!” an Auror panted as he busted into the room, his demeanour showing that what he had to say was urgent.

“Radway!” Redford snapped out angrily. “What’s the meaning of this?”

“We have a problem, sir,” Radway said straightaway, fidgeting impatiently. “It seems that the Dursley boy and his friends were ‘gifted’ with a boy who looked almost like Mr. Potter.”

“Gifted?” Fudge asked, confused by the wording. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“They were told to use him to their heart’s content, sir,” Radway said, looking expectantly at the men. “That’s where the boy had been when we got to the house. That’s why he stunk like he did.”

It took Redford a few more minutes to realize what his man was trying to say without coming out and saying it. “They were raping a boy?”

“Yes, sir,” Radway said with a nod. “One who looked like Mr. Potter… and he’s still there with the boy’s friends.”

“Go,” Fudge said when Redford looked at him.

“Where are we going?” Redford asked as he rose to his feet.

“The boy wouldn’t tell us. We have him in the waiting room so he can take us there.”

“Let’s go.”

“I’ll have my contact meet you at the Dursley home,” Lucius said following the Aurors out of the office.

**

The Aurors appeared inside the Dursley home so they wouldn’t arouse any suspicions with the neighbours. “Where are we going, boy?” Redford demanded angrily. “And don’t think you can run from us because we’ve put a magical tether on you. You won’t get more than ten feet.”

“Down the road,” Dudley stuttered, fear making his eyes huge in his pudgy face. “Two blocks down, there’s a stand of trees that we use as a hide out.”

They were startled when there was a knock on the door. Nodding to one of his men, Redford waited by the living room door as the door was answered. “My name is Constable Leonard Tower,” the stranger said with a grave look on his face. “Lord Malfoy sent me to this address, said someone would be here to expect me.”

“Yes, Constable Tower,” Redford said as he moved forward to shake the man’s hand. “Seems we’re having problems with a bunch of teenage boys. Did Lord Malfoy explain to you what was going on?”

“He told me you’d explain what was going on with a bunch of delinquents causing some kind of mischief,” Leonard said with a confused shrug. That was when they noticed the strange star on a chain around his neck. “Where are we at?”

Redford remembered seeing that star in his literature on muggle law. This man had to be part of the police the muggles used, a counterpart to the Aurors. “Mr. Dursley here is going to take us to his friends. Seems they’ve been… entertaining a young man,” Redford told him as he led Dudley
out of the house. “Lead the way.”

Dudley hesitated before trying to bolt, just as the Aurors had thought he would, but didn’t make it more than the ten feet Redford had predicted. The fat teenager was yanked off his feet, landing hard on his ass.

“What did I tell you, Mr. Dursley?” Redford said as Dudley picked himself up off the driveway. “Do I need to shorten the leash?”

“No, sir,” Dudley mumbled, not looking at the man. “This way.”

“What happened there?” Tower asked in confusion.

“Did Lord Malfoy ever tell you what he was, Constable Tower?”

“That he was a wizard? Yes,” Tower said with a nod. “My cousin went to the same school as Lord Malfoy. That’s how we met, in fact, that and other business ventures. So is this magic in play?”

“Yes,” Redford said with a nod. “We wanted to make sure Mr. Dursley didn’t try to run before we collared all his friends and rescued their victim.”

They were quiet the rest of the way, pausing when they reached the trees Dudley was leading them toward. Frowning, Redford pulled out his wand and did a quick scan, wondering how it was that they weren’t hearing anything. If the boys were with the boy, they should be hearing something.

He swore as his scan picked up the Silencing spell along with another that didn’t allow for their victim to escape unless they wanted to release him. “Radway, Tower and Jordan, with me. The other, fan out and make sure no one escapes. Hallowell, stay with Mr. Dursley.”

“Sir!”

Redford led the men into the trees, feeling the spell someone had placed to keep the young man in as they did so. Inside, they were surprised to see three other boys laughing as a fourth boy advanced on a fifth, who cringed away from them, trying to push himself through the barrier keeping him there. It was obvious he’d been suffering their attention for quite a few days. One eye was swelled shut, his lip had been busted and still bled. There were several marks on the naked body before them and he was completely filthy.

“Run!” one of Dudley’s friends screamed when he spotted the men coming in. They scattered, pushing through the trees hiding their spot, easily escaping the prison. The naked teen whimpered as he collapsed on the ground. Redford could see the relief in the green eyes as he curled up on himself.

Jordan conjured a blanket and wrapped the teenager in it, speaking softly to him.

Seeing his man had the injured teenager well in hand, he led the other back out of the trees, satisfied when they saw the other Aurors had the boys in hand. “So what do you think, Constable Tower?” Redford asked as he turned to look at the muggle cop.

“It’ll be easy to charge them for rape but why would they do that?” the man asked with a frown. “How did they manage to keep him in there without tying him up?”

“Easy,” Redford murmured as he led the muggle back into the trees so they wouldn’t be overheard by passing muggles. “Someone cast a spell to make this place silent so no one would
hear the teenager’s cries for help and another so he couldn’t leave unless they allowed it. It’s my suspicion that the person who cast them wanted to make sure the… fun wouldn’t end prematurely. I’m also beginning to think that this boy wasn’t supposed to survive what they were doing to him. I’ll have to test the boys, but something tells me they might have been tampered with.”

“Does it still make this their fault if someone tampered with them?” Tower asked as he watched Jordan coax the teenager to his feet.

With a flick of his wand, Redford cancelled the spell that prevented the removal of the teen. They needed to take him to St. Mongo’s to be checked over. They needed a list of his injuries to use at trial. “Yes. Just because it was suggested they do this, they willingly did it. Magic doesn’t hold well on muggles. They might have started doing this by someone else’s instructions, but they kept on going regardless. Once they’re questioned, we’ll more than likely find out that they were instructed to do this to someone else as well.”

“Really?” Tower said in surprise. “Who?”

“Mr. Dursley’s cousin, Harry Potter. Let’s take them back to the house so we can both question them. Jordan, take him to St. Mongo’s for evaluation. Ask for paperwork that we can use.”

“Yes, sir.”

* * *

Draco was worried.

Standing at the window, he watched as Harry sat on the grass in the garden, where he’d been for the past hour. Harry hadn’t said anything more for the rest of the afternoon, seemingly lost in his own mind. Draco knew his mother had noticed the change in the ebony haired boy but had respectfully given him his space.

Sirius had left to join Draco’s father… probably at the Ministry, because he couldn’t see the men still being at the Dursley home. He wondered what else they intended to do to the family who’d tormented Harry for Merlin knew how long. Would they require Harry to be involved further? If so, what would it do to his new friend?

Sighing tiredly, he decided Harry had been alone long enough with his thoughts and headed outside to talk to him. “You know,” Harry murmured before Draco could say anything as he came to stand beside him. “When we got to the Dursleys, for a few minutes, I almost forgot that I wouldn’t be living with them ever again.”

“And now?” Draco asked curiously.

Harry sighed, looking up at the sky, at the clouds gently rolling by. “I don’t know what to feel. I’m glad I don’t have to go back, but the idea hadn’t sunk in until now. I’d been dreaming about being rescued from that house for so long that I’d kind of resigned myself to being stuck there until I graduated Hogwarts.” Harry turned his head to look at Draco. “After that I wouldn’t have looked back. I’d have left them all behind and not thought of it again. Ever.”

“And now everything’s changed because Sirius is free,” Draco said in understanding. For Harry, everything was turned on its head. He didn’t know what to expect now… Draco could understand that. “It’s going to take time to get used to how different things are going to be. Do you regret it?” he asked as he put his hands in his pockets.

“Being free of the Dursleys?” Harry asked in surprise. Draco nodded, allowing the other teen to think of his answer, not pushing. “No. I think I’m ready for things to change. After all, it can’t get
any worse than living with the Dursleys.”

“Good,” he said in satisfaction. He turned to look at the Manor when he noticed movement. He smiled slightly when he saw his father sit down at the patio table with his mother and Sirius. “Seems Father and Sirius are back. Shall we go talk with them? They might be able to tell us what’s going to happen now.”

Harry looked over at the adults, before standing up with a nod and Draco led the way towards the adults waiting for them at the table, talking softly amongst themselves until they’d settled themselves in their chairs.

“Harry,” Lucius said in greeting, nodding slightly. “Draco. How was your afternoon?”

“Good, Father,” Draco murmured, glancing quickly at Harry before turning his attention to his father when he realized Harry looked better now than when they’d gotten to the Manor. “How was yours?”

“Informative. Harry,” Lucius said, turning to look at the other teen. “It seems we’re not done with your relatives. Mr. Parker informed me that there will be a court date later to determine if anything will be done with them. Unfortunately, your presence will be required.”

“Yes, sir,” Harry murmured with a nod. “If you think it’ll help.”

“Mr. Parker seems to think we might be able to use this towards Dumbledore’s trial,” the blonde man said with a nod. “We might have to delve deep into your memories in order to find something on the headmaster. We’ll know more once your relatives’ trials end.”

“Alright. What’s the next step?”

“Mr. Parker said he’d be by in a couple of days,” Lucius told him. “He and Mr. Goldenseal might have more questions to ask you after they’ve questioned your relatives.”

“I’ll be ready, sir.”

* * *

Tuesday, June 26th, 1995

“Minister, we’ve decided to simply take the Dursley’s to court instead of questioning them too much,” Parker said when everyone had gathered in Fudge’s office for an impromptu meeting.

“I thought you said you wanted to ask them questions?” Sirius asked in confusion.

“Oh, we have a couple of Aurors doing that right now,” Goldenseal said from beside Parker, “but we figured that if we ask them most of the questions at trial, they won’t have time to think up something else to say. Right now, they don’t realize what this is leading up to, which works in our favour.”

“So then we just go straight to trial?” Fudge asked with a frown. “Isn’t that a breach of protocol?”

“We’ve never had to deal with muggles in this capacity before, Minister,” Redford said with a shake of his head. “This isn’t covered in our laws. In fact, I looked it up and no wizard has ever been in Mr. Potter’s situation before. This is a first in a lot of aspects. I also looked up the investigation into the Potters’ murders and it seems there wasn’t much evidence to the identity of who did it. They did find something odd in the baby’s room, a cloak that didn’t appear to belong to either parent.”
He pulled out a cloak that had been placed in a plastic bag, putting it on Fudge’s desk.

Snape frowned as he reached for it. It looked familiar somehow… reminding him of something from long ago… then he remembered. “This is the cloak Voldemort would put on when he was working on his experiments,” he told them as he flipped the bag over to examine the other side.

“You’re sure?” Redford asked in surprise.

“Positive,” Snape said with a definitive nod. “I remember it from his lab. He told me he’d spelled it to protect himself from most backlashes when working with dangerous spells and potions. He’d managed to shield it from quite a few potions that are deemed hazardous. He’d come out of his lab with quite a few scorch marks when the Killing Curse would rebound and singe him. Sometimes he’d place it over whichever animal he’d be working with in order to test theories. He told me he was close to fixing the problem.”

“That explains the hairs they found inside the liner of the cloak, then,” Redford murmured as he read over the report. “They were confused at the amount of animal hair they found, especially since the Potters owned no pets. There was, however, a few hairs they found on the outside of it that weren’t animal and didn’t match anyone. Tests performed on one revealed that it was from a man between the ages of seventy and eighty.”

“So they did perform a *Progenies Probatur,*” Snape murmured with a nod, glad they done a lineage test. “I wondered if they would. Did they compare it to Voldemort?”

“They did,” Redford said with a nod as he referred to the notes again. “According to these notes, it seems Dumbledore insisted they test the dead man, providing hair samples for them to use. Apparently it came back negative. It was why they never bothered to question you about his involvement.”

“How would the Headmaster have hair from Voldemort?” Snape asked in confusion and surprise.

“This makes me wonder if, perhaps, he *was* behind Voldemort’s demise,” Sirius said as he frowned thoughtfully. “Why else have hair from a man who’d died before the deaths of the Potters? It doesn’t make sense.”

“Maybe we’ll get some answers when we bring Dumbledore to court,” Goldenseal murmured as he wrote something down on his notepad.

“Voldemort’s death was ruled accidental,” Snape said as he looked at the two lawyers. “Can he still be charged for murder because of it?”

“If we have a confession from the old man, it’ll be enough to add the charge to the list of offenses,” Parker said with a nod. “Since we can use Veritas Serum for this instance, we’ll be able to ask him how he came into possession of the cloak. I highly doubt Voldemort was in the habit of lending out his lab equipment.”

“Not the ones he used daily,” Snape murmured with a shake of his head.

“Alright, so what’s the next move?” Fudge asked as he leaned back in his chair, rubbing at this forehead like he was getting a headache.

“The Aurors should be just about done questioning the Dursleys,” Parker said with a sigh, rubbing the side of his face as he thought it through. “With that, we’ll be able to pay a visit to Mr. Potter and question him about the information we have. This will give us a better idea of if we allow him into the court room or only bring him in when we question him. I think he’s been traumatized
“He also might have an idea of other questions to ask them that we haven’t thought of. Once that’s done,” Goldenseal continued, sitting back. “We wait for a trial date. It would be nice if it could be soon, but that’s up to the clerks and the schedulers to decide, not us. As soon as we can do this, we can move on to Dumbledore’s trial date… which will be determined by the information we get at the Dursleys’ trial. What do we do with the boys?”

“Well, the scans the Healer did on the boys confirm that they were magically manipulated into using their victim,” Redford said as he consulted his notes. “According to the notes, it would seem they managed to extract the memory of Dumbledore coming into their little hiding place with instructions to use the teenager to their hearts’ content. They were also told that their victim wouldn’t be able to leave until they grew tired of him. Also, they were to do the same thing to Harry Potter.”

“What does your contact say, Lucius?” Fudge asked with a sigh. Things were getting more and more complicated, it seemed.

“Tower said he filed the grievance report with their local law enforcement,” Lucius said as he sat back in his chair, “along with pictures of the area the boys were found in. He even took pictures of their victim for their records. An arrest warrant had been issued for the boys. He’s explained to his superiors that another jurisdiction has the boys in custody and they’re waiting for us to conclude our business before taking possession of them.”

“And his superiors have agreed with this?” Fudge asked, frowning slightly.

“Considering that Tower told them that the victim was from another country, they’ve agreed to wait until we’re done our own investigation,” the blonde aristocrat murmured with a nod. “And yes,” he said before anyone could comment on his words. “He used the word ‘country’ because he can’t tell them the boy’s a wizard.”

“Is there anything we can charge these boys with?” The men around Fudge’s desk looked over at the lead Auror for that answer.

“Yes, sir,” Redford answered. “We can charge Dudley Dursley with physically assaulting Mr. Potter since we have a witness in the Auror who stepped in. Since he won’t remain in our custody, we won’t have to really bring him to trial. As for the others, we’ll put it on record that they physically and sexually assaulted the teenager, but again, since the muggle law enforcement will take matters into their own hands, we don’t need to bring them to trial either.”

“Good,” Fudge said with a satisfied smile. “File the appropriate paperwork and deliver the delinquents to Constable Tower. You know,” the Minister said with a disbelieving shake of his head. “I didn’t believe you when you told me the Dursley boy was heavy set. I paid him a visit after you left yesterday and couldn’t believe they allowed him to become what he is. It’s very disturbing to think that Mr. Potter lived with those muggles as long as he did.”

“Yes, Minister,” Sirius said with a sad sigh. “But at least he doesn’t have to live in a situation like that ever again.”

“Alright,” Fudge said as he straightened in his chair, alerting everyone to the fact that the meeting would be ending. “I’ll see you all at the Dursleys’ trials. Once those are over with we’ll reconvene to discuss what we’re going to do with Dumbledore. Hopefully we can get this resolved before school begins so we can appoint a new headmaster or headmistress to take his place.”

“Actually, Minister,” Lucius said with a thoughtful frown. “We could take Dumbledore out of that
position and we can use this as the excuse. By right, a teacher under investigation for their conduct and actions, be they headmaster or not, has to step down during that time. Otherwise, it’s a conflict of interest where the students are concerned. That was my concern two years ago, when all that trouble at the school began. I felt Dumbledore didn’t have the students’ best interest at heart, that he was serving his own interest instead of the school’s.”

“So then we simply alert the Board of Governors to the investigation into Dumbledore’s actions the past few years and let them vote him out?” Parker asked curiously. He wasn’t opposed to the idea if it protected the students of Hogwarts—all of them. “Who do we put as Headmaster for next year?”

“Well, I wouldn’t put Minerva McGonagall,” Sirius said decisively. “She believes too strongly in Dumbledore, thinks he’s infallible.”

“That’ll be a matter for the Board of Governors to decide,” Lucius said with a nod. “But I agree with Lord Black. McGonagall is too likely to continue what Dumbledore started, simply because she believes he’s doing the right thing.”

“So, then, Lucius I’ll let you bring it up to the Governors,” Fudge said with a nod. “Tell them of the concerns where Professor McGonagall is concerned and see who else we can place as Headmaster. I’ll send you all owls once we reconvene to discuss how we’re to proceed with Dumbledore.”

“And I can also add the fact that Dumbledore is interfering with some students’ choice of house they go into,” Lucius agreed, nodding in agreement.

“What do you mean?” Redford asked in confusion and alarm. “There’s more to what the Headmaster has done?”

“Harry told us that he should’ve been placed in Slytherin but because of outside pressure by Hagrid and Ronald Weasley, he asked the hat to place him into any other house than Slytherin.”

“That’s most disturbing,” Fudge said with a frown. “We’re going to have to do a major resorting of the students come September to see just how far this goes.”

“Something doesn’t seem to add up, though,” Remus murmured with a frown. The werewolf didn’t speak up often, but when he did it was usually to point things out… like now.

“What’s that?” Sirius asked in confusion.

“We already know that Dumbledore is tampering with people’s minds, the Dursleys being a good example,” the lanky professor pointed out. “Is there a possibility he’s done the same to some of the students? Or some of the teachers at the school?”

Several people frowned as they thought that through. “You’re right,” Fudge said finally. “Some of the teachers should’ve reported the abuse towards Harry Potter. From what I understand, the Dursleys starved him more than they fed him. Madam Pomphrey would’ve been one of the adults that should’ve recognized the signs. Could Dumbledore have corrupted so many people?”

“This might work to our advantage,” Goldenseal said with a look of dawning realization. “We can somehow use this to find out just how many students Dumbledore has been tampering with by using the Sorting Hat to uncover just who the old man has his hooks into. As for the teachers at the school, we can do some testing when they show up at the school before it begins. I’m hoping it’s not as bad as we fear, but we’ll have to wait and see just how far it goes.”

“Good, set the wheels in motion,” Fudge said with a decisive nod. “We’ll take care of the
tampering once we can get Dumbledore out of the school.”

* * *

Later that day found Harry sitting with Draco, Lucius and Sirius, facing Mr. Parker and Mr. Goldenseal. “Alright, Harry,” Mr. Parker murmured as he looked down at the notes he had. “We’ve questioned your uncle and aunt earlier today and wanted to see if what they said will match up with what you know is the truth.”

“Of course, sir,” Harry said with a nod. “Whatever you think will help.”

So the afternoon was taken up with questions and answers. Harry figured it was going really good, considering the two lawyers seemed pleased with what he was telling them. He’d never spoken so much about his life with the Dursleys to anyone before but he was finding that with every telling, it was getting easier to push past his own embarrassment and discomfort... of course, it helped that he had the support of everyone in the room.

“Well, so far, everything matches,” Parker murmured in satisfaction. “When we take the Dursleys’ to trial, we’ll be able to ask them even more questions. With Veritas Serum, it’ll force them to tell the truth instead of sugar coating it for the Wizengamot. Is there anything in particular you’d like to ask from them or would you rather let the men and women decide their fate?”

“I don’t want anything from them, sir,” Harry said, knowing he was telling the truth. He just wanted to put all this behind him and move on with his new life. “I have everything I’ve ever wanted. I’m out of their home and away from them. I can now buy some decent clothes without worrying about them finding out I have money.”

“What do you mean, Harry?” Sirius asked with a troubled frown. “Why didn’t you buy your own clothes once you entered the Wizarding world? You knew you had money then.”

“Yes, Sirius,” Harry said with a nod. “But if they’d known I had money, they’d have forced me to sign it over to them and move on with his new life. “I have everything I’ve ever wanted. I’m out of their home and away from them. I can now buy some decent clothes without worrying about them finding out I have money.”

He noticed that Parker was writing something on his notepad. “This makes me wonder just how much income came into the home. Your aunt didn’t work, did she?” the lawyer asked as he looked up at Harry.

“No,” he said with a shake of his head. “She never had to.”

“Lucius, if you’d have Tower look into this?” the lawyer murmured with a frown, waiting for the blonde aristocrat to nod his response before continuing. “In this day and age, unless you’re well off or have a really high paying job, it’s hard to live on only one income, especially with the way they spoiled your cousin.”

“Or the way they fed him,” Harry added with a nod. “Every meal was big, which is why Dudley and Vernon are the size they are. Petunia ate sensible portions but she was the only one.”

“And what about you, Harry?” Lucius asked with a disturbed frown.

Harry shrugged dismissively but didn’t answer, leaning forward to refill his tea cup. He ate better when he was at school because he could have as much as he wanted. He’d always counted on that to regain the weight he lost during the summer. When he went to Madam Malkin’s to get his new school robes, he always asked her to make them a little baggier that normal so that when he was the correct weight, the clothes would fit properly.
He’d seen the concern on the woman’s face the first time he’d asked but now she simply did it without being asked.

Since this year would be different, he’d be able to wear clothes that actually fit his frame without having to worry about what would happen to him or his money.

“You didn’t eat much when you were in their house, did you?” Draco asked when it became apparent that he wasn’t going to answer the question.

“It doesn’t matter anymore,” Harry murmured with a slight smile. “I don’t have to worry about them after this.”

“But it does matter, Harry,” Goldenseal said with a troubled look on his face. “If they starved you on top of the neglect, it indicates that they didn’t provide you with even the basics of needs. Clothes are one basic need, but so is food. Did they starve you?”

Harry sighed as he realized that he wasn’t going to get away without answering this. “They fed me enough so I would be able to do chores. They found out early that if they didn’t, I couldn’t do the work they wanted done.”

“So then you worked for the little they gave you,” Parker asked, though it sounded more like a statement.

“I guess we could look at it that way,” Harry said with a reluctant nod. “I remember once Vernon telling me that I had to pull my own weight around the house if I was expected to eat… though it was sort of confusing, considering he’d lock me in my room, sometimes for days, without feeding me.” He didn’t notice the disturbed looks the others shot each other at his words, lost in thought…

“So we know when the trials will be held?” he asked, blinking back to the present, not wanting to linger on the past.

“No,” Parker said with a shake of his head. “We’ll be notified as soon as we can get a date.”

“Well, then,” Draco said as he straightened up beside Harry. “We can take the afternoon to go shopping for some clothes. Harry should look better than he does now before we go to trial.”

“I think Harry should keep a set of his cousin’s cast offs to wear at trial to show how his relatives dressed him,” Sirius said before Harry could answer the blonde teen.

“You think it’s important to show how they dressed me, Sirius?” he asked in surprise. He’d thought he’d be able to throw them all out, but what his godfather was saying made sense.

“I agree with Sirius,” Goldenseal said with a nod. “It’ll drive the point of your neglect home a lot better than going in with nothing to show the Wizengamot. The people of the Wizengamot don’t know of your old home’s situation. If they can’t see how the Dursleys dressed you while in their care, they’ll think everything we’re saying is just something to get back at the Dursleys. If we can show them that you were dressed in those cast offs, they’ll readily believe that was how you were dressed at home.”

“I agree,” Parker said with a sigh. “We need whatever edge we can get, though the Dursleys’ attitudes will also work against them, especially your uncle’s. Your aunt might be a different thing altogether. Her crime consisted more of starving and ignoring you, from what we learned from her. She didn’t want to – and I’m quoting here – get her hands dirty handling the freak.”

“That sounds like Petunia,” Severus said as he entered the living room with Narcissa. “She always did turn her nose up at anything to do with magic. A thought occurred to me, though.”
“And what’s that?” Parker asked as the two adults settled themselves on whatever furniture was unused.

“We should test Dudley and Petunia Dursley.”

“What for?” Lucius asked in confusion.

“I suspect that the boy may be a Squib. There’s no way Petunia wasn’t magical and Lily was. I think they repressed it because of the influence around them,” the Potions master said, nodding at the surprise on the others’ faces. “Petunia would’ve suppressed it because she didn’t want to be anything but what others considered ‘normal’ and the boy would’ve done the same thing because of his parents’ reactions to Harry.”

“You know,” Lucius said finally, looking thoughtful now. “That actually makes sense. The boy has grown up listening to Harry being referred to as a freak because he can do magic. Out of self-preservation, he would’ve repressed it just to survive in his own home.”

“Exactly.”

“I’ll set something up,” Parker said as he wrote something down. “If it turns out that he is magical, it might affect the outcome of his sentencing. They might be more lenient in order to have him trained properly once his sentencing has been carried out or keep an eye on him and if his children display signs of being magical, to remove them, so they can be free of the stigma of the family.”

“It would actually be ironic if he did turn out to be a wizard,” Harry said with a snicker, which turned into a full blown laughter, surprising everyone with his reaction. “It would be true justice in fact, considering Vernon and Petunia pride themselves for being normal,” he gasped finally, getting a hold of himself, looking over at Draco, who was smirking at him as he realized what Harry was saying. “If it turns out to be true, I want to be the one to tell them, just to see their reactions.”

“I do believe you deserve that right, Harry,” Lucius said in amusement. “The test can be administered this afternoon. We’ll know by the end of the day.”

“Can we watch it done?” Draco asked curiously. Harry had to admit, he was curious as to how they found out if a muggle was actually a Squib.

“I can’t see a problem,” Lucius said with a slight nod, rising to his feet. “I’ll send an owl to Redford. Harry, Draco, why don’t you get ready and we’ll go get some new clothes for Harry.”

The two teenagers nodded and Draco led Harry upstairs to his room. “With your slight frame, you should be able to fit some of my clothes. It’ll be better than what you have on now,” Draco said as he opened his closet doors. Harry blinked in surprised at the amount of clothes inside it, wondering if Draco had ever worn all of it. It didn’t seem possible, really…

He was amused as Draco threw a pair of pants and a shirt at him to try on. He had to admit, when he stood in front of the mirror, looking at his reflection, Draco’s clothes on, that he looked good. Draco had always had good taste in fashion… which Harry didn’t have.

In fact, it actually went well with the tattoo and earring, displaying both in a way Harry had never thought to do before. He was also surprised to realize that no one had mentioned the new changes to him… but then, maybe he shouldn’t really be. Most of his new friends were Slytherins, after all.

“Better,” Draco murmured with a look of appreciation, looking Harry over from his head down to his feet, where he frowned. “Though, we need to change those trainers.” Going back to the closet,
he came back with ankle high boots for Harry to slip into. “Yes, much better.”

“Good enough to go now?” he teased the blonde, grinning at the tongue that was stuck out at him.

“All you have to do now is run a brush through your hair.”

“Why?” Harry asked in confusion. “It’s not like it’ll make a difference.”

Draco rolled his eyes and gestured for Harry to sit in the chair situated in front of the dresser mirror. Taking the brush to his hair, he proceeded to run it through the thick locks, frowning as he realized Harry hadn’t been kidding. It seemed to spring back into place as soon as the brush released the hair so he decided to take a different approach and gathered the top half into a tail, tying it in place. Harry had to admit that it did manage to tame his hair enough to cooperate and it didn’t look that bad either.

“Now we’re ready.”
Chapter 7 – And The Verdict Is…

Harry watched in amusement – and more than a little alarm – at Draco’s enthusiasm when it came to shopping for clothes. It had begun as soon as he’d been dragged into the muggle store run by two Squibs who catered to both muggle and Wizarding kind.

Draco was like a whirlwind as he began pulling shirts, pants, boots, and accessories off hangers and shelves.

“Alright,” the blonde teen finally said after depositing a pile of clothes inside one of the fitting rooms. Beside the door were two carts. What they were for, Harry had no clue… maybe Draco would explain their use… eventually. “Try those ones. I’ve put them so that you put on a shirt with the pair of pants beneath them. Don’t worry about shoes right now.”

“What about those with several shirts before the pants?” Harry asked in confusion.

“Those are to be tried with the same pair of pants,” Draco told him as if that were obvious. “And don’t skip.”

With that, Draco closed the door, leaving Harry alone in the small cubicle with the mountain of stuff. Shaking his head, he pulled off Draco’s clothes and reached for the first items on Draco’s pile. He’d never imagined there was so much to clothes shopping before. He’d never been allowed to go with Petunia and Dudley when she bought him new clothes for school… maybe that was a good thing?

Once he was dressed, he hesitantly exited the cubicle, wondering what he was supposed to do now. The clothes were more fitted than he was used to, but he figured that was how it was supposed to be…

“Turn,” Draco ordered imperiously when he spotted Harry, a new pile started on the chair beside him. “No, that doesn’t suit you at all,” the blonde said with a disappointed sigh. “Come on.” Following him back to the cubical, Harry watched as Draco pulled out a bunch of shirts and tossed them into one of the carts. “Take that one off and add it to the pile. The pants go in the other cart.”

“Just what do the carts mean?” Harry asked finally.

Draco blinked at him in surprise. “Oh, right,” he murmured as he seemed to come to some kind of realization. “The cart on the right is for the clothes to go back and the cart on the left is for what you’ll be buying.”

“Ah.” Harry waited for Draco to leave the cubicle so he could change clothes… of course, it didn’t bother him to change in front of the other teen since Draco had seen him naked several times already, but he didn’t feel like parading himself in front of everyone else…

Moving the several shirts Draco had placed on top of the next pair of pants he was to try on, he proceeded to strip again. This was going to be a long day…

For the next couple of hours, Harry put on and took off whatever Draco gave him to try on, biting his tongue at the never-ending amount of clothes the blonde gave him. In fact, he was surprised
that not as many of the clothes were making it to the ‘buy’ pile as he’d first feared… of course, the pile was still growing because Draco wasn’t done yet… Each time he came out, Draco would look at him carefully before telling him which cart to place the clothes in.

“Are we just about done, Draco?” he asked tiredly, sinking into a chair for a few minutes of rest when it became apparent the blonde still wasn’t done going through the store.

Draco looked at the clothes that Harry was to buy with a thoughtful frown. “I guess this will do for a while. Oh, but keep those ones on.”

Harry’s eyebrows rose in disbelief. “For a while?” he asked, catching those words even as he took Draco’s clothes out of the changing booth, keeping them with him so he could put them in with his purchases once he’d paid for the stuff. The women smiled at him as they watched him fold them and place them on his lap.

“Well, yeah,” the blonde said with a shrug. “We’re going to have to stop at Madam Malkin’s for different clothes. Father usually has two or three parties in the summer and tends to invite really important people. He likes to do this so those of us in the club can practice what we learn,” Draco said softly, making sure no one overheard him.

“I guess that makes sense,” Harry murmured after thinking about that for a few minutes. “Alright, so then let’s pay for this and head over to Madam Malkin’s. I’m getting hungry.”

Draco laughed as they gathered the paid purchases – which were way more than Harry would’ve picked out – but that was why he’d asked Draco to help him in the first place. “How about we do it this way,” the blonde teen said as they were leaving. “Let’s go for lunch now and finish shopping afterwards.”

“Sounds like a good idea,” Lucius said as he came walking up to them. Harry had wondered where the older Malfoy had disappeared to. “We’ll head over to Diagon Alley and get something there.”

They weren’t stopped or crowded as they walked through the Leaky Cauldron – which Harry was grateful for – and into an expensive restaurant, sitting down at a corner table that was somewhat private. Harry had never enjoyed a more relaxing meal in a long time… not since this all began, really.

During the holidays, he’d come to realize that Lucius Malfoy was nothing like he’d first thought and it was only strengthened now as the meal progressed. The man really had a sharp wit to him, which he seemed to have passed on to Draco. They joked a lot more than he’d thought they would – after all, the elder Malfoy had a reputation to uphold – and nothing was off topic when it came to asking questions.

Harry liked that.

He also learned that Lucius, like Severus, wouldn’t lie to him. If he didn’t know or couldn’t answer certain things, he said so… it was a refreshing concept.

Soon they were entering Madam Malkin’s so Harry could finish his shopping. Fortunately, this trip went faster than it had this morning. The woman led him towards a raised platform so she could measure him, checking the old measurements she’d taken at Christmas, adjusting the numbers when needed. “How many outfits will you require?” she asked them with a pleasant smile.

“I think six should do for now,” Lucius said as he looked at his watch. “We can always send a
note if more are required.”

“Very well,” Malkin murmured as she wrote something down. “Where should I send this?”

“Black Manor, please,” Harry said politely. “That’s where any of my purchases can be sent from now on.”

“Yes, I heard about that,” the woman said with a slight frown. “Nasty business with Mr. Crouch,” she tutted with a disapproving shake of her head. “I was glad to hear that Lord Black was cleared of all charges.”

“Yes,” Harry murmured, not wanting to dwell on what had happened in the past. “Let’s hope they found all the wrongfully convicted that were placed in Azkaban.”

“Yes, well,” Malkin sighed as she put her pad away. “I’ll get on this and send your parcel as soon as it’s done.”

“Thank you.”

Harry breathed a sigh of relief as they exited the shop, glad the day was finally over. “I never realized that shopping for clothes could be so exhausting,” he breathed, ignoring Draco’s snicker at his words.

“At least you now have clothes to call your own,” Lucius murmured as he led them towards the Leaky Cauldron. “I think it’s time to head home. Things will pick up quickly until everything is settled with your relatives.”

“I can’t wait for all this to be done and over with,” Harry muttered, shoving his hands deep into his pockets. He could console himself with that knowledge, anyway. He could wait for everything else to fall into place…

* * *

**Thursday, June 29th, 1995**

Harry, Draco, Sirius and Lucius were led to an observation room as soon as they arrived. Through the two way mirror, they watched as Dudley fidgeted nervously where he sat at a table, obviously waiting for someone to let him out. The male Auror in the room with him simply watched, refusing to answer any questions Dudley asked.

Harry was amused when Dudley tried to look intimidating… much to his cousin’s annoyance when it didn’t produce the results he’d expected. Harry figured the people Dudley dealt with much of the time were intimidated by the fat slob, but Aurors dealt with worse people than his cousin and weren’t intimidated as easily.

“So what are they going to do? How do they test people?” he asked when a Ministry clerk entered the room they were in.

“Well, there’s three test they administer to determine just how powerful a Squib is,” the clerk said, pushing his glasses up his nose. It didn’t make much difference as they slid right back to their original position. “The first one is a blood test, which they did before putting him in the room. The next one should be starting in a few minutes.”

“And what does it entail?” Draco asked curiously as they watched a woman enter the room Dudley was in.
“This one will test his intelligence and learning capabilities,” they were told as the woman pulled out some sheets with some kind of puzzles on them.

“This should take a while then,” Harry muttered with a sigh, crossing his arms over his chest.

“What do you mean, Harry?” Lucius asked as he watched from Harry’s left.

“The Dursleys learned early after I started primary school that if I missed any time because of Vernon’s heavy hand, Dudley fell behind in class because he couldn’t cheat off my work. And Dudley falling behind was unacceptable to Vernon, or that I do better than him.”

“And none of the teachers noticed the cheating?” the clerk asked, frowning in confusion.

“I don’t think they cared to look too closely at it,” Harry said with a wry twist of his lips. “And if I dared say anything or I tricked Dudley into answering differently from what I wrote, I’d get my ass tanned when my uncle got home. It makes me wonder how he fared at Smelting, the school he started when I began Hogwarts.”

Harry knew he was revealing more about his home life than he’d intended again, but he wasn’t really surprised when Dudley failed to comprehend the puzzles he was given. Dudley had never really been an intellectual student, preferring to rely on others to get ahead. It was a problem inherited from – and encouraged by – his father.

“This last test is designed to register any trace amount of magic inside a person,” the clerk murmured as they watched the woman hold out a wand towards Dudley. “This one is the test they usually administer to squibs since it registers the low levels they carry.”

“This is going to be hilarious,” Harry snickered, knowing they were going to have trouble with Dudley on this test. As he’d expected, Dudley jumped out of his chair like a scalded cat, backing up as quickly as possible, screaming at the top of his lungs.

“What happened there?” Draco asked in alarm, jumping when Dudley ran into the wall they stood by as if he were being chased by the hounds of hell itself.

“Dudley’s been trained to fear wands,” Harry explained as he laughed. “He seems to think he’s going to be killed by it or something. I remember the first time I took mine out after first year, Dudley ran to my uncle screaming that I had taken my thing out to hurt him.”

“Your thing?” Draco asked incredulously. “It almost makes it sound like you’d bared yourself to the fat slob or something.”

“In that place, taking out a wand is worse than stripping down to the skin and parading through the house,” Harry said with a shrug. “In fact, I don’t think I’d get the whipping for stripping that I got for taking out my wand.”

“That’s just not right, Harry,” Lucius murmured, frowning at the news.

Harry shrugged indifferently. “It’s how they see it, Lucius. Nothing we can do about it.”

In the other room, the woman sighed in exasperation and used her own wand to force Dudley to take the wand. With it held at shoulder height, they watched as it glowed slightly. “Well,” the clerk said with a disappointed sigh. “He’s not as powerful as we’d hoped, but maybe it’s for the best. His children should be stronger than he is. We’ll have to keep an eye on that.”

“Does this mean we’re taking the boy, along with his friends, back to the muggle world to face the charges laid against them?” Parker asked as he entered the room in time to hear the verdict on
Dudley. Harry hadn’t asked what Dudley and his friends had done, he didn’t really care. It was enough that they wouldn’t be coming after him again. Ever.

“Yes. My colleague will tag him magically so we can locate him easier when he reaches adulthood,” the clerk murmured as he wrote something down on his clipboard.

“What happens if he has kids?” Harry asked with a frown.

“If they register in the books, they’ll be taken away from him, replaced with muggle orphans at birth,” the clerk answered, looking up at him. “As his only magical relative, you’ll be the first one we’ll ask if you want to raise them, of course. If you decline, they’ll be placed in an orphanage here in the Wizarding world.”

“Is there an option where he can choose who raises them?” Lucius asked with a frown.

“I’m sure that would be acceptable,” the clerk said with a dismissive shrug, writing that option onto the clipboard in his hands.

Harry nodded, looking back at where his cousin sat, looking shell-shocked at the news that he was just like Harry. He wanted to feel some kind of sympathy for his cousin, but he couldn’t seem to muster enough feelings towards the boy who’d made his life hell for so long…

“When do you want to tell your aunt and uncle about this news?” the clerk asked, quill poised above the clipboard.

“After their trials,” Harry told him, turning away from the window, “before they’re led away, and preferably with written proof. If I tell them before, they might balk during the questioning. It’ll be the final blow to their coffin, so to speak.”

“I’ll let the Minister know,” the skinny man murmured, writing down his answer before he left the group there.

“Wow, Harry,” Draco murmured, a look of respect and awe in his eyes. “I didn’t think you’d start to display Slytherin characteristics so soon.”

“Well,” Harry said with a cheeky grin. “It’s never too late to start.”

“Indeed,” Lucius agreed with a smirk. “It’s time to rid ourselves of some pests. I’ll see you boys at home.”

“Yes, sir,” they answered in unison.

“Come,” Parker murmured in amusement. “I’ll lead you to the Atrium.”

* * *

“Leonard,” Lucius murmured as he led Dudley and his friends towards the muggle cop an hour later. There were three Aurors with him today so that none of the teenagers would escape… of course, there was a spell tying the delinquents to the Aurors so that they had to stay within a certain range of the men.

“Lord Malfoy,” Tower said with a nod. “Are these the boys we were talking about a couple of days ago?”

“Yes. Let me know if their victim has to testify at their trials and I’ll arrange for him to be escorted to whichever building you require,” Lucius said as he nodded towards the Aurors. Tower gestured
to a few of his fellow officers so they could place metal rings around their wrists, effectively shackling their hands behind their backs.

As each teenager was done, they were loaded into the back of one of three vehicles. Soon there was only one vehicle left, the one waiting for Tower. “Did their victim have to testify at their trial?” he asked softly, making sure his voice didn’t carry to his partner.

“No, in our justice system, we use the victim’s memories of the incident so they don’t have to relive what happened. They don’t even have to enter the same room as their attackers. They’re simply told what the verdict was and what punishment was decreed. Depending on what the crime is, if it’s not too severe, usually it’s the victim who chooses what punishment is dealt out, short of killing them, of course.”

“Makes sense, in a way,” Tower said with a thoughtful nod, “since they’re the ones who had to live through it. I’ll let you know what happens here. I’ll make sure they don’t get away with it.”

“Good,” Lucius said with a nod, shaking Tower’s hand. “Geffrey will be glad to hear that. Let me know if and when they go to trial so I can tell the Ministry this chapter is closed.” He doubted it would get as far as trial, really.

The Aurors, once they’d realized where they were taking the boys and that they might have to put their victim through reliving the few days they’d had him, had given something to them. Lucius had been assured that it wasn’t harmful to the muggles, but it would force them to tell the truth.

“I will.”

* * *

Friday, June 30th, 1995

“We lucked out,” Parker said as they met at the Ministry for the first of two trials. “We managed to book in the trials fairly quickly. This morning at ten will be Mr. Dursley’s trial.”

“What about the woman?” Lucius asked, impressed that the trials could be done so quickly.

“Today at one,” Goldenseal said with a nod at the surprised looks that got him. No one had ever gotten trials that quickly before, least of all for the same group. “Seems that when the Wizengamot found out what the details were for these trials, they managed to rearrange the schedules to get them done.”

“Someone must have told them that this was so we could use the results against the old Headmaster,” Remus murmured softly with a sly look towards Lucius. They’d gathered in a side room to the court room they would be using for the trials.

“This works to our advantage,” Parker said with a nod as he turned to look at Harry. It had been deemed unnecessary for Harry to dress in his old ‘hand-me downs’ since they’d decided to go a different route. The boy would also not be required to testify against his relatives. They would be using memories instead, and they showed how they had dressed the boy and when it had begun. So, Harry had been allowed to burn the old clothes and wear the new ones instead. “Are you sure you want to do this, Harry?” the lawyer asked, worry clear in his eyes. “You don’t have to sit in the court room while the testimonies are aired out. You could wait in this room until the verdict is given.”

“I appreciate that, Mr. Parker,” Harry said with a smile of gratitude. “But I’d rather see and know what’s going on. I know I’m never going back with the Dursleys now. When we went to the house, I forgot about leaving it for good. I’ll be fine this time.”
“Are you sure about this, Harry?” Sirius asked hesitantly, not wanting to pressure him.

“I’m sure, Sirius,” he said with a nod and an appreciative smile. “It’s not like I’m doing this alone. I have support and I know I’m in the right.”

“Alright, then,” Parker said as he went over his notes one last time. “I’ll leave you here to await the proceedings. I have one more meeting to attend before the trial begins. Lord Malfoy, if I could speak to you for a moment?”

“Of course,” Lucius murmured and followed the lawyer out of the room.

“We can use this time to study a bit more,” Draco said as he pulled out a book from his robes.

Harry groaned, his head falling with a gentle thud on the table. “Draco, it’s summertime! Can’t we take a break from studying?”

“This has to do with the club, Harry,” the blonde teen admonished gently, tapping the back of Harry’s head with the thin book.

Sighing in resignation, he looked up at Draco. “Alright, what are we learning today?”

**

“Have you heard back from Tower?” the lawyer asked, walking down the hallway from the room where the boys were sitting with Sirius and Remus.

“I have,” Lucius said with a slight nod. “Things went according to plan. The boys pled guilty to kidnapping, rape and assault. The judge they went before just happens to be one of us – a Squib. He decided to make an example out of them and sentenced them to eight years as adults. Seems like they’ll have to do at least five before they can even apply for release.”

“It’s a good thing then. It puts less stress on Geffrey. I’ll send his parents a letter informing them that the attackers have been dealt with and what their sentence was. They’ll be pleased. On another subject, what do you think Harry’s mental state is?” Parker asked with a thoughtful frown.

“He seems better than he was six days ago,” Lucius murmured as he thought that through. He knew Parker had a reason for asking this. Did he suspect Harry would freeze up again when he was faced with his uncle? He didn’t blame the lawyer for being concerned… Lucius had to admit that he was wondering the same thing himself.

“That doesn’t really mean much, does it, though,” Parker murmured with a thoughtful frown. “That young man’s been through a lot in his short life. You know him better than I. Do you think he’ll be alright if he comes face to face with what’s been happening?”

Lucius sighed, shaking his head slightly. “To be honest, I’m not sure. I didn’t think we’d put him into a near catatonic state when we confronted his relatives the other day, but that’s what happened. I think, though, that today will be different. He’s going to hear a lot of truths in court, more than what he’s expecting.”

“I agree,” Parker said with a sigh. “Somehow, I don’t think he knows that the Dursleys have been paid to take him in. Or that the money spent on his cousin actually came from his vaults. Dumbledore was sly, I’ll give him that, but he didn’t cover his tracks very well. Octavius has the Goblins doing a complete investigation on just how much the old man has liberated from the Potter Vaults.”
“Has there been any news on that?” Lucius asked in surprise. He’d known Dumbledore was callous, but to pay someone to torment a child by using money from that child’s own vaults…?

“It’s slow going, but Octavius is confident we’ll have enough evidence by the time we take Dumbledore to court,” Parker said, looking at his watch. “I’ll leave you with the boys. I’m going to be late to my meeting, but it’s not that far so it won’t be too bad. I’ll see you in forty-five minutes.”

Lucius nodded and turned back to the room where Draco, Harry, Remus and Sirius were sitting, talking about the book in Draco’s hands.

“…That’s how it was done in the older days,” Draco was saying to an amused Harry. “Of course, things aren’t done like that now, but you have to remember, at the time this book was written, children were seen more like property than anything else. Parents had the right to sell a child of their own blood if it was advantageous to their needs. It’s one of the reasons they had more than two or three children.”

“It’s just hard to believe that kids could be used as commodity, is all,” Harry said with a shake of his head. “I’m glad it’s not like that now.”

“No kidding,” Sirius muttered wryly. “The reason it changed, though, was because it was getting out of hand. Some were having children just to sell them. That’s when the Ministry got involved and changed the law so that it protected the children. Of course, it wasn’t everyone who sold their offspring off, just a few, but it was enough to raise alarm bells.”

“Alright, so it explains why that was changed, but why do we have to hide what we do from everyone?” Harry asked with a slight frown. “I mean, it’s not like underage kids are being forced to do something that’s inappropriate anymore.”

“Think back to when you were told about all this, Harry,” Lucius murmured as he sat down at the table, finally joining the conversation. “What was the first thing that came to mind when you were told that your father offered you up to slavery?”

“Horrified, actually,” Harry said honestly. “I couldn’t believe my father would do something like that.” Harry paused as he thought about that. “I get your point, though. The first thing that comes to mind is not what really happens at the club, which is why we keep this private.”

“Exactly,” Remus said with a nod. “You have it worse than the others at the club, coming into this as late as you are, but you’re learning quickly what this all means. There are rules and regulations we all have to follow, no matter who we are, as you saw with Jonathan’s father. Because we believe in this, we all make the effort to keep it as it was when the club was first started.”

“Which is why there’s two different groups,” Draco added, taking up the instructions. “The masters are there to provide guidance and corrections to the one they’re to dominate. The slaves learn the lessons provided by the masters or face the consequences. When we’re started into this at age four, all the children learn the same lessons. It’s not until our ninth birthday that we’re placed in our groups and taught what it means. That’s when we start keeping to our groups. By the time we’ve reached the age of eleven, we know more about what our roles are, be it master or slave.”

“And by the time you reach your fifteenth birthday,” Lucius continued when Draco paused for breath. “The masters have already spent a year with the slaves who chose them. That’s a crucial time because it’s when you learn what the other person likes and dislikes. The slave learns from the master’s mannerisms what’s acceptable and what isn’t. The punishments don’t really come into play until after you’re bound together. Some of the others will have an easier time than you because they’ll have most of summer to learn about each other.”
“But that’s okay,” Harry said with a nod. “Draco and I will have until summer ends to learn about each other. I already know most of what Draco’s willing to do and the Christmas holidays taught me to be patient. I think that’s a big accomplishment compared to how I was before this was revealed to me.”

“I agree,” Draco said, nodding in agreement. “I’ve notice you don’t anger as quickly as before. It’s a great improvement, if you ask me.”

“So when are the bindings supposed to begin?” Harry asked curiously.

“The first weekend in July usually begins all the bindings,” Lucius murmured as he poured himself a cup of tea that was on the table. “There’ll be three or four bindings every week until all the current fifteen year olds are done. Tomorrow, Lord Herbert and the other elders will be dividing you all into four groups: two groups of masters and two groups of slaves. Your instructions will be given to you separately since the ritual markings are different for each group.”

“So then, we’re all supposed to participate in these rituals?” Draco asked in surprise.

“Yes, but that’s a conversation for tomorrow and not something we’re to discuss here today.”

“Alright, so then what else is there for me to learn before we begin all this?” Harry asked curiously, looking from one to the other. “Is there more for me to learn before the bindings begin?”

“There’s a lot that you still need to learn,” Remus said with a nod. “It’s just that there’s too much for you to learn before your binding.”

“Well, then what if Draco and I immerse ourselves into this until our binding?” he asked with a frown.

“What do you mean, Harry?” Draco asked, tilting his head to one side.

“Well, you’ve said before, I’m still learning what it means to be a master,” Harry said, and Lucius could see he was thinking of his words before saying them so they wouldn’t misunderstand what he meant. “What if we use the weekdays to teach me what it really means to be a master? Either at Malfoy or Black Manor. Or even at the club.”

“What do you think, Father?” Draco asked, intrigued.

“I see no problem with that,” Lucius said after thinking about that for a few minutes. “You’ll have to spend most of your time at Black Manor, Draco, so that there’s proper supervision. Do you think you can do that?”

“This is for Harry to learn, so yes, I can do that,” the blonde teen said with a decisive nod. “Anything to help him.”

“Sirius?” Lucius asked, knowing the ex-con had to be in agreement before they could make the final plans.

“I think this will be the best way to help Harry be what he was supposed to be,” Sirius murmured, nodding thoughtfully, rubbing at his chin. “And I think if we invite a few of the masters and slaves of their year to join us, we might be able to improve his knowledge faster. All the students in his year already know that Harry’s coming into this from a disadvantage and I’m sure they’d be willing to help him out. After all, it’s how we keep this secret, by helping each other out.”

“Good, then we can start with sending letters to some of our fellow students after the trials and
tonight Draco and I can start at Black Manor,” Harry said, straightening up in his chair as the decision was made. “Tomorrow I find out from those we send letters to if they’re willing to help. We can seriously start this a week from Monday.”

“Then it’s settled,” Sirius said with a smile of satisfaction.

“I’ll contact Lord Herbert and see if he can either provide another person to help or allow the club to be used once in a while,” Lucius murmured with a nod of approval.

* * *

Vernon glared up at the people sitting above him, judging him. He knew he shouldn’t have trusted the old bastard to keep his word. And then there was that imprudent freak of a nephew…

He hadn’t been allowed to speak to Petunia or Dudley in the few days he’d been taken from his home. He worried about what they were doing to his family. These people had no right to do this to him! He’d done nothing wrong, after all.

It was all the old man’s idea. He should never have taken his nephew in, never should’ve agreed to the payments the old man had agreed to give him… never mind that it paid off his house, provided him with a new reliable car, or even paid for the stuff they gave Dudley. He should’ve just told the old man to bugger off like he’d meant to.

But when the idea of getting money to take the freak in had been presented, they’d been living in an apartment in a shitty part of town. Petunia had been working, meaning they’d had to pay someone else to take care of Dudley and Vernon didn’t like that. He wanted his wife to stay at home and raise their son… so he’d taken the deal with the old man.

In fact, the first payment had given him the money for a down payment on the house. Vernon had made sure they’d gotten that before they got the boy.

It was one of the reasons he’d had Dumbledore put in writing what he expected them to do so that if something like this came back on him, he’d have proof that he had permission. Now it seemed it wouldn’t matter. He didn’t know what was going on or why he was being treated like this, after all, he’d done nothing wrong. Hadn’t he cared for the freak since he’d been dropped off on his doorstep?

He was distracted by people filing into the room from his right and growled as he realized it was the freak, dressed in brand new fitting clothes. So, the brat was behind all of this. Seemed the old man hadn’t kept his part of the bargain and kept the boy away from all the money he was using or giving Vernon…

Then another thought occurred to him and his eyes narrowed in anger. So, Harry thinks he’s going to get some revenge, does he? I’ll see about that!

**

Harry walked calmly to his seat, glad he wasn’t doing this alone. Draco, Lucius, Sirius and even Severus were there to support him… funny thing was, now that this was happening, he only felt relief. It would all be over soon. He could feel Vernon’s eyes on him, trying to burn a hole in the side of his head as he glared in hatred, but Harry didn’t look at him just yet. As soon as he was sitting, he returned his uncle’s gaze head on.

This would be the last time he’d have to.

“Mr. Dursley,” Fudge began, glaring down at him as he brought Vernon’s attention back towards
the front of the room. “It has been brought to our attention that your nephew, Harry Potter was illegally placed in your care. You are here to answer to the charges of kidnapping, child abuse, endangerment and neglect.”

“That’s a lie!” Vernon cut in, face purpling in anger.

Typical, Harry thought with a soft sigh. Vernon never liked to take responsibility for his own actions. It was why Harry had always been targeted for anything bad happening in the home.

“Mr. Dursley!” Fudge said over his loud exclamation. “You’ll have your chance to speak once I’m done. If you do not keep your mouth shut, I’ll have to take steps to do it for you!”

Harry waited eagerly, wanting the Minister to do it, just to see Vernon’s reaction to being silenced… but Vernon settled for glaring again, lips clamped tightly together.

“We have proof that you’ve been abusing Mr. Potter since he was placed in the dubious care of your family so there is no point in denying it,” Fudge continued sternly. “Which we will now review.”

With a tap of his wand, several memories began to play, one after another. Two year old Harry being shoved through the door under the stairs for milk Dudley had spilled. Four year old Harry receiving his uncle’s belt across his back for not completing the list of chores he’d been given. On and on it went. Harry didn’t really bother to watch the memories because he’d lived through it already. Instead, he watched the men and women around the room, watched their reactions to what they were watching. The only person who didn’t react in horror but rolled his eyes instead was Vernon.

“I did not abuse the boy,” Vernon growled out when the memories ended a half hour later, and when it became apparent the Minister was waiting for him to speak. “I simply disciplined him for not behaving.”

“Not feeding him proper meals is abuse, Mr. Dursley,” Fudge said stiffly. “Using a belt on a child’s back because he can’t fulfil a list of chores impossible for even an adult to complete is abuse. Calling him ‘freak’ for most of his childhood is also abuse, sir.”

“Rubbish,” Vernon scoffed dismissively.

The others in the room began to stir uncomfortably as they realized that Vernon actually believed he’d done nothing wrong. “Are children that aren’t of your loin not treated the same way as those you’ve sired?” a woman asked from the left side of the room.

“Potter is not someone I wanted in my home,” Vernon growled, turning to glare at Harry. “I was forced to take him in by that Headmaster of his.”

This seemed to disturb a lot of the men and women of the Wizengamot…

Harry only blinked dispassionately at the man he’d called Uncle while growing up. He’d expected this from the man. It wasn’t really that much of a shock to him. He’d always known he wasn’t welcome in his relatives’ home… he was just an inconvenience to them. “He deserved what he got and I didn’t kidnap him. He was dropped off on my doorstep by the old coot.”

“Yes,” Fudge murmured as he looked down at some papers in front of him. “We found the letter that Mr. Dumbledore wrote out to you. Where exactly were you residing when he contacted you?”

“What do you mean?” Vernon asked uncomfortably.
“I mean I’ve had a muggle accountant go over your spendable earnings and not everything adds up, Mr. Dursley,” Fudge said, looking down at Vernon. “Your job would not give you enough money to afford a home in the neighbourhood in which you now reside. How did you pay for the house?”

Harry sat up in confusion and surprise. His relatives hadn’t paid for their home? How could that be?

For a minute it looked like Vernon would refuse to answer, taking a deep swallow of the glass of water sitting beside him. “It was a gift from Dumbledore for taking the freak in,” he finally answered, sweat breaking on his forehead, almost like the words were forced from him. “Said it was the least he could do for us. Then he began sending us money every month.”

Harry felt someone grab hold of his arm, an urgent voice whispering softly in his ear, but he couldn’t make his mind work as the words Vernon had said repeated themselves over and over in his head. They’d been paid? By Dumbledore!?

“Harry!” he finally heard hissed in his ear and realized his arms were being held in a tight grip on both sides, Draco on one side and Severus on the other. “Relax before you get us kicked out!” Only then did he realize they were keeping him in his seat. Taking a deep breath, he forced himself to calm down, closing his eyes in order to block out his uncle’s face.

He could hear the trial continuing around him, the voices dim and distant.

How could he have been so stupid!? He should’ve known the Dursleys wouldn’t take him in without compensation. They hadn’t liked him enough to take him in out of the goodness of their hearts. He felt like screaming in rage but buried the urge… for now.

He didn’t know how long he sat like that but finally his arms were released…

“Mr. Dursley,” Fudge said as they neared the conclusion of the trial, looking tired and disturbed by the information he’d heard. Looking at the people in the room, Harry realized a lot of them were looking the same way. “It is the outcome of this court that you are found guilty of all charges.” Flicking his wand towards Vernon, Harry felt like laughing as his uncle flinched in fear, but it only produced a piece of paper and pen in front of him. “Please sign this so we may continue.”

“What is it?” Vernon asked warily, looking down at the paper.

“It states that you were found guilty and everything gained using the money received from Dumbledore is now Mr. Potter’s in compensation of the misery you put him through.”

“You can’t force me to sign this!” Vernon protested, pudgy eyes popping out of his head as he looked up at the Minister.

“Would you rather he got everything, Mr. Dursley?” Fudge asked with a raised eyebrow. “Because it’s well within my right to give all you’ve placed in the savings account as well, instead of allowing your son to claim it. He’ll get out of jail with no money to his name.”

“Jail!?” Vernon exclaimed in confusion and alarm. “Why is Dudley in jail?”

“He and his friends were caught sexually violating a teenage boy, Mr. Dursley. The muggle authorities is seeing to it they pay for their transgression. Now, sign the paper, please.” This was news to Harry. No one had told him… and he hadn’t asked. Though, truth be told, he hadn’t thought it would be that bad, maybe physical assault, but not rape.
Growling angrily at the people looking down at him, Vernon grabbed hold of the pen and signed his name on the bottom. Harry knew the fat man had tried to sign someone else’s name to the paper but because of the pen they’d given him to use had been spelled against it, he watched as Vernon’s eyes bugged out slightly as it forced him to put his own name down.

Once signed, the Aurors moved closer, forcing Vernon to his feet. “Mr. Dursley, it’s the decision of this court that you’ll spend a minimum of ten years on a penitentiary island off the cost of Iceland. There, you’ll be forced to work daily at whatever job the Aurors deem worthy of your attention. The better you perform them, the better your living conditions will be. You’ll be given the minimum amount of food to keep your strength up and no more. Maybe this will teach you just how badly you treated your nephew, sir.”

Vernon began to protest loudly at that, fighting to get out of the hold the Aurors had on him.

“Mr. Potter had something he wished to tell you before you’re taken to the island, Mr. Dursley,” Fudge said, nodding towards Harry.

Taking a deep breath, Harry stood up, looking down at the man who’d made his life hell since he entered his home. “I wanted to let you know, Vernon, that Dudley, they found out, is just like me,” Harry said, watching as the blood drained out of his uncle’s face, shaking his head in denial. “He’s not very powerful, but his kids will be. They’ll be just like me but you won’t know them and they won’t have to grow up with the hatred I did. Goodbye.”

With a nod from him, the Aurors began to drag Vernon out of the court room, ignoring his blubbering and screaming.

“Mr. Potter,” Fudge asked before he could sit down again, feeling empty. “What would you like to do with the things listed on this page?” Harry blinked at the man, realizing a piece of paper was being held out to him.

“Sell it all,” Harry told him, not bothering to look at what it listed. He didn’t care. “Give whatever it brings in to the teenager Dudley and his friends assaulted.”

“Are you sure about this, Harry?” Sirius asked with a frown.

“Yes,” Harry said with a decisive nod. “You can tell him that it’s from them, reparations for what was done to him.”

“Very well, Mr. Potter,” Fudge said with a slight frown as he wrote down Harry’s wish on the piece of paper. “Dismissed.”

* * *

“Perhaps we should’ve told Harry about Dumbledore paying the Dursleys to keep him there,” Severus said as the adults watched the teen in question push his food around his plate. They were currently at a restaurant in Diagon Alley, waiting for Petunia’s trial to begin.

The adults had opted to sit at a separate table to give the two teens some privacy.

“Too late now,” Lucius murmured, glancing over at the other table. They could see Draco talking to Harry but there was barely any communication from the dark haired teen. “If he’s not in better spirits by the time we have to head back to the Ministry, I’ll take him back to Malfoy Manor.”

“No,” Sirius said with a sigh, shaking his head. “It might be better if I take him to Black Manor. He really needs to settle into his room now that the Manor is back to how it was supposed to be.
This way, he and Draco can figure out how they want to do this for the summer.”

“Perhaps that’s what we should do instead of allowing Harry to attend the trial,” Severus murmured with a frown. “On Wednesdays, I’m going to require him to come over and learn more potions. I think some of his problems with the subject may reside in the fact that he always has to be on guard for sabotage.”

“That and Ron and Hermione were always distracting him, you said,” Sirius said with a slight frown.

“It’s a possibility,” Lucius said with a slight nod. “Did you not say that Granger had tossed something into his cauldron the first time you separated them?”

“Yes, and then Ronald Weasley attempted also, though Harry had placed a shield on the cauldron so it would bounce whatever was being maliciously tossed into it back to the sender’s own cauldron,” Severus said with a sigh. “It’ll be nice when all this is done with. Oh,” he said suddenly, sliding a piece of paper towards Lucius. “I found this reference in a book on how the Hat can detect mind tampering. We’ll be able to use it during the re-sorting to find out just how many students Dumbledore altered in the last few years.”

“And I think I might have a way for the hat to tell us who those students are without announcing it to the room in general,” Lucius said as he picked up the note. “I’ll talk to the Minister tomorrow and see if he wants to do it discretely. I can’t see why not.”

“This makes me wonder just how many students Dumbledore manipulated in his time as Headmaster,” Sirius said with a frown.

“We’ll never know. For most of them, it’s too late to change anything,” Lucius said with a shrug. “We can only help the ones at Hogwarts now.”

“For now, it’s enough that we are aware of what was happening and to put a stop to it,” Severus said with a sigh. “We need to get Harry’s thoughts turned towards more constructive things.”

**

“What are you thinking, Harry?” Draco asked after watching his friend play with his food for the last little while.

“I don’t know why I’m so surprised that the Dursleys accepted money to keep me,” Harry said with a disappointed sigh. “I knew they didn’t like me in the first place. I mean, it was obvious from the start, even to me, but to use that money to get what they wanted…”

“Does it really make any difference now?” Draco asked gently, wanting to help but not knowing what to do.

“I suppose not.” Harry put his fork down on the table, rubbing at his forehead, needing to change the depressing topic. “So what else do I have to know about this summer?”

“Well, later today, we need to write letters to some of the others to invite them over,” Draco said, sitting back in his chair. “Which means we’ll be able to discuss things in more details. I know the others are curious about what to expect this summer.”

“You know, in a way, I wish this could’ve been introduced to me back in first year. I think it would’ve helped me me more in the long run.”

“I realize that, but the adults made the choice to wait and there’s nothing we can do about it but
move on,” Draco murmured softly.

“I know.” Draco waited to see what else Harry would say as he stared thoughtfully at his plate. “I guess my aunt is the last one to see. I don’t know what to expect, really.”

“But once this is done, it’ll be behind you and you can move on with your life.”

“True,” Harry murmured tiredly.

“Harry?” Sirius cut in, hesitating slightly as the adults joined them. “It’s time to go home. Are you ready?”

“Don’t I have to be at Petunia’s trial?” he asked in surprise.

“No, I think it’s enough for today,” Lucius said decisively. “Severus and I will be there for it. I think it’s best if you concentrate on what needs to be done now. You have to settle into your room, Draco can help you with that, and get your letters sent off so we can continue your instructions.”

“If you think it’s for the best,” Harry said with a nod, “then that’s what I’ll do.” Harry’s answer made Draco realize that this teenager was willing to let these adults guide him in his life now, was willing to listen to their suggestions where before he would’ve balked at doing it. This was a good thing. It meant that Harry could overcome the difficulties he’d lived through before the club was revealed to him. “Besides, Vernon’s trial was the only one I really wanted to be at. He was the worse of my tormentors.” Without another word, they followed Sirius out of the restaurant and back to the Leaky Cauldron to Floo to Black Manor.

**

Severus and Lucius sat in the court room listening to Fudge read Petunia’s list of offenses brought against her by Harry. “Your husband has already been found guilty of kidnapping, child abuse, endangerment and neglect. We have already seen what your actions – or lack thereof – were during the time that Harry Potter resided in your care. We can now sentence you accordingly.”

“I demand to see a lawyer!” Petunia said in a loud voice, sitting stiffly in her chair, hands clasped primly and tightly in her lap.

“Unfortunately for you, Mrs. Dursley,” Fudge said, his look cold as he glared down at the woman, “because your guilt has already been seen in Mr. Potter’s memories. There is no need of a lawyer to defend you. This is simply a cursory trial, meant more for sentencing than to question you about your actions.”

“I did nothing to Harry Potter,” the woman argued stiffly. “I never hid the fact that I didn’t want him in my house.”

“But in point of fact, Madam,” one of the men on Fudge’s left said. “The house you’ve been living in for the last twelve and a half years is not really yours but Mr. Potter’s.”

“What do you mean?” Petunia asked in confusion. “Vernon bought the house shortly before my nephew was dropped off on our doorstep.”

Fudge nodded in agreement. “Yes, bought with money given to your husband from Mr. Potter’s vaults. Once we found this out, the decision was placed to him as to what he wanted to do with that and other items bought with his money.”

“My nephew has no money,” the woman sneered in contempt. “If he did, we would’ve known
“And probably bled him dry in the process,” a woman on the right of Fudge sneered, looking down at Petunia as if she were a bug. Severus knew that this had to sting Lily’s sister’s pride.

“Yes,” Fudge murmured in agreement, looking down at Petunia with a thoughtful look, “which was probably why Dumbledore never made it known to them. It won’t matter. Mr. Potter has decided to sell everything and give the proceeds to the teenager your son and his friends assaulted. It seems fitting considering what they did to him.”

“Dudley is an angel,” Petunia said in outrage. “He’s never hurt anyone in his life.”

“And yet, the truth will not be denied, lady,” Argus Morenci growled down at her. “Young Geffrey didn’t ask to be violated by your brat and his friends. Now, finally, he’ll pay the price for what he’s done. Same as you and your husband are about to.”

“Mrs. Dursley, it is the decision of this court that you have been found guilty. Perhaps not of beating your nephew as your husband did, but mental abuse is still abuse,” Fudge said, cutting off anything Petunia would’ve said.

Severus wanted to laugh as the woman nearly looked like she was having a heart attack. This was the best payback he could’ve ever asked for. What would the deciding body sentence her to…?

“Since you seem to like following the orders of others, I think we’ll continue the trend,” Fudge began, straightening up. “It is the decision of this court that you will be delivered to a Wizarding family in the States for no less than seven years. And be assured, Madam, the family will be advised of why you are being punished along with a list of things you asked a three year old to do. A spell will be placed on the home so you won’t be able to go far without permission before you’re yanked back to the yard. We’ll see if you enjoy doing the chores you placed on Mr. Potter since he came to your care.”

“B-but what of Dudley?” she asked, trembling in fear. “Who’ll take care of my darling boy?”

“That will be the decision of the muggle courts,” Fudge told her coldly. “We have nothing more to do with Dudley Dursley. Take her back to her cell until transportation can be arranged.”

“Minister?” Severus murmured politely.

“Yes, Professor Snape?” Fudge acknowledged with a nod.

“Mr. Potter wished me to relay a message to his aunt before she’s taken away,” the Potions master said with a slight smirk.

“Proceed.”

“Mrs. Dursley,” Severus said with a vicious look in his eyes, taking great pleasure in telling the woman this. “I’m happy to advise you that your son, Dudley, has been tested for magical tendencies and has been found to have some, low though they are… just like your nephew.”

“My Dudley isn’t a freak like Harry or any of you,” Petunia sputtered in denial. “He’s a perfect gentleman and an angel! What have you people done to my beautiful boy!”

“I assure you, Petunia that Dudley is indeed a ‘freak’ as you put it. He’s just suppressed his abilities so he could survive you and your husband,” Lucius said with a sneer as he glared down at the stupid woman.
The woman began screaming in denial as the Aurors forced her out of her chair, dragging her out of the room to the sound of her cursing them all for ruining her child with their freakish magic cut off once the doors closed behind her.

“What a pleasant woman,” Lucius drawled with a sneer. “And to think, Harry had to live with those... muggles for most of his life. It’s no wonder he wanted out.”

“Indeed.” The two men walked towards the Atrium in amicable silence until they made it to Malfoy Manor. “This summer should go smoother than any other time Harry has been with us.”

“With Dumbledore unable to find the boy, things will progress at a more normal pace,” Lucius said with a slight nod. “Lord Herbert agrees with Harry’s plans for this summer. Tomorrow will begin the first of several lessons in bindings and Harry needs to be ready for that. The elders sent letters to every parent to make sure the children are brought to the club tonight for their instructions of what to expect and what their duties will be for the binding.”

“Already?” Severus asked in surprise and a little apprehension. Lucius understood. This was a lot for the boy to take in in such a short time, but this part was necessary. “We might as well inform the boys.”

“You go,” Lucius murmured with a calculating look on his face. “There’s something I need to do before supper.”

Severus looked at the blonde man questioningly but nodded. He left his life-long friend alone in the Foyer and Flooed over to Black Manor. He wasn’t surprised when he came out in the living room. When Walberga Black had been in charge of the Manor, she’d relocated the entrance so that people came out in the kitchen. It was so she felt more in charge and made others feel no better than servants. Seemed Sirius had changed it to its original place since coming home. It was now in its rightful place again: the receiving room beside the door.

A house-elf he didn’t recognize came scampering up to him as he stepped out of the fireplace. “Can Winky help sir?” it asked and Severus felt his eyebrows rise to his hairline. Sirius had gained Crouch’s family elves? He knew the man had had at least three in his employ...

“Lead me to Sirius,” he ordered the little creature, who bowed quickly and led the way down the hall and into the kitchen.

“Severus,” the other man greeted with a pleasant smile. “Would you like a cup of tea?”

“Please,” Severus murmured with a sigh as he pulled out a chair. By the time he was sitting, a cup was placed in front of him. “Thank you.”

“So how did it go with Petunia?”

“As well as could be expected,” the Potions master said with a twist of his lips. “She accused our kind of turning her ‘little angel’ into a freak.”

“Typical,” the ex-con snorted in contempt. “Harry and Draco are in the library doing some research on slave-master bindings. He’s taken it upon himself to teach Harry all the different kinds of bindings there are so that Harry’ll know which one they’re doing for the club.”

“I’m not surprised,” Severus said with a nod. He knew Draco was trying hard to get Harry to understand what it was that was expected of them with the club. The dark-haired teen might not realize that he didn’t really need to know all Draco was teaching him, but it wouldn’t hurt either. “Seems the children are to be taken to the club tonight,” he told Sirius as he remembered the reason he was there.
“Are they going to tell them what to expect, then?” Sirius asked in surprise just as a house-elf appeared beside him with a letter. “Thank you, Tooly.”

“It’s what we’re assuming.” Severus waited while the letter was opened and read before being put aside.

“Lord Herbert says that the boys are to be taken to the club at seven tonight for further instructions.”

Severus nodded in understanding. “How many Vaults were you given?” he asked, changing the subject for now.

“I got five of them from the Crouch estate. From what I hear, Chris Cunningham was given the home the family lived in in compensation for the fifteen years he was incarcerated and his personal vaults returned to him.”

“Is there anything left for Barty Crouch Junior?”

“He was allowed to keep the Vault his father opened for him as his inheritance – apparently Fudge couldn’t touch that – but everything else – all the other properties and businesses – were liquidated or distributed to the victims. I, myself, got the house-elves and five Vaults of my choice. I went through them all back in April and made my choices. I got one Vault that contained Galleons and gems from the lower levels and two that contained artifacts that the Crouch family had been collecting for centuries. If there aren’t any vaults left by the time everyone else is compensated, I’ll be given five businesses and or properties in the end. They just want to make sure everyone gets what’s owed them before I get the last three vaults.”

Severus was impressed and surprised to hear that. “How many Vaults did they own?”

“In total? After all the shuffling and combining Crouch did over the years? The Goblins said there were twenty five. It took me a few days to peruse the Vaults. I was also able to choose ten items from each Vault to add to mine. I managed to gain quite a few libraries to add to my own. I was excited when I was told that all the books from the Vaults counted as one thing. I never realized just how much Crouch had been gathering until I went through everything. It seems he was claiming his victims’ Vaults as his own.”

“But he didn’t get yours,” Severus said in confusion. “Why not?”

“Because I had Harry as my Heir should anything happen to me. Most of Crouch’s victims were young when he threw them in Azkaban. He hadn’t counted on me being named Harry’s Godfather or me adding him to my will. Until I died and Harry died, he couldn’t touch the Black family Vaults and estates.”

“Clever,” the Potions master said as he nodded at that. “This makes me believe that he was after more than sending random people to prison, then.”

“Seems Crouch had an agenda,” Sirius said with a nod. “Redford told me that he’d discovered a pattern when he was checking out who had been sent to Azkaban. Once one was taken out of the picture, their Vault would suddenly vanish from the records and be absorbed by Crouch when he brought paperwork to Gringotts to seize them. No one realized what he was doing until now. Unfortunately, no one knows exactly which Vault belongs to whom. Crouch destroyed all the evidence.”

“So then, how do they know what, or how many, to give to the victims?”
“The Goblins have records of how many Vaults belonged to which family even if they don’t know which ones those were. Using that, they’re giving the victims the same amount of Vaults that was taken from them. Some recognize items in certain Vaults so that’s the one they’re given. From what I understand, the Crouch family originally had only one Vault. The one that’s left will go to Crouch Junior.”

“If Crouch didn’t get anything from you, why were you able to claim five vaults?”

“They’re the ones that belonged to the deceased,” Sirius said with a shrug. “And it’s compensation for the years spent in Azkaban. Since I already owned a Manor, I wasn’t allowed to claim Crouch’s family home.” Sirius shrugged again, this time dismissively. “I didn’t want it anyway.”

It made sense, he figured… Severus shook his head at the complexity of Crouch’s plan but it was over with now and the former Ministry worker wouldn’t be able to do it to anyone else. “So when are the boys sending their invitations?”

“They did that after they got back,” Sirius said, nodding at the surprise on Severus’ face. “They’ve already gotten four responses back.”

“I think I’d be more surprised if they got any refusals from the others,” Severus said with a slight smirk. “Everyone wants Harry to succeed in this and join everyone else.”

“You know, I wonder if it wouldn’t have been simpler if Harry had been a slave instead of a master,” Sirius said with a sigh. “He would’ve had an easier time being led, I think.”

“Hard to say.” Severus was refreshing his tea when the boys entered the kitchen, talking softly about something.

“Hello, Severus,” Harry said pleasantly when he saw him. “I didn’t know you were here.”

“I haven’t been here long. How has your afternoon been going?”

“Good,” Harry said as Draco poured each of them a cup of tea, offering to refresh the other’s cups as well. “We found a few books on different types of bondings in the library. We were just discussing which one they were going to have us do this summer.”

“And what have you found?” Sirius asked in curiosity.

“Well,” Draco said, tapping the book Harry had placed on the table. “This one has three bonding rituals that would work for the club so we’re not quite sure yet if our guesses are correct. Has there been word of when we begin learning that?”

“According to Lord Herbert, tonight will be the first lesson,” Severus murmured with a nod at the looks of anticipation on the boys’ faces. “Monday we’ll begin to immerse you into your master/slave training so you can keep learning what the others already know. Some have already agreed to come, I take it?”

Harry nodded as he reached out to pick up one of the small cakes the house-elf had added on the table beside the tea. “Draco suggested sending the letters to masters only, saying that they would confer with their slaves before responding to the letters. Four have agreed, so that’ll mean eight of our year will come. I’m assuming the others will send their letters with their answers within the next few days.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised if some of them gave you their answers tonight at the club,” Draco said, nodding when Harry looked at him.
“Sirius,” Harry said as something seemed to occur to him. “I thought you were disowned by your family?”

“Disowned?” Sirius said in surprise. “Who told you I was disowned?”

“I don’t remember,” he said with a confused frown. “I just remember that your name had been blasted off the family tapestry, but when I looked at it earlier, there was nothing wrong with your name or picture.”

“I know I did a lot of things to anger my mother, but nothing bad enough to warrant being disowned,” the dark haired man said with a bark of laughter. “No, Harry, whoever told you that lied.”

“I’m starting to wonder if I know anything that isn’t a lie of some kind,” the dark haired teen said with a tired sigh, frowning in annoyance. “At least before this was all revealed to me.”

Well, Severus thought with a slight frown, at least the boy didn’t think what he’d been told since October was a lie. But then he’d seen the proof for himself… “Maybe you should start thinking of things as finding them out for the first time instead of relying on what you’ve been told,” he suggested gently.

“I suppose it would make more sense,” he agreed wryly. “It would make things a whole lot simpler.”

“Now, tonight begins the first of a series of training sessions for both masters and slaves,” Severus said decisively. “They’ll more than likely take place every second night until the first of the bondings are done at the end of the week. On Wednesday, I would like you to come to Snape Manor for some potions training. I think some one-on-one training will help you get to where everyone else is in class.”

“Remus has also agreed to train you and Draco on pair dueling,” Sirius added with a grin. “We can even make it into a sort of class for everyone coming over. He wants to see just how well you two can work together now that you’re not fighting anymore.”

“Sounds good to me,” Harry said with a nod, looking over at Draco. “What do you think?”

“Sounds like fun,” the blonde teen said with a shrug. “It might actually be better than just sitting around just talking about what being a master is compared to being a slave. Personally, I think it would get boring without a change every once in a while.”

“Then that’s what we’ll do,” Severus said, taking a sip of his tea. “I think between Remus, Lucius and I, we can come up with a schedule that would put things in a perspective that’ll break up the sessions with the other teens.”

“I can’t wait to start,” Harry said with a smile and Severus was surprised to see that the boy meant it. This would be a refreshing start to Harry’s new life…
Saturday, July 1st, 1995

Harry laughed and joked with the others as they waited for their instructions to begin. None of them knew exactly what to expect, but their anticipation was high.

Finally, Lord Herbert entered the room with four other people. The silence was instantaneous. Everyone seemed to realize that their appearance meant things were going to be starting. “As I call your names, I want you to stand up. Just the ones called, mind,” Lord Herbert said, looking at everyone in turn.

As names were called, the teenagers stood obediently. “You will follow Lord Cumberland,” Lord Herbert instructed. “He’ll be your teacher for your week of training. Remember where you’re going because you’ll be using the same room until the bindings begin.”

Lord Cumberland gestured for those standing to follow him and everyone waited until there was silence in the room again before more was said. “Those who are the slaves of the masters called are to stand up.” It didn’t take long for the order to be obeyed. “You’ll follow Lord Westmount. He’ll instruct you on what’s expected of you.”

Again, they waited until the room was quiet before more was said…

“The remaining slaves will stand.” Harry watched as Draco and the other slaves did as ordered. “Lord Bowman will escort you to another room for your instructions.” When the only ones left were the remaining masters, they stood up without being told, knowing it would be their turn to follow their instructor. “This is Lord Walker,” the older man said as he nodded to the man standing beside him. “He’ll instruct you in what you need to know.”

They followed Walker out of the room and down the hallway to an empty room. When everyone was settled in a seat, Walker closed the door and walked to the front. “Good evening,” he murmured as he looked at each one of them. “Tonight will be the first of several meetings we’re going to have with all of you. The goal of these meetings is to get you ready for what is going to happen at your bindings. It’s not really complicated but you want to learn the proper way of doing this. Yes,” he murmured as one of the girls at the front raised her hand.

“What would happen if the binding went wrong?”

“It depends on what part you did wrong. If it’s the dominating part, it could turn it around so that the slave becomes the master. If it’s the binding, it could be more disastrous. If you learn it the proper way, you won’t have anything to worry about. Now,” Walker said, his hands behind his back. “Tonight we’ll learn the runes you’re going to use to bind your slave to you.”

Harry listened in rapt attention as the man described the runes they would have to use on their slaves. He was even surprised to learn that they would be writing some of them on the other masters as they prepared them at the start of the ritual.

“I’ll be giving you a sheet with the runes you are to use for the ritual. Your job for the next meeting will be to interpret them and figure out which ones are to be used on the masters and which ones are for the slaves.”
Walker looked at them all carefully. “At the start of the ritual, the other masters will be in charge of sponging clean the one going through the binding. Certain runes will be drawn on the master’s body in specific places. One on the forehead, placed there for wisdom. Another one will be placed on the center of the chest to represent the heart. This one is placed there for compassion. The last one is placed just above the genitals. This one is place there for stamina. Once done, a robe will be provided to cover the master’s body.”

Harry raised his hand.

“Yes,” Walker said, pointing at him.

“How many runes are there in total for the ritual, sir?” he asked curiously.

“In total, including the slaves’ runes?” Walker asked with a slight smile. Harry hesitated slightly before nodding. “Twelve. Most of them are done on the slaves. So far I’ve mentioned three. For the masters, there are only five that you need to know, those painted on the other masters for their ritual: head, heart, left wrist, right wrist, and genitals. Does anyone know why there are more on the slaves than the masters?”

Everyone thought of that carefully before Harry remembered something Draco had read in their research on the binding rituals. He raised his hand, realizing that several others had also raised theirs. “Yes,” Walker said, pointing at one of the girls in the back.

“Because they require more control over their bindings?” she said, despite the answer being the right one, Harry could see the question in her eyes.

“Exactly. The thing you all have to remember about this,” Walker said as he began to pace the front of the room, “is that this binding goes against everything the slaves feel and think. Despite the fact that they’ve been trained since the age of four to prepare for this, they aren’t mentally prepared to relinquish control over their minds and bodies like they think. Their first unconscious thought is to fight the control someone else is going to try to exert over them. It’s instinctive. No one really wants to be at the mercy of someone else’s whims, no matter how much training they go through. It’s natural for a person to rebel against something like this.

“It’s our jobs, as masters, to know the difference and give them choices so that they don’t feel completely out of control, which is where the wisdom rune comes into play. By watching our slaves’ body language and facial expressions, we learn when to push and when to compromise. If we don’t give in at times, our slaves will lose themselves in the lifestyle. Our jobs, as masters, is to make sure that doesn’t happen. Does anyone know why?”

This time, Harry’s hand went up without hesitation. Draco had made sure he knew this part.

“Yes,” Walker said, pointing at Harry.

“If our slaves act differently than before the binding, it’ll raise questions we don’t want to answer. That’s why we have to make sure things stay balanced in our relations with our slaves.”

“Very good,” Walker said in approval. “I’m glad to see you’re taking a very clear interest in what happens here, Mr. Potter.”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said with a slight nod. He knew he was surprising a lot of the older crowd, but he found that he wanted this to work. It was the first time in his life that he felt like he belonged somewhere. “My slave – along with a few other adults – wants to make sure I understand what’s expected of me and I find that I want to make them proud.”
“That’s a good attitude to take,” Walker praised with a smile.

“Thank you, sir.”

Walker went on to explain in detail why the runes were placed in the places they were.

“I must confess, Mr. Potter,” Walker said when he requested Harry stay behind after dismissing the others, a sheet with the runes they were to look up in hand. “I expected to have more problems with you. I didn’t believe the others when they said you were coming along nicely. I’m glad I was proven wrong.”

“I have to admit, sir, that if it wasn’t for Draco, Severus, Lucius, Remus, and Sirius, I don’t think I’d be taking it as well as I am. They’ve taken the time to explain to me why things are done the way they are and I understand why this is kept quiet. Even my friends who are in this are helping me when I can’t ask the others. I’ve got more support than I expected to have.”

“Sometimes, that’s a good thing,” Walker murmured as he led Harry back into the receiving room where Draco and Severus were waiting for him.

“Everything not going well, Lord Walker?” Severus asked, frowning in confusion.

“Everything is fine, Severus. I just wanted a private word with Harry, is all.”

“See you at the next meeting, sir,” Harry murmured as the older man walked away from them.

“How did it go?” Severus asked as they awaited their turn. “Most of your exercises will be the same. The difference will come when you need to learn where the runes are to be laid and the cleansing rituals. This will be an interesting week for both of you. How many have responded to your invitation, Harry?”

“Six sent their apologies for not being able to make it, but then it’s because plans had been made for them already,” Harry said with a shrug. “I understand that people have other things they need to do. At least everyone else has responded that they’d be willing to come over. Fred and George have given their response as well. Their father gave them permission to come over starting Monday.”

“Don’t forget to let them know you won’t be home on Wednesdays,” Severus reminded him.

“It is every Wednesdays, then?” Draco asked in curiosity.

“Yes, this way it won’t get monotonous with just learning about being master and slave.”

Harry nodded in understanding. This would give everyone time to themselves instead of always being over at Black Manor. “Are we just using Black Manor or are we also going to be using Malfoy Manor?” he asked as a thought occurred to him. Maybe alternating between the two houses would also be a good thing…
“I can ask Father and Mother, but I can’t see that there would be a problem. Mother and Sirius don’t work and Severus and Remus are off for the summer. We’d have enough supervision.”

“So then why don’t we do it so that everyone has Sunday, Wednesday and Friday off?” Harry said with a thoughtful frown. “Since we’ll be at the club Saturday after supper, it makes sense to not overdo it.”

“That might be the best way, but right now, we have to start on this assignment,” Draco said, holding up the paper in his hands.

“Alright,” Severus murmured, nodding at the Floo powder. “Time to go to Black Manor. I’ll talk to the others tomorrow. Have fun with your research and Sirius will let you know how things are going to go.”

“Yes, sir,” they answered in unison before they stepped into the fireplace, heading home to start on their research.

* * *

Monday, July 3rd, 1995

“Since Harry’s new at all this, let’s play the modified game of truth or dare,” Theodore suggested as they sat in the parlour, their slaves sitting quietly beside them. Sirius and Remus sat a little distance away, against the wall by the door. The adults were there as observers and helpers if needed but otherwise kept to themselves.

“Modified how?” Harry asked, frowning in confusion. He wondered how they modified such a game that would work in this type of setting.

“In this, the slaves also play. It’s one way to get to know each other better,” Vince said with a shrug. “The other difference is that the questions have to be reasonable.”

“You can’t ask for knowledge of embarrassing events,” Millicent added with a shrug when she realized Harry wasn’t quite sure what he meant. “Those types of questions are for when you’re alone with your slave. It’s also the only time we can address the slaves by their names since we can ask anyone.”

“Let’s just play,” Theodore said as he pulled out his wand. He cast a spell Harry was familiar with, having played this game with the Gryffindors before all this began. He knew that if ground rules weren’t applied that it could get… slightly out of hand.

“Draco, how long did you know who you wanted as your master?” Gregory asked with a smirk. Draco’s head tilted to the side as he thought of how to answer this. “Well, we were told about Harry being brought into this in June, so I guess three months before I had to choose.”

This told Harry that the slaves didn’t have to tack on the word ‘master’ at the end of their answers. That was good to know.

“Draco,” he asked when it came to his turn, something occurring to him as the others answered questions centered around the club. “Was I your first choice as master?”

There were three other masters I was contemplating before we were informed about you,” the blonde answered with a nod. That brought more questions to mind, but he decided it would be best to ask them in private, not wanting to put Draco in a spot where he would have to name names.
Harry laughed at some of the questions and answers that ensued as the game progressed. All in all, it was a very illuminating afternoon…

Later, when they were alone in the library, Harry sat lost in thought, thinking over all the information he’d gained that day. He couldn’t seem to concentrate on the last two runes on his page. What Severus had told him was true, then. The slaves were the ones to choose the master and not the other way around… It made sense, in a way. If he were a slave, he wouldn’t want just anyone to have power over his life.

“What’s wrong, Harry?” Draco asked when he realized the brunet was staring at the book in front of him.

Harry blinked back to the present, surprised slightly. “Oh,” he murmured when he realized what Draco had asked him. “Nothing. I was just thinking of what I found out today. So,” he said with a smirk of amusement. “You had three other masters you were thinking of, was there?”

Draco shrugged unapologetically. “I knew I had to choose someone this year so I started watching all the masters, wondering just how good they’d be at controlling a slave. Everyone I watched, I dismissed as being inadequate to the job… at least for me. By the time summer ended, I had three masters that would do, but they weren’t perfect either. What you didn’t go through – what the other masters have to do to prove themselves – is a series of test. Every master has to participate. Kind of like what you did during Christmas break.”

That surprised Harry. He had thought those tests were just to bring him up to speed with the others. “Really?” he asked, frowning thoughtfully.

“Yes, every master does every one of them to demonstrate to the slaves that they would be perfect as their choice. Jeremy, one of the masters I was thinking of, had a tendency to be too lenient on a slave when they misbehaved on purpose. Another master I was contemplating was Theodore, but he tends to be too dominating for me. Then there was Victor – no, not Krum – he was the best out of all of them, but he likes complete obedience with no room to play.”

“So then, why did you choose me? It’s not like I have any experience in this.”

Draco grinned at him. “All those fights of ours could almost be called training,” the blonde said cheekily, causing Harry to laugh.

He hadn’t thought of it that way. “I guess it is how we used to interact,” he murmured in amusement. After all, they both knew what buttons to push in order to anger the other… one could almost point out that it was Draco’s way of testing him.

“I have to admit, though,” the blonde murmured thoughtfully. “You don’t fly off the handle as easily as you used to. The training during the break helped you to reign in your tendency towards anger. You’re more willing to listen to reasons instead.”

“That’s what I was told by some of the older masters,” Harry said with a shrug. “They were surprised at how much progress I’d made since September.”

“But this is a good thing,” Draco said in encouragement. “It means that it doesn’t matter what station you’re in, whether master or slave. It won’t change the fact that beginners will start off as slaves, but it means masters can also begin from the bottom and do good.”

“Do you think it might be because of how I was raised before going to Hogwarts?” Harry asked with a frown.
“What do you mean?”

“Well, the Dursleys used me like you would a house-elf. I did all the cleaning, cooking and the yard work while Dudley got to go out and play with his friends. Could it be because I know what it feels like to be treated badly that I won’t do it?”

“It’s possible,” Draco murmured as he thought about that. “Finish your work. Supper is in an hour and we need this for tonight. We can talk to Severus later and ask him about it. He might be able to tell you.”

* * *

At seven that night, the teens were once more led to the rooms they’d been escorted to on Saturday by the same men who were teaching them what to do for the ritual. Their homework was sitting on the desk at the front of the room and they sat in the chairs again.

“I’m glad to see everyone is taking this seriously,” Lord Walker murmured as he skimmed the pages, nodding in approval. “I’ll look at these more closely later. For now, we’re going to learn the placement of the runes and what their meaning will be. For this part, we’ll be using one of last year’s bound group to demonstrate where and in what position.”

As he spoke, a master and slave entered the room from another door that Harry hadn’t noticed before. The slave was dressed as the other slaves were. As they watched, the slave undressed the master, who watched them as if he did this all the time.

“The slave will draw the runes on his master to show where they go.” As they watched, the slave painted a rune onto his master’s forehead but because it wasn’t meant to work, the paint didn’t do anything magical. “These won’t activate because there’s more to the ritual than what we’re doing today. Last time, I gave you a bunch of runes to look up. These pages will tell me how much you took it seriously. This time, we’re going to look into where they’re placed and why. On our last meeting, I’ll instruct you on how the ritual begins so that you’ll know what is to take place. I want you to tell me what it’s called and if you know why. So the first rune goes on the head. Who wants to begin?”

Several hands shot into the air and Walker pointed at one of the girls. “The first rune is called **Consilium** and it’s use is for wisdom. It’s meant to help us use wisdom when dealing with our slaves. It also means that we’ll think clearly before administering punishments.”

“Very good, Miss Ridder,” Lord Walker said with a nod. “The second rune goes over the heart. Why?”

“The rune’s called **Hunanitas**. It’s placed over the heart because it’s used for compassion so we don’t use our power over our slave to only dominate them. We’re meant to act as guides as well as dominate, along with other things we’re supposed to be in charge of when we’re with our slaves,” Theodore said from Harry’s left.

“Well said, Mr. Nott,” Walker said with a smile. “As masters we have to realize that without wisdom or compassion, things can and usually do go wrong when dealing with someone who’s personality is usually a complete opposite to our own. We need to think and remember that we’re not only there to dominate our slaves in this setting. Things that happen outside of this have no bearing on what we allow and don’t allow unless it was specified from the start. Usually this would take place when you –a master – marry your slave. What about the next rune? The one that goes on the right wrist?”

“That rune is called **Inducto**. The right hand is for leading,” another boy answered when called on.
“This means that we’ll lead justly.”

“And the next rune? The one on the left wrist?”

“It’s called Roctus and it’s placed on the left hand because it’s meant to be for discipline,” Rochelle said with a slight frown. “Why is it only on the left wrist, though?”

“Because you need both runes to make sure you don’t take things too far with your slave,” Harry answered before Lord Walker could. This was something he’d researched on his own when he’d realized that both wrists had different runes. “When the rune for discipline is combined with the one for leading it means that you’re going to use both of them equally, especially when paired with the wisdom and compassion runes.”

“Very good, Mr. Potter,” Lord Walker praised with a nod. “That’s exactly how the runes work together. When we deal with a slave, we need all those runes together to make sure we don’t unnecessarily harm the one whom we have power over. What about the last rune? The one that goes around the genitals?”

“The rune’s called Patientia. It’s so we can perform whenever our slave needs it,” Jeremy murmured with a grin, blushing furiously. The group chuckled in amusement. “It also insures that we can control our own pleasure in order to see to it that our slave isn’t left hanging needlessly.”

“Excellent,” Lord Walker murmured in satisfaction. “I’m glad to see you all did your research in this. Doing things right is how we insure our slaves are happy. If they’re happy, we’re happy because there isn’t as much commotion or butting heads. Now, for next week, I want you all to practice drawing the runes. On next Saturday, we begin the first of the bindings and you’ll need to know how to do them right. For the next hour, we’re going to practice them on the blackboard behind me. Please remember that it’s important to learn how to do them properly. Failure can be quite painful.”

With a flick of his wand, instructions for how each rune was drawn on the blackboard and each one took a turn to do them. If it was done incorrectly, Walker would erase the rune and the person would have to redo it until it was perfect.

“I want you all to practice writing the runes until the first binding. Only with practice will you get them down correctly,” their instructor told them, looking at each one in turn. “If you feel that you’re not ready to do them by the first of the bindings, please, step back when it comes time to draw them on the person being bound. You’re dismissed.”

* * *

**Wednesday, July 5th, 1995**

Harry had expected to have more trouble when it came to potions, but he was pleasantly surprised that Severus didn’t throw him into the deep end and expect him to swim. His day at Snape manor went by quickly… more quickly than he’d expected.

Draco hadn’t been there for once.

He’d been surprised by that but it made sense when he thought about it. He doubted they’d be together all the time. After all, they were more than likely going to be working in different fields once they were done at Hogwarts.

“Severus,” he asked at lunch as something occurred to him. “Why are you teaching me so many potions? It’s not like I’ll need it after I’m done school, am I?”
“I’m just curious as to how much information you can retain and understand before we speak of your future,” the Potions master murmured, causing Harry to frown. “It’s too early to tell what your profession will be at the moment,” Severus said with a smirk. “Draco has already expressed an interest in becoming a Potions master, like myself, so I don’t expect you to do the same. However, a lot of other professions are open to those who understand potion making. Like Auror and Healer, to name a couple. Have you thought about what you want to do after you’re done at Hogwarts?”

Harry shrugged indifferently. “Not really. With Dumbledore breathing down my neck, I haven’t really thought about what my future would be like. I’ve just been going through the motions. Ron was trying to talk me into becoming an Auror, but to tell you the truth, I don’t really want to fight anymore. I had my fill of fighting for my life the last few years. I nearly died in first and second year. Last year wasn’t as bad, though, and this year was loads better with Lucius stepping in or my life would probably be in danger again. That reminds me, though, what was Cedric Diggory talking about? I heard he said he was whisked to a graveyard instead of the Quidditch pitch.”

“It would seem that someone tampered further with the games. The cup was originally meant to Portkey the victor, as it’s supposed to be, but the location was tampered with. It would seem that whoever was behind your name being placed in the Goblet of Fire never counted on you being let out of the tournament. They either forgot that the final cup had been changed or they simply couldn’t get to it to change it back to its original destination. When it was made public that the games had been tampered with, Crouch tightened security around the grounds.”

“Was there anything in the graveyard?” Harry asked curiously.

“As far as I know, when the Aurors went to the location, there was nothing there but a very large cauldron and the body of someone they had thought was missing,” Severus murmured before taking a bite of his food. “Tom Marvolo Riddle has now been found.”

“I wonder why,” Harry said in confusion. “Was he another person Dumbledore manipulated into helping him?”

“It's impossible to tell now. In fact, the Aurors are confused as to why he was there and where he had been. Since he was found close to the Riddle Manor, they're searching the grounds for clues,” Severus said with a shake of his head. “I’m sure we'll hear about it eventually. Finish your meal. We have more potions to brew this afternoon.”

Thursday, July 6th, 1995

That evening found Harry and his group at the center for their final information session with Lord Walker. “Tonight, we’re going to discuss what your roles in the ritual are,” they were told as their instructor scanned the room. “Lots will be drawn so that no master will be called on more than once unless needed. It has happened in the past.”

“Sir,” Geoffrey, a boy in Hufflepuff asked, a frown on his face. “When is the name drawing done?”

“It’ll be done tomorrow by Lord Herbert. Those drawn will be told when they show up on Saturday,” Walker answered before pointing to another boy who’s hand had come up. “Yes?”

“Are the masters not included in the ritual still involved?”

“No, but they are required to be in the audience in silent support to the ones being bound,” they
were told and that surprised Harry. He would’ve thought that they would be sent home so they wouldn’t see anything inappropriate… but then it really wasn’t, was it?

Walker sighed as he saw the confusion on some of the masters around him. “The reason you’re allowed to remain for the bindings is in two parts. One, it’ll give you a visual of what’s going to happen at your own binding and two, it’ll show you where the placement of the runes are to be placed… if they’re done right.”

That seemed to clear up a lot of confusion as realization dawned on some faces. “So then Saturday is another training session… of a sort,” Nott said seeming to echo a lot of the thoughts everyone was thinking.

“Exactly,” Walker said with a nod. “This will eliminate a lot of trouble for those who aren’t quite sure about what’s expected of them. Don’t forget to tell an adult if you don’t feel confident about placing the runes on a master. It’s better to be safe than sorry.”

“Yes, sir,” the group answered when it became apparent that he was waiting for an answer from them.

“Now, your final assignment before the bindings begin will be to research the ritual being used,” Walker said as he slowly walked the front of the room. “You’ll be given the name of the one we use. I can’t stress enough that you should know what’s required of you at this time. It’s crucial that you feel confident while doing this,” he told them sternly as he made eye contact with each person. “Any kind of doubt you bring into the ritual will transfer itself to the whole thing. We don’t want you to feel stressed or pressured into doing this. Yes, you all will be doing it, but it doesn’t mean we want you to make mistakes if you don’t feel ready to help.”

“So then,” Neil from Ravenclaw said with a frown. “If our name is drawn first for this Saturday and we don’t think we’re ready to step up, we can ask for someone else to be drawn?”

“Yes, in fact, we’d prefer it,” Walker said with a nod. “We can always put someone else in your place instead.”

Harry felt relieved about that. He hadn’t told Draco, but he’d been worried that he wouldn’t be ready if his turn came too soon. It was nice to know he could ask to wait his turn.

As they left the room, each one of them was given a piece of paper with the name of the ritual – Modus Vitas – they needed to research along with another set of the runes they’d learned about. Bound lives, Harry translated easily thanks to Draco’s coaching. It just happened to be one of the rituals he and the blonde had actually looked up, too.

He knew why they were given a new copy of the runes, too. It was so they knew which ones they needed to learn for Saturday. There was even a diagram of where the runes were to be placed on the person’s body. He wondered if he could talk Draco into acting like his guinea pig so he could draw the runes on him in the right places and correctly…

It was something to ask, anyway.

***

Friday, July 7th, 1995

“Sure,” Draco said with a shrug when Harry asked him at breakfast. “As long as I can do the same thing to you,” the blonde smirked, but Harry could tell now that it hid his nervousness.

“Absolutely.”
“And Sirius and I will watch and guide you,” Remus murmured with a nod. “Unless you would prefer someone else?”

“I have no problems with that,” Harry said with a grateful smile. Draco nodded beside him. “Just out of curiosity,” Harry said with a slight frown. “Which ones are you guys? Master or slave?”

“Master,” Remus said with a gentle smile. Harry had always found the man to be a peaceful and restful presence when he was around. He’d managed to calm Harry back in third year with his mannerisms.

“I’m a slave,” Sirius said easily and Harry realized that these men seemed to be alright with whatever rank they had in the club.

“That works out great! We’ll each have someone who can tell us if we’re doing the runes correctly!” Draco said with a relieved grin.

“Precisely.”

“So who’s your slave, Remus?” Draco asked curiously.

“Rick Parker,” the werewolf answered with an amused smile at the look on the boys’ faces. “Yes, Sirius’ lawyer and now yours, Harry.”

To say Harry was shocked was an understatement. He’d thought for sure that Mr. Parker was a master with the way he took charge of things. “And you, Sirius? Who’s your Master?”

“Auror Jenner Redford. He was the one in charge of your relatives, remember?”

“Wow,” Harry whispered in amazement. He never would’ve guessed who Sirius’ master would’ve been… in fact, he’d thought maybe Severus was his godfather’s master. But that made him wonder. “Who’s Severus’ slave?”

“You’ve never met her, actually. Her name is Rayna Archean. She works in the Ministry but in a different department. She’s married with two children. One will be starting Hogwarts next September and the other one is only two.”

“Why hasn’t Severus ever married?” he asked, wondering if maybe Sirius or Remus knew.

“He hasn’t met the right person yet. He will eventually,” Remus murmured as he led the way to the parlour where they would have more room to practice the runes. “He knows he has to do his part, so do Sirius and I, but we can’t rush into these things. We still need to pick someone who’s appropriate and won’t get jealous about what we do.”

“What happens when the spouse isn’t in the group?” Harry asked as that made him realize something. “Like Mr. Weasley.”

“A spell is cast over the spouse so they’ll ignore the signs of something happening, like when the twins walked in on their brother,” Remus explained with a sigh. “Bill and his slave were supposed to cast a spell that would make it so that no one would notice what was happening. The fact that they didn’t was a real problem for the Elders. They almost got kicked out because of it. Arthur had to talk fast in order to save them going through it, instead saying that he wanted to include the two boys in the club. It nearly didn’t happen. They were lucky.”

“It’s that strict?” he asked in surprise. He’d thought they’d get reprimanded, not kicked out.
“The group takes secrecy seriously,” Sirius said with a nod. “They have to in order to avoid detection.”

“Wow, I didn’t think it would be that severe.”

“Let’s go over your runes,” Remus said, gently steering the conversation to a lighter topic.
The Bindings Begin...

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 9 – The Bindings Begin…

Saturday, July 8th, 1995

By the time Saturday came, both Draco and Harry felt more comfortable with where and how to place the runes on other people’s bodies. Harry was slightly disappointed when his name wasn’t called on to draw the runes.

The masters – those who weren’t drawing the runes – were told to stay and watch as the one being bound at this moment was readied for the ceremony. That was Harry’s task tonight. Knowing this was serious, he sat with the others, watching intently as Theodore Nott was bathed and tattooed. Everyone was quiet as they watched the process taking place.

He understood now why Draco had been adamant that he take this seriously, understood how making light of the situation threw everything out of rhythm. It now made sense to him.

They followed Nott out of the room, being as quiet as they could until they got into the main room. Chairs and pillows had been set up for everyone to sit on, with a few empty chairs for the masters to sit on as well.

He wasn’t really surprised to see the slaves already sitting beside the chairs and Harry made his way over to where Draco was waiting for him. In front of the room was a small coffee table-like dais where Nott’s slave knelt, patiently waiting for him.

Harry was fascinated as he watched Nott give his slave a potion before positioning her on the dais, watched as the other boy carefully pushed into the kneeling girl. She made a sound of discomfort and pain but Nott didn’t stop until he was fully seated inside her body, knowing he couldn’t stop.

When he paused, Harry was surprised. He’d thought they couldn’t stop until the binding was done, but that wasn’t the case. Then he realized why. Hadn’t Lord Walker told them that this was meant as domination but not with too much pain? He guessed that in this case, the master could use their judgement when it came to this part.

Nott waited a few seconds before he began to move, making his slave hiss in slight pain, but then that was what this was for… to mark their slaves this first time.

As they watched, the runes on both bodies before them began to glow softly. When Nott spilled himself inside his slave, the runes pulsed a few times before becoming black against their skin. This, they had been told, would remain permanently, invisible to those who weren’t in the club.

The first binding of the night was complete.

Four masters were called and told to go to the back room to prepare the next master for the second of the four bindings that were to take place tonight. Harry was excited when he was called on and smiled as Draco went the opposite way. The blonde teen was to mark the slave.

He was glad he could demonstrate that he was learning from the teachings he was receiving.

The rest of their group stayed in the main room this time, not needing to watch every master or slave as they were prepared.
By the end of the night, all the masters and slaves knew what to expect. Harry knew that by the time his own binding came around, there would only be three or four pairs to do. At least he wouldn’t be the last one or even the only one. Neville’s would be done that same night.

* * *

Thursday, July 20th, 1995

Lucius frowned as he looked down at the letter he held in his hand. “It would seem,” he murmured as he looked at the men around the room. Fudge, Sirius, Severus, Remus, Parker and Goldenseal as lawyers were there to discuss its contents. “That Dumbledore cannot be taken out of the school at this time because they can’t find someone appropriate to take his place before the start of the school year.”

“So what does that mean for our plans?” Remus asked as he stood beside the fireplace.

“I don’t think it’ll change anything because we were going to do the scans in secret using the re-sorting as a cover,” Lucius said, straightening his already straight jacket. “I went to the school yesterday with Severus since I knew Dumbledore wouldn’t be in and had a chat with the hat. When we explained what was happening, it agreed to do the scans at the same time as the re-sorting. Madam Pomfrey has agreed to hold the pages that the hat will produce. The full list will be waiting in Severus’ private quarters, taken there by house-elf without Dumbledore’s knowledge.”

“From there,” Severus said with a nod, “I’ll send it along to you, Lucius, so you can take it to the Minister the next day.”

“Good,” Goldenseal said as he rubbed at his forehead. “Seems complicated but if it works, then I’m not about to complain about how it’s done.”

“Will we be able to use this against the old Headmaster?” Parker asked with a frown.

“If there’s enough names on it, yes,” Fudge said with a nod. “It’s a start, anyway.”

“Agreed,” Lucius said as he placed the letter on his desk. “Meanwhile, the Board of Governors will keep looking for a suitable replacement. Once they find someone, they’ll be arresting Dumbledore and things will go back to normal.”

“Make a copy of the list of students tampered with, Lucius,” Fudge said as he stood up. “Give it to the Board to see just how many people are affected by this. Maybe it’ll give them an incentive to go faster. I have to go. I have a meeting with the Minister of Istanbul in twenty minutes and I’d really rather not be late.”

“Thank you for coming, Minister,” Parker murmured as he shook hands with the man. “We’ll keep you informed if any new information comes up before the start of school.”

“Thank you, Mr. Parker. I appreciate that.” With that, Fudge was gone. The lawyers dispersed shortly afterwards, leaving Severus, Remus and Sirius with Lucius.

“How is Harry coming along with the others?” Lucius asked as they sat down for some tea. Currently, Narcissa and another of the masters were keeping an eye on the group. They had decided to spend some time outside instead of being cooped up inside. It was a nice change for everyone concerned.

“Surprisingly well,” Sirius said, frowning slightly.
“But?” Remus asked curiously.

“Well, it’s just that this year, Harry’s had to learn a lot of things, most of it finding out he’s been lied to for most of his life,” Sirius said with a sigh.

“Yes,” Lucius said, clearly not understanding what the problem was.

“Is it just me or is he taking this a lot better than he should?” Sirius asked after a few minutes of thinking of how to word his concern.

“I know what you mean,” Severus murmured, stirring his tea thoughtfully. “Even before all this was revealed to him, he would lose his temper easily. I always found he was easy to rile up. This year is different. He’s much calmer than he should be. By right, he should have had at least one temper tantrum and he hasn’t. Has he said something to Draco?”

“As far as I know, he hasn’t. I’ll talk to Narcissa later.”

“Is it such a bad thing that he hasn’t reacted negatively yet?” Remus asked with a frown.

“Considering how he grew up? Yes,” Severus said with a nod and sigh. “Children of child abuse don’t like change as much as others. They tend to react differently than normal. It could just be that he hasn’t thought about things and how they’ve changed just yet. If and when it hits him, hopefully he isn’t in a crowd.”

“It could also be that he’s found someone to confide in without us knowing about it and is getting help that way,” Remus said, eyebrow raised knowingly. Meaning that Harry was more than likely confiding in Draco and some of the people he knew best.

“Well, if and when it happens, we’ll deal with it. Until then, let’s not worry needlessly. We have enough things to deal with at the moment,” Lucius said with a decisive nod.

***

Dumbledore frowned as he sat on the bench in front of number four Privet Drive. Things didn’t seem right. He’d gone into the grove where he’d left the boy, thinking he’d find a broken Harry Potter being brutalized by his cousin and his friends. Harry would then be so appreciative at being rescued that he’d be willing to do whatever Dumbledore wanted… only there had been no one there.

Scans had revealed that his spells had been removed.

But who could’ve done it? There was nothing to tell who was interfering with his plans.

And now the people coming in and out of the house he was sitting in front of wasn’t the Dursleys… Just what had happened? When had it happened? The Wards would’ve warned him if anything had happened to the boy…

He couldn’t make sense of what was going on… Then Mrs. Biggs came and sat down beside him. “Professor,” she murmured distantly and in greeting. “I’m surprised to see you here after all the excitement at the end of the school year.”

“What excitement, madam?” he asked, hiding his confusion from the odd woman.

“I thought you knew,” the woman said as she turned to look at him in surprise. “The Aurors came and took the Dursleys away, including Mr. Potter. Soon after, the house was put up for sale. No one has seen the family in weeks.”
Merlin’s beard, Dumbledore cursed silently. He should’ve checked up on the brat sooner but at the time he’d been more worried about where Harry was going than if anyone was going to interfere with Harry’s home life. He should’ve known better.

“Do you know what happened to Mr. Potter?” he asked in false-concern.

“I think I saw him come out of the house with another teenager and a man, but I’m not sure if it was him or someone else,” she said with a frown. “I haven’t seen the boy since.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Biggs,” Dumbledore murmured with a strained smile. “You’ve been extremely helpful.” With a nod, he got up from the bench and walked away from the woman before he did something he could be seen doing… like killing the stupid woman for not telling him about this development sooner.

Now where was he going to find that brat? Where did he start? Sirius Black would probably be a good place, but he wasn’t sure where to find the man. He’d lost track of him last summer. He’d read about Sirius being cleared, of course, the Prophet had made sure to splash that all over their paper, but he had no idea where he could be now. He needed to find someone who might know where the boy would be…

He’d seen the Longbottom boy keeping company with Harry this year… but then he’d also been keeping company with Seamus Finnegan, Dean Thomas and with the Weasley twins. Maybe they could tell him where to find Harry Potter.

* * *

Harry sat in the Black library with Draco, Fred, George and Neville an hour after the rest of their group left. They’d agreed to meet here before supper, having asked the adults for permission before leaving.

“So what’s the problem, Harry?” George asked when they’d settled down with tea appearing on the table between them.

“What do you mean?” he asked, not quite sure how to answer that question. Was there a problem? Yes. Did he know what it was? Not really. When the twins gave him a ‘who are you kidding’ look, he sighed in slight irritation. “I don’t know what the problem is, actually,” Harry said with a frown. “Something’s off but I can’t put my finger on what it is.”

“What do you mean?” Neville asked in confusion.

“It’s hard to explain, really,” he said with a shake of his head. “Something doesn’t feel right. It’s almost like… you know something’s going to happen but you don’t know when or how you know. I know it doesn’t make sense, but it’s the only way I can explain it.”

“Maybe it’s because you always had to be on the alert when you lived with your relatives,” Draco said thoughtfully. “Even at school, you seemed to be alert all the time. It’s almost like it’s become habit for you to expect something bad to happen. This year, however, it’s been different because my father, Remus and Sirius have gotten involved.”

“Maybe,” Harry said uneasily. “I don’t know, though.”

“Let’s just concentrate on what’s in front of us,” Fred said with a shrug. “There’s nothing we can really do until it happens. No one even knows where you are, and as far as we know, no one even that your relatives have been arrested and dealt with.”
“True,” Harry said with a sigh. There was no reason to worry about something until it happened. He hoped he was wrong...

“Have you gotten your Hogwarts letters yet?” Neville asked, changing the subject, seeming excited about it.

“Got it this morning, actually,” Draco said with a nod. “Funny how it didn’t look like Dumbledore’s handwriting, too,” he said with a slight frown before he shrugged it off. “Have you guys chosen your spares yet?”

“Fred and I decided to take Potions again, since we want to start our own business,” George said with a shrug. “Most of our ideas are centered around that subject, anyway.”

“Then we chose Ancient Runes and Apparition classes. Mum finally agreed to allow us to take it since we’ll need it later,” Fred said with a nod. “Oh, and Alchemy classes are being given this year so we put our names down for it, too. What about you, Neville?”

“I wanted to drop out of Potions, but it’s not possible right now. But I figure if I pair it up with Herbology, it’s not so bad,” Neville said with a shrug. “But I figured I’d take Ancient Runes and Care of Magical Creatures. Maybe even Muggle Studies. What about you, Harry? Draco?”

“I’m taking Ancient Runes again and Arithmancy,” Draco said with a sigh. “I don’t really care about the other subjects, though I might add Care of Magical Creatures for fun.”

“I don’t know what I need,” Harry said with a shrug. “I don’t even know what I want to do after Hogwarts.”

“Well, you did well in Ancient Runes,” Draco said with a thoughtful look. “Why don’t you keep going in that class?”

“Actually, that class was challenging and fun,” Harry said with a grin, nodding in agreement. “I was thinking of maybe taking Care of Magical Creatures but I’m not going into Divination.”

“I’d suggest Arithmancy but you’d have to have been in the class since third year and is harder to get caught up in than Ancient Runes was,” Draco told him with a shrug. “You could always take Muggle Studies.”

“I already know about muggles, though,” Harry said with a shake of his head. He found the teacher didn’t really understand muggles, preferring to picture them as harmless. Harry knew better. “I think I’ll go for Ancient Runes and Care of Magical Creatures. We’re going to have enough to do this year without loading myself down with classes that aren’t important.”

“We can write it on the letter and send it off tonight or tomorrow so that they have the number of students wanting to attend the classes,” Draco said with a nod.

“Sirius said he and Remus would take us to get our supplies tomorrow,” Harry told him before looking at the others. “You guys want to join us? I doubt they’ll mind more people coming with us.”

“I’ll ask my Gran when I get home and send you a note but I can’t see her saying no,” Neville said with a grin.

“We’ll ask mum when we get home. She’s a little trickier than dad,” Fred said with a shrug.

“Or maybe we’ll just ask dad,” George said with a mischievous grin. “Either way, we’ll send our answer tonight, too.”
“If you get permission, perhaps you could sleep over tonight. That way we can actually plan our
day out after supper,” Harry suggested. “Maybe we could even spend it over at your place,
Draco?”

“I can ask Father during supper,” Draco said with a nod.

“Then that’s settled,” Fred said with a grin.

* * *

Friday, July 21st, 1995

Dumbledore was furious. Neither Seamus nor Dean had been of any help. Apparently, Harry
hadn’t confided in either boy. This left only Neville and the twins, none of which was available at
the moment. Lady Longbottom had been cold and rude towards him and Molly had simply
shrugged in confusion. The boys had gone out with friends and weren’t coming home that night.

Nothing was falling into place like it should…

Since the Ministry had taken the book listing all the students away from him last year, he couldn’t
check to see where Harry was now living. He’d taken the chance that the students had gotten their
letters and would come to Diagon Alley for the things they needed for school. Hence the reason
he was sitting here with the best view of people walking around the alley.

His vigilance paid off today. He wasn’t surprised to see Harry, but he was surprised to see who he
was with… He, Draco Malfoy, Neville Longbottom and the twins walk by the restaurant he was
sitting in followed by Sirius and Remus. The boy was laughing and joking with the other boys as
if they were long-time friends.

I should’ve known Malfoy had something to do with this, he thought angrily.

Getting up, he decided to trail after them, following them into the Apothecary. With a determined
look, he went in after the group, blending in with the next group of people heading in. He
watched as Harry actually looked at the ingredients he was picking up, as if he actually knew
what he was doing, though he remembered Harry’s hatred for the craft of potion making… or had
something changed his outlook on the class?

He waited until Harry had moved away from the others before coming up behind the boy. “Harry,
my boy,” he murmured in a worried tone. “I’ve been worried about you.”

*

Harry whirled around at the sound of the Headmaster’s voice, feeling his heart pound in his chest.
“Headmaster,” he said politely, his smile strained. “What a lovely surprise to see you here.”

“I’ve been looking everywhere for you,” Dumbledore said and Harry could see the tension in the
old man. “When I heard your Aunt and Uncle had been arrested, I tried to seek you out. Are you
alright?”

“I’m fine, Professor,” Harry murmured, scanning the area for the others. He didn’t like being
alone with the old man. He didn’t know what to expect from him anymore, though for the first
time, he could really see the manipulations going on. He was surprised he hadn’t noticed it
before…

“Why don’t you come with me, Harry,” Dumbledore said, moving closer to him and Harry
instinctively took a step back, coming up against the shelf behind him. “I want to make sure you’re safe, my boy.”

Harry opened his mouth to protest but didn’t get a chance to say anything.

“Harry,” Sirius said as he rounded the shelf he was pressed against and stopped when he saw Dumbledore there, a hand on Harry’s arm, as if he would drag him out of the store. “Headmaster,” he said politely as he moved closer. “What a pleasant surprise to see you here.”

“Ah, Sirius,” Dumbledore murmured, releasing his hold on Harry’s arm. “I wasn’t aware you were here as well.”

“Of course, I am, Albus,” Sirius said with a smile, hands in his pockets. “As Harry’s legal guardian, it’s my duty to get him ready for the school year. As I’m sure you’re aware, the students have gotten their letters and supplies and books need to be procured. Harry, are you done getting what you need?”

“I just have two more ingredients to pick up. Professor Dumbledore just stopped me to talk to me for a minute,” Harry told him, feeling relief fill him as he realized Dumbledore wouldn’t want to cause a scene and risk being the center of attention.

“Gather what you need, then. The others are waiting for us.”

*

“That was close,” Harry breathed as they left the Apothecary, holding himself in check, knowing the old man had to be watching him. He didn’t want to tip him off that he was on to his treachery.

“We’ll talk about it when we’re in a more private setting,” Remus murmured as he led them to the Flourish and Blotts. “Let’s finish our shopping and leave.”

“I didn’t think he’d try something in so public a setting,” Sirius murmured with a disturbed frown.

*

Dumbledore felt a fresh wave of frustration fill him as he watched Harry gather what ingredients he needed and pay for them, leaving with the blasted mutt and werewolf. He felt like hexing someone as he watched his only chance at getting the boy away from his protectors and back under his thumb.

Of all the rotten luck. If Black hadn’t come around right then, he could’ve left with Harry and no one would’ve been the wiser about where he was…

For the rest of the time Harry was in Diagon Alley, Dumbledore followed at a discreet distance, hoping for another chance at approaching Harry when he was alone, but the others were always around, not all at once, but never leaving Harry by himself again.

He cursed as he watched the boy Apparate away with the others and was powerless to stop him from leaving, not having any real reason to stop them. When he got back to the school, he frowned as he realized there was a letter on his desk that hadn’t been there before he’d left. Picking it up, he wondered why a law firm would be contacting him…

He felt rage fill him as he read the contents.

To: Headmaster Albus Dumbledore
From: Goldenseal & Associates Law Firm

It has come to our attention that you have been interfering in student choices/lives and have been remanded to investigate and/or press charges. If our investigation turns up any such information, legal actions will be taking place.

Please have your lawyer(s) contact us at your earliest convenience.

With respect,

Octavius Goldenseal

The Minister had to be behind this… but why wait so long? This should’ve come to him not long after Christmas… unless the law firm was only warning him that the investigation had been going on since then. Was this Goldenseal warning him that charges were being brought against him for stopping Harry from leaving the school? Or had they found proof that he was tampering with students?

With a sigh, Dumbledore put the letter down. The best thing for him to do right now was nothing. If he left, it would show that they were right and he couldn’t afford to let all his plans crash and burn. He just needed to get Harry under his control again…

The letter suggested he get a lawyer but if he did so, it would mean he was guilty and he couldn’t have that. He was doing this for the greater good of the Wizarding world. He was in the right…

* * *

Saturday, August 5th, 1995

Draco was nervous. He’d been waiting for this day since he was introduced to the club, had known this was his purpose. He would finally be bound to someone for the rest of his life… but he was still nervous. When he’d begun this journey, he hadn’t thought he would be bound to Harry Potter, something he’d fantasized about since he’d first met the boy back in first year.

When his father had told him they would be bringing Harry into the club, he’d been ecstatic about it. This was his chance at being with the boy he’d wanted since he was eleven… but then Pansy had wanted him, too, and Draco was pretty sure it had only been because he wanted Harry for himself.

He’d been thrilled when Harry had chosen him as his slave. This was his chance to have the master he really wanted. He’d watched the other teen closely as he was told what his role was in the club. He’d seen the look on Harry’s face.

He’d known then that what Harry was thinking his role was wasn’t what it really was… until he’d begun asking questions, first of Longbottom, then the Weasley twins, and even Draco himself. He’d been thrilled that Harry had confided in him.

He’d told his father a few days ago that Harry had done so. His father had been glad to hear that, but Draco had no idea why… and he hadn’t asked, either. He’d watched carefully as Harry had come along, accepting the fact that he was to dominate Draco when they were together… had, in fact, been anticipating it more and more each day. He remembered their one tryst during the Christmas holidays… had wanted it to happen again but hadn’t dared.

Draco forced himself to not shiver in anticipation of what was going to happen.

He so wanted Harry to dominate him…
Before everything had been brought to the dark haired teen’s attention, all Draco had gotten from him had been his anger and hatred… but even that had turned him on. Just thinking of Harry’s past moods made his heart beat faster.

But now, now he was seeing how Harry truly was: kind and funny with a wry wit.

He couldn’t wait to learn more about Harry’s diverse personality… he was sure there was more he would get to know as the years progressed. And he couldn’t wait.

When the runes had been drawn, he was led into the room to await Harry’s arrival. It was time to be bound to his master…

*

Harry was excited. His heart was beating a mile a minute, he was sure. Tonight he would bind Draco to him. This meant he would finally be able to bed Draco like he’d wanted to since all this had been revealed to him.

He couldn’t wait!

He’d learned so much from the blonde teen. Harry didn’t know if he’d be ready for this if it hadn’t been for him and the others. He was glad he was friends with Neville, who’d been bound to his master just a few minutes ago. His had been the third of the bindings tonight. Harry’s and Draco’s would be the last one. Everyone in their year was now bound to their chosen slave.

His heart, which had been calming down, sped up again as he realized that after tonight, he’d be able to have Draco whenever he wanted. He understood there were still rules to be followed, but the adults wouldn’t be as strict with what could and couldn’t be done anymore. He also knew that when they were in the group setting, there would only be kissing and heavy petting but nothing too heavy. They still had to remember there were young ones in the group.

Sirius had talked to him about this before leaving the house. He understood his role tonight.

Once they were in school, things would have to be like it had been last year. Secrecy was key to their club, after all. His studies would still continue and he was going to have to sit down and think real hard about what he wanted to do for a living.

He knew Dumbledore, and even McGonagall, were hoping he would become an Auror, but Harry wasn’t sure it was the right path for him. He’d never liked all the fighting. Oh, he liked learning the spells that came with the job, but did he really want to chase after the bad guys for the rest of his life?

When they were done drawing the runes, Harry was led into the room where Draco was kneeling beside the altar. It was time to make Draco his…

He wasn’t nervous, not like he thought he’d be. It felt right to do this.

He gave Draco the potion before helping him into position on the dais before he got into his own. Knowing he had to push into his slave, but not wanting to really hurt him, Harry began pushing into Draco’s body, being careful as the muscles of Draco’s ass resisted slightly before finally giving in.

Draco hissed softly in pain but Harry forced himself to keep pushing. He knew he couldn’t stop just yet. When he was fully in, he paused, allowing himself to accustom himself to the feel of the tight heat surrounding his throbbing length.
When the muscle’s grip relaxed around him a little, he began to move. Instincts were guiding him now. He didn’t last long, but that was alright. This wasn’t what he really wanted. He wanted Draco to react with passion to what he was doing to him.

His whole body was throbbing and it took him a few minutes to realize he could feel the runes pulsing through him. When he spilled himself inside Draco’s body, his whole body thrummed before it faded. This had to be the runes taking effect.

It was done.

Pulling out of Draco, he moved back to the applause of the group. He stood there with Draco kneeling beside him, head down. Harry stopped himself from smiling happily. He knew the others wouldn’t understand why he was happy and might take offense.

Draco was now truly his… forever.

They were allowed to go get bathed and dressed, Draco washing Harry’s body thoroughly before washing himself. No words were spoken between them but Harry could feel the anticipation between them. He knew Draco was just as anxious as he was to get home. Once they were dried and dressed in their master and slave outfits, they rejoined the group, Draco following meekly behind him.

He knew this was all part of the game. When not in this setting, Draco was very much opinionated… much to Harry’s delight. He didn’t know what he’d do with a Draco that didn’t argue back.

He was congratulated by the adults he passed and Harry allowed himself to grin now. The adults wouldn’t take it the wrong way. It was late and the members were soon dispersing, heading home for the night.

Harry and Draco were taken to Malfoy manor, saying that Sirius wanted to spend time with his own master. Harry was pleased to know Sirius would be spending time with Jenner. “Lucius,” he asked as something occurred to him. “How did it work when Sirius went to Azkaban? Did Jenner take someone else as his slave?”

“No,” Lucius told him with a shake of his head. “If your master or slave is taken away, whether by death or any other way, you remain alone. It’s harder on the slave than the master.”

“Because slaves are usually ignored in the club?” Harry asked after thinking that over.

“Exactly,” the older man said with a look of pride in his eyes. Harry was glad to have the approval of this man. He’d never realized what it felt like to make someone proud of him, never having had anyone take that kind of interest in his well-being before. It was a novel experience. “Time for bed.”

“Yes, sir,” the teens answered as they headed up the stairs. Harry felt his heart speed up as he realized he would be spending the night with Draco until school started.

Looking over at his bonded slave, he could see the same thought cross Draco’s mind. When he looked at Harry, they grinned at each other before hurrying their pace. By the time they made it to Draco’s bedroom, there was a light in Draco’s eyes that Harry had never seen before.

When they were finally inside the bedroom, Harry closed the door, watching Draco carefully. “I want you to do to me what Father was doing to Mother during Christmas break,” Draco whispered breathlessly as he turned them around so he stood against the door. As if in a trance,
Harry allowed it, his own breathing speeding up as he remembered what he’d seen in the library in January. “But against the door instead of a shelf.”

“Yes,” Harry whispered as he moved closer to Draco, claiming his mouth in a searing kiss. Draco whimpered as he pushed himself against Harry’s body, trying to grind his hips against his master.

Forcing himself to pull back, Harry turned Draco around so he was pressed against the door. Before Harry could begin, Draco grabbed Harry’s wand and cast a Silencing spell. “So we don’t disturb them,” he explained, dropping the wand on the floor.

With a grin, Harry grabbed hold of Draco’s hips, ignoring the chain around the other teen’s waist and pushed up against him, enjoying the gasp of pleasure that escaped Draco’s mouth. Anticipating this night, Harry had raided Sirius’ library for any information on male sex. He’d found out more information than he’d thought there was.

Sliding a hand between Draco’s legs, he was pleased to find him already hard. The chains rubbing around the flesh under Harry’s fingers caused Draco to moan in reaction. Watching Draco’s reactions were a huge turn on, Harry had to admit.

Sliding a hand over the soft skin of his backside, Harry pushed a finger into the hole, watching Draco carefully. The blonde’s eyes opened wide at the feel, his mouth open as if to scream but no sound came out for a few seconds. “Fuck,” Draco gasped, his body tense as Harry moved his hand, playing with Draco’s body.

It was interesting to watch Draco writhe against the door as he played with him, finally pushing a second finger in. He wanted to make sure Draco was ready for him this time. “Harry,” Draco gasped as he tried to push back, but the way he’d placed himself against the door didn’t allow for it and Harry was entranced with the sight of Draco’s pleasure. “More!”

Taking that as an indication that he should push a third finger in, he obliged, listening to Draco groan in pleasure. When he figured Draco had been stretched enough, he pushed his pants down enough to free himself and began pushing into Draco’s body. He groaned in pleasure as the tight heat enveloped him, just like the first time only this time was better because the muscles allowed him entrance without stopping him.

“Fuck, you feel so good,” he whispered in Draco’s ear as he slid back and forth, watching as Draco’s eyes closed tightly, gasping, trying to clutch at the door. “I’ve wanted to do this since that day,” he continued breathlessly. “Wanted to fill you like your father was doing to your mother. Beg me like she did you father, Draco. Beg me to fill you.”

“Please,” Draco whimpered, pushing back against Harry, trying to move against it but he was pushed too tightly against the door to do so. Seeing that, Harry moved back, pulling Draco with him so he was a few inches from the door. “Yes!”

Harry realized the advantage of giving Draco room to move. He didn’t have to do all the work.

“Please, Harry,” Draco begged as the pace increased. “Fill me again, like you did in front of everyone.”

Harry pulled Draco back some more so that he was nearly bent in two, clutching at the door. The move, however, revealed something to him when Draco screamed on the next thrust, forcing him to hit something inside the other teen, making him jerk in surprised pleasure.

He proceeded to thrust hard into Draco, just wanting to spill himself, watching as Draco jerked with each jab in, crying out his pleasure. He was surprised when the muscles suddenly tightened
around his member as Draco arched up, reaching his peak. It forced his own cock to spill itself inside the tight hole as the muscles rippled around him, forcing all the liquid to come out.

“Fuck,” he whispered breathlessly as he caught himself on the door, not wanting to shove Draco into it. It was a few more seconds before he pulled out, causing Draco to groan in pleasure, shuddering at the feel. Once he was out, the blonde collapsed to his knees on the floor, panting hard. “That was better than I expected.”

Draco laughed breathlessly as he looked up at him. “I think we could easily become addicted to this.”

Harry laughed and helped him to his feet. Their knees were so weak that they helped each other to the bed where they stripped and crawled in, collapsing tiredly onto the blankets.

* * *

Saturday, August 12th, 1995

That was how they spent the whole week, staying in Draco’s room getting to know each other. Harry had thought he’d known Draco before but it was nothing to what he found out during that week. They spent it talking or having sex. Since this was what the week had been for, no one bothered them and their meals brought to them.

Lucius and Narcissa were looking at them in amusement when they finally made an appearance, though they didn’t say anything. “Severus asks for you to come over today, Harry. Draco is to accompany you. Remus was telling him about the pair fighting and they’ve decided they want to test you on it.”

“Have they really?” Harry asked excitedly. He’d been intrigued when Remus had mentioned it but nothing more had been said about it.

“Yes, sir,” they said in unison, filling their plates and settling down to eat breakfast.

They were soon over at Spinner’s End, looking up at Severus with expectant looks. “Remus isn’t here yet but will be shortly,” the Potions master murmured in amusement as he handed Harry a sheet of paper. “This is the marks you would’ve gotten on the potions you did this summer had you completed them at school.”

Harry was surprised as he took the paper, realizing there was a proud look in Severus’ eyes. Looking down at it, he was surprised at the high marks he would’ve gotten. This was better marks than he’d ever gotten at school, in fact. Then he frowned. “What makes it different from here and school, Severus?” he asked in confusion.

“For one thing, no one is bothering you while you do them here. For another, no one is sabotaging your cauldron. It’s as I figured last year,” Severus murmured with a sigh, pouring them each a cup of tea. “When you aren’t pressured by others or worried about what someone else might do, you relax and do what you’re supposed to do. We just need to work on stopping all the distractions and sabotage.”

“If only it were that simple,” Draco muttered sarcastically.

“Indeed.”

“What’s going on?” Remus asked as he joined them.
“Severus graded my potions for the summer,” Harry said as he held out the paper to him.

Remus was confused but took the paper anyway, looking over at it, his eyebrows rising in surprise. “Harry, this is wonderful! Have you ever thought of becoming a Potions master?” Harry looked at him with a blank look. He’d never thought he was good enough to be one before. In fact, he’d been so bad at potions that he’d never even considered becoming a master! Remus chuckled at the look. “I take that as a ‘no’.”

Harry looked at Severus thoughtfully. “Do you think I could do that? Become a Potions master?”

“Why not?” Was his answer, eyebrow raised in silent challenge. “Like I said, without the worry of something happening, you relax and do the potions right. It could be that you could be quite proficient in that field once you apply yourself to it.”

“I thought that’s what Draco wanted to become, thought?” he said, looking over at Draco.

Draco chuckled in amusement. “Just because I love potions doesn’t mean I want to do that for the rest of my life. Father wants me to work at the Ministry with him, actually.”

“Enough talk of the future,” Severus said briskly. “We’re here to test you both out for pair dueling.”

“Yes,” Remus murmured with a gentle smile. “Let’s try it out.”

The rest of the morning was spent dueling with the two adults, one on each side so it would be more equal. Harry enjoyed himself immensely. He’d always liked the challenge dueling brought about. It was even better when the people he was dueling with were friends. They didn’t try to hurt him too badly.

Then it was the two teens facing off against the adults.

They surprised them by actually holding their own. Remus threw a flaming spell at Draco and Harry stepped into it, twirling into the flames, letting them enfold themselves around him before putting them out with the next spell before sending a spell at the werewolf.

Severus called a halt to the duel, looking at Harry in surprise. “Where did you learn to do that?”

“I’ve been raiding libraries,” Harry explained with a grin, “first at Black Manor, then Malfoy Manor. I never realized how many books there were on defense. One of Lucius’ books actually had a spell that deals with fire spells.”

“Had you tried that before?” Remus asked in confusion.

“No, but the spell was described easily enough that I could follow what to do. It said to step into the spell, not to avoid it, and allow it to wrap itself around you while you spin. Forcing it to wrap around you stops it from actually touching you so that you can cast the counter to it,” he told them with a shrug. “Easy to follow.”

The others looked at him in shock. “That’s not how that spell is supposed to work, Harry,” Draco said in shock.

“It’s not?” Harry asked in confusion. “So then why did it work?”

“I think you need to show me that book,” Remus said with a shake of his head. They followed him to Malfoy Manor and Harry retrieved the book for them, turning it to the page he’d found the spell.
“See? The book explains how to deal with it,” Harry said as he stepped back while the three of them perused the spell.

“Harry,” Draco said with a frown. “We can’t read this.”

He blinked at them in confusion. How could they not read that? It was in plain English… wasn’t it?

Lucius chose that time to walk in. “I wasn’t aware that you were back,” he murmured as he stopped, looking at them in surprise, before noticing the book between them. “Raiding my library again, Harry?”

“Yes, sir, I didn’t think you’d mind but I found a book that they can’t seem to read,” he told the blonde man with a cheeky grin.

“Indeed? I have many books in different languages,” Lucius murmured with narrowed eyes. At one time, Harry would’ve wondered at the meaning of it but now he knew Lucius was only thinking of what this could mean. “Which book is that?”

Severus closed it and handed it over to him. Lucius examined it carefully before looking at Harry. “What does the title say, Harry?”

Confused, Harry took the book from him and looked at the cover. “Compilation of old and modern spells, sir.”

“What language is it written in, Lucius?” Remus asked curiously.

“Parseltongue, actually.”

“Why would you have a book in Parseltongue, Father?” Draco asked in confusion.

Harry didn’t understand. He knew he was a Parselmouth because of the incident with the Basilisk in second year, but why would Lucius have a book in a language not many people could read?

Lucius sighed and sat down on the sofa, gesturing for the others to sit as well.

“Salazar Slytherin had four children who married with other Wizarding families. Throughout the years, the Parseltongue ability has cropped up because of it. Not many people like to advertise that fact because of the stigma that comes with it,” Lucius explained as a tea setting appeared between them. “When it became apparent that Harry was going to be involved with Draco, I sent out discreet feelers to some book dealers I know and managed to procure two or three books written for the descendants of Salazar. It would seem that he’s written quite a few for them. You, however,” he said with a wagging finger at Harry, “were not supposed to find them yet. They were to be a gift later on.”

“Sorry, sir,” Harry said with a sheepish grin. “I’ve just realized that I like reading books I’ve never been able to get before that I didn’t think you’d mind if I went through your library.”

Severus chuckled in amusement. “It would seem this one is quite handy,” he said as he pointed at the book Harry had shown them. “No one ever tried stepping into the flaming spell before. It was quite effective.”

“Yes, it was,” Remus agreed with a grin. “It was quite a sight to see.”

Harry grinned as he realized he wasn’t in trouble for going through Lucius’ library. “There’s quite a few spells that I’ve never heard of before but would be interesting to try,” he told them excitedly
as he flipped through the book. “Like this one here, it says you can actually use the Levitation spell to walk on top of water if you don’t have a boat, especially when you use only half the power you usually need for the spell.”

The adults laughed at his enthusiasm and he flushed as he realized he was getting excited over a book. He almost sounded like Hermione! “Sorry,” he apologized sheepishly.

“At least you’ve found something else you can be passionate about,” Severus murmured in amusement.

“Meaning?” Lucius asked in confusion. Harry held out the paper Severus had given him and watched as he looked up at Harry with a look of surprise. “Very good, Harry. Well done.”

Harry flushed at the praise, realizing it felt good to have people do so. “Thanks, sir.”

“With marks like these, however,” Severus said with a warning look. “I expect you to put the same dedication to your studies once school starts up again.”

“I understand, sir,” he said, being serious this time. He knew he needed to bring his marks up in all his classes, but this year he got to choose some of the classes he wanted to take and he’d chosen wisely. He also understood that this year they would be getting more assignments and didn’t want to overload himself, either.

“All I ask is that you put some effort into it,” Severus told him gently. “I don’t expect you to become completely studious.”

“I don’t think I’d know how to be, sir,” Harry told him with a grin. “Besides, there’s still Quidditch practices and games being held now that the Triwizard tournament is over with.”

“Thankfully,” Draco said with a relieved sigh. “It was fun while it lasted but I’m glad it’s over with.”

“Indeed,” Lucius murmured in agreement. “This year should be quite tame compared to last year.”

“I highly doubt that, Lucius,” Remus said with a shake of his head. “I think the mass re-sorting the Minister is planning is going to throw everything out again.”

“Are they really going to go through with that?” Draco asked in surprise. “I didn’t think he would.”

“It needs to be done to see just how much tampering has been done,” Severus answered with a nod. “It’s to be done before the first years are brought into the Great Hall. I almost hope it’s not as bad as I fear it will be.”

“Do you really think Dumbledore tampered with a lot of students choice of house, Severus?” Harry asked in open curiosity.

“I do,” the Potions master murmured with a sigh. “I can’t see him going to all the trouble he has just on you, Ronald and Hermione. He’s been working towards something, involving other students as he went. Regulus might only be a piece of the puzzle and until we find out what that puzzle is, we’re going to be cleaning up his mess.”
The train ride back to Hogwarts was thankfully uneventful. Hermione and Ron actually kept their distance, seeming to finally realize Harry wasn’t going to leave his new friends to talk to them. Just like the end of last year, he and Draco were sitting in a car with other masters and slaves, joking around.

“って going to be weird being in Gryffindor again,” Harry said with a sigh.

“Maybe, maybe not,” Theo said with a frown. “There’s talk that there’s something happening when we get to Hogwarts.”

“Like what?” Pansy asked with a frown.

“Don’t know,” Theo said with a shrug. “My father wouldn’t say but there was something he was excited about this morning.”

“Wonder what’s going on,” another boy said, Harry didn’t remember his name, but then there were so many people he didn’t know that it really didn’t bother him.

He looked over at Draco with a knowing look but didn’t say anything.

“All right, Potter,” Crabbe said, seeming to catch the look Harry and Draco exchanged. “Out with it. What’s going on?”

“We can’t say,” Draco said with a shrug. “My father forbade us saying anything.”

The others looked at them with open curiosity but refrained from asking any more questions. This drove the difference between the members of the club and Harry’s old friends home for him. These people understood and didn’t pry when told they couldn’t say anything. Hermione and Ron would pester him to find out what it was he was hiding from them… it just made him realize how restricted he’d been with those two.

“You know,” Harry said as something occurred to him. “It’s weird how things have changed in just a year. Before this was revealed to me, I didn’t realize how much freedom I didn’t have to do what I wanted. Now, I have loads of friends and the ability to keep secrets if I want to.”

“What do you mean?” Pansy asked in confusion. “Didn’t Weasley and Granger help you out?”

“For their own purposes, yes,” Harry said with a nod. “But even when I didn’t have anything to hide from them, Hermione would be demanding that I tell them what was going on. It got a little annoying, actually.”

“That’s for sure,” Goyle muttered with a dark frown. “I can see why you dumped them last year. I don’t understand why you kept them around for so long.”

“I think I know why,” Draco said, stretching his legs out under the table. “It all comes back to Dumbledore. He wanted you controlled so he put those two on the path to keep you in check.”
Didn’t you notice last year? They kept trying to separate you from us. They were up to something.”

“Surprisingly enough, they haven’t tried to approach you yet,” Nott said with a nod. “I wonder what changed.”

“Who cares,” Crabbe grumbled in irritation.

“Actually, it makes me wonder why they haven’t approached you,” Draco said, frowning thoughtfully. “Maybe they’ve changed their tactics and are hoping to ambush you at school.”

“I think we shouldn’t worry about it until we have to,” Harry said with a sigh, rubbing at his forehead. “We’ve got enough to worry about than those two.”

“Yeah,” Pansy said with a teasing light in her eyes. “Like how we’re going to survive without sleeping with our other half?”

Everyone laughed at that, though there were more than a couple of red faces in the group. The conversation after that was light and relaxed. Harry had never spent a more relaxing trip than right now. Not even the trip home had been like this.

He liked it.

When they got to the train station at Hogwarts, everyone was surprised to see more people than usual on the platform. There was no sign of Hagrid, who would usually be there to greet the first years. “Everyone is to go to the Great Hall immediately,” one older man ordered. “All first years will gather over here, please.”

Harry and Draco looked at each other in confusion. Was this part of the Minister’s plan? Who were all these people?

The same man repeated himself several times as the students moved towards the carriages that would take them to the school. “What’s that all about?” Pavarti Patil asked as she climbed into a carriage next to her sister.

“I don’t know,” Padma answered with a confused shrug.

Harry knew, but he wasn’t saying. Sirius had warned him not to say anything and though Severus hadn’t said anything, he hadn’t had to. Harry understood that this had to be kept secret until it began because of the Headmaster’s interference. He wasn’t clear on all the details but he knew enough that if it got back to Dumbledore, he might bolt or try to meddle in what was about to take place.

There were even more strangers at the school. Men and women were directing each student to hurry into the Great Hall. There was no straggling in the corridors like there normally would be as students waited for friends. No, today, everyone was ushered into the Great Hall whether they wanted to or not.

Harry wondered if these people were Aurors… it would make sense, in a way. That department would, after all, have enough people to cover this endeavour. “You’re behind this, aren’t you, Potter” Ron spat as they got closer to the red head. Beside him, Ginny rolled her eyes at her brother.

“Actually, I have no idea what this is all about, Ronald,” Harry told him with raised eyebrows. “Contrary to your belief, I’m not behind everything that happens here.”“Yeah, right.”
“Come on, Ron,” Ginny growled out in irritation as she tried to get him to move.

Harry decided to take pity on her and grabbed her hand, putting it on his arm. “Come on, Ginny, I’ll escort you in,” he said in a teasing tone, grinning when Draco rolled his eyes at him. “It’s the gentleman thing to do, after all.”

She laughed at him as she fell into step with him. “Somehow, I don’t really associate you with being a gentleman.”

He looked at her in mock-hurt. “I resent that,” he gasped, a hand on his chest. “I’m a very good gentleman!” He stuck his tongue out at Draco when the blonde snorted at him.

“Sure you are,” Draco drawled as the rest of their group laughed at them.

“You’re ruining my image, here, Draco,” he stage whispered.

It was Ginny’s turn to snort in amusement. “That ship has sailed, Harry.”

Even Harry laughed with the others as they moved into the Great Hall. Everyone ignored Ron as he stomped angrily after them. They were going to disperse, going to their respective tables but were stopped.

“Everyone will stand against the walls for now,” they were told by some of the adults dressed in black in the Great Hall. It was crowded by the time everyone was inside, talking loudly amongst themselves. When it became obvious everyone was there, one of the men stepped forward.

“Quiet, please,” he told everyone, holding his hands up to gain everyone’s attention. “The reason you are not allowed to sit down just yet is because everyone, one at a time, will come over here and be re-sorted,” they were told, gaining looks of surprise and confusion.

“How?” someone called out from the anonymity of the group.

“It’s come to the attention of the Ministry that some of the students have been placed in the wrong House. The Minister for Magic wants this tested and, if it is true, rectified. This is not up for debate or optional. Everyone will be re-sorted. Professor McGonagall is going to call you by name, you will step forward and the hat will tell you which House you are to go to. It could be that some of you will remain in the same House as before, but this will happen.”

With a nod of his head, he motioned for McGonagall to begin.

As each student was done, they moved to the appropriate table. Harry realized that there were quite a few who actually got to stay in the House they had originally been placed in. By the time a quarter of the students had been done, there were only about twenty who had been in the wrong House. He also realized that they were doing it by year.

To one side of the room, he noticed Madam Pomfrey with a few people, looking over something, talking softly amongst themselves.

“Fred Weasley,” the old professor called out, looking at the crowd.

Fred elbowed George good naturedly before he made his way over to McGonagall. The hat seemed to think about it for a few seconds before calling its verdict. “Slytherin!”

There was a lot of whispering as Fred walked over to the proper table with a grin.

“George Weasley.” With a huge grin, George winked at Harry as he passed him. The hat seemed
Harry found that odd that the twins would be in Slytherin instead of Gryffindor... looking discreetly towards the head table and realized that Dumbledore looked ready to spit flames, he was so angry. Turning to look at Draco, he gained the blonde’s attention. Flicking his eyes towards the front, he relayed what he wanted him to do.

Draco’s eyes flicked in the direction of the Headmaster before looking at him again, nodding slightly without making it obvious, as he turned to talk to Theodore. They would have to tell Severus about this.

*  

Dumbledore could feel the rage climb inside him. How dare they interfere with his plans! He needed those people in the Houses they were in in order for his plans to go the way they were supposed to go! He was beyond furious when the Weasley twins were taken out of Gryffindor and placed in Slytherin. He didn’t want them there. They were more valuable to him in Gryffindor.

Student after student were re-sorted and placed in either the same House or into a different House than previous. He knew Madam Pomfrey was there with some healers, but he wasn’t sure what they were doing. All he’d been told was that they were there to make sure there weren’t any physical ailments to the students, but he was beginning to wonder about their roles.

Beside McGonagall was another Healer, watching the proceedings so Dumbledore figured he was there to do scans and the papers were sent to Pomfrey and the others. He wasn’t worried that they would find out about his tampering, after all, it wasn’t a physical ailment.

“Ron Weasley!” he heard, his attention brought back to the re-sorting. He watched as Ron went over to McGonagall and the hat was placed on his head. It took a few seconds before the hat declared its verdict. “Hufflepuff!”

To say the boy was stunned was an understatement. He had to be forced to walk in the direction of the Hufflepuff table where the others pulled him down to sit.

“Hermione Granger.”

The girl hesitated slightly before she walked over to the old professor, taking a deep breath as the hat was placed on her head. Dumbledore was sure she would remain in Gryffindor. It was where she belonged, after all. “Ravenclaw!” Dumbledore felt his jaw drop slightly as the girl hung her head slightly, heading for the correct table. No!

“Neville Longbottom.”

Dumbledore was shocked as the boy walked calmly over to McGonagall and held still as the hat was placed on his head. He’d never seen this boy be anything else by shy and nervous, but today, Longbottom was calm and collected, even when the hat called out where the boy should be. “Slytherin!”

No! No! No! All his well-laid plans were being systematically taken apart! And there was nothing he could do about it without arousing suspicion!

“Harry Potter.”

Dumbledore sat up slightly as he watched the boy in question smiled encouragingly to the Weasley girl before he made his way over to the hat. This one would stay in Gryffindor. He
needed Harry in that House in order to do what Dumbledore wanted. It was where he would regain control over the annoying brat-

“Slytherin!”

He wanted to scream in rage as his new plan to regain Harry Potter went up in smoke. The spell he’d placed on the boy’s bed was all for nothing! He was so consumed with rage that he missed the rest of Harry’s year, missing the fact that the Patil sisters were now in the same House, or that Dean Thomas had been placed in Ravenclaw.

He also missed the fact that Ginny Weasley remained in Gryffindor. By the time he came to his senses, reining his temper in, there were only three students left to re-sort. Looking around the hall, he realized that everyone he’d place where he needed them were no longer there. Only three or four of them were still in place.

The only House that hadn’t really changed was the Slytherin. They hadn’t lost anyone, just gained. Dumbledore cursed himself for not getting someone in that House now, but then he hadn’t thought he’d need it.

Once everyone was sitting down, the first years were led into the room, and this year he hadn’t been able to tap any of them because he hadn’t had the book to locate them. Why was the Ministry involving itself in his plans now? He’d worked years to get the people he needed where they were. If the brat had followed the plan, he’d have brought back Regulus in his capacity as Voldemort. Now even that was ruined.

He was going to have to find another way to bring Regulus back before it was too late… of course, there was a way and he wouldn’t even have to use Harry to do it. The rat would have a use, after all.

*

Severus skimmed through the papers Pomfrey had had delivered to his quarters once the sorting was done. He hadn’t thought there would be that many students tampered with. He wasn’t really surprised to read that Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley were two of the worse cases of tampering.

He was surprised to see that Dumbledore had tied his manipulations to the boy’s emotions, though it now made sense. The outbursts the Weasley boy had had last year had all been related to his anger and losing Harry as his best friend. This was the proof they needed that Dumbledore was behind everything.

He was, however, surprised at what the Headmaster had done to Granger. It seemed after the talk they’d had with the girl, Dumbledore had upped his manipulations of the girl. Had the compulsion they’d put on her interfered with the manipulations the old man had placed on her all those years ago? It showed that he’d taken drastic measures to tie her to him once more… It made him wonder if the old man would actually resort to other things if it didn’t go his way.

He frowned at the papers, wondering if he really would sexually violate a child to get what he wanted. It seemed it had come close to that with Granger.

With a sigh, he transfigured the papers into a book on spells before calling for a house-elf. “Take this to Lord Malfoy,” he told the little creature. There was no sense in arousing the attention of these creatures, especially since they answered to the Headmaster.

“Yes, sir,” the elf said with a bow before he was gone.
He hadn’t really been that surprised with the turnout, really. Maybe the scale of the tampering was more than they’d expected, but not where Harry was concerned. At least he was now in Slytherin where he should’ve been for the last four years.

They were going to have to be careful with the old man. He was sure they’d disrupted some of his plans and that could be dangerous.

* * *

Thursday, September 27th, 1995

Dumbledore smiled as he managed to get out of the castle without anyone being the wiser. He’d been trying for days but hadn’t been able to get away. He’d forgotten how much work it was the first few weeks of school.

But now he was gone and he could find the rat.

He knew where to find him, after all. He’d been the one to find him the job. It didn’t pay much, but it was enough to keep him where he was. Dumbledore had made him think this was what he wanted and the rat was content to putter around the greenhouse he worked at.

He waited until the little man was alone before activating the spell he’d painstakingly set into place years ago. It was how he’d gained access to the Potters’ residence, after all. James had trusted this little insignificant weasel.

It had worked perfectly… if things had actually worked out the way they were supposed to, anyway. It was just rotten luck that he’d lost Voldemort’s cloak, but he’d turned that to his advantage when it was discovered in the Potter house.

His chance came a half hour after he got there.

The greenhouse owner left on an errand and wouldn’t be back for at least an hour. That was plenty of time to get things in motion. In his pocket was the locket the rat would use to bring Regulus back. The memory would simply use this one to bring itself back and was spelled to come find him when it was done. From there, Dumbledore would set Black’s own brother against the brat and things would go the way it should have.

“Hello, Peter,” Dumbledore murmured pleasantly, smiling when the rat spun around with panic in his eyes. “It’s time.” With those words, he watched as the eyes of the man before him became hazy and he smiled stupidly at him. “Take this locket and go to the house. Wait there until he comes back,” he instructed, watching as the rat nodded and Disapparated.

With a smile on his face, Dumbledore returned to the school to away Regulus’ return.

* * *

Tuesday, October 17th, 1995

Harry and Draco were ushered into Severus’ quarters after supper and were surprised to find Remus, Sirius, Parker, Goldenseal and Lucius in there. “What’s going on?” Harry asked in confusion.

“We decided to keep you in the loop for this, Mr. Potter,” Goldenseal said from beside the fireplace. “This here, not including the Room of Requirements, is one of the safest rooms to meet in without being found out.”
“The Minister has approved a Floo connection that Dumbledore isn’t aware of for tonight,” Sirius said with a smile. “This means that no one knows we’re meeting here tonight.”

“So then, what’s going to happen?” Draco asked as he sat down on the couch before Harry joined him.

“Dumbledore is going to be arrested in a couple of weeks,” Parker told him with a grim look. “It’s come to our attention that the old man is attempting something, though we haven’t quite figured out how or even where. The ‘when’ is trickier. We know it’s already begun but won’t be completed for a while, but we don’t have a definite date. Or at least it would’ve happened if the information hadn’t come to us, anyway.”

“Do we know what he’s planning on doing?” Harry asked after thinking that through.

“It seems Dumbledore’s tampering goes further than we expected,” Remus murmured with a sigh. “We were contacted by a man who was apparently friends with your parents after they left school, though they were never really friends at school. James ran in different circles than this man.”

“Who?”

“Peter Pettigrew,” Severus said with a distasteful look on his face. “He wasn’t the cleanest person when in school. I remember people used to make fun of him, James included.”

“It’s why I was surprised when I heard he and James were friends after we finished school,” Sirius said, taking over the tale. “He worked as a Herbologist, last I heard. He went missing last month.”

“So this Pettigrew contacted you?” Harry asked in confusion. “Why would he do that if he’s under Dumbledore’s thumb?”

“That’s where it gets tricky. Seems he left himself a note to contact Sirius if he ever came up with some missing time,” Remus murmured softly. “As well as meeting people who seemed to know him but had no memory of ever meeting them. He’d also left himself some memories that he didn’t remember happening.”

“Alright, so what is he supposed to do?” he asked, wondering what this had to do with Dumbledore and his manipulations.

“It would seem,” Lucius told him, bringing his attention to the blonde man, “that he’s going to attempt to bring Regulus back to kill you… or have you kill him, I suppose. The fact that Dumbledore has waited this long to implement these plans means that he either had to delay them, since you didn’t participate in the tournament last year, or he’s bringing his timetable up because he’s losing control of all his plans.”

“So you think Dumbledore really did tamper with the cup to put Harry in the tournament?” Draco asked with a frown.

“It’s becoming obvious he was behind it all, yes.”

“Alright,” Harry murmured with a sigh, rubbing at his forehead. “What do you want me to do?”

“Keep an eye out for anyone acting out of character. We don’t want this coming back to the Headmaster,” Remus stressed, giving him a warning look. The need for secrecy wasn’t mentioned but Harry understood the warning.

“I won’t say anything to anyone,” Harry promised, Draco nodding beside him.
“Good. We’ll give you a warning when Fudge comes around so that you won’t give anything up to anyone by not wondering what’s going on,” Severus murmured in dismissal.

“Yes, sir,” they said in unison and with a hug for Sirius from Harry, the boys left the men to finish their planning. “Let’s go finish our assignments,” Draco murmured as they headed for the Slytherin common room.

* * *

Tuesday, October 31st, 1995

Dumbledore was smirking as he watched the children enter the Great Hall for supper. This was it. This would be the night that Regulus made his reappearance. The rat assured him that everything would happen quickly…

All he needed to do was wait for the right time to signal the traitor in order to start the ball rolling.

Everything was finally falling into place again…

He was surprised when the Minister walked through the door, smiling pleasantly at the students around him. What the hell was he doing here? And of course, the man came in with an entourage. There were no less than six Aurors with him, his personal guards… though there was a couple of men with him Dumbledore didn’t recognize.

“Minister!” he said with false cheerfulness, as he rose to his feet. “What a pleasant surprise. To what do we owe this pleasure?”

“Oh, I just thought I’d visit the school and see how things were coming along,” the Minister said with an airy wave of his hand. “This is Zachary White from Italy. I was showing him how a school this size runs so well.”

“Mr. White,” Dumbledore murmured, shaking the man’s hand. “What is it you do, sir?”

“Oh, it’s professor, actually,” the man said with a polite smile as he shook Dumbledore’s hand. “I’m planning on running a school of my own soon and wanted to see just how this would work out with so many children attending. Do you ever have problems with them being too unruly?”

“No, not really,” Dumbledore murmured pleasantly, wondering what was going on here. There were schools opening nearly every year and none of them had ever visited Hogwarts for pointers… Was this school to be different than the others? Was this supposed to be more on par with Hogwarts? “But then every school has its share of troublemakers, I assume.”

“I’m sure,” White laughed easily as he looked at all the curious faces watching them.

“Won’t you join us for supper?” Dumbledore asked, realizing he was being rude to this man.

“It won’t be a bother?” White asked, though Dumbledore could tell he really wanted to stay.

“No at all.” Dumbledore nodded to Filch to bring more chairs and space was made at the head table for the newcomers. Dumbledore, however, wanted to curse. He wouldn’t be able to give the rat the signal without arousing suspicions now. It would have to wait.

* *

Harry and Draco looked up at the table before looking at each other knowingly. Severus had just managed to send them the warning before they were done class. They knew what was going to
happen tonight. They just didn’t know at what time. Would the adults wait until after supper? Or would they wait until after the celebration?

They sat down and waited to see what would happen. When the meal was served, they knew it wouldn’t happen just yet.

It wasn’t until after the supper dishes were cleared and sweets appeared on the tables that anything happened.

“What is the meaning of this!” Professor McGonagall demanded as a man came up behind Dumbledore, forcing the old man to turn in shock to look at him.

“Madam,” the man answered, helping Dumbledore to his feet before his wrists were shackled behind his back. “Please, sit down. Professor Dumbledore, you are under arrest for tampering and murder.”

“And who did I supposedly murder?” Dumbledore demanded angrily as he was escorted from the hall.

“The details will be discussed at the Ministry, sir,” the Auror informed him, because that was when Harry realized who this was. It was Redford, the Auror who had taken his relatives into custody. He also wondered if anyone else had caught on to the fact that Dumbledore hadn’t demanded to know more about the tampering charge…

“You can’t take the Headmaster away!” Professor McGonagall sputtered as she watched them lead him out.

“Madam,” Fudge interrupted loudly, cutting her off. “If you would allow me to speak?”

“Of course, Minister,” she said primly, looking at him in disapproval. Harry recognized the look well. She’d used it on him quite a few times in the last four years, usually when he was caught doing something he shouldn’t be doing.

Fudge turned to look at the whole hall before speaking. “This is Professor Zachary White,” he told everyone, pointing to the man on his right. “He will now be Headmaster of Hogwarts for the rest of the year. If the charges brought against Headmaster Dumbledore are indeed true, he will remain until further notice. Now, please, enjoy your night.” With that, Fudge nodded to his men and they made their way out of the Great Hall, ignoring the questions tossed their way.

* * *

Wednesday, November 1st, 1995

At breakfast, there were quite a few chairs empty at the head table and everyone wondered what was going on. During the meal, teachers trickled in, heading for their chairs, ignoring the whispering going on around them.

Some were angry and disgruntled but others were pale and withdrawn. Among those who were withdrawn that Harry wasn’t really surprised about were Professors McGonagall, Hagrid, Flitwick, and Trelawney. But he was surprised to learn that Professor Sinistra from Astronomy class, Professor Vector from Arithmancy, Professor Sprout, Professor Burbage from Muggle Studies class and Madam Hooch, were also part of those tampered with.

He hadn’t expected the tampering to be so extensive, but then it made sense if he really thought about it. If the tampering hadn’t been as bad, someone would’ve noticed the abuse he was getting from home before now.
Madam Pomfrey didn’t really count because he didn’t see her until he was already injured at school. And justifiably, the students were confused, especially when teachers began to act differently once the coercions and tampering were reversed.

It also didn’t surprise Harry to learn that Binns was also one of the teachers who had been tampered with. When they managed to reverse it, the professor demanded he be released from the school. He was told that it wasn’t possible until the end of the school year because they had no one to replace him in History of Magic. It was a relief when class became livelier, drifting away from the Goblin wars.

McGonagall didn’t really change. She was still her stern self, despite the tampering. She was just less prone to pick on specific students, which was a relief to those students.

Classes would now be taught better than before without the tampering.

* * *

Thursday, November 9th, 1995

Over the next few days, certain students were ordered to report to the infirmary by their Heads of House. They would come back a little dazed but different from how they had been before. They were only taking a few students at a time and Ron wondered just what was going on. To top it all off, Hermione had begun avoiding him again, just like last year. He needed to get to the bottom of this…

He managed to corner her in one of the library rooms where she had been quietly studying, though he caught her staring off into space instead. “You’ve been ignoring me since the start of school, Hermione. What’s going on,” he demanded angrily, startling her.

“Isn’t it obvious, Ron?” she asked with a tired sigh. “Dumbledore used us to get to Harry and now he’s gone.”

“You’re wrong!” Ron yelled at her, glaring angrily. “He’s just testing us to see if we’ll stay loyal to him. You’ll see! He’ll come back and things will go back to normal. Harry will come back to us and you’ll be my girl again.”

Hermione looked at him with pity in her eyes. “Oh, Ronald,” she said softly. “It’s never going to work between us. You have to know that.” She stopped in fear at the look on his face. “Ron?” she whispered her voice barely audible as he advanced on her.

“I’ll show you,” he growled angrily.

* *

Harry and Draco looked on in confusion as people rushed by them on their way to the library to work on some assignments. “What in Merlin’s name is going on?” the blonde teen asked before he snagged a second year by the collar. “Where are you going?” he demanded, glaring at the student.

“Hermione Granger was found in the library by Madam Pince,” the student stuttered in fear when he realized who it was who had him. “Seems she was badly beaten and sexually assaulted.”

“By who?” Harry asked in horror.

“Don’t know,” he was told, eyes flicking back and forth. “They’re moving her to the infirmary for
observation until she wakes up.”

Draco released the student and he scurried off before Draco changed his mind and grabbed him again. “I know what you’re thinking, Harry, but we have to stay away from her and Weasley.”

“I know but it doesn’t make it easy,” Harry said with a sigh, knowing Draco was right. “I just wonder who could’ve done it…” As the last words left his lips, Ron came walking down the corridor, glowering at anyone who dared get in his way. The look he threw Harry was full of hatred and Harry noticed something weird on the red head’s white shirt. It wasn’t until he had gone by them that he realized what it was. Blood! “We have to find Severus,” he said urgently.


“Because I think I know who attacked Hermione.” Before Draco could ask any more questions, Harry was off, moving quickly down the corridor, his instincts telling him the Potions master would be heading for the infirmary. His potions were often used to help injured students, after all.

He hesitated when he came up on the man in question, but he wasn’t alone. The new Headmaster was with him, including Professor Flitwick and McGonagall.

“Mr. Potter,” Severus said when he noticed him hesitate. “Is there a problem?”

“Professor, could I speak to you for a moment?” he asked hesitantly, glancing at the other teachers. “Privately?”

“Whatsoever you want to say to Professor Snape can be said in front of all of us, Mr. Potter,” McGonagall said sharply. It seemed she’d gotten even more ornery since the tampering had been discovered.

“I think I know who attacked Hermione, Professor,” he said when it became obvious that the old professor was going to insist.

“Who?” Professor White demanded abruptly.

“Ronald Weasley, sir,” Harry told him before explaining himself. “Ronald just passed us with blood on his shirt, sir. It wasn’t there after lunch.”

“Are you sure, Mr. Potter?” Severus asked before McGonagall could demand more answers. “This is a serious accusation.”

“Yes, sir, I wouldn’t have said anything otherwise.”

“We need to find and question Mr. Weasley, then,” Professor White said with a sigh. He held up a hand when McGonagall opened her mouth to protest. “We need to be sure, Professor.”

“I find it strange, Mr. Potter, that you would be the one to bring this to our attention,” McGonagall stated primly, her hands folded in front of her. “Especially since you’re no longer Mr. Weasley’s friend.”

“I know, Professor, but I’ve learned to be observant in the last four years,” he said with a shrug. “There’s not usually much I miss. I just don’t say anything most of the time.”

She grudgingly agreed with him before dismissing him. “Are you sure it’s Weasley, Harry?” Draco asked when they were out of earshot.

“Why else would there be blood on him if he wasn’t responsible?” Harry asked reasonably.
“Besides, if I’m wrong, it means Ronald was fighting with someone else and he’ll still get in trouble for it.”

“True,” Draco murmured as they entered the library. “Nothing more we can do, let’s just work on our assignment.” Then a gleam came into Draco’s eyes that made Harry instantly wary. “Besides, if we finish it quickly and correctly, we can get some play time in.”

Harry’s eyes dilated as he realized what Draco was saying. They’d be able to play one of the many fantasies that had been running in their heads since they’d been bound…

* * *

Zachary waited in his office for Ron Weasley with Professors Sprout, Flitwick and Snape. They didn’t have to wait long.

Ron came into the office with a surly look on his face. “Headmaster,” he greeted as he stood there, waiting to hear what was going on.

“Mr. Weasley, it has come to my attention that you and Miss Granger are friends. Is this true?”

They watched as Ron grudgingly agreed with the man, seeming to know that if he denied it, the three teachers could call him on it for lying. “But we haven’t really hung around since the re-sorting,” he told them.

“Could you tell me where you were about an hour ago?” Professor Sprout asked gently.

“In the library,” the red haired student grumbled, glaring at them. “Studying.”

Zachary noticed the surprise on two of the professors’ faces while Severus’ eyebrow simply went up. “Since you have yet to actually do so, Mr. Weasley,” the Potions master drawled coldly, “I highly doubt you were studying.”


“Mr. Weasley,” the Headmaster warned with a reproving look. The boy settled for glaring at the Potions master… not that seemed to bother the man. “Would you like to sit down?” he asked pleasantly, gesturing towards the chairs.

With another glare at the Potions master, the teenager sat down in the chair, accepting the cup of tea that Professor Flitwick offered him as everyone sat down with a cup of their own. This was going better than he’d thought it would. It didn’t take long for the Veritaserum to take effect. “Where did the blood on your shirt come from, Mr. Weasley?” he asked when Severus nodded to him to ask.

Weasley looked down at himself and noticed the blood Mr. Potter had noticed and glared angrily. “That stupid bitch stained my shirt,” he growled, not seeming to realize what he’d said until it was too late.

White sighed sadly. “So you did attack Miss Granger,” he murmured, gesturing to the man hiding behind the teenager. “What will this mean with the tampering we discovered?”

Ron Weasley gaped at the Auror standing there, seeming to be unable to process what was happening. “It’ll depend on if this is part of the tampering or if it’s just his own thoughts that made the attack possible.”
“We need to bring in his parents,” Professor Sprout murmured, turning to look at the Headmaster. “They need to be made aware of this.”

“Indeed,” Zachary said with a nod.

* 

By the time Molly and Arthur Weasley arrived in the Headmaster’s office, Ron’s shirt had been tested for blood. Zachary was thinking furiously as to what to do. The Auror wanted to take the boy into custody and he couldn’t really blame him since the blood had indeed belonged to Miss Granger.

“Ronald,” Molly asked when they entered the office, going to the boy still sitting in the same chair as earlier.

“Hello,” Arthur said with a pleasant but confused smile, reaching out to shake Zachary’s hand. “What’s going on here?” he asked as he took in the fact that Severus, Sprout and Auror Redford, and now Pomfrey, were standing in the office as well.

Flitwick had gone to check on the students in his House and to check on Miss Granger. Her parents had also been contacted and were on their way. Redford had sent an Auror to bring them since they were muggles and couldn’t Apparate.

“It has come to our attention that Albus Dumbledore has been manipulating students and teachers here at the school,” Redford began with a nod from Zachary. This might be better coming from the Auror instead of any of the teachers here.

“Manipulation?” Molly asked in confusion. “How many people were there?”

“That isn’t why you’re here, Madam,” Redford told her with a shake of his head. “You’re here because Ronald Weasley attacked a student today.”

“Again?” Molly demanded, glaring at Ron who sulked on the chair.

“Again?” Zachary asked in alarm before Redford could say anything. “This isn’t the first time this has happened?”

“She means, Headmaster,” Severus murmured carefully, “that Ronald attacked his sister, Ginny Weasley, nearly breaking her arm, and Seamus Finnegan in my classroom last year. Both incidents were done in front of witnesses.”

“Yes,” Arthur murmured as he looked at Ron with a frown. “Dumbledore asked to talk to Ron by himself and when we came back, Ron was his usual self. A little confused, mind you, but calmer, not so angry.”

“Madam Pomfrey is here to fix the manipulation done to him but we wanted to wait for you to be present before doing so,” Zachary told them. “Afterwards, we will question him again and if it is found out that Ronald attacked Miss Granger on purpose, then I’m afraid Auror Redford will be taking him into custody.”

“For what?” Molly asked in panic and confusion. “For beating up someone?”

“You misunderstand us, Madam,” Redford told her before she could work herself into a state. “He didn’t just ‘beat’ up Miss Granger. He raped her as well. Madam Pomfrey had to put her under a healing sleep in order to bring the swelling down in her brain. He almost killed the girl.”
They paled at that before looking down at an angry Ron. “Do it,” Arthur told Pomfrey before Molly could say or do anything, pulling his wife away from the boy. “I want to get to the bottom of this.”

Zachary had a feeling this man gave in too readily to this woman at the best of times, but it was good to see that it wasn’t every time. Pomfrey stepped forward and began chanting the spells that would remove the manipulations put of the boy. As they watched, the boy’s eyes became vacant until the spells were done.

Zachary didn’t know what he’d expected but it wasn’t what they saw. The boy paled but the anger remained as he glared at them, daring them to judge him.

“Did you attack Miss Granger?” Redford asked sternly.

“She deserved what she got!” he yelled at them, seeming to know he was done, anyway. “The old man promised her to me when we started school! She was mine! Just like Potter was but Malf—n got involved and changed him. Now, Potter won’t even talk to me after everything I’ve done for him! They were mine! Well, I got Granger before she could leave,” he said with a vicious smile.

Zachary watched Weasley’s parents carefully. Molly paled and took a step back, shocked at what she was hearing from her youngest son. Arthur reached out to touch her, lending her his support. “What will you do?” he asked Redford, knowing something had to be done.

“Since he confessed and seems to have no remorse, I’ll have to take him in and see what the courts decide,” Redford told the two adults with a shake of his head. “I have no choice.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” Ron growled out, glaring at all of them. “Dumbledore will bail me out like he always does.”

“I’m afraid,” Redford told the boy, glaring down at him, “that Dumbledore won’t be bailing anyone out, let alone himself.”

With that, he hauled Ron out of his chair and headed for the fireplace. Seeming to realize what was going to happen, the boy turned to look at his mother with a petrified look on his face. “Mum?” he asked and Zachary wondered if he was the only one who saw the calculating look in the back of the boy’s eyes. Flicking his eyes to the other occupants in his office, he realized two other people saw it: Severus Snape and Arthur Weasley.

Molly reacted to the tone, as any mother would, but the hold Arthur had on her arm prevented her from going to the boy.

“Help me, Mum! Don’t let him do this!” Ron pleaded with her. That was when Zachary realized that Arthur wasn’t as much as a pushover as he’d thought. Molly was. The boy kept pleading with her until Redford was gone with a whoosh of green flames.

Molly turned into her husband’s arms and sobbed.

“Come on, Molly,” Arthur murmured consolingly. “Let’s go home.”

They watched as Arthur escorted his wife out of his office. Zachary sighed as silence finally descended around them. “Headmaster, I’m going to go back to the infirmary to check on Miss Granger.” Zachary nodded to Pomfrey and she was off. Sprout and Severus nodded to him as well and they followed the woman out of the office. Zachary sighed and shook his head. When he’d taken the position of Headmaster, he’d been warned that Hogwarts would be in turmoil because of Dumbledore. He just hadn’t realized it would be this bad…
Severus sat beside Harry in the courtroom with Rick Parker. Sirius didn’t have to be there because of the way Harry had filled out the adoption papers, so Severus could act as guardian because of it. He just worried what the potions he had in his pocket would do to the teenager after he administered it, not just once, but at least twice, maybe three times depending on how Harry reacted to it.

They’d spoken about this the night before and Harry was all for using them. He wanted to make sure Dumbledore never made it out of the Ministry to harm anyone else.

They were sitting where people speaking against or for the defendant usually sat, waiting for things to begin. People had been arriving for the last few minutes, filling the chairs with people who would judge the old Headmaster.

Dumbledore was already sitting in a chair in front of them with a few Aurors behind him in case the old man decided to do something drastic. It was good to know they weren’t taking chances. The only other furniture in the room was a table set between Dumbledore’s chair and Fudge’s seat.

Fudge looked around to see if everyone was in place before he addressed them. “Ladies and gentlemen of the Wizengamot, we’re here to hear evidence against Albus Dumbledore,” the Minister said clearly, looking around at all the people gathered in the room. “He is accused of murder and manipulation against children. Mr. Goldenseal, you may begin.”

“Thank you, Minister,” the lawyer murmured with a pleasant smile. “Before you is a list of the people Albus Dumbledore manipulated and these are only the ones still at the school. We’re unsure how many more there are that the old Headmaster has manipulated into doing what he wanted.”

There was a lot of murmuring as the pages in question were passed around for the members to look over. “Just how long had this been going on?” one member asked as he looked over a colleague’s shoulder, a look of alarm on his face.

“I’m afraid that’s something else we don’t know, sir,” Goldenseal answered with a look of regret. “We do know that it has been going on since at least the seventies. We know of past students manipulated by the old Headmaster before he was even in that position.”

“That long?” a woman asked in shock. “And no one realized this?”

“No, Madam,” Goldenseal shook his head, now looking grave. The man definitely knew how to play a crowd to his advantage, Severus thought in amusement. “Until Lord Black brought it to our attention that Mr. Potter had been whisked away to be hidden in the muggle world without ever being asked by his legal guardian if that would be alright, no one knew.”

“Ah yes,” Mr. Morenci murmured with a frown. “I remember reading this in the Daily Prophet. Lord Black was supposed to be Mr. Potter’s legal guardian before his unjust incarceration.”
“Yes, sir,” Goldenseal answered in a clear voice. Now was when they began setting the stage for the proof they had. “But there was a further proviso in the Potters’ will. If Lord Black was unable to complete that function, Professor Snape was to be placed as legal guardian. The fact that neither of these men was consulted before Mr. Potter was vanished from the Wizarding World means Albus Dumbledore smuggled him out of our world to place him with someone he knew would abuse him.”

“Yes,” Fudge murmured as he looked down at the lawyer. “That was established when the Dursleys were brought in for trial. Is there any proof that Albus Dumbledore was behind Mr. Potter being placed in their dubious care?”

“Yes, Minister,” Goldenseal said, holding out the letter they had found in the Dursleys’ house. “This was found in Vernon Dursley’s possessions when the Aurors searched the home.”

The letter was magicked up to the man and Severus watched Dumbledore instead of the men and women who would be reading it. He saw the surprise light the old man’s eyes and realized that Vernon was supposed to dispose of the letter, not hold on to it. This would be the first nail in the man’s proverbial coffin.

“Is there any more evidence to bring forth?” Fudge asked after he’d read the letter, passing it on to the person beside him.

“Yes, sir,” Goldenseal answered with a nod. “There are two or three memories but it’s going to be tricky to retrieve them.”

“Explain.”

“Professor Snape has brewed a potion that will bring up long buried memories. When we spoke to Mr. Potter last night he was willing to take this potion but there’s a catch.”

“A catch?” a woman in the back asked, echoing most of the people’s thoughts, it seemed, by the looks on several faces in the crowd.

“Yes, Madam,” Goldenseal said with a nod. “We will be able to view the memories as Mr. Potter sees them in his mind just as we would with a Pensieve but he will build a tolerance to the potion quickly, which is why I said two or three memories.” As he spoke, Goldenseal began to pace the courtroom, looking up at the attentive people looking at him. “We are unsure of the effects the potion will have on Mr. Potter but, even knowing this, he is willing to put himself through this so that everyone can see what he knows.”

“Proceed, then,” Fudge said with a sigh.

“Mr. Potter? Professor Snape?” Goldenseal called, gesturing towards the table. Severus heard Harry take a shaky breath before he rose to his feet. He followed the teenager he’d come to care about and worried what this might do to him.

Helping him to sit on the table, Severus pulled out one of the phials from his pocket. “Drink it and then lay down. The first one takes a few seconds to work. The others will activate faster so I’ll give them to you while you’re laying down,” he instructed, watching Harry closely as the teenager nodded, taking the phial from him.

Taking out his wand, he waited for Harry to down the potion and lay down. He would then say the words that would allow everyone to view what Harry was seeing.

With a nod from Harry, Severus murmured the spell needed. Looking up, he could see a black swirling mist. “Harry,” Goldenseal murmured gently. “Think back to the first time you ever saw
Harry’s eyes flicked around and they could see him peering down at a card with Ronald Weasley sitting across from him. The name on it clearly read ‘Albus Dumbledore’ but then everything shifted and the memory became slightly fuzzy like one would normally associate when viewing an aged photograph and they were seeing through some kind of bars at Dumbledore in a room that was a complete disaster. There were bits and pieces of broken furniture everywhere with a woman standing between them. “I’m sorry Lily, but I can’t have you survive and not James. Everything depends on this working out.” Dumbledore said in a regretful tone.

“They are doing this?” Lily asked desperately, confusion clear on her face. “I thought you said Voldemort was the one who wanted Harry dead!”

Dumbledore smiled pleasantly. “But I don’t want him dead. He’s worth more to me alive,” the old man said in a reasonable tone. “It’s you and James that need to die. I have other plans for Harry with the help of Regulus. Vernon and Petunia are waiting for the boy so they can raise him for me.”

“Regulus?” the woman said in confusion before Dumbledore’s words fully registered. “Petunia?” Lily asked in horror, looking back at her child before looking at the old man again. “The will James and I had made will insure he doesn’t go to that hateful family,” she told him with a hard look in her eyes.

“We’ll see,” Dumbledore murmured before sending the killing curse at Lily Potter. They listened as the woman screamed in pain, Harry arching up on the table beneath the playing memory. It faded with the woman lying on the floor, completely unmoving, while Dumbledore moved towards Harry, a gleam in his eyes as he brought up his wand…

Severus put a calming hand on Harry’s chest, looking at him in concern. “Harry?”

Panting harshly, Harry looked up at the Potions master, his eyes full of pain but Severus wasn’t sure if it was because of the potion or if it was because of the memory. “Keep going,” he ground out between clenched teeth.

Severus was a little alarmed at Harry’s reaction to the potion. It seemed to be causing the teenager great pains. Looking up at Goldenseal, the lawyer nodded grimly. “This has to be done, Severus.”

With a tightening of his lips, Severus pulled out the next phial and poured it into Harry’s open mouth. “Harry, now I want you to think about the next time you ever met Albus Dumbledore.”

Severus wondered if anyone else noticed Harry’s hands clenched on the edges of the table as he panted, eyes flicking around the room as he obeyed the gentle order.

Looking up, they saw a strange door open and three year old Harry was pulled out of it. The mirror, which had been placed across from the door, was old and damaged, showing the clothes falling off the small body as the boy was unceremoniously pulled out of a closet under the stairs.

“There he is,” Vernon growled as he shoved Harry towards Dumbledore, falling to his knees. The adults ignored the cry of pain that came from the child as he clutched at the knee that seemed to have collided with the coffee table in front of him.

Dumbledore examined Harry, as if he were a bug or a flower, before pulling the too-big shirt off the small frame. “Mr. Dursley, you’re being too lenient on him,” Dumbledore said as he examined the boy’s back, seeming to count the ribs they could see through the child’s skin. “What does he do around here?”
"We have him doing some chores," Vernon grudgingly admitted, though they noticed he never said how much chores Harry did. "We feed him enough for him to do them,"

"Then you’re feeding him too much," Dumbledore murmured as he threw the shirt at the child. "And you don’t discipline him enough. I thought you’d have at least whipped him for disobedience by now. There’s not even a mark on him."

With a glare at Dumbledore, Vernon grabbed hold of Harry’s stick thin arm and dragged the boy back to the closet, throwing him in and locking the door. "If you don’t like the way we’re raising him up, then find someone else to take the freak," Vernon growled out at the old man.

“I’ll be back next month," Dumbledore said with a disappointed sigh. “Maybe by then he’ll have given you a reason to use a strap.” With that, Harry watched through the grate in his door as Dumbledore picked up his jacket from the couch and walked out the door.

On the Table, Harry arched up again, moaning in pain, his grip on the table tightening. Severus leaned over the teen worriedly. “Harry?” he asked softly as Harry shook with tension, coughing slightly. He began to worry when Harry only nodded, wondering what the potion was doing to him. Maybe he should’ve researched the potion better, but he hadn’t been able to find much on side-effects of the memory potion.

“Again,” he whispered hoarsely.

He looked up at Goldenseal again, shaking his head, telling the lawyer they’d done enough to Harry. The man sighed and reluctantly nodded. “Last one,” he promised, despite the fact that it would indeed be the last one. After this, the potion wouldn’t work on Harry without throwing him into a catatonic state that he might not recover from.

Severus debated with refusing but looking down at Harry, he knew he needed to continue. The teenager would only be angry with him for not giving it to him. In that respect, he had Lily’s stubbornness. Pulling the last potion from his pocket, he poured it into Harry’s mouth.

This time the memory played without prompting, almost like the potion had caught on to what they were doing.

The memory playing showed a six year old Harry tied to a post in what looked like a basement. His back was riddled with old marks; the same marks Severus had seen last year, though maybe not as many yet. The boy was barely aware of his surroundings, whimpering in pain as a belt landed on the skin of his back.

To Harry’s right was a canning pot, reflecting Vernon swinging the belt towards the small child. Behind him, they could see an old man come to a stop behind Harry’s uncle.

As the fat man panted in exertion, Dumbledore walked closer to the boy even as the belt struck the boy, earning a cry of pain as it struck his ribs, leaving a cut on the skin which began bleeding freely. “Better, Mr. Dursley,” Dumbledore murmured as he looked at the bleeding child who looked up at him with dazed eyes, crying out as the belt connected with his hip. “But it’s still not enough. That’s only four strikes. What did he do to earn the whipping?”

“He caused Dudley to fail a test on purpose,” Vernon growled angrily, "then tried to get him in trouble by telling the teacher my boy was cheating off his paper. Dudley was sent home for three days because of this freak. He needs to learn to keep his mouth shut!” With that, the belt struck the boy again, this time on the legs.

That’s when everyone watching realized the boy had been stripped of his clothes, especially when
the belt struck the boy, seeming to wrap around the small child’s hips, connecting with his privates. The boy screamed in pain, eyes wide.

The Dumbledore in the memory smiled in satisfaction. “Maybe if you hit him with the buckle…?” he suggested with a raised eyebrow.

Vernon laughed and the next thing to hit the boy was, indeed, the buckle head. The scream that filled the room made quite a few people wince, even as it came again and again.

The memory cut off then and Severus looked down at Harry, feeling panic fill him as the teenager began to convulse on the table, face slack. “Harry!” he called out, pinning the teenager to the table before he fell off. Goldenseal rushing to the other side to help him. It didn’t last long but Severus was worried when Harry didn’t move, not seeming to be breathing. Quickly putting his ear to Harry’s chest, he sighed in relief when he heard the erratic heartbeat.

He sighed in relief as he straightened up, looking up at the lawyer. “That’s it. No more.”

Goldenseal nodded grimly. “Agreed. Even if the potion were to work, I think he’s had enough.” Turning, he looked up at the men and women looking down at them, quite a few of them watched in concern as Severus tended to Harry. “As you can see, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Wizengamot, Albus Dumbledore not only manipulated people into doing what he wanted, but he was also responsible for James and Lily Potter’s deaths.”

“Who is Regulus?” Mr. Morenci asked with a confused frown. “How does this person tie into all this?”

“Regulus, sir, was Lord Black’s youngest brother,” Goldenseal said gravely. “He went missing some years ago. We’re unsure what his role in all this is, perhaps Mr. Dumbledore will enlighten us as to what part he played in his plans.”

“Indeed,” Fudge murmured as he regarded Dumbledore. The man in question hadn’t moved, even as he’d watched himself directing Harry’s uncle into beating a helpless child or even when he’d killed the boy’s parents.

Severus wondered what was going through the heads of the people judging the old man, but it didn’t occupy his thoughts long. He had Harry to take care of. With a wave of his wand, he levitated the teenager off the table and took him over to the chairs again, turning some of them into a couch to lay the teenager on. He would allow him to sleep while the trial continued and administer the other potions he’d brought just in case.

He was glad he always planned for the worst.

“Mr. Dumbledore,” Fudge began as everyone looked down with contempt at the man sitting benignly before them. “A Veritaserum has been administered to you before trial began. What have you to say about all this?”

“If I hadn’t done what you saw,” Dumbledore said, seeming to choose his words carefully. “Everyone here would have been too lax. I decided to bring a threat out before everything was ruined. The muggle influence that has been brought out is because of me. It’s time they knew they lived side by side with wizards and witches. The teachers at the school understood this before you decided to meddle in my plans.

“Do you really think Gellert Grindelwald was really the only dark wizard we have to worry about?” the old man demanded, glaring up at the people judging him. “Do you really think you would be ready if another dark wizard were to try taking over? I was doing you a favour.”
“By creating a dark wizard with an innocent wizard and implicating another one?” Goldenseal asked incredulously, looking at Dumbledore with contempt. “Did you kill Voldemort as well?”

“If that man hadn’t been stopped, he would’ve been able to take over the Wizarding community and maybe even the muggle one,” Dumbledore ranted angrily. “Why do you think he was trying to create a cloak that would protect him from the Unforgivables? It wasn’t just for the fun of the research! No one would listen to me so I took matters into my own hands.”

“By killing an innocent man?” Mr. Morenci demanded angrily. “And then trying to implicate him in the murder of a family after he was dead and couldn’t defend himself of your accusations?”

“Who cared about that man?” Dumbledore scoffed dismissively.

“How about his partner?” Goldenseal asked with a raised eyebrow, gesturing towards Severus.

“Severus was better off without the corrupting influence of that man.

That was when everyone seemed to realize that Dumbledore thought he’d done them a favour by creating all this drama. And for what? Just to make himself important to the Wizarding world again? This man thought he was in the right.

Fudge sighed and shook his head. “Are we ready to vote?” he asked the group. There were nods everywhere. “Those for incarcerating Albus Dumbledore in Azkaban?” Everyone’s hand rose into the air. Looking around, Fudge seemed to take in the fact that no one had their hands down. “Those opposed?”

There were no hands up this time. It was a unanimous vote. “Aurors,” he murmured, gesturing for them to take the old man away. He went without protest, head held high.

Pulling a potion out of his pocket, Severus waved his wand, casting an Enervate on Harry. The boy stirred and opened his eyes, looking around in confusion. “Everything is done, Harry,” Severus murmured gently as he knelt beside the teenager. “I need you to take these potions so we can go.”

Harry forced himself to sit up and took the potion from the Potions master. The Pepper Up went down easily. It seemed to bring his alertness up to normal, but Severus knew it wasn’t going to last long. Madam Pomfrey was waiting for them at Malfoy Manor where he was sure Draco was pacing impatiently, waiting for them to return.

“Are you alright?” he asked the teenager as they stood up, catching Harry when he weaved slightly.

“I’ll be better when we’re home,” he murmured, still looking dazed.

“How are you feeling, Mr. Potter?” Goldenseal asked as he came up to them.

“Shaky,” the teenager murmured honestly. “With a headache.”

“Let’s get you home to Draco,” Severus murmured grimly. “I’m sure he’s driving his parents crazy with his pacing and worrying.”

Harry grinned slightly in response. They both knew the blonde well enough to know Severus was correct in his assessment. They made it to the Atrium easily enough and to the Floo. It wasn’t until Severus stood on the other side, inside Malfoy Manor that things got out of hand. Harry made it to the Foyer, stepping shakily out, face pale, and then promptly fainted, his eyes rolling into the back of his head. Severus barely had enough time to catch him as he fell.
Goldenseal came after him and rushed over to help him. “I hope we didn’t cause him damage with that potion,” the lawyer murmured as they carried Harry into the nearest room. “I’ll go get the others.”

Severus nodded and transfigured a pillow into a blanket, draping it over the teenager, sighing tiredly. Madam Pomfrey was the first one into the library, Draco right behind her. Severus stepped away from the couch, giving the woman the room she needed to cast her spells.

Draco hovered close by but didn’t dare get in the way.

“How did it go?” Lucius asked as he went to stand with him.

“Dumbledore is going to Azkaban, charged with murdering not only the Potters but Voldemort.” Severus nodded when Lucius looked at him in surprise. “He admitted to killing him.”

“What memories did you see?” the blonde man asked, watching Pomfrey as the Mediwitch began pulling potions out of her kit.

“We had assumed Harry had only seen Dumbledore once, but apparently there are more memories of that man than we thought,” Octavius murmured as he joined them, having heard Lucius’ question. “Obviously, it showed Dumbledore killing the Potters… Well, Lily Potter, anyway, but he admitted to killing James, too. We also know that his goal wasn’t to kill Harry, but to put him with the Dursleys.”

“What else did it show?”

“It showed that Dumbledore encouraged the Dursleys to abuse him. The next time we saw Harry, he looked to be about two or three and Dumbledore told Vernon that he was feeding him too much even though you could see the child’s ribs through his skin.”

“And that he wasn’t whipping him like he’d thought that man would do,” Octavius said with a nod at the look Lucius threw at them. “After that, it showed Harry tied to a beam or something. It looked almost like a basement and Dumbledore was commenting on the fact that the fat slob wasn’t putting enough effort behind the belt he was hitting the child with. And on bare skin, at that. He looked to be six, from the conversation the two men were having. Then Dumbledore suggested he use the buckle instead of the belt. I never realized just what that boy went through at the hands of his uncle.”

“It’s over with and no one will ever touch him again,” Severus said grimly as Pomfrey moved towards them, allowing Draco to sit beside Harry. “What’s the prognosis?”

“The potion didn’t do any lasting damage,” the woman said with a sigh. “It might still affect him as it exits his system but only time will take care of that. If he stops whatever he’s doing or even stops mid-conversation to stare into space, don’t worry. It’s just the potion’s doing. How many times did you use it?”

“Three times,” the lawyer told her with a nod as she threw him a look of surprise. “The last time, he began to convulse on the table.”

“Yes, then, it will take a few days to dissipate.” She looked over at the two teenagers and sighed again. “I’m glad this is over with. He’ll likely wake up in a couple of hours with no real adverse effects. I’ll check him again in the morning at breakfast.” Turning to look at them, she nodded and left them there, going back to the school.

Severus was glad they’d informed her of what they had planned to do today so she could be here...
“Once he wakes up, I’ll take them back to the school and inform the Headmaster that there shouldn’t be any further disruptions.”

“You don’t think you should keep him here for a few days?” Octavius asked in surprise.

“No, the sooner things go back to normal, the better things will be. I’ll just have to inform his teachers about the inconsistencies,” Severus said with a shake of his head. “I don’t want him to fall behind in his studies.”

* * *

Wednesday, December 20th, 1995

Dumbledore sat in a cell at the Ministry awaiting his transfer to Azkaban, fuming at the turn of events in his life. Nothing was going his way. How could they not see he was doing this for them? How could they send him to a prison meant to hold the worst of the worst in Wizarding society?

All his plans were for nothing now. He hadn’t been able to give the rat the signal to bring Regulus back. How had things gone so wrong? Why?

It was all Harry Potter’s fault.

If that brat had just stayed with Granger and Weasley, he would’ve been tied to Regulus and thought he was fighting Voldemort. Things had been going according to plan… then everything had changed.

First, Malfoy had been set to tutor Harry in some of his classes. Then Harry kept vanishing at odd times. He hadn’t wanted to talk to his former friends…

It was all Draco Malfoy’s fault, then!

If that boy had stayed away like he was supposed to, Harry would’ve still been under his control! But then that didn’t explain Fudge’s sudden interest in Harry’s school life or even the choices Dumbledore had kept from the boy. Then there was Black managing to find a lawyer to clear his name. Rick Parker shouldn’t have wanted to touch that case because of the accusations of Black being an escaped convict. Everything had been going fine until then.

Then Black had been cleared of any wrong doing. Dumbledore was sure the mutt had managed to file adoption papers for Harry. It was the only thing that made sense, explaining why he couldn’t find the brat last summer.

After all, he’d seen him with Black and Lupin.

So then it was Sirius Black’s fault!

Everyone had conspired to work against him this last year. Everything had been on track before. The Dursleys had done their job in drumming passivity into Harry. He’d been malleable when he’d come to school at age eleven. If Dumbledore had wanted to, he could’ve continued the beatings at school. It would’ve been easy to bring in a few students that could’ve abused the brat… maybe he should have.

He didn’t deserve to go to Azkaban! Why could no one see he had been working for the greater good? That he’d been doing this for everyone’s best interest?!

The door opening pulled him from his ranting thoughts where he could blame everyone for the failure of his plans. “It’s time to go,” the man on the other side of the door said, holding a pair of
shackles in his hands. If only Dumbledore still had his wand, he would be able to turn this man to his side…

* * *

Voldemort Cleared of Previous Accusations!

By Cornelius Grey

On December 18th of this year, Albus Dumbledore was brought to trial for magically manipulating students and teachers at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It would seem that a mass re-sorting had to be initiated to see just how far the manipulation had gone. It would seem some hundred and sixty-three students had to be placed in Houses they had meant to be in but weren’t. [See pg. 15 for full list of students]

It is also said that quite a few teachers had to be tested as well with intervention taken for those affected.

It has also come to the attention of this reporter that one Regulus Black, younger brother of Sirius Black, also had something to do with everything happening at the school. That the man is dead is a certainty since they discovered his body buried in the back of Albus Dumbledore’s home.

It is unclear to this reporter why the former Headmaster went to such lengths to manipulate so many people. It is also said that the full extent of the manipulation is unknown.

At Black Manor, Sirius closed his eyes as he read that. At least they knew Regulus hadn’t been involved by choice… and now he had a body to bury with the family.

At the time of printing, it was clear that Voldemort, whom everyone had been told had killed James and Lily Potter, did not commit the crime. In fact, the man in question was already dead months before the family was attacked and killed, leaving one sole person alive, Harry James Potter.

At Hogwarts, Severus forced himself not to react to what he was reading. His lover and partner had been cleared. It was more than he’d hoped for. Two days ago, a Ministry official had delivered the cloak found in the Potter house. Fudge figured that he should have it since Voldemort had no living relatives. He’d been grateful to get it back even if it was a painful reminder of what he’d lost.

Harry Potter, it was discovered, was illegally dropped off at his mother’s sister’s house. The family in question was unlocatable at the time of printing so it is unclear why they had a Wizarding child in their home when they were muggles themselves.

At trial, an anonymous source revealed that the former Headmaster had confessed to killing both Lord Voldemort and the Potter adults just to get at the baby the Potters had. It is unclear just what Albus Dumbledore planned on doing with the child but it is a good thing the man in question was delivered to Azkaban prison before he could do more harm to more people.

Harry lost interest in the article at that point. He was relieved that everything was over with. He didn’t know what was going to happen to Ron and he didn’t care anymore. Hermione was back in class, but she was different. She jumped at the least little noise and was withdrawn. Her parents had wanted to pull her out of school but she had begged to stay, if only to finish her schooling here. It helped that Ron wasn’t here to be a constant reminder of what he had done to her.

He realized Draco was shooting looks at him and smiled as he looked at him. “I’m glad everything is done,” he told the blonde teen. "I don’t think it would’ve been fair to anyone else if
Dumbledore had remained Headmaster."

“I agree,” Draco murmured with a small smile. “At least, now, he won’t be trying to hurt or
manipulate anyone.”

“That’s definitely a good thing,” Harry agreed with a wider grin. “And now things can finally go
back to normal. Have you figured out what you want to do after we graduate?”

“I’m almost tempted to become a lawyer,” Draco said, surprising him. He’d never have thought
that Draco would want to go into law… but then Lucius would be happy with that because it was
a good paying job, even if it wasn’t politics. Which reminded him…

“I thought your father wanted you to go into politics with him?”

“I spoke to him while you were in court and he’s fine with my choice. He was a little
disappointed, sure, because he wanted me in that field but he understands that I don’t really care
for it,” Draco said with a shrug. “What about you?”

“Well, Severus made me wonder if I shouldn’t go into potions, after all. I actually enjoy making
them and I like the complications they bring,” Harry said with a sigh, looking down at his half
eaten plate. “I think I’m going to give it a try. If I don’t like it, I can always change fields later on.”

“That’s why I’m giving Herbology a try,” Neville said from across the table. “I’ve always enjoyed
working with plants and their magical properties. Gran is all for it as long as it’s something to
occupy my time.”

“That’s great, Neville,” Crabbe rumbled from beside him. “Maybe you can help me with the
subject, then.”

“Sure,” the shy boy said with a friendly smile. “I can do that.”

Harry realized that this was their station in the club kicking in. Before, he’d have thought Crabbe
more apt to beat Neville up but that wasn’t the case. He also realized that being a slave actually
gave the other boy the confidence needed to actually interact with these students. Draco had been
right. It didn’t matter that he and Neville were slaves, it helped them in life, too.

* * *

Monday, January 1st, 1996

Harry sighed happily as he watched the crowd of people inside the ball room in Malfoy Manor.
Last year had been quite the eye opener to these pureblood witches and wizards. He hadn’t
realized until now just how isolated Dumbledore had made him.

He’d gone from having two friends and a handful of acquaintances to quite a few friends in
different Houses and respect for quite a few adults.

He was glad Dumbledore was in Azkaban now. There was nothing stopping him from being
himself. In a way, though, Dumbledore had helped him. He knew, in a manner of speaking, how
a slave at the club shouldn’t be treated. They weren’t slaves in the archaic sense of the word. They
were partners for the masters to have. They were there to allow the masters to dominate, sure, but
they had a say in the matter too. He’d come a long way in just over a year…

He smiled as people from the club, adults, came over to speak to him. Yes, he was definitely
happier with the old man out of his life…
Draco watched from a distance as Harry smiled genuinely to the people who interacted with him. It was more than he’d done last January. He was glad that Harry was coming into his own. He’d been there when Harry had spoken to Severus about becoming a Potions master.

The professor would begin his apprenticeship after the holidays, having gotten permission from the apprenticeship board. This would give Harry an advantage because he could begin now instead of waiting until after graduation. He would study under Severus and now that there was no more tension between them, Harry was more relaxed about learning from the Potions master.

Things were finally falling into place for Harry and Draco was glad. He needed things to go his way.

He hadn’t told Harry but after his cousin and his friends had been taken into custody, he’d bought newspapers until he caught the headline that said the teenagers had been sentenced as adults for their part in brutalizing the teenager Dumbledore had ‘given’ them. They were to serve at least five years before they could get out of their jail. He didn’t envy Dudley Dursley and his friends their futures.

He’d also found out that jail, in the muggle world, was worse than in the Wizarding world. Here, once you were released, you could at least work to rebuild your reputation. In the muggle world, it followed you around for the rest of your life. There would be no cushy jobs for those guys. They would forever be haunted by what they’d done… in that respect, they had Dumbledore to thank for ruining their lives.

Frowning as something occurred to him, he looked around for Rochelle. He thought he might have a solution to their shared predicaments. Spotting her across the room, he made his way over to her. “Excuse me,” he murmured as he interrupted her conversation with Lord Herbert. “Could I speak with you for a minute?”

“At all,” she murmured with a slight frown. “Have you come up with a promising solution?”

“I have something I want to run by you before I say anything to Harry,” Draco said softly, making sure no one would really hear anything important. Not everyone here was in the club, after all. “It occurred to me that we’re in the same boat, you and I. You want to be with Annabelle and I want to be with Harry, but we can’t because of restrictions placed on us.”

“All right,” she murmured with a slight frown. “Have you come up with a promising solution?”

“What if we were to join together?” he asked, choosing his words carefully.

She blinked at him, and Draco could see that she was thinking it through, not just refusing flat out. “A partnership?” she asked and he knew she was just asking for clarification.

“Yes,” he said with a nod. “I realize we’ll have to get together, the four of us, and discuss just how it would go, but I think that would be the better solution to our problems.”

“When would you like to get together?” she asked with a slow nod.

“I think it would be preferable to discuss this before we go back to Hogwarts so that everything can progress as it should.” He’d always loved talking in code and this was why. The club had taught them this much, among other things.

“I agree,” Rochelle murmured in agreement. “Not tomorrow, obviously. How about the day
“That will work perfectly. Where should we meet?” he asked with a smile.

“Why not here? We can even invite your father to officiate the results,” she asked with a lopsided smile. “I think we can come to an agreeable solution, don’t you?”

“I’m sure we can,” he said, shaking her hand. “Until then,” he murmured with a nod of his head, leaving her to join Harry. He smiled at his master as the people who’d been talking to Harry moved on even before he got to the dark haired teen.

“I saw you talking to Rochelle. Anything I should know?” he asked pleasantly, grinning at Draco.

“We have a meeting with her and Annabelle in a couple of days,” he told him, nodding when Harry looked at him in surprise. “I think I have a solution to both our problems but I want to run it by them first. She wants my father there as witness.”

“Are you going to tell me what this solution is?” Harry asked with eyebrows raised.

“Later,” Draco said with a nod. “I think you’ll like it.”

“Good!” Harry was grinning at him now and Draco inhaled sharply as he felt the compulsion hit him as Harry’s thoughts activated the runes on his body. “I can’t wait until the party is done,” he murmured with a wicked look in his eyes.

Oh, yes, Draco wanted to leave the party now, but knew he couldn’t. “Behave yourself,” he panted softly. “It’s not yet time to go.”

Harry’s grin got wider and Draco glared at him, though there was no heat in the look. He was too aroused for it to be effective. Sometimes, he regretted reminding Harry about this part of their bonding, thought in the right setting, it was really interesting. He just didn’t like it at the moment when he couldn’t do anything about it… then he realized he could play with this.

“I didn’t think I had earned punishment tonight, Master,” he whispered, leaning closer to Harry. He was gratified to hear his master inhale sharply. “Forgive me.”

“We’ll have to see just how you can make it up to me, Slave,” Harry murmured just as softly.

Draco smirked as he looked down at the floor, loving the play they had come up with. Tonight should be very interesting…

* 

Draco groaned in pleasure as he felt the runes on his body throb. They’d been at it for the last fifteen minutes. Harry had ordered him to lean up against the post of his bed, his hands gripping the wood as pulse after pulse assaulted his senses. He didn’t know how much more he could take of the teasing but until his master ordered him to come to him, he was to force himself to remain where he was.

Looking at Harry, he was satisfied to see that his master wasn’t unaffected by what he was seeing.

Both of them had thrown off their outer robes but were still fully dressed. He wanted Harry to take him, fill him until they were so exhausted that neither one of them could move. It was why he hadn’t begged Harry to take him yet. He was waiting until he couldn’t stand it anymore… he was almost to that point.
Another five minutes went by with Draco panting hard, body writhing against his bed before he’d had enough. “Please, Master,” he begged softly. “Forgive me for talking to another master without permission!”

Because Harry had told him that was the play for tonight. Draco had been all for it, too.

“I don’t know if I believe you, slave,” Harry murmured as he walked closer to Draco, waiting until he was about six inches from Draco before stopping. “I don’t think I believe you’re really sorry.”

Draco moaned as another wave hit him, body arching up towards his master, though they didn’t touch… though it was close. Harry was tantalizingly just out of reach. Another wave hit him before he could respond. “Please, Master,” he panted, looking at Harry with feverish eyes. “You are the only one I would allow to touch me. No other master will do, please!” he cried out as another wave hit him. It was even better than the first time! That time, they hadn’t lasted long, the compulsion too strong to make the play last.

He was surprised when Harry kissed him, his lips pressing hard as his tongue plundered Draco’s mouth, making them moan in pleasure. Draco groaned in protest when Harry pulled away. With a wave of Harry’s wand, Draco was naked, even as another wave hit the blonde teen.

“Undress me, Slave,” Harry ordered breathlessly. Draco moaned as he pushed himself away from his bed, wanting to attack Harry and to hell with the clothes, but he stopped himself – barely – and started unbuttoning Harry’s shirt. “And make it provocative.”

“Yes, Master,” he whispered, trying to rein in his body. It wasn’t easy as another wave hit him. He wanted to glare at Harry for making this more difficult but he couldn’t muster the anger as his body burned with pleasure. Forcing himself to concentrate, he finished unbuttoning Harry’s shirt and proceeded to suck on the revealed skin. It took longer to undress his master because of Harry sending wave after wave at him so that he was writhing against the other teen’s body. “Please, Master,” he gasped as the last article of clothing fell off Harry’s body. “Please make me yours again!”

Harry growled as he turned Draco around and pushed him up against the mattress, pressing his own hard length against Draco’s backside. “I’m going to make sure you remember to ask permission,” his master grunted as he pushed into Draco’s willing body. Draco screamed his pleasure at the feel of Harry sliding deeply into his body, clutching at his blankets.

Harry’s hands roamed his body even as he pounded into Draco. It was as if Harry couldn’t get enough of him. Draco screamed again as Harry hit his prostate even as he pulled him off the bed so that they were pressed back to front. Draco spread his feet a little to give him better balance even as he clung to Harry.

Neither one of them lasted long.

They both cried out their pleasure as Harry filled him, forcing Draco’s own length to shoot his load onto the blanket. Draco wasn’t sure who was holding who up because it was clear neither one of them had energy. He groaned as Harry released him, both of them falling to the bed, trying to catch their breaths. “Well, that was definitely interesting,” Draco said with a chuckle.

Harry laughed, too. “I’ll say.”

* * *

Wednesday, January 3rd, 1996
Draco smiled as he greeted Rochelle and Annabelle. “Thanks for coming,” he murmured as he led them into his father’s office. They could use it since the older man was waiting there for them. He’d already alerted his mother as to his plans for this afternoon so he was sure she wouldn’t be disturbing them either.

“So,” Rochelle murmured as a tea setting appeared between them. “What’s this idea you had?”

“It occurred to me that we’re in the same boat,” Draco began as he settled beside Harry. He hadn’t taken the time to inform his master as to what he’d thought up. Draco wanted him to have an honest reaction instead of just waiting to see if the girls agreed. “Wanting to be with our master or slave but unable to do so because of the club rules. So I thought that maybe we’d all be interested in this little proposal I had on New Year’s Eve.” He took a deep breath as he looked at all of them. “I figured we should hook up.”

Harry blinked at him in surprise, but didn’t say anything. Draco wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or not. The girls looked at each other thoughtfully before looking at Harry. He realized that they were wondering if he knew about this already. His reaction seemed to put the girls at ease.

“Hear me out before you comment,” he said hastily. “I would rather be tied to Harry and I know Annabelle would rather be tied to you, Rochelle. The fact that we’re of the same sex is the problem. The rules of the club are very clear. We have to keep our lines going. Annabelle, you and Rochelle have older brothers that will be doing that so that it doesn’t matter if you have kids of your own. Now, I’m assuming you’d like to have some later on. I know I do. What better solution is there to take care of all of it?”

Rochelle was frowning at her cup before she sighed. “I have to admit, I haven’t come up with a better solution for our situation.”

“Are we really going to do this?” Harry asked as he leaned back on the couch. “I understand what you’re saying but this would mean we’d be coming up with a marriage contract based on necessity not anything else.”

Draco felt relief that Harry wasn’t taking this the wrong way. “That’s actually how pureblood families do this, Harry,” he told him hesitantly. “We don’t really marry for love, just necessity. If we end up with love along the way, great, but not everyone actually marry for love.”

Harry shook his head slightly before he sighed. “It just seems so wrong,” he told them but the look he gave them said he understood the need to do it this way. “But I’m in.”

“How would we do this?” Annabelle asked, looking over at Rochelle.

“How about,” Harry began thoughtfully. “I go with Rochelle and Annabelle can go with Draco?”

“What’s the reasoning?” Rochelle asked, head tilted to one side in curiosity.

“Well, right now, I’m a master and Draco is a slave, right?” They nodded their acknowledgment. “And Rochelle is the master and Annabelle is the slave. If I marry Rochelle, our child or children, depending on how many kids we have, would then be a slave, but if I marry Annabelle, it would be the opposite. I think it would be more of an advantage if the Potter side were to be slave instead of master. This would give the Malfoy side the chance to be master instead of slave. Does that make sense?”

They thought about that before responding, but it was Annabelle who answered. “That actually makes sense. This way it isn’t going to be the same family who dominates. Because Rochelle is already master, it would alternate it so that his child would be the opposite. I get what you’re
saying and I agree.”

“I think that would be fair,” Rochelle murmured with a nod. “It would be the same if we were to marry someone outside the club because they would then be the opposite of our station if that were the case. I think that’ll work.”

“So then should I have contracts drawn up for us to sign?” Lucius asked as he regarded the four of them. If it were in writing, everyone would be satisfied, including the parents.

“I think that’ll be a good idea. Let us know when we have to sign them and we’ll inform our parents of our decision,” Rochelle murmured agreeably as she rose to her feet. “We can then spend time getting to know each other.”

“Alright,” Draco said as he rose to escort the girls to the foyer, seeing them off before rejoining Harry in the office. “Are you sure you’re fine with this?”

Harry smiled as he prepared himself a cup of tea. “I agree with you that this is the best solution, Draco,” he murmured with a nod. “I was trying to figure out a way we could make this work. You found us a solution that works the best. This way we don’t have to make excuses to any future spouses we would have to get. Do I like marrying someone I have no feeling for?” Harry sighed as he thought that through. “No, but that’s because I think it’s not fair to the other person. Done this way, both Rochelle and Annabelle know what they’re in for and they’re still alright with it.”

“But are you?” Draco asked as he sat across from him, watching him carefully. Not having been brought up like Draco, the blonde teen knew Harry would balk at marrying someone he didn’t love. Draco had always known this would be his life.

“Surprisingly enough,” Harry said with a smile. “Yes. I know I want us to be together and so do the girls. This is really the best option to both our situations. I think we can make this work.”

“Good,” Draco said with a smile. He’d worried that Harry would only be doing this for Draco, and in a way, it was but it was also for the girls. He was alright with that.

* * *

After supper, Snape, Lucius and Sirius were sitting with Narcissa in the living room while the boys were doing something by themselves. They weren’t quite sure and since the binding, they were willing to give them more freedom than they’d had before.

“So,” Lucius murmured as he sipped from his Firewhisky. “Draco and Harry want marriage contracts drawn up for them and Miss Robertson and Miss Varlett.”

“They have?” Sirius asked in surprise.

“So,” Narcissa said with a smile. “I wondered what the solution would be.”

“To them staying together?” Severus asked knowingly. “I’m surprised Draco didn’t come up with this sooner. It’s the best solution out of everything else.”

“Ah,” Sirius murmured with a nod. “So that’s how they’ll get by the marriage rule of the club. Ingenious.”

“And when are you planning on fulfilling that part for yourself, Sirius?” Lucius asked with a raised eyebrow.
“Actually,” the Animagus murmured, cheeks tinted red, surprising the others. “I’ve got that already in the works.”

“Dare I ask who?” Narcissa asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Penelope Braxton.”

“Lord Braxton’s daughter?” Severus asked in amusement. The girl had pursued Sirius in school but the man had been a confirmed bachelor at that time and had refused to be pinned down by one woman. She wasn’t part of the club but that hardly mattered. “What changed your mind?”

“Prison changed my mind,” Sirius said with a sigh. “Watching Harry this past year has made me realize that it’s time to begin a family of my own. I was always so busy being a slave that I just never really gave it much thought. It was only when James and Lily were killed and Harry left all alone in the world that it registered that maybe it was time to settle down.”

“Then you ended up in Azkaban,” Narcissa said with a nod. “Understandable that you would want to start your own family, especially with the boys growing as quickly as they are.”

“Exactly,” the Animagus said with a nod. “Pretty soon they won’t need us as much as they used to.”

Severus sighed tiredly. “I must admit,” he murmured as he looked down at his drink. “It does make one think of those things. I’ve thought about the same thing myself. I know I’ve put it off for a long time but I’m going to have to do the same before it gets too late.”

“Have you thought about who would be a perfect companion for yourself?” Lucius asked in surprise. He wondered what was in the air that would make everyone think of marriages. First the boys, then Sirius and now Severus!

“No,” Severus told them with a frown, “but watching Harry learn these past fifteen months, it’s made me realize that maybe it’s time to teach someone more personal in what they should do in the club.”

“It’s been quite the road, hasn’t it?” Narcissa murmured with a fond smile. “I never realized just how much that child suffered at the hands of so many adults. I’m surprised that he’s turned out so level headed.”

“Indeed,” Lucius said before taking a sip of his glass. “I’m actually surprised it didn’t take much to convince him to join us at all. The fact that he added all three of us to the adoption papers was a miracle. He managed to recognize who was there to help him and who wasn’t. He could’ve easily placed anyone as legal guardian but he chose us. It’s quite the honor to be honest.”

“Yes,” Sirius said with a grin. “He did manage to surprise a lot of people with that move. I’m amazed he didn’t tell anyone about it. Not even Dumbledore knew about that.”

“He’s quite the extraordinary person,” Severus murmured proudly.
Epilogue

Beta'd by Sollardragon

Chapter 12 - Epilogue

Wednesday, November 15th, 2006

Draco smiled down at his little girl as she ran around him trying to get her ready for bed. “Have you brushed your teeth yet?” he asked with a laugh as he caught two year old Viviana who giggled as she threw her arms around his neck.

“Yes, Daddy,” she said as he stood up.

“Yes, Daddy,” his soon-to-be four year old son, Scorpius answered as he came out of the washroom.

He’d already put Scorpius and Viviana up to the ancient ceremonies of the club at birth, just like he had been. He couldn’t wait until Scorpius’ birthday in three months when he could bring the boy to the club.

He and Annabelle had married four years after finishing Hogwarts, two years after finishing his course in law. He was glad to have finished it with very little ease. His life had been enriched with his first child, then a second. Now, ten years after Hogwarts, everything was falling into place for the four them.

Annabelle as even doing what she wanted, working as a fully trained Healer. When she’d had Scorpius, she’d wanted to quit, to be home with the baby, and Draco had agreed but he’d also told her he still wanted her to go back to work once the boy was a year old, because he didn’t want her to give up on her dream. She’d agreed.

“Alright, you two, time for bed,” he told them as he placed the little girl in her bed.

Annabelle was currently with Rochelle, which was how they’d devised their times. Every second day, Draco and Harry put the kids to bed and the other days, the women did. It was the only way that made things fair. He wanted the kids to go down quickly but he didn’t rush them. He knew Harry was putting his own children to bed and would find him in their room.

*

Harry closed the book he’d been reading as he realized the boys were asleep. It hadn’t taken long for Cory and Angelus to pass out after putting them to bed. He smiled gently down as he rearranged the blanket over his twins before he quietly made his way out of the bedroom.

Harry reflects on everything that had happened to him since school ended. He’d finished his Potions mastery a year after finishing Hogwarts – thanks to Severus teaching him from fifth year – and was now almost at the top of his field. Being a Potions master meant he could spend more time at home than Rochelle, who was an Auror. It didn’t bother him, however, because he wanted her to do what she loved, which was bringing down the bad guys.

They’d married three months after Draco and Annabelle just so they didn’t arouse suspicions. They’d been the best man for the other person. They hadn’t gone extravagant, keeping the ceremony simple, and Harry had been relieved at that.
Together, the four of them had then decided to live together in the same home. At first, they’d lived in Potter Manor, but it became too small, especially with the arrival of Scorpius, Draco’s son, and then Cory and Angelus, Harry’s sons a year later. That had been a surprise until Rochelle had told him that she was a twin herself with her twin dying shortly after birth.

Now, however, they were living in Malfoy Manor. Funny enough, it was Lucius who suggested they move into the huge Manor. He and Narcissa were willing to move into a smaller home, especially since they were just the two of them. Harry had offered them Potter Manor. Lucius had smiled at the irony of the move but had accepted.

Just like they’d done at school, certain nights were designated as family nights so that they could either spend it as a family or just together. Lucius and Narcissa, Sirius and sometimes even Severus, would babysit when the couples wanted to go out, which wasn’t really that often.

Harry was satisfied with the way things had turned out. Sirius had finally been snagged by Penelope Braxton, who had born his godfather three children, Regulus, Brianna and Star. Regulus had been introduced to the club four years ago and Brianna had been introduced two years ago. The only one who wouldn’t be included was Star, though Sirius was hoping to change the Elders’ minds when she turned four in two years.

Even Severus had finally married two years ago and was expecting a child of his own. Rebecca Greensmith had joined the family five years ago. She was a very quiet and demure woman. Harry never would’ve expected her to fall for Severus but it had turned out to be a mutual bonding between the couple.

With a smile, he closed the door to the twin’s bedroom and headed for his and Draco’s special room. Tonight, Draco wanted him to play out one of his fantasies about Hogwarts. Said he had something special he was going to do to play it out. He couldn’t wait to see what the blonde had in mind…

The End

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!