

The Black Bunny

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Characters:	Harry Potter , Hermione Granger , Tom Riddle Voldemort , Lucius Malfoy , Severus Snape , Draco Malfoy , Fred and George Weasley , Remus Lupin , Narcissa Black Malfoy , Fenrir Greyback , Ron Weasley , Ginny Weasley , Neville Longbottom , Luna Lovegood , many more - Character
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The Black Bunny

by [windseeker2305](#)

Summary

Harry's had it with his destined role after the Order does something he can't forgive. Now he's done with both sides of the war and wants to be left alone. But since when have his wishes ever counted for anything? LV-TR/HP Slash & eventual MPREG.

Notes

This story comes with some warnings... the fic starts out kind of serious, but it quickly turns into a light-hearted romantic comedy with dark themes. And considering the main pairing, that makes this (in my opinion) a crackish fic. If you are looking for a lot of drama and angst and something that borders on realistic actions from these characters as you would usually find with this pairing, then this is NOT the fic for you. The following story is full of crazyness. I just wanted to do something with this pairing that wasn't angst ridden. Things may not make sense in this story, but that's the way I want it. Please no flames about the things I've just said, since you have been warned.

Chapter One

The Black Bunny

Chapter One

Diagon Alley was busier than expected. Due to Lord Voldemort still being at large, the two wizards standing in the shadows expected wizards and witches to be hiding in their homes, afraid of Death Eater raids. It had been so only a few short months before. However, the crowds suited the purpose of the two disillusioned wizards studying the bustling crowds where they kept a watch standing in a darkened narrowed side alley. Both wizards straightened up upon catching sight of their objective, walking through the crowds, eyes straight ahead, seemingly ignorant of the whispers and stares.

"And we are sure our information is correct, Lucius?"

"Yes, my Lord. The boy has been betrayed. He has stopped training. He makes an easy target now. Purposely throwing himself into danger time and time again. One would think he wants to die."

"Or he simply no longer cares about the cause."

"I had begun to think the same... Why should he care about any of the causes when they've both brought him nothing but death and betrayal? Draco reported Potter's involvement with the Slytherins. Even then, before the massacre, he'd pulled back from the fight. Draco says he doesn't concern himself anymore."

Voldemort nodded and he and Lucius continued to watch the eighteen year old wizard casually walk through the crowds, chin to the ground but his vibrant green eyes bore straight ahead, neither looking here nor there.

"We could take him now, my Lord. I see no one from the blasted Order."

"Spoken too soon. Really, Lucius. Why can't you hold your tongue?" Voldemort hissed. He pointed towards a group of wizards scurrying after Harry Potter.

The two watched intrigued as several members of the Order surrounded Potter, all of them looking hostile. The moment Potter saw them his blank face morphed into a scowl and his wand was suddenly in hand.

"So it is official," Voldemort murmured. Potter's countenance once faced with five wizards was also interesting to study. Where once before he'd been walking down the road relaxed but alert, now the boy had straightened up and it seemed his power had wrapped around himself. He looked strong and well equipped to deal with the fools surrounding him. But... there was

also something infinitely off about Potter's stance. After a moment, Potter winced. And he did it more than once.

"He's injured," the Dark Lord whispered and Lucius' eyes narrowed for further study.

"Come along, Harry. We must get you back," Arthur Weasley's voice reached them. Lucius shifted and sneered.

"Um... no. We've had this discussion before."

"You cannot simply pop off to wherever you want, Potter!" barked Alastor Moody.

"I'll do as I please. You have no control over me anymore," Harry stated firmly before trying to brush by Moody and Weasley. Moody grabbed Potter's arm, and even from where they were standing, Voldemort and Lucius could see the grip was meant to be painful.

"Please, Harry. Let's return to Headquarters and we'll talk about it," Weasley pleaded.

"How many times do I have to tell you, Arthur? I'm through with the Order! I'm through with all of you," Potter snarled and twisted his arm out of Moody's grip. "Maybe I want to do Voldemort a favor by getting myself killed. You deserve to lose!"

"Harry! What are you saying?"

"I don't know how I can be any clearer. You all showed your worth when you tried killing all the Slyth-"

Several stunners were thrown at Potter at once and he was unable to dodge them all. Before he could hit the ground one of the Order grabbed him and quickly Apparated away before the crowds could understand what had just happened.

Lucius cleared his throat, noticing a tame fury entering his Lord's eyes. "Correct me if I'm wrong, my Lord. But did the Order just kidnap Harry Potter?"

"Yes, Lucius. I believe that's exactly what we've just seen," Voldemort replied softly.

They were keeping him prisoner in the attic of Grimmauld Place. The attic! Laughable as that was. Had they forgotten? He was Sirius' heir. Everything inside Grimmauld Place, including the house itself was his. The house would protect him. The house would follow his orders. Including the House elf. "Kreacher!"

"Master called?" the house elf asked with a disdainful ear twitch. Harry, who was sitting cross-legged in the center of the empty attic, raised his hands out in front of him. His wrists were in manacles which had been chained to the floor and spelled so that he couldn't pull the chains free.

"Release me. Then go and find my wand. I'm sure it's still in the house. Return it to me and help me out of here. And don't say anything about any of this until after you've helped me go."

Kreacher crept forward and eyed the chains before sneering and snapping his fingers. The manacles fell away with a loud clatter. It wasn't long before the elf returned with his wand and the elf handed over a Portkey Harry had hidden away in his bedroom downstairs.

"Thanks," he told the sour elf before activating the untraceable Portkey. Harry landed on his back inside his furnished flat located in London and shouted out as the contact with the floor caused shocks of pain throughout his back. He twisted onto his stomach and lay there on the wood floor; trembling and pulling in deep breaths until the pain receded.

"Bloody bastards," he hissed after standing and going into his bedroom. He supposed it had been stupid of him to go into Diagon Alley but Harry never thought the Order would go after him like that. He should have known better though. After Dumbledore's death, the Order had changed. They became more ruthless in how they accomplished things. Trying to kill off the entire Slytherin House for example and then blaming it on Death Eaters. What the hell? Harry couldn't believe it when he realized what was happening. And many students had died. His boyfriend, for one.

With that thought came the inevitable bout of pain and sadness, though he wasn't permitted to soak in it this time when a pop sounded in the living room. "Harry!" And suddenly he had a whole face full of bushy brown hair.

"I'm fine, Hermione."

"I was so scared when I heard what happened! And the papers were saying it was an imposter! They wouldn't even let me see you when I went to Headquarters! Denied that you were there. Honestly, Moody and the others seemed to have gone insane." She took a deep breath and suddenly looked enraged. "What were you thinking, going to Diagon Alley?"

Harry shrugged, though he looked mildly ashamed. "Going to meet Neville... suppose it was naive to believe at least one Gryffindor besides us thought the whole Slytherin plot to have been horrid."

Hermione's eyes widened into saucers. "Neville set you up?"

"Seems that way to me. Anyway, I don't want to talk about me being an idiot and believing the best in people.... You can see I'm okay. But I'd really like to be left alone right now, Herm."

Sensing the somber mood, she nodded. Knowing Harry's brooding did more good than harm for him. "You'll be careful if you go out."

"Sticking to the muggle areas. Just going to pop out to the park down the road. Won't be long."

"Alright. I'll be back later to apply the lotion onto your back."

"Thanks, Hermione."

He'd been in the park for about an hour, sitting at the edge of a small duck pond and staring morosely out at the ducks that all seemed to have little happy blissful pain free lives. And then suddenly the hairs on the back of his neck began to stand on end and he knew someone was staring at him.

Casually, Harry looked over his shoulder but found no one really around him. And no one in the distance paying the least bit of attention to him. That is to say... no humans paying him any attention. But strangely he caught sight of an animal that looked completely out of place. There was a black bunny sitting under the tree a few yards away. Just sitting there staring at him. Immediately Harry knew it was magical. No regular animal could have a stare like that to make the hair on the back of his neck stand on end.

Either it was an Animagus or someone's familiar. Fearing the first- and that it was someone sent by the Order- Harry stood from the patch of grass he'd been lounging on, turned away from the bunny, and began to walk towards the sidewalk. A few yards away he glanced over his shoulder again, only to stop and stare. The bunny was hopping after him and he had the distinct impression that the animal was scowling at him.

Just as he was about to walk on, his scar started throbbing. So much that he doubled over and had to press the heel of his palm against the jagged mark on his forehead. Harry cursed lowly until the pain receded. After a moment he was able to straighten and took a deep breath. Then he turned to fully face the animal, which was now only a foot away. "I get it," he hissed before minutely flicking his hand at the animal. "*Petrificus Totalus*."

Harry picked the bunny up by the scruff of its neck and as soon as he found somewhere private, Apparated to the muggle flat Hermione had set up for him months ago. Harry grabbed an empty cardboard box, dropped the bunny inside, and set it on the coffee table. He didn't release the animal from the wandless spell and because it couldn't release itself, Harry assumed he'd gotten the message wrong about the creature currently lying frozen in the box. The brunet frowned as he glanced at the clock. He had a few hours before Hermione would visit after work so he lay down on the couch for a nap.

Two black paws appeared at the edge of the cardboard box. The careless young wizard had fallen asleep on his stomach. Fallen asleep when he knew the animal before him was not normal. The bunny suspected Potter knew or suspected it was an Animagus, and not a friendly either. *And yet he fell asleep?* The bunny twitched its nose in annoyance.

What is the point of this ridiculous box? the bunny thought with a sneer as it leaned forward, tipping the box over a bit so that it could hop out and onto the hard wood floor beside the couch. Potter shifted as the rabbit hopped closer. The wizard groaned softly in his sleep and moved again so that his t-shirt moved, revealing a strip of skin at the base of his back. The rabbit's eyes narrowed in curiosity when it caught sight of the inflamed mark. A nasty thick scar that began under the boy's waistband to disappear up past his shirt.

He was injured. How? No one with a Dark Mark reported any injury to the boy-who-lived, but obviously the young wizard had been injured. And brutally. The bunny could all but feel the magic used for such a wound. Could smell it. And the wound was festering. Wanting a better look, the bunny hopped onto the couch, waiting until Potter settled down before slowly hopping little hops along the boy's side, careful not to fall off the edge. The bunny moved

until he could see the wound clearly and leaned forward until its dark nose nearly touched Potter's skin. *This was done by dark magic. Perhaps a Death Eater has done this. No one from the Order would... then again, they did attack Potter in broad daylight and in the middle of a crowded street... even if they covered it up in the Prophet by stating they were after a Potter impostor.*

"Your nose is cold. Mind backing the hell away from me?"

Potter sounded fully awake and unconcerned that the animal was free, but despite his tone, there was an underlying current of wariness and the boy had his wand gripped firmly in hand.

Harry moved before the bunny did; crawling off the couch and circling around to stand behind it. Again he had the distinct impression that the bunny rolled its eyes as him. "Alright. I brought you here. Show yourself. And if you're here to kill me... I'm not exactly helpless. Know my fair share of dark curses."

The bunny hopped off the couch and turned to face the young wizard before transforming. Harry's eyes widened and lifted as the figure returned to his normal height. The newly transformed wizard studied the young man before him with red eyes void of emotion. "Didn't you tell the Order you wanted to do me a favor by getting yourself killed?"

"I said maybe," Harry responded after recovering. "Fuck. This is...shite," he hissed, realizing he was screwed. He might know of some dark and light curses that could help him out, but he was so not ready to duel Voldemort inside the living room of his flat. That aside, Harry felt a bubble of laughter trying to make its escape. Tom Riddle, aka Lord Voldemort had been hopping around London as a little cute black bunny. It was too funny to not find humor in despite the situation.

A dark brown eyebrow rose when Harry released a snort of amusement... hold on. Eyebrow? "What the hell happened to your face?"

Voldemort's eyes narrowed. "How do you mean?"

"You have one!"

The slight twinge from his scar surprised Harry. The small pain only amounted to Voldemort being slightly annoyed and that was all. Harry had expected a lot of rage for his boldness. But the dark wizard wasn't sneering or smirking evilly. Didn't look ready to raise his wand and cast Avada Kedavra. Instead the wizard, who somehow had his human face back, was watching Harry with unblinking eyes.

"Have you come here to murder me or is this a tea time visit?" Harry asked boldly.

"If my plan was to murder you, I would have done it already. Stupid child."

"I'm not stupid!"

"You are. You brought me here, despite knowing I was dangerous."

"Didn't know it was you exactly," Harry mumbled.

Voldemort studied Harry a moment before speaking again. "You're taking my presence here fairly well, I must say."

Harry shrugged. "I'd rather be murdered by you than controlled by the Order and everyone else for the rest of my life," he spat darkly. "Why are you here? Come to create havoc and mass hysteria? Intend to kill all my muggle neighbors? The bloke down the hall is a real arse hole. Start with him." Harry grinned when his scar twinged painfully.

"I was witness to that display of kidnapping in Diagon Alley," Voldemort bit out, annoyed by the boy's insistence on being so bold with him.

"I'm not joining you."

Voldemort pinched the bridge of his nose. A nose that was surprisingly straight and handsome, Harry noted. The Dark Lord pulled in his frustrations and prepared to respond when there was a knock on the door.

"Harry? Are you in?"

Harry looked at the door with wide frightened eyes. Hermione was early. The Gryffindor hurried and put himself in between the door and Voldemort.

"Let her in."

"No," he hissed and pressed back against the door. "She's all I have left. I won't let you do anything to her."

"Surely that's wrong. You've several," Voldemort sneered, "friends."

"No. Not anymore," Harry turned and pressed lips against the door. "Hermione, come back later."

"No, Harry! I need to put the salve on your back! Let me in!"

"Let her in."

"NO!"

"Harry, who's that with you?" Hermione called pensively. Harry heard her pull out her set of the flat keys. "I'm coming in!"

"No, Hermione. Go away!"

"Are you okay?" the doorknob started to rattle. Harry pressed all his weight against the door. Praying she'd go away. "HARRY JAMES POTTER! YOU LET ME IN RIGHT NOW!"

Voldemort smirked when Harry cringed in fear. "I will not hurt her. Even if she is a muggle born. Rather like to see what kind of witch could make you fear so."

Harry was prepared to tell him to piss off when suddenly he was thrown forward onto his face as his front door was blasted open by a worried and enraged witch.

Hermione burst in, wand at the ready and prepared to battle. Voldemort raised a brow, seeing the snarl on her face. He then smiled blackly when she caught sight of him and all the blood from her face drained. But instead of freezing in fear as he thought she would, instead the witch lunged forward, grabbed Potter under the arms from where he lay on the floor in a daze, and dragged him back behind the couch, ducking out of sight.

"Hermione, my door!"

"Your door? Your door?!" she shrieked hysterically. "Forget the bloody door! We need to get out of here!"

Voldemort raised his wand and repaired the door. And then went to sit down and wait for Potter to explain things. Though he wasn't sure how that would go as he hadn't really explained the reason for this visit.

"Tea is required, Potter," he announced before Granger managed to convince Potter to Apparate out of the apartment. Not that that would do them any good now that he'd put up an anti-Apparition up. "Now," he elaborated.

"Harry, what's going on?" she asked when Harry refused to leave.

"Apparently he wants tea," was the murmured reply.

"I'll assume you know how to make a decent cup?" Voldemort went on. There was silence. Figures. "Miss Granger... perhaps you are better at it than he is?"

"You do usually make my tea," Harry whispered.

"Harry-"

"He said he hasn't come here to murder me."

"And you believe him?"

"Honestly, I don't care. But you should leave."

"I'm not leaving you!"

"Tea, Potter."

"Check it out. He's got a face now... there's no snake scales," Harry quipped as he squirmed away from Hermione's tight embrace and moved into the kitchen.

"When this is over, I'm checking you into St. Mungo's psych ward!" she hissed at his back.

"He is taking my presence very well," Voldemort agreed with her. A head of bushy brown hair slowly came into view from the side, her brown eyes narrowed on him.

Harry walked into the kitchen in a sort of daze, certain his current state of mind reflected acute shock. All he could do at the moment was stand in the kitchen, place hands flat on the counter and stare unseeingly at the closed cupboard in front of him. Maybe he was crazy. Any sane person would be afraid right now. Anyone with a right mind would be trying to get as far away from Voldemort as possible. Especially someone who was marked for death by said Dark wizard. And yet he wasn't afraid and he didn't even want to run away. Why should he? If Voldemort had been able to find him in a relatively muggle neighborhood, when even the Order couldn't find him, then the Dark Lord would probably be able to find him anywhere. The only reason why he'd not been visited by Voldemort before was because he'd always been protected either by the Order or at Hogwarts. But now he didn't want that sort of protection, which meant this visitation should have been anticipated. Voldemort was right. He really was stupid. And then there was the other huge matter that had caused him to lose fear... but that was a subject he tried not dwelling on unless absolutely necessary.

Voldemort sat back in his chair, ignored the girl watching him closely from behind the couch, and instead focused on the still wizard within the kitchen. The young man stood there staring at the cabinet door in front of him with a small frown on his face. His eyes were glassy in thought. Potter looked the same as he had in Diagon Alley, maybe a little more helpless though. If not helpless than more vulnerable than he had been walking down Diagon Alley. It was unlike any other time he'd come in contact with Potter. The young wizard look defeated but Voldemort was sure it had nothing to do with his presence.

"Tea, Potter." When the young wizard didn't move, Voldemort lifted his wand to Potter.
"*Crucio*."

"*Protego*!"

Voldemort's gaze drifted to Granger who'd quickly cast a shield around her friend before the *Crucio* could hit. Neither noticed the pain crossing Harry's face when Hermione's spell surrounded him. "I am unused to being ignored, Miss Granger. This civility I'm showing is quickly expiring."

The witch's scowl melted away to surprise and then comprehension. She bustled over to the kitchen and pushed Potter out of the way to begin making the tea. Voldemort chuckled darkly to himself and resettled back against the chair. Potter was shaken out of his daze by his friend, saw what she was doing, and removed himself from the kitchen to return to standing behind the couch.

"What ritual did you use this time to get your body back?" Harry blurted out.

"Potion. Severus, as you know, is a very accomplished Potioneer."

Potter looked surprised at the quick and easy reply. The boy flushed and rubbed the back of his neck. "Fucking Snape," he muttered. "You don't look much passed thirty. Not even that, actually. You look..." he trailed off and flushed an even darker shade.

A slow smirk curled Voldemort's lips. "Why so focused on my looks, Potter?"

In the kitchen, Granger fumbled with the kettle as she stared at Potter's flushed neck incredulously. "No reason," he replied. "It's just a surprise..." Harry quickly dashed back into the kitchen. Leaving Voldemort alone to finally study the meager surroundings.

As was habit, Voldemort's lip curled into a sneer of disgust for the muggle quarters. But it suited someone like Potter. A young wizard barely passed the age of adult hood. Surprisingly tidy too. A long upholstered couch, two sitting chairs, and a coffee table in the living room. In the small kitchen sat a small round table. To his left was a bedroom he could see into from the open door. The bed was in clear view. Surprisingly that was big. The bedroom also looked tidy.

Finally the two returned and Granger set a tray down on the coffee table before taking a seat beside Potter. He raised a brow at Potter, who caught his look and sighed.

"This is all fucked up," he murmured, scooting forward to pour the darkest wizard alive a cup of tea and hand it to him. Serving the murderer of his parents fucking tea. "Why've you come here?"

"To invite you to my home."

"Is it a burrow?" Harry asked with a snicker. Voldemort's wand hand twitched.

Hermione dropped her spoon. "Harry!" she hissed.

Harry sobered and shook his head. "I've already said I will not join you."

"Have I asked you to join me, Potter?"

"I don't see why else you haven't killed me, if not for that. Why would you invite me to your home if not to try and recruit me?"

"My reasons are my own, Potter."

"I don't think so. You came to me. If you want me there, it can't be for anything good. Probably torture, yes?"

"I could do that here easily enough."

Harry blinked. That was true. "Look," he finally said, meeting red eyes that were more mesmerizing than scary. "I want nothing else to do with the war. I want to live in relative peace for as long as I have left. Is that so much to ask? I couldn't give a rat's arse about what happens to the Wizarding World without me. I think it's pathetic the way they lay all their hopes and dreams on one boy. Personally with the attitude they have, the wizarding world probably deserves to be defeated by you. Then maybe it would teach them to look out for themselves instead of looking to a little boy to do their dirty work for them. I just want to be left alone, Voldemort. I won't get in your way."

Voldemort had remained silent and still through this small declaration. He'd already known Potter had been thinking along those lines. The Dark Lord was more surprised to see Granger nodding her head along with him though. She froze, however, when noticing his gaze on her.

"You'd let them be defeated even when you know who I'm after?" he asked without looking away from Miss Granger.

"It's not just muggleborns you're after. That's an excuse. You simply want power. And purebloods have a lot of that. What better way to garnish that power, have them side with you, then by praying on their own discriminations. Did you really start off hating muggleborns? I know who you were born to, Tom. I know where you grew up. We grew up similar I think... but I don't think your childhood made much of a difference in the way you've molded yourself. You are much too strong of a person for that. If not you wouldn't have the strength you have today... even if it is a bit misguided. Personally I think you should give up killing muggles and muggleborns and find something else to hate them for... stupidity for instance. Hermione has more talent in her little finger than all the wizards and witches in Wizarding Britain put together. You should be trying to recruit her, not trying to kill her. She could win this war for you single handedly."

"Have you gone insane?" Hermione hissed in his ear.

"Probably... yes."

"You do so amuse me, Potter."

"I wasn't trying to be funny," Harry replied with a frown.

A small smile touched Voldemort's lips. "No, you weren't." He set his tea down and stood. "I'll be taking my leave. Think upon what I've said. The offer still stands."

"You haven't really said anything."

"Put healing salve on your wound now. Expect to hear from me soon, Potter." And with that Voldemort Apparated away.

There was a long moment of silence until Harry broke it. "That was strangely exhilarating."

Hermione shook her head. "Sometimes I worry about you. Truly."

Mione thought he was insane. It had been three days since the odd encounter with Voldemort. Three days in which Harry had thought of nothing else. Frankly Harry was happy with the distraction. What exactly had been Voldemort's purpose of being there anyway? Harry didn't believe for an instant Voldemort had turned over a new leaf. There were still Death Eater attacks going on every day. Though no senseless muggleborn killings and Harry wondered what that was about.

An annoying pain in his back pulled him from his musings. Harry's relatively light mood vanished as he stood from his sofa to go to the bathroom located off of his bedroom. The wound on his back seemed to be getting worse. No matter what he did, no matter what potions Hermione found for him or spells she researched... The curse he'd been hit with was a slow working one.

Shifting and pulling off his shirt to see part of the wound, Harry felt the despondency he always felt when looking upon it. He and Hermione hadn't come right out and spoken about it, but this curse would be the death of him. This festering wound was slowly poisoning his blood. Harry narrowed his eyes on the wound as he reached for the container of healing balm. This would be the second time today the cut needed to be covered in the pain relieving lotion. Usually it was only once a day. But the pain had been increasing the past few days, and Harry never said anything to Hermione about it. She'd been making it a point to leave work everyday in order to help him since the wound ran the length of his back where he couldn't reach certain areas. And if he told her the curse was expanding, she'd only worry more. Why do that when he knew the outcome? He wanted to save her as much grief as possible. Hermione believed a cure was out there somewhere, but they had both been researching for months and hadn't found anything. They didn't even know what spell had been used. And if Hermione couldn't find anything, Harry was sure no one would.

As he slathered the milky green substance onto the base of his spine where he could reach the gash, he figured this was one reason why Voldemort's visit hadn't sent him screaming in fear. Not that he would have ever done that anyway. But back to the point. He was dying. He was dead, really. Harry had nothing to lose. And he'd meant what he told Voldemort. All he wanted to do was live out the rest of his life in peace. And the visit had been... different.

Harry gritted his teeth. Yep, the pain was intensifying. Instead of being only where the wound was, it felt like fire was spreading throughout his back. He figured in a few weeks not even the balm would help with that. The Gryffindor paused in his ministrations when he heard a knock on the door. Hoping it was Hermione because he needed that balm on every inch of that wound now, he stopped what he was doing and hurried to the door and opened it.

"Oh, it's you."

Voldemort cocked an eyebrow at him. "Indeed," he drawled before sweeping passed the younger wizard. "Tell me, Potter. Do you always answer the door without being appropriately attired?" the dark wizard asked, eyeing the topless young man.

"Sure. Sometimes even in the nude," Harry snapped back. "Not that it's any of your business. If you want tea this time make it yourself," he ended as he walked by to return to his bedroom.

Voldemort eyed the eighteen year old's back as he departed and took immediate notice of the long gash, which had changed color and more than the immediate area was now inflamed. After a moment he followed after the impudent wizard, only to stop short at seeing Potter holding a container over his shoulder at the back of his neck and tipping it. "What are you doing?"

Potter gritted his teeth. "Can't cover the whole thing by myself, but I need it really badly."

"And you thought doing it this way would work? Did you hope it would miraculously fall upon the areas you needed it to cover?"

Harry rolled his eyes. "Oh I am *not* in the mood for this snarky business, Voldemort. Have you a better idea?"

The Dark Lord actually blinked in real surprise at the snarky jab. "Surely," he replied lowly and took the container before the brat could spill the lotion all over the floor. He then took the surprised wizard's arm and led him into the bedroom. "Lay."

Harry stared stupidly at the dark wizard and was suddenly horrified when his mind instantly jumped into the gutter. But it wasn't his fault. This Voldemort wasn't half bad looking (that was a gross understatement) and the dark wizard's magic fairly wrapped him in a blanket. It was hard not feeling drunk off it.

"Lay on your stomach, Potter," the wizard drawled with ill concealed impatience.

"Mind not saying it like that!" Harry bit out in embarrassment. His body was being treacherous. He wished Hermione were there to slap some sense into him.

Voldemort then looked amused. "And how would you like me to say it? Potter," he purred, causing Harry's sharp green eyes to widen, "climb onto the bed and lay on your stomach for me like a good little boy... was that more to your liking?"

Harry scowled. "Whatever." He hurried to lay on his stomach before embarrassing himself further.

Without making a snide comment as Harry thought he would, Voldemort sat on the edge of the bed beside him and lifted the container of lotion to his nose. "And what exactly is this?"

"Hermione made it."

"Another way of saying you don't know."

"Hey! I know what it does at least."

"You are not convincing me of your intelligence," Voldemort countered as he scooped out some lotion and rubbed it onto his palms.

Harry rolled his eyes before burying his face in the pillow, trying to ignore the part of his mind that was screaming to him, telling him this was completely insane and weird. Just when he would have rolled away, caving in to the sane part of his mind, Voldemort touched him. The hands suddenly touching the top of his back were firm but not rough, and Volde- no, Tom. It would be Tom now because he couldn't call someone massaging lotion onto his back Voldemort. Tom must have warmed the lotion before applying it because it wasn't cold as he slathered it on and it felt too good for this situation to be alright.

The Dark Lord stared at the back of Potter's head as he gingerly applied the lotion to the horrid gash marring Potter's otherwise perfect back. Potter's hair was shorter than he remembered it being in the youth's fourth year. It was short but no less unruly. Black locks stuck up everywhere, as if it had been caught in a brisk wind. A storm that held no mercy. It was also darker than his own hair. Where his was a dark brown, Potter's hair was black like midnight, which did well to bring out the striking color of the young wizard's eyes. An arresting green Voldemort had never seen on another human being before.

He narrowed his eyes on the gash after a moment and his hands stilled. Now that he was touching it in his human form, he could feel the magic better. "This is a very dark spell."

Potter stiffened then which brought Voldemort's attention to the fact the youth had been relaxed under his ministrations. "Yeah, we've been over this... probably invented it yourself."

"Possibly," he replied seriously, leaning down to have a better look. "How did you receive this, Potter?" he asked after a moment.

Potter took some time before answering. "Course you know what happened. The Slytherins-" Harry cut off when his voice cracked. After a moment he cleared his voice and started over. "They were just kids. Like me. I don't care who their parents were, or what they may or may not have done in the future. They didn't deserve to be slaughtered like animals. And Theo... they took him out just to gain back control over me. They were afraid of his influence... but he was fucking neutral when it came to me!"

"Draco said you tried to save his friend."

"Should have been me who died. Not Theo..."

"You threw yourself in front of a dark curse," Voldemort surmised as he returned administering the salve. "Did you hear the incantation?"

"No. Mione and I have been trying to find out what it is but we haven't found anything... All I know is the pain is getting worse. And instead of once a day, now I have to put that shit on twice a day."

"Swearing is unnecessary, Potter."

"You know where the door is if you don't like it."

Harry sucked in a breath when a rough hand dropped to the curve of his hip, opposite side of where the gash was. That hand squeezed lightly as the other hand continued to rub in the lotion. Harry was fully expecting some sort of punishment for his cheek; but instead only received silence. And that was something that seemed worse than pain. Especially when that warm hand remained on his back where there was no need for it to be resting. Harry found he didn't quite mind it. *Something is seriously wrong with me.*

"So... a bunny?" Harry snickered against his arm when that hand twitched. "A cute black bunny?"

"I could cause you great injury right now, Potter."

"Nothing more that hasn't already been done," Harry murmured.

They lapsed into more silence and it lasted until Voldemort finished applying the lotion. The Dark Lord was pleased to see the inflammation receded slightly, though not all together. And once again, he found that Potter had fallen asleep in his presence.

Once he'd cleaned his hands, the Dark Lord whipped out his wand and muttered a few diagnostic incantations over the wound. He recognized some properties of the curse used and he was almost positive the curse was one he had created. By the time he was done with the diagnostics, one thing was clear. Potter was dying. And the boy probably knew it. Explained the ease with which Potter handled his presence this time around. The brat really had nothing to lose. Was Potter just going to lie there and take it?

The dark wizard supposed Potter had no choice. This curse was undocumented and the version he had created came with no cure. And once upon a time, he would have been ecstatic with the circumstances. But no longer. And now Voldemort inwardly seethed from knowing someone had tried to take this young powerful wizard's life and in such a slow painful way.

Potter shifted then, groaning in pain, and Voldemort realized the boy was feeling his rage through the link of the scar. The dark wizard turned and Apparated. He had a lot of work to do.

"Are you kidding me?" Harry yelled upon leaving his bedroom two mornings later and finding four unwelcome wizards in his living room. "Can't I be left alone to die in peace? What? Is this the new Death Eater hideout? What the hell, Tom? Might as well write a letter to the Order and give away my location! You brought Snape here! What the fuck?"

"Die?" Draco Malfoy inquired, raising a perfectly sculpted eyebrow.

Harry groaned. Draco's question made him realize he'd gone and spilled his secret without even meaning to. And then he'd gone and implicated Snape as being a double agent... though Harry wasn't too troubled for having done that. He hated Snape with a bloody passion.

"Are you quite finished?" Voldemort snapped. Harry sneered, turned right back into the bedroom, and slammed the door shut.

"Die? He's really dying?" Draco asked again.

"We did discuss this, son," Lucius Malfoy intoned.

"But- but I thought you were jesting. Potter can't die! He's a constant source of amusement for me!"

Voldemort turned to face the younger Malfoy. "Good to finally learn your true feelings on the Potter matter. Explains your inability to hand him over to me at every possible turn."

Draco paled and backed away, shifting so that he was partially hiding behind his father. As usual. "It's just... and he tried to save Theodore..."

"Did you see it?" Voldemort asked his Potions Master. Harry had of course left his bedroom without his shirt on again and Voldemort noticed the wound seemed worse than two days prior.

"I'd say a month at the least. He'll be feeling pain all over his body soon."

Harry flopped back onto the bed. At this rate the Order would find him. Not only had Tom brought Malfoy and Draco, but he'd also brought Snape... and Merlin! Hermione was due any moment. Just as he jumped off the bed, Voldemort entered the room.

"You four need to leave. Now. Hermione will be here any minute."

"I'm sure she would like to be included for what we plan to do," Voldemort drawled.

"Plan to kill me off faster?"

"Do you never shut up?"

"Potter's mouth has a tendency to go off on its own with very little prompting," Draco said from the doorway.

"Shut the hell up, Drake! No one asked you!"

Voldemort turned to the smirking blond. "Draco, return to the kitchen and make tea."

Harry snickered at the horrified look appearing on his friend's face and watched the young aristocrat go out, mumbling about doing plebeian work.

"I was unaware you two were friends."

"It was Theo's fault..."

"You said Granger was the only one you had left."

"I meant people who consider me friend. I'm not too sure Malfoy considers me a friend... anyway, will you please explain the sudden appearance of four Slytherins within my flat."

Voldemort approached until Harry had to tilt his head back to look into the older wizard's face. He didn't particularly mind Voldemort was so close... he could feel the other man's body heat. It was nice. "Did you want to die, Potter?"

"It was a joke. I'm not really dying," Harry murmured, turning away to go rummage in his dresser for a shirt.

Red eyes narrowed dangerously on the teen. "You are. Did you think I wouldn't notice what a curse of that magnitude could do to a person?"

"What does it matter, anyway?" Harry growled slamming the dresser drawer shut before pulling a dark blue shirt on. "You should be happy! I'm finally out of your hair... now that you have some."

"You also told me you were having nothing to do with the war anymore."

"And that's still true. So I don't understand why you're here!"

Outside in the living room, Severus and Lucius stood together, attentions on the slightly opened door, listening to every word. "Why are we here?" Lucius inquired.

"Saving the brat's life, I suppose. *Again*," Severus hissed under his breath.

Lucius frowned. "And I suppose this has something to do with why our Lord called a cease fire on Potter?"

"Your guess is as good as mine."

"Father, I don't want to make the tea! This is servants work!"

"And you are the Dark Lord's servant," Lucius hissed as he turned cold eyes to his spoiled son. "Do as you're told."

"Severus, Lucius. Let us begin," Voldemort announced from the open door.

"I'm not going to be an experiment!" Potter yelled from somewhere inside the room. The two elder Death Eaters watched their Lord look up and pinch the bridge of his nose before returning to the room.

"You'll do as I say, Potter!"

"No I won't! I'm not one of your boot licking Death Eat-"

"Stupefy!"

Within the kitchen, Draco started to snicker and watched his father and godfather enter Harry's bedroom; Severus carrying with him the heavy black leather bag he'd been holding the entire time. A few minutes later, Draco was still in the kitchen staring defiantly at the teakettle and listening to the low murmuring coming from Harry's room when the door knob of the front door rattled and then began to turn. Moments later he was staring at the end of Granger's wand.

"Father," he whined loudly while standing still, knowing full well the mudblood would curse him in an instant should he move.

"What are you doing here, Malfoy? Where's Harry?"

Draco waved towards the bedroom. Instead of going off to the bedroom like he thought and hoped she would, Granger approached him until her wand pressed firmly into his chest. "Father!" he cried again.

"Still whining, Malfoy? Always expecting your father to come and save you. How typical."

"I'll have you know I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself. It just so happens my father is here. FATHER!"

Realization finally dawned on the usual quick thinking Gryffindor. *"Stupefy!"* she hissed and then turned away before Draco could even hit the floor and rushed to Harry's bedroom

Throwing open the door, she took one look and started firing out curses. "*Stupefy!*" Hitting Lucius Malfoy in the back where he had been waving his wand over Harry's back in an intricate pattern. And then on to Snape who looked to be drawing Harry's blood. "*Stup-*"

"*Silencio. Incarcerous,*" Voldemort drawled, watching with acute satisfaction as the witch went down, surrounded by thick tight ropes. "Severus, if you please."

The Potions Master scowled as he turned to retrieve Miss Granger from the floor and then unceremoniously dumped her into the nearby chair sitting beside the bedside table. Voldemort revived Lucius, whom sent a quelling sneer at the Gryffindor before the three Slytherins completely ignored her and continued on with the tests.

Hermione growled low in her throat, though no one could hear it, and had to watch the three wizards hover over her best friend. What were they doing to Harry?

"It's become worse within the span of minutes, my Lord," Severus murmured.

"Do you suppose it's the magic? The Stun perhaps? And the tests I'm running?" Lucius inquired.

"It is possible." Voldemort turned to the girl who looked both livid and terribly frightened for her friend. "Miss Granger, do you recall the wound becoming worse after Potter's kidnapping from the Order?"

Hermione waited until he lifted the *Silencio* spell. "It did," she bit out.

Voldemort's jaw tightened. "Seems we've all accelerated the deterioration. Severus, have you all the samples you need?"

"For the time being, yes."

"Return to the labs then and start working on it immediately."

"Very well, my Lord." Severus turned on the spot and Apparated away. Now that Snape no longer blocked her view of Harry, she was able to see that the gash was nearly black and there were blue veins creeping out from it to spread across the rest of his back.

"He needs the salve!" she cried. "He'll be in so much pain. Let me go!"

"Someone would have to be particularly vicious in order to cast a curse of this magnitude," Lucius said thoughtfully.

"Harry never saw who cast the curse."

Voldemort studied the girl, who only had eyes for the boy laying face down on the bed. Worry clear in her eyes. "You realize he's dying."

She nodded, biting back a sob. "Explains the recent bout of insanity," she said with a watery chuckle. "He thought he was keeping it from me. He's got a whole cabinet full of pepper-up potion in the bathroom..."

Voldemort turned to Lucius. "Start your research, Lucius. I'll join you soon."

"Of course, my Lord." Lucius bowed his head before striding out of the room, one last parting glare to the girl still bound in the chair. A moment later they heard Draco's whining voice.

"Father, that mudblood stunned me!"

"Cease the whining, Draco!"

Voldemort barely refrained from smirking. Both Malfoys being stunned by a mudblood. Must hurt the pride terribly.

"Are you trying to save him?" the witch inquired. "Why would you do that?" she went on without an answer.

Voldemort said nothing at first. Simply stood at the end of the bed, staring at Harry for a few moments before flicking a hand at her and the ropes fell away. "Put the salve on his back and make sure he comes into no contact with any more magic."

And with that said, the Dark Lord vanished from the flat. By this time Hermione was no longer worried that Voldemort was trying to kill Harry. It was apparent the leader of the Dark was trying to save him. No, what really bothered Hermione was the way Voldemort had been eyeing up her best friend.

Chapter Two

The Black Bunny

Chapter Two

Very soon it became usual for the Dark Lord to appear within Harry's flat without invitation every other day. Sometimes Snape would come with him seeking more blood and skin samples- not that Harry thought it would do him any good. And sometimes Draco would come with him, just to be an annoyance. At least that's what Tom said one time as he once again administered the healing balm to his back. Harry thought it funny that even the Dark Lord put up with Drake's whining. He would have thought that if Draco acted his usual self around him, the Dark Lord would have killed the blond a long time ago. But circumstances were not as they always had seemed and Harry learned this quickly on after the first visits.

It really wasn't just a servant master relationship the Malfoys had with Tom. It was kind of like a dysfunctional family. Tom was an odd evil rich uncle that only barely tolerated the whiney little nephew and took great pleasure in bossing said nephew around; enjoying the fear he could produce in the younger wizard at all times. Harry found it all completely hilarious. But it was also disconcerting to see Tom having even a small amount of patience and compassion for his closest followers when all he'd ever heard of Lord Voldemort was that he was a monster. No if and or buts about it. Again this was not the case and Harry worried for his sanity when he found himself warming up further to Tom.

During his visits, Tom would constantly ask him to stay at his home and Harry would stubbornly refuse. It had nothing to do with the fact that it was Voldemort's home. Harry believed Tom when he said he meant no harm to him. Like he said before, what could Tom do to him that hadn't already been done? But Harry wanted a semblance of freedom he didn't think a possessive freak of a wizard like Tom was capable of giving him. Never mind that Tom continued to argue he could cure him faster if he went with the Dark Lord. Now that was a blatant lie. Harry knew for some unknown reason, Tom really wanted him in his home and until Harry went, the Gryffindor was sure Tom didn't mind blatantly lying about why.

Nearly two weeks had come and gone and Harry found himself alone in his flat for once, able to relax if only slightly. He'd taken a pepper-up potion a few moments ago though all he could do at this point even with the potion was shuffle around, never having enough strength to travel beyond that. He had enough strength to get up long enough to fetch what he needed before falling back down on the couch and trying to ignore the increasing pain washing through his body. Hermione had moved in soon after the first visit from the four Slytherins and though Harry tried to protest her babysitting, she quickly put his objections down; stating she knew how bad the curse was, knew about the pepper-up potions and refused to allow Harry to deteriorate alone. Not to mention she didn't trust the Slytherins and wanted to be around to watch over him when the Death Eaters and their Dark master stopped by.

Currently Harry was in the kitchen checking up on the dinner Hermione was making. She had to step out for a few minutes to run to the store for an ingredient she'd forgotten and Harry

agreed to keep an eye on the food. He was just about to remove the lid of the pot containing a sauce that had the entire flat smelling delicious when suddenly his legs buckled out from underneath him. As he fell, he brutally knocked his forehead against the edge of the oven. The pain stemming from his head was the least of what he felt at the moment. He felt cold, numb, and literally on fire all at the same time. The pain was everywhere and he couldn't even breathe properly because the agony doubled if he moved even a breath. As his vision faded in and out and the blood trickled out of the small cut he'd just gained, Harry realized this was it. And Hermione was gone and he wouldn't get to say goodbye. To tell her how much he loved and cherished her. Harry was sorry she would come back and find him laid out like this.

He barely registered the pop of Apparition. "Potter?" someone called from the vicinity of his bedroom. Relief flooded Harry even as that emotion confused him. How could he be happy that if he should die, at least Tom would be here for his last breath? Maybe it was poetic irony, but he was relieved to hear Tom's voice and know the older wizard would be here at his death. Wasn't it always supposed to be this way?

"Here," he croaked, unable to move.

Voldemort began to think Harry had unwisely left the flat when he heard the low rasped answer issued from the kitchen. From where he stood in front of Harry's bedroom door, the sofa blocked his view of the kitchen floor. Quickly moving through the living room and around the sofa, he finally spotted Harry sprawled out on the floor, eyes tightly closed in pain while blood slowly dripped on a cut from the boy's temple and mouth. Harry was in such a state that he didn't realize he was bleeding from other places as well. The Dark Lord lowered to his knees beside the young wizard, inwardly cursing as he wiped the blood away from Harry's mouth with a shaking hand. It was too soon. He thought he had two weeks left before the curse started to shut down Potter's organs. The reversal spell for the curse was not yet complete.

Green eyes met his. "Bunnymort."

Voldemort was too busy checking the boy over to be properly enraged by that greeting. "Bold to the very end, Potter?" he replied softly and as soothingly as he could manage.

The smile Harry intended came out as a half grimace. "Your eyes aren't scary at all. They're like rubies..." he whispered offhandedly, seeing nothing but those burning red orbs narrowed slightly in concentration.

Voldemort absently trailed fingertips across Harry's sweat slicked brow, over the scar he'd inflicted upon the young wizard. "You're talking nonsense."

Harry pulled in a deep breath when another fissure of pain shot through him. His body arched off the floor as electrifying spasms took hold of him. Not even the Crucio had felt this bad. "Having you... in my flat, being civil... seems like nonsense, Tom."

"Stop talking," Voldemort hissed impatiently and wiped away the blood that was now dripping from Harry's nose. Talking was causing Harry more pain and using up the remaining

energy he had left. Which wasn't much. Voldemort began searching through the folds of his robes, looking for the vial he'd begun to keep on him whenever he paid Potter a visit.

"Why?" he gasped out. "I'm dying. You didn't... didn't find a cure... did you?"

"I'll find one, Potter," he said forcibly. "The reverse spell is nearly complete."

"Too late." Harry squeezed his eyes closed as his body was suddenly wracked with shivers and more blood dripped passed his lips. He felt so cold. Raising dulling green orbs to meet conflicted red, Harry whispered to his previously sworn enemy, "I—I don't want to die, Tom."

"If you think I'll let you die, thus getting away with that Bunnymort comment, you are sadly mistaken."

Harry tried smiling again, but by now the only action he could accomplish was staring up into Tom's face. Voldemort cursed seeing the young wizard's lips were turning blue. He could hear Harry's teeth chattering, and he was shivering ferociously. Finding the vial, Voldemort set it beside him and pulled Harry into his lap, pulling one of Harry's arms around his neck. "You need to take this potion."

"C-can't m-move..."

"Open your mouth."

Harry did as was asked. Voldemort was in the process of dumping the acidic blue potion down the boy's throat when Granger made an appearance. She gasped and dropped the bags held in her arms as she sprinted forward. "Stay here," he told her firmly as he stood, deftly hoisting Potter up with him. "I'll send someone for you shortly."

The witch nodded mutely and watched as he Apparated Potter and himself away. Landing within the parlor of his home, Voldemort immediately called out for Severus and Lucius as he moved quickly from the room and down the hall. He stared down at Potter's pale face. Holding Harry was like holding a corpse; his body was stiff from pain and cold already.

"LUCIUS!" he bellowed, strides becoming faster turning into a quick run. He had to reach the stones before Harry's heart gave out. "SEVERUS!"

The two in question appeared from a room half way down the corridor, both looking out pensively, wondering what could have the Dark Lord bellowing in a way they hadn't heard in a very long time. Upon seeing Voldemort running towards them with the pale body of Harry Potter in his arms, the two looked at each other gravely.

"The stones!" Voldemort yelled.

Without waiting for him to catch up, they bolted out of the room and ran down the hall, leading the Dark Lord to the ritual room where seven large onyx stones were positioned in a circle. Once in the room, Voldemort wasted no time in carefully depositing Harry onto the

stone floor. Severus and Lucius were already murmuring the incantations, pointing wands at the stones to activate them.

The seven stones had been laid there the day after Voldemort found out about Harry's affliction. The Dark Lord was taking no chances with the former Savior of the Wizarding World's life. The purpose of the stones was to ensure whoever was within the ring would hold on to life, no matter how close to death they were. It was a strong stasis spell but unlike the spell Healers generally used, this stasis was interactive. They could work on Potter's affliction without having to take him out of stasis until the actual healing had to be done.

Once all the stones were activated, a low hum filled the room and soft vibrations emanated from the stones, prickling the wizards' skin. Moments later the soft slow beating of Harry's heart surrounded them as the young wizard's body floated a few feet above the ground to hover in the air. Voldemort crossed his arms over his chest and began to pace around the stasis circle. Eyes away from Potter and solely on each stone as he passed them. Lucius and Severus glanced at each other warily, having no idea how to proceed. But at least, they thought in relief, the stasis spell had worked in time. Though by the very slow beat of Potter's heart, it had been a close thing. A minute more and the boy would have been dead.

"My Lord," Lucius prompted for an order.

"One of you go and fetch Miss Granger," Voldemort ordered without looking up. Lucius sneered. No way would it be him.

Severus rolled his eyes, having no need to hear Lucius' thoughts on the matter. "And what should we do with her, my Lord?"

Voldemort looked up then and stopped pacing. His eyes looked explicitly malicious. "Nothing," he hissed. "Is that understood? She is not to be harmed unless I say otherwise. Bring her here... Have Draco take charge of her when she arrives until I can make time to speak with her."

The two nodded and departed, both looking over their shoulders as they did so. The Dark Lord was now staring fixedly at the floating body, this time with a desperate expression that surprised the Death Eaters. It surprised Lucius, but was more of a confirmation for Severus.

As soon as Lucius shut the door behind them, he turned to Severus. "Why does he go to such lengths? For Potter?"

Severus sighed. "I have my suspicions and whatever the reason, I'm sure I will not like it. I'm sure we'll have to deal with Potter on a daily basis from here on out. It's obvious our Lord plans to keep the boy."

"If he lives..." Lucius replied, sounding as if he believed Potter's life was forfeit and the stasis spell was only delaying the inevitable.

"Come now, Lucius. You know very well that given enough time, our Lord will find the answer. Potter will be cured. Unfortunately. If the Dark Lord can't find the answer then he will make one. That has always been his way."

"And if it can't be undone?"

"We should all go into hiding."

Ba-dump... Ba-dump... Ba-dump... Ba-dump... Ba-dump... Voldemort closed his eyes against the maddening slow cadence of the heartbeat. "Too slow," he murmured, stepping into the circle until he was near enough to touch the body. "If you'd not been so stubborn and agreed to come here in the first place, we wouldn't be in this situation right now, Potter."

He took one last look at Harry before leaving the circle and the room, thinking it didn't matter now. He had Potter where he wanted and he would make a cure. It was only a matter of time. All he needed to do was discover the element of the curse that seemed to be very well concealed. Until he found that element, he couldn't finish the reversal spell. The element concealed was the property which made the curse react badly to any outside magic. Voldemort had been wary about putting Potter in the stasis circle. There was a chance that would have killed him immediately, but that's what the blue potion was for. The potion he'd given Potter was only a temporary solution. Gave him only enough time to get Potter within the stasis circle and allow the magic to surround him without affecting the curse.

His musings were cut short when he arrived outside of the room Granger was supposed to be held in. It was proven when her voice and that of Draco's came blaring out to him.

"You're a despicable excuse for a human being, Malfoy!"

"Likewise, Granger! How Potter could lower himself to being friends with the likes of you is beyond me. You are nothing but filth!"

That statement was met with a short silence until a shout filled the room and then an explosion that sent vibrations coursing through the old manor. Voldemort raised an eyebrow. After, there was nothing but silence. Had the Granger girl gone and killed Lucius' son? Opening the door, the dust hadn't even settled yet though he spotted Granger standing in the middle of the room, wand pointed straight ahead at the lounge. "Come out, you coward!" she yelled.

"You could have killed me!" a high-pitched wail came from behind the settee where half the wall seemed to have been blown away. "My father will have—"

"Who in this world is not tired of you crying to your father, Malfoy? Honestly! No wonder Zabini hasn't taken an interest in you!"

Voldemort crossed his arms and cupped his chin in hand. Waiting. This was quite amusing. Draco's head popped up from behind the lounge, looking wide eyed and embarrassed. "You-you don't know what you're talking about!"

"Oh please... everyone can see you fancy your best friend. Even Harry knows and he's the most thickheaded male I've ever met! Oblivious, that's Harry's middle name."

"Do you think Blaise knows?" the blond asked in a small voice.

Hermione crossed her arms and shrugged.

"This is horrible!" Draco wailed, his eyes rolling back as he disappeared behind the lounge again in a dramatic display of despair.

"Yes and the fact that Zabini is in no way attracted to boys."

Draco's whining took on a new level and Voldemort noticed the witch looked pleased for causing young Malfoy to fall into a depression; she was smirking smugly about it too. Finally he cleared his throat. Hermione spun around to face the door and Draco jumped to his feet, quickly brushing hands over his dusty tailored robes. Both acting as if there wasn't a big gaping hole where the wall had once been.

"Do you wish to assist in Potter's healing, Granger?"

"Of course," she answered.

"I need to know what curse was used. The exact incantation, Granger. And if possible, who."

"Impossible!" Draco declared with a sneer at the Gryffindor. "The mudblood would never betray her precious Order."

The Dark Lord's eyes shifted and narrowed on the Malfoy heir. Draco's lips pressed into pale thin lines and he quickly edged out of the room.

"Can you do it, Granger? I would have Severus do it but the Order has not trusted him since the old man's death."

The girl looked off to the side, a thin frown on her face. "They don't trust me either... but, I think I can get help from those who are trusted and who would do anything for Harry. But first I demand to see my best friend."

"You demand?" he asked lowly and was immeasurably pleased when she gulped loudly and backed up a step.

"I'm sorry. Please may I see him?"

"Very well. Follow." Voldemort spun on his heel to leave the damaged room. He led her down the hall and into a severely warded room. Once the wards were down, she entered and was able to see Harry. The Dark Lord allowed her to linger only long enough to hear his slow heart beat for about a minute before pulling her out of the room and demanding she get on with finding who did this. And because she wasn't nearly as insane and bold as Harry, all Hermione could do was nod and leave. But at least now she knew Harry was still alive.

"Hermione!"

The witch waved as she moved further into the shop, smiling brightly at the happy excited smiling twins behind the counter of Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes. "Hello, boys," she greeted, accepting a hug from each of them after they rushed from around the counter to embrace her.

"Good to see you," Fred said.

"Missed you," George added.

Hermione cut right to the chase before they could ask her about Harry, as she knew they would. "There's something really important I need to speak to you two about. It's urgent... and I don't want to speak here. Can you close up?"

Sensing the seriousness of the matter, the twins did just that without asking questions. Once the shop had no more customers and was locked up, Hermione Apparated first Fred and then George to Harry's flat. "This is where Harry's been staying." And she told them that because deep down she knew the Dark Lord had no intention of allowing Harry to live anywhere else then where he currently was. And did this worry her? Yes it did! But that was neither here nor there at the moment.

"Nice."

"Where is he, Hermione?" George asked. "And why haven't we heard from him?"

"Harry assumed you wanted nothing more to do with him after what happened with the Slytherins. After he decided to stay out of the war."

"That's rubbish!"

Hermione nodded. "Yes, and I knew you would feel this way, but I didn't say anything because... I wanted to keep him safe. The less people who know where he is the better."

"Hermione, we wouldn't have told the Order anything."

She knew they believed that but she also knew things could change and no one ever knew what the future could bring. The less people Harry had on his back about leaving the war, the better. Then she supposed this was all beside the point now. Harry needed help if he was going to live through this curse, and the twins would probably never stop hounding her for information on him.

"We need your help," she told them, and then rushed on before they could automatically offer to help. "But I need to explain the situation first. And I'll need a Wizards' Oath from each of you that you will not repeat a word of what I'm about to tell you, no matter if you do or do not decide to help."

The Oaths were readily given and soon Hermione launched into the insane story and ended with Voldemort asking for her help in curing Harry.

"No bloody way," the twins said in unison once the tale ended.

"Everything I've just said is true."

The twins looked at each other and nodded a moment later. "What do you need from us?" Fred asked. "If we can help save Harry, we want to help."

"We'll do anything you want, Hermione. As long as it doesn't put our family in jeopardy," George elaborated.

Hermione sighed in relief and smiled brightly at them. "Okay, here's what I need you to do..."

A day later, Draco popped into Harry's flat where Hermione awaited word from the twins. "Well?" he demanded once finding her sitting on the couch, reading from a stack of reports she had brought from work. "How is this helping? You sitting around..."

"Oh go try and bugger a dragon, Malfoy."

"Would that help save Harry?" he asked hopefully. He looked so completely serious that Hermione couldn't help but laugh. And loudly. Draco huffed and placed a hand on his hip. "Well?" he demanded.

"You really do like him, don't you? How is that possible?"

Draco crossed his arms over his chest and stuck his nose into the air. "I don't feel the need to explain myself to you."

"That's true... may I ask why you are here?"

"I've been sent by our Lord, of course."

"Your lord... creepy pedophile that he is," she murmured. Though in all honesty, Harry was eighteen so he wasn't a child and Voldemort no longer looked old or really creepy, so... there was that. "Anyway, I'm waiting for word from my informants. Nothing to report yet."

"That's not why I'm here," the blond responded as he pulled a large silver button from within his expensive and fashionable robes. "A Portkey," he announced, holding it up for her to see before dropping it into her hand. "So that you can return to his home when you do have answers... though I believe you'll come out empty handed and then hopefully I'll be able to watch my Lord kill you."

"You're an absolute arse!"

"Looks good though, right?" he asked, turning so that his arse was in plain view. "I'm meeting Blaise in a few minutes so I'd like an honest answer, Granger."

"You have a skinny nonexistent arse, Malfoy. And Zabini isn't gay. The sooner you get over that the better."

Before he could answer, twin pops resounded throughout the room. Fred and George stood behind Draco, looking grave. "Sturgis Podmore," they announced.

"Are you sure?" Hermione asked, standing and approaching. They nodded even as their gazes went to a devastated looking Malfoy. Both pairs of eyes widened. They hadn't seen Draco Malfoy since leaving Hogwarts.

They went on to explain how they'd gone to headquarters and announced they knew where Harry was and that he was dying from a curse given to him when the Slytherin students had been attacked. Told the Order Harry was on his last breath and unless the spell was revealed, the Chosen One wouldn't last the week.

"Never seen someone look so confused and terrified," George went on. "We said you figured out what was wrong and that the only way to save Harry was by the person who cast it to retract the curse. Podmore perked up then. He was the only one who reacted in such a way."

"Bloody Gryffindor, I bet," Draco murmured. "Giving himself away."

"Lucky for us and Harry, hot stuff," Fred responded as he moved closer to the blond, eyeing Draco up. Malfoy look startled and backed away closer to Hermione. Both twins adopted sinister smirks.

"They asked where Harry was and we gave them the fake location you gave us," George murmured as he and his brother continued to advance on Draco. "Merlin, Malfoy... what happened to you?"

"Ever had a threesome?" Fred asked, running a finger down the front of Draco's robes.

Draco eeped and ran behind Hermione. "Restrain them!" he demanded of the Gryffindor witch.

"Aw... don't be like that," Fred cooed.

"We know you play for our team," George said, reaching over Hermione's shoulder to run invasive fingers through the blond's hair.

Hermione laughed. "Stop trying to scare the poor gay Slytherin!"

"I'm not poor!" Draco interjected as he backed away from the hand in his hair.

The twins pouted. "We're just having a bit of fun, Mione... Come on!"

Draco looked slightly less horrified. "So... so they aren't really coming on to me? They aren't gay?"

"Oh no, Malfoy. We'd love to lay you," Fred countered. "Hold no boundaries whatsoever. Man or woman. Death Eater or Order member..."

George nodded along. "We're open to all things. And you were cute at Hogwarts... a bit young back then—do you like bondage?"

"HARRY!" Hermione screeched, trying to bring everyone's attention back to the most important subject at hand; also trying to ignore the hilarious sputtering coming from Malfoy behind her.

"Lord Voldemort will want this information immediately," Draco murmured. His eyes were fixated on the salivating twins and his wand was tightly gripped in hand. The way those two

were looking at him... He shivered. "I'm going now. You can tell the Dark Lord," he said to Granger and then Apparated away from the fiendish redheads.

"Thank you so much," she told the twins as she fingered the button.

"Hermione, we want to see Harry and that hot blond again."

"You aren't serious... about Malfoy?"

"Oh the things we would do to him," Fred breathed looking up at the ceiling, eyes gone hazy from the images popping into his head.

"Anyway...." Hermione went on, staring at them as if they'd lost their minds. "I'll speak to Harry about visitation once he's better. I can't bring you back to wherever I'm going. Voldemort may be trying to keep Harry alive, but he's still the same. He'd probably kill you two."

"Just let us know how Harry is as soon as you can and be careful."

Hermione promised she would. The twins then left and Hermione activated the Portkey, landing in the same parlor she'd been fighting with Draco in. Finding it empty, she quickly left and headed for the room Harry was being kept in stasis. The wards were down which indicated someone was within the room with Harry.

It was Voldemort. The Dark wizard was sitting against the far wall with old books stacked on each side of him. Red eyes were narrowed on an open book in his lap. A tray of tea sat beside one stack and nothing seemed to have been touched. Voldemort looked like he hadn't moved from that spot since she left the previous day.

"I trust you've found something," he said with a deadly softness that had Hermione thinking she should lie if she hadn't had anything to report.

"Sturgis Podmore cast the curse. This is the only information we could get."

"It will do." Hermione released a breath she knew damn well she'd been holding. Finally his eyes lifted to her face. She tried not to flinch from his undivided attention. "We? Who did you recruit to find the information?"

"I- I'm not putting anyone else in danger by giving you that information. You have Podmore. They'll be searching for Harry at a false location. Should be there now."

She gave him the location and Voldemort assembled a team of Death Eaters shortly after hearing this. He led the group himself to the remote farmhouse outside of London where the twins told the Order Harry was hiding. The Order was still there when they arrived, searching for the Chosen One and immediately a battle began. Voldemort ordered his minions to kill anyone opposing them, but everyone's main objective was to get in, find Podmore, and then out again. Apparently the Order never anticipated a DE attack and only a handful of its members were there and all but one was killed- Moody yet again fighting his way out before

Apparating away. Podmore had been easily found, bound, and immediately returned to Voldemort's dungeon.

When Voldemort returned home, he appeared immediately in the dungeons and wasted no time rifling through Podmore's memories. He found the incantation used.

Rage built within him as he withdrew from the cowering wizard's mind. "Casting a curse you do not fully understand... foolish!" he hissed.

Lucius stepped forward. "My lord?"

"This wizard cast a spell he did not take the time to research and therefore had no idea what it would end up doing. Killing Potter was an accident. An accident!" he hissed in rage. "A wizard such as Potter brought down by an accident! Ridiculous! At least I have my answer." Voldemort spun away from Podmore and began to head out of the cell. Podmore seemed to think he would live another day until Malfoy smirked at him and asked what should be done with the prisoner. "Oh, yes," Voldemort hissed. He turned and leveled his wand at the Order member, who raised his hands in a silent plea. "*Avada Kedavra.*"

Lucius watched the man slump lifeless to the ground. And because the Dark Lord spun away once more without reveling in the kill as he usually did, the blond thought it a testament to how much of his master's mind was on Potter that killing the prisoner had been an afterthought. The blond was pulled from his thoughts when the Dark Lord called and Lucius quickly strode out of the cell and after Lord Voldemort.

"I should have been able to see it without having had to locate the caster."

The way Lord Voldemort growled that last part made Lucius suspect his Lord was angry about the oversight. Lucius himself remained quiet, though he thought it was no wonder the Dark Lord hadn't figured that out. He had been, much to everyone's curiosity, completely focused on Potter and not just on the boy's ailment.

"You know now, my Lord. And Potter can be healed immediately."

"Yes." Lucius didn't see it but he clearly heard the relieved smile in the Dark Lord's voice and he was bewildered. "Fetch Severus and return to the room in an hour."

"You know your part. Do not hold back. Should you do so and he dies..." the Dark Lord trailed off, knowing his followers would get the message. Inwardly Severus bristled. Since when did Potter become so important to Lord Voldemort? So important that the Dark Lord would kill his closest followers should they fail to save the spoiled brat?

"Severus? Something you want to say before we begin?"

Lucius glanced sideways at Severus with a look that said he'd better not speak loudly of his thoughts. And that he should probably stop thinking thoughts like that from here on out.

"No, my Lord."

And so they began. Lucius and Severus standing still with their wands drawn and held loosely at their sides. The three spent half an hour building up their magic, chanting words that would allow them to pull the full extent of their magical abilities from the core. The two Death Eaters did this in order for the Dark Lord to borrow their power when the time came to disconnect the stasis circle and begin the healing spell he had created.

When it was time to start, Voldemort pointed his wand at Severus. "*Adsumo*." Calling the Potion Master's power to him. Voldemort inwardly shivered as the borrowed magic merged with his. And then he called upon the magic Lucius would lend. Once he'd pulled their strength, Lucius and Severus ended the stasis circle. The slow heartbeats died along with the vibrations of the stones. Harry remained still as he floated back to the ground to lie on his stomach. The three wizards knew he must have been in agony, but it was a testament to how close to death he was that Potter hadn't the energy to even move, let alone scream.

The Dark Lord quickly strode forward to stand beside the deathly silent figure; fully aware Harry could die at any moment. He lowered his wand until the tip was pointed at the youth's bare back. "*Sano protinam devoveo. Retrorsu deprecor*," he recited very clearly and with a hard firm voice. He repeated the chant three times and by the forth, a black cloud had risen from the gash on Harry's back. Voldemort raised his wand and slashed at the poisoned curse. "*Dominatus sanati!*"

The incantations finished, all held their breath as they waited. Knowing if this didn't work, nothing would. The black mist hissed and then vanished in the next moment and the gash upon Harry's back split wide open, allowing blood to fluidly pour out.

Lucius' eyes widened, not having expected this part. Severus quickly moved forward, pulling a potion out of his robe pocket and passing it to the Dark Lord. Apparently they had expected this. Voldemort dropped to his knees beside Harry and carefully pulled the teen into a sitting position, bracing the slighter wizard against his side. Voldemort forced Potter's mouth open and poured the potion down his throat.

Seeing the blond's stricken look, Severus explained. "The curse was destroyed but Potter's blood is still poisoned. However, without the curse his blood and magic can heal the wound. He only needs new blood. And quickly."

"Ah," Lucius replied. "Blood replenishing potion?"

Severus nodded. "And pain relieving potion," he added when Potter started to stir, moaning from the pain he could now feel.

Severus half expected Potter to start screaming from the pain and began to brace for it, only to stare in shock moments later when the boy, without opening his eyes, turned into Voldemort and wrapped trembling arms around the Dark Lord's back; holding on tightly with his head pressed firmly into the Dark Lord's chest. The whimpers and moans were getting louder, but it was clear Potter was still not fully aware. Nowhere near conscious. Voldemort had to grab a hand full of black hair and wrench Potter's head back so that his face was visible, allowing Severus to get the pain potion down his throat.

"What next?" Lucius inquired as he finally moved forward, eyeing the blood pooling around the kneeling figures.

"We let him bleed for the next half hour," Severus answered. "And then administer another blood replenishing potion. We do this for twelve hours and then he should be fine."

Inwardly sighing, Lucius vanished the blood staining the floor. They were in for a long night.

Harry awoke from a heavy sleep; deep and difficult to pull from. Lying on his stomach, he felt his back chilled by the air. But most of all he felt hands upon his back. Hands instantly recognized for they had applied Hermione's salve onto the cursed wound on more than one occasion. Harry kept his eyes closed when he felt those hands travel where there was no wound, touching and prodding, soothing his tense muscles. Harry bit back a contented sigh. How could Tom make him feel like this? Content and warm. Pleasant all around. Safe.

The next thing Harry knew he was jolted awake by the annoying whining of a certain blond, and as he awoke much easier this time, he remembered his thoughts before on Tom and thought perhaps all that had been a dream.

"Potter! You're alive and cured! Stop laying about trying to garner more attention!" the voice of Draco Malfoy squeezed into Harry's pleasant dreams. "It's been two days! Wake up so that I don't have to deal with the mudblood anymore! She's horrible! Keeps telling horrid lies about Blaise's sexuality!"

Harry opened his eyes with a long-suffering sigh. Sometimes he wished Theo had never persuaded he and Draco to drop the ridiculous feud they had. Harry gingerly twisted around and sat up. Draco stood at the end of the bed, arms crossed over his chest and tapping his foot impatiently. Looking around, Harry found his glasses on top of the beside table. Grabbing them he put them on and looked around, finding himself lying on a wide bed covered in dark blue. The room itself was large as well. Very large and very well furnished and completely unfamiliar.

"Err... where am I?"

Draco smirked. "Your room. And those stairs," the blond pointed to the narrow stairs by the window, "lead down to your very own study. Specially made just for you, Potter."

"What?"

Draco huffed and spent a moment watching Harry inspect the room from where he sat on the bed. "Get up! I'm supposed to dress you, have you take some potions, and show you around! And hurry! The Dark Lord wants to see you."

Harry flushed and looked to his lap. "He- he saved me. Didn't he?"

The blond scoffed. "Of course he did! Did you have a doubt?"

Harry refused to look at Draco. He had in fact doubted. At the end there... "*I—I don't want to die, Tom.*" He remembered saying that to Tom, in a pleading voice, showing such weakness and fear to a man who was anything but. It was pathetic really. "I should probably be getting home," he murmured, pushing back the heavy feather downed comforter and swinging his legs over the side.

"Didn't you hear me, Potter? This is your home. This is your room. The Dark Lord has you where he wanted you all along. Do you honestly think he's going to let you leave now?"

Harry winced a bit as he stood from the very comfortable bed. The pain came from his back being stiff but other than that he was fine. It wasn't overwhelming anymore and that was always a good thing. "I will not be a prisoner here."

"And what are you going to do about it? You can't just walk out of the Dark Lord's home without him noticing."

"Where are my clothes?"

Draco shifted and clasped his hands behind his back. "Err... yes, um... the Dark Lord instructed me to burn what you were wearing when he brought you here."

"WHAT?!"

The blond smirked. "Kidding. Couldn't help it. Seeing your face burn up with self righteous anger is always fun."

"Bugger off, Malfoy."

"No. I'm fine where I am, thanks."

"Then help me find some clothes so I can go and make sure Bunnymort knows I'm not a prisoner here."

Draco sputtered in outrage. "What did you call him?!"

Harry laughed as he went about the room searching for the bathroom that was sure to be connected to such a grand room.

"You don't question the Dark Lord!" Draco yelled. "Harry? Are you listening to me?"

"Honestly... no." Harry kicked Draco out of the room once he located the bathroom so he could shower and dress. Draco was a little perv and would peek in on Harry taking a shower. And though Harry wasn't self-conscious about his body, he didn't like peeping Toms... well not blond peeping Toms anyway.

After that, he found Draco had waited out in the hall for him and the two young men meandered down two levels and over to the east wing where Voldemort's office was located. "I'll be out in a moment, Drake."

"Does that mean you want me to wait for you?" The blond asked hopefully.

"Yeah. Wait for me," Harry responded before turning to the office and opening the door. "You can't keep me prisoner here," he stated the moment the door was shut behind him.

Tom took a moment to notice the healthy glow of the young man's face and the outraged fire in his green eyes and smirked. "Point of fact, I can. You are talking to Lord Voldemort after all. However, I've never had the intention of keeping you prisoner anywhere. Where did you get this idea?"

"Drake said you wouldn't let me leave now," Harry replied a little more calmly. "Really? I'm not a prisoner?"

"You are a guest here at the moment, Potter. You can come and go as you please, within reason," the Dark Lord ground out. "And Draco will be punished for talking too much and spreading lies."

"So I can go home then."

Tom leaned back and steepled his fingers under his chin, giving Harry an impassive look. "I saved your life, Potter."

"Yes and thanks," Harry replied cautiously, remembering he was speaking to a Slytherin. He took a seat in front of the desk, preparing for it. "Why did you do it?"

"My wish was not for you to die, obviously. But I think I'm owed for saving your life."

Harry rolled his eyes. "What do you want?"

"For you to remain here as a guest until I think you've overstayed your welcome."

Since Tom was the reason he was still alive, Harry didn't think this was such a bad thing. At least he didn't have to worry about being killed. But just to make sure... "Am I safe here?"

Tom nodded and wondered if Harry would believe first without seeing. If not then he was more than willing to prove it to the young wizard.

Harry narrowed his eyes. "I don't want to know what you're doing concerning the war and I don't want to know what the Light is doing either."

"We'll have a don't ask don't tell policy if you wish?"

"What about Death Eaters? I don't want to be constantly surrounded by Death Eaters."

"Meetings hardly ever take place here. The only Death Eaters you're likely to come across are the ones you've already been seeing. Lucius, Severus, and Draco. Possibly Bellatrix and the Lestranger brothers. Anything else?" he asked in amusement, seeing the boy's brow furrowed heavily in thought.

"I'm not staying in this humongous manor at all times, Tom. If I want to go out, I will. I'll not hide from the world."

The amused smile quickly vanished. "You'll put yourself at risk again, brat," he hissed. "Allow yourself to be kidnapped once more. Forced to do the Orders bidding."

"Escaped the first time, didn't I? I can do it again."

"And how about the fact that you could lead the Order here?"

Harry's eyes snapped to his. "I would never do that," he said forcibly.

"You may do so unintentionally."

"Do you think I'm a bloody idiot?"

"Should I really answer that, Potter?"

"Not funny. And I mean it. I wouldn't do that; intentionally or otherwise. Don't even know where here is exactly."

"Will you allow me to place a tracking charm on you?" Tom asked after a moment of silence where Harry had avoided his eyes after being stared at so intensely. "For your protection of course."

"Coming from you, I'll take that as a load of bullocks. For my protection..." Harry scoffed.

"What would it take for you to trust me, Harry?"

Harry wasn't sure why but he didn't want to answer that question. "Are you ever going to tell me why?" he asked instead. "Why did you invite me here in the first place?"

Tom grinned at him suddenly. It was like a snake strike; quick and stunning and painful. Harry thought that grin must have venom in it too because his heart was suddenly beating harder than it ever had before. Maybe he liked venom. Certainly he liked that the evil looking grin did more for Tom's good looks rather than taking away.

"My reasons are my own," the older wizard finally answered. "But I will say there are several reasons and none of them have to do with you being involved in the war, or with you being tortured or killed. This is your sanctuary if you want it, Potter."

The ex-Gryffindor huffed and stood. "Fine. But you will tell me eventually."

"Perhaps. Now run along. I've paper work to finish."

Harry nodded and began towards the door. "Err..." he turned back to find red eyes staring intently at him. "Could you not punish Draco? He's going through some things..."

Tom frowned. "Your heart is far too big."

"Thanks."

"That was not a compliment, brat."

"I know." Harry smiled. "Hey, maybe while I'm here you might cut down on the death and destruction and work on world peace?"

Tom chuckled darkly. "Don't bet on it."

For reasons Harry didn't understand, he felt the smile on his face grow as he left the Dark Lord's office. Draco was staring at Harry incredulously.

"What?" he questioned as they headed down the hall.

"World peace, Potter? Really? Were my ears deceiving me or did you actually just ask the Dark Lord to work on world peace?"

Harry snickered. "Thought I would try... and what were you doing eavesdropping?"

"If he was going to torture the Boy-Who-Lived, then I wanted to hear it," Draco answered with a grin. Harry playfully shoved him away.

"I'm not the Boy-Who-Lived anymore. Don't ever want to hear that title again."

"Sorry Potty, but unless you die, that title and others will never go away."

"I'm not running away," Harry said through gritted teeth and petulantly crossed arms over his chest. "I'm just not participating anymore."

"This is definitely a discussion for a later time when we have time to sit down and get properly sloshed," the blond said grinning. "But now I'm to show you around and-"

"Need to go back to my flat and get a few things," Harry interrupted. "Want to come? I need you to help me get there. My wand is at the flat."

Draco paled. He remembered what happened the last time he was there. "Err..."

"Yeah, come on," Harry insisted. "Need company anyway."

Draco was pulled along with Harry ignoring all of his protests. Harry gave the blond an odd searching look when Draco swung his wand around the moment they Apparated into Harry's small living room. "What's wrong with you?"

Draco's eyes scanned every inch of open space before blowing out a breath. "Nothing... nothing at all, Potter. Just get your stuff so we can go."

"Hermione's not going to be here if that's what you're worried about. She'll be at work most of the day."

"It's not the mudblood I'm concerned with."

"Stop calling her that," Harry murmured as he went into his bedroom. "What are you concerned with?"

Draco wandered in after him. "Two identical freckled devils who don't know how to respect personal boundaries."

Harry turned from where he pulled his wand from the bedside drawer. "You're talking about Fred and George? They were here?"

"They practically molested me!" the blond whined. "You should have seen the way they were eyeing me! Like fresh meat!"

"But... what were they doing here?" green eyes widened. "The Order knows then! They know where I live!"

"Calm down, hero." Draco grabbed the back of Harry's shirt before he could bolt. "Those *fiends* were here giving your mudblood information on who cast that curse."

"It doesn't make sense. I thought they didn't want anything to do with me."

Draco shrugged, having no idea what to say to that. Harry went around gathering the things he thought he would need. The Invisibility Cloak, photo journals, Firebolt and its cleaning kit, and some clothes... until Draco announced he didn't need the horrid clothes he already had.

"I'm not walking around in robes all the time, Drake," he mumbled. "I like muggle clothing."

"Fine. We'll go shopping for new muggle clothes. Clothes that fit and show off that sexy arse of yours."

Harry didn't react to that, which told Draco the brunet was deep in worried thought. Since the feud ended, it had become a game of theirs to flirt with one another even though neither could ever see themselves together, knowing they were meant for others- in Draco's case, the wrong other. But the flirting was all in good fun and Harry always rose to the occasion; always pleasantly stroking the blond's ego... but not now. Harry was lost deep in thought. No doubt about those atrocious twins.

Harry remained silent and somber throughout the short visit to his muggle flat. He didn't say more than a dozen words after they left. When Draco tried to give Harry a tour of the huge manor, the brunet declined and slunk off to brood in his bedroom. Draco wished he hadn't said anything about the twins at all.

Harry sat cross-legged on the floor in the massive bedroom with his Firebolt floating inches off the floor as he polished it. His movements were slow and practiced and he paid little attention to the actual job, instead focusing on his thoughts about the twins. Fred and George were the only Weasleys he missed most... with the exception of Ron, though Harry knew he was better off without that friendship.

But the twins were a different sort of Weasley. Not so uptight about certain beliefs, about the way things should be. Their whole lives didn't revolve around the Greater Good...at least that's what Harry had thought. Fred and George weren't absolute Slytherin haters either.

Never have been. They weren't bigoted so when Harry had lost contact with them it was really painful. He felt more comfortable with them then he did with Ron sometimes... well most times. He didn't need to tip toe around the twins about certain subjects just to avoid an argument as he often had to do with Ron.

But now it seemed the twins had helped him recover by outing a member of the Order. Did that mean they still wanted to be friends, or were they simply helping in order to make sure the Chosen One didn't die before he could kill off the big bad gorgeous Dark Lord? It was all so confusing. And heartbreaking to think that's the only reason why they would have done it. Not for a friend, but only for the Greater Good.

Tom stepped in then to hear Harry muttering under his breath, "fucking greater good... bunch of imbeciles."

"Sure you don't want to join me?"

Harry didn't even look up from his broom. "No. Stop asking."

"Not once have I asked that of you," Tom reminded him.

"Whatever. You can do what you've been doing... they can keep doing what they want to do and I'll stay out of the way," Harry replied softly and continued on with working on his broom. "If your agenda with me being here has anything at all to do with the war then you are wasting your time."

Tom refused to repeat himself and the room fell into silence. The Dark Lord crossed his arms and leaned against the doorway, watching Harry. Obviously the boy was weighted with heavy thoughts. His jaw was tightened as if he were grinding his teeth, and though Harry's eyes were obscured by pale lids and long thick black eyelashes, the dark wizard knew those green eyes were warring with emotion.

His eyes dropped to the ex-Gryffindor's hands as they meticulously polished his Firebolt and he spent long moments watching Harry's long fingers sweeping back and forth against the wood, and though the boy was obviously distracted with his thoughts, those hands knew exactly where to go without having to look at the broom.

"Was there something specific you wanted?" Harry suddenly asked.

Tom's gaze moved back to the young wizard's face. Harry was still looking at the floor, though his eyes flickered sporadically at the figure in the doorway. He smirked when he caught sight of a light blush sprinkled across Harry's pale cheeks. Obviously the young wizard had noticed his staring. "You've missed breakfast and lunch. You'll dine with me this evening."

"Is that an order?"

"Of course."

"Freaking dark lords," Harry muttered, though he was grinning slightly. "Fine. You win this time... must be a new feeling for you, eh? Winning."

Harry grinned cheekily at him and whatever had taken up the young wizard's thoughts previously seemed to have been pushed away for the time being. "Impudence is not an endearing trait, Potter," the elder wizard replied. Tom stepped inside as Harry began to pack away the broomstick and servicing kit.

Once Harry had put his stuff away, Tom moved forward to stand behind the young wizard and gripped the hem of his old and disgraceful muggle t-shirt.

Harry's eyes widened into saucers. "What are you doing?" he shrieked in a completely unmanly way, which had him blushing further in embarrassment.

"Your wound needs to be checked. To make sure it is truly healing as it should," Tom murmured as he pulled Harry's shirt off and tossed it onto the bed before Harry could argue further. "And you shouldn't be sitting as you were, hunched over. That is not going to help the gash heal."

Breathe, Harry. Breathe. The mantra was forced over and over again in his mind even as the Dark Lord's chest pressed firmly against his side. *This is the Dark Lord. You are not supposed to be attracted to the Dark Lord!* Harry swallowed thickly. And when a hand dropped to his lower abdomen and stayed there, Harry stared at those long fingers in shock before biting his lip and looking away. Tom's hands were large, fingers elegant and Harry always liked a man with hands like that. Moments later he felt another hand on his back; fingers softly probing the healing wound at the base of his back.

"Pain?" Tom asked.

"Not much," he whispered and prayed his voice wasn't truly as husky as it sounded. The hand at his front shifted and the tips of Tom's fingers inadvertently slipped a breath beneath the waistband of his baggy jeans. Harry squeezed his eyes closed. The move was not done on purpose he knew. Tom had shifted to bend over a little until his nose was nearly touching Harry's back. Probably didn't realize where his hand was...

How could he be so warm from one touch? It should be the complete opposite. He should feel cold and disgusted and throw those hands off him. But he couldn't and didn't want to. He felt safe and cared for as Tom checked the curse scar. And how was that possible?

"This scar may never heal," Tom murmured after a moment and Harry wondered when the wizard's lips had gotten so close to his ear. "But at least you'll live."

Harry was as still as a statue beneath his hands and somehow it annoyed him that no bold comeback spewed forth from the boy's mouth as was usual. Tom allowed his hands to linger a moment longer, enjoying the feel of Harry beneath his fingertips before pulling away. He thought perhaps the silence had to do with Potter's earlier thoughts.

"We're dining with the Malfoys tonight. Be sure to dress appropriately." And with that the Dark Lord left, finally giving Harry the privacy to start trembling from the insane intense

attraction he'd been trying to fight with all his might.

"What does appropriately mean?" Harry wondered some time later while staring into his walk in wardrobe. In the end he chose something that was sure to annoy the Dark Lord. If Tom were really going to drive him insane by making him attracted to said Dark Lord, he planned to get Tom back for it every chance he could.

Twenty minutes later Harry stood before Tom and grinned when the Dark wizard pinched the bridge of his nose in annoyance. "What? You don't like?" Harry asked, turning and showing off his dark jeans and long sleeved burgundy button-down shirt. A shirt two sizes too big for him. A sharp contrast to the elegant and form fitting dark blue dress robes Tom wore.

"I'd like to tear your clothes off and promptly burn them," Tom hissed at him.

"You'd take them off me first before burning them? That's not very 'evil' of you."

Tom growled before grabbing Harry by the scruff of his neck and thrusting him towards the Floo. "Malfoy Manor," Tom instructed.

Draco was at the other end, waiting to catch Harry as he knew the brunet had not learned how to exit a Floo properly. "Bloody hell," the blond tisked as his blue eyes swept over his friend, "dressed yourself again, didn't you?"

Harry laughed.

He wasn't as uncomfortable through dinner as he thought he would be, considering where he was. He wasn't even fazed to find Snape would be there as well. Though this probably had to do with the fact that his thoughts continued to slide back to Fred and George and wondering what their involvement with his recovery meant.

"Will you stop sulking," the blond hissed with a jab into Harry's side. "We do not sulk at the dinner table."

Harry blinked away the haze of depressed thoughts and turned to Draco. "Blaise is straight."

"You're lying! You have to be lying!"

"You think the entire world lies to you, Drake?"

"Don't care what you say! I refuse to believe it!"

"Draco, dear," Narcissa called down from the head of the table. "Stop sulking."

Harry picked up his goblet of wine to hide his grin. "We do not sulk at the dinner table," he mimicked, ignoring the sneer on the blond's face to pass his gaze over the other occupants at the table. Inevitably landing on Tom whom was speaking softly with Narcissa. Harry was surprised to find them both smiling, as friends would do. And then there was Lucius Malfoy and Snape, sitting together and speaking, heads bent closer than should be socially acceptable for friends. Harry's brows hit his hair line when he saw Malfoy's hand move under the table

to drop lightly on Snape's upper thigh and stay there. *No way! No way, no way. NO BLOODY WAY!*

"Your mudblood said my arse is skinny and nonexistent. Is that true too?" Draco questioned in rising panic.

Harry sighed and turned away from that surprising sight and gave the blond git his full attention. "You know perfectly well you've a delicious arse. Of course Hermione lied to you. She hates you... now, enough about that. I want to know what kind of relationship your parents have," he demanded.

"Hmm?" Draco asked curiously. He bent forward to look at his father and caught sight of what Harry had seen. "Oh, didn't you know? Father and Severus have been lovers for years and years."

"B-but," Harry sputtered. "Your mother's right there!" he needlessly pointed to the woman sitting directly across from his father.

"Sure. And they love each other. Just in a completely platonic way. Father has a lover. Mother has many. Works out for everyone involved."

Harry decided purebloods were just plain weird. And then he wondered behind the smile Tom had been giving Narcissa Malfoy and as his eyes traveled back to them, Harry vehemently denied it was jealousy that had suddenly sprung up to cause his chest to tighten. But Tom wasn't smiling at Mrs. Malfoy anymore. There was no smile and those red eyes were on him now, piercing him with a stare that immediately had Harry flushing; spreading pools of heat throughout his body in every which way.

"You really are an open book," Draco whispered from beside him. "Face is so red right now. Why don't you make a sign and stick it to your forehead that reads 'Harry wants to shag the Dark Lord'. And that said... What the hell is wrong with you? After everything that's happened, you want to shag the dark lo-"

Harry shoved half a loaf of bread into the chattering blond's mouth. "Will you shut up!" he hissed, severely grateful he and Draco were far enough away that the others couldn't have heard the blond. He then turned innocent eyes to the others whose attentions were drawn to them by the loud choking noises coming from Draco. Harry reached over to lightly pat the blond's back. "Geez, Drake," he responded loudly with an apologetic smile to the others at the table. "Just because you can fit certain big things all the way down your throat doesn't mean you should try it on everything."

Draco's face turned as red as Harry's had been moments ago and if Harry hadn't cleared the bread from his mouth, it was certain Draco would have choked to death on it. Harry couldn't help but laugh. A severely embarrassed Draco was the funniest thing he'd seen in a long time.

"What exactly are you implying about my baby, Mr. Potter?" Narcissa asked with a smile that wasn't sweet at all. Actually it was all kinds of unhinged. Harry chose not to take notice of it.

"Oh well, you know... Drake's got a talent for su-"

Draco's hands were a flurry of movement over the table and Harry found the blond's glass of wine along with his own suddenly in his lap. "Would you look at that?" Draco exclaimed as he shot from his seat. "How clumsy of me. Here, Potter. Let me help you clean that up!" Draco grabbed an unopened bottle of wine before reaching for the brunet.

Harry was yanked rather painfully out of his chair and pulled away from the table, still laughing over the incredible red tinting the blond's cheeks.

As they were leaving, Harry heard Mrs. Malfoy mutter under her breath, "and to say such things at the dinner table! About my innocent child!"

Thinking maybe he'd gone a little too far, Harry looked over his shoulder to see what Tom thought, actually worried about the Dark Lord's view on him, only to find Tom smirking at him. Harry released a breath and sent a wide smile at the Dark wizard before Draco yanked him completely out into the hall and out of view.

That smile should be illegal, Tom thought. Or at least should be caught, bottled, and on display only for me. The Dark Lord wondered at himself. Feeling jealous and possessive over such a silly thing as a smile. A throat was cleared at his right and Voldemort found his three followers looking at him expectantly.

"Yes?" he inquired of Lucius.

"Forgive me for questioning you, my Lord, but... why exactly is that boy here? Alive?"

Severus rolled his eyes. "That's fairly obvious."

"Is it?" Voldemort asked, pinning Severus in place with an intense look.

"Truthfully?"

"Go on," Voldemort replied, waving at Severus to continue without threat of retribution.

"Potter's here to be 'safe' and 'well cared for'. The word consort comes to mind as well."

"How astute of you, Severus. Though the consort part... not in any traditional sense of the word."

"He would make a horrible consort," Narcissa murmured.

"Too true, Narci," Lucius replied. "Potter would never obey."

A smile touched Voldemort's lips. "No, he wouldn't."

"What about the war?" Severus inquired. "And Potter's involvement?"

"I will keep him away from the war because that is what he wishes."

"That went well," Harry laughed as he lowered to the ground on Draco's balcony.

"Hate you so much right now!"

Harry laughed at Draco's pout and snatched the bottle of wine out of the blond's hand. "It's not like she didn't already know what kind of kinky perv you are."

"But you're wrong," he whined. "Mother may be a smart woman and observant as any Slytherin but when it comes to me she's as oblivious as you are about everything!"

"Hey..." Harry's brow furrowed from the insult.

"It's true! Mother has some sort of complex... she's in complete denial over my growing up and tomorrow..." Draco groaned as a look of horror crossed his face, "tomorrow she'll set me down for one of her annoying little talks about how I'm still innocent because if not she might go insane! Thanks a lot, Potter!"

Harry couldn't stop laughing. "You should really consider finding your mother some help then. You're eighteen, for Merlin's sake! Does she honestly expect you to remain a virgin for the rest of your life?!"

"It's not funny, bloody speccy git!"

Harry sobered slightly. "Sorry. Here sit down and have a drink with me. Sorry," he said again. "Maybe I did go a little too far."

"A little?!"

"Don't worry about it, Drake. Everything will be fine."

The two settled down and spent some time in a companionable silence, which both found odd but not unpleasant. And then Draco voiced what they'd both been thinking. "Isn't the world supposed to come to an end now?"

Harry hummed as he accepted the bottle of wine. "This is kind of new. Never hung out without... without Theo between us."

They spent more moments after that to silently drink toasts to Theodore Nott.

"Harry."

"Drake?"

By this time they were pleasantly buzzed and Draco figured he could go ahead with what he really wanted to know. "He loved you. Did you know?"

Harry bent forward over his lap. Resting his elbows on his knees, he entwined his hands and pressed his knuckles against his forehead to hide his face from view. He only nodded.

"Were you in love with him?"

Harry didn't take too long to answer. As he'd had plenty of time to think about it before hand. "I cared for him, you know that. But no, I don't think I was in love with him. He was a great friend and lover, but I always felt something was off. Which pissed me off."

"Why?"

He finally looked at Draco. "Because I wanted to love him. He was the only one who ignored my titles, you know. Not even Hermione can do that, even though she tries..." Harry looked away, wiping at his wet eyes. "Don't really want to talk about that anymore."

"Why are you here, Potter?"

"Merlin, Malfoy. I don't know. Why don't you go ask your Dark Lord?"

"What I mean to say is," Draco took a deep breath, because he was fairly sure what he was about to say would start an angry rant from the brunet in front of him. "Don't you feel guilty? For turning your back on the Light?"

Draco sucked in a breath when fiery green eyes burned into his. "Do you think I should?" he growled. "Feel guilty? After what they've done?"

"Not particularly, no," the blond replied truthfully.

"I spent my life being unselfish. Spent most of my life doing what they wanted. I didn't mind it. At first I didn't mind it at all. I was needed, right? Needed when before I was non-existent. So I didn't mind I never had a proper childhood. Didn't mind I was forced to be raised in a household that hated me. Forced to grow up too soon. But when I wanted to be a little selfish and do something for me, something that wouldn't affect their goals, I discovered they would never allow me any sense of control. Ever. So I decided instead of a little selfish I would go all the way.

"What do I know of the wizarding world? Not a lot. What the fuck was I fighting for? Preparing to die for? All I knew of the magical world was Hogwarts; homework and meager spells, rivalry and lessons on bigotry..." Harry took a deep breath and leaned forward, placing elbows on his knees. "I was never taught about the world I was supposed to be saving; and I understand Dumbledore hid me away in the muggle world in order to allow me to grow up without the fame... but that backfired on him. I grew up as a slave. I never enjoyed life then, and never at Hogwarts either. So when the Light showed they could be as evil as the Dark I decided enough was enough. I'm going to be selfish and live my life the way I want and be happy doing it. At this point I don't know which side is worse so I figure I won't fight for either side."

Draco watched the brunet slump back and glare into the night sky. "What about the Dark Lord?" he asked.

"I hate him," Harry whispered. *Hate him because he makes me ache, makes me feel safe and most of all I hate him because sometimes he makes me forget he's the reason I have no parents.* His gaze returned to Draco, and there was something like understanding in the blond's blue eyes. But it didn't make Harry feel any better.

Chapter Three

The Black Bunny

Chapter Three

It started when Potter was fourteen. That's when this fixation Tom had on him changed from simply wanting the boy to die into something entirely different. Happened the night he was returned to a body and he had to duel the boy. Harry had been scared. Terrified. But he'd never backed down. Harry's green eyes were bright with determination and scorn when he faced off for a duel he should have died in. That's when the fixation changed. That's when Tom started wanting the boy.

Though he did make a considerable effort to try and push all that away. He may be a mass murderer and an all around bastard, but Tom was no pervert and the boy had been too young. Not only that, but obviously Harry was still fighting for the Light. So Tom let his want turn into determination in killing Harry to end the ridiculous fascination he had with him. Only that fixation grew once again when he faced off with Harry at the Ministry of Magic. Invading Harry's mind that night had changed his life. It linked them on a deeper level than what they'd had before.

Tom settled back in his chair, looking up at the ceiling in his office. *Dumbledore probably thought I tainted the boy somehow but really it was the other way around... though it wasn't any kind of taint... Harry had begun to heal me the moment I settled into his consciousness.*

And though Harry didn't know this, ever since that night at the Ministry, Tom continued to travel into his mind for the express purpose of regaining himself. And now Harry wanted to be free from the war and Tom was free to pursue what he'd been coveting unlike anything else before. But not only did he want to pursue, Tom found he wanted to protect too. He wanted Harry to trust him and vice versa. He wanted Harry emotionally chained to him. Tom wondered if their link would make that happening easier or harder in the long run.

The object of his thoughts waltzed into the office just then as if he owned the place... as he had been doing the last week of his stay. Harry came in with a small smile and draped himself over the chair in front of the desk. "I'm a guest right?" he asked without greeting, swinging his legs absently.

"Yes," Tom answered slowly and warily. "We've been over this."

"And that makes you the host, correct?"

Tom nodded, eyes sweeping across the body lazily lounging in the chair and wondering if the young wizard were posing like that on purpose.

"Which means you are obligated to humor me, isn't that right?"

"I'm sure you're coming to a point..."

"Just be quiet and listen. Remember, you are humoring me."

"Potter-"

"Humor me!" Harry snapped. "If you can't sit there and listen, you could always turn back into the bunny and humor me that way. I purchased this cute little collar and leash..."

Tom's lips pressed into thin lines and there was murder in his eyes. That was humoring too. "Right then..." Harry then cleared his throat before opening his mouth to sing in a clear upbeat tone.

"It's a world of laughter, a world of tears

It's a world of hopes, it's a world of fear

There's so much that we share

That its time we're aware

It's a small world after all."

Harry had to turn away, lifting his gaze to the ceiling to avoid looking and laughing at the horror struck Dark Lord. He continued on:

"It's a small world after all

It's a small world after all

It's a small world after all

It's a small, small world."

Harry launched into the second verse before Tom could do what he wanted, which was object loudly and/or hex the living daylights out of him. And still he kept his eyes trained on the ceiling so that he could contain his laughter.

"There is just one moon and one golden sun

And a smile means friendship to everyone.

Though mountains divide and the oceans are wide

It's a small, small world.

It's a small world after all

It's a small world after all

It's a small world after all

It's a small, small world!"

Once it looked like he was finished singing, Tom opened his mouth to blast him for wasting his time on ridiculous songs but Harry straightened up in his chair and met his eyes dead on and began to whistle the annoying upbeat tune that went along with the words as loud as he could. His green eyes were alight with wicked humor and Tom wondered if Harry were trying to cast some spell by sound. Certainly he had a headache already!

Harry whistled the entire bloody tune thrice before standing. His grin was face splitting. By this time Tom was more than annoyed. "Is that all?" he asked lowly.

"For now." Harry chuckled and turned to leave the office. "By the way, I'm going to Diagon Alley. Need to go speak with some people."

"Potter, come back here."

Harry sighed. Why had he thought he could get out so easily? Tom told him he was free to come and go, but he hadn't gone anywhere except to Malfoy Manor and he knew Tom didn't mind that. But this was the first time he was going back out into public and he knew, despite what was said, that Tom did not want him going out. So when he stopped in front of the desk again, Harry expected some sort of lecture or a plain refusal of his going. Instead Tom simply pressed something into his hand.

"Put it around your neck," Tom ordered. Harry peered down to find a thin silver chain in his palm with a small charm connected to it. The charm was a small nondescript dagger.

"Untraceable Portkey," the Dark Lord explained.

Harry stroked the small dagger charm with his thumb. "Are you keeping me safe to keep the Order from finding a way to control me and fighting you in the end? Do you think you'll win if I'm out of the way?"

"Yes."

The quick and honest answer had him dropping his eyes to the floor. "I see."

Tom rose from his chair and circled around the desk until he was planted in front of the shorter wizard. "You're here for you as well. It has nothing to do with the war and it most certainly has nothing to do with controlling you," he said in response to the absolute disappointment clouding the young wizard's face. And he had such a need to chase that expression away.

"But... you thrive on controlling people," Harry whispered morosely, still staring at the floor. "I can't see how-"

"You shouldn't be controlled, Harry. The longer you stay here, the more you'll realize I have no intentions of controlling you...unless you sing another ridiculous song."

"W- what are you talking about? That song is the best ever!" Harry exclaimed as he dropped the chain around his neck and allowed the charm to fall under his shirt. "Hermione taught me that song...." Belatedly he realized he probably shouldn't have said that. Especially not when

he hoped his scheme would work. And if it did work, that meant eventually Tom would feel the need to kill someone. "Anyway, guess I'll go."

"They may have people watching out for you."

"Most likely."

"Do you understand what would happen should they capture you?"

"You'll celebrate?"

Fury washed over Tom's face and Harry stumbled back in surprise at the expression. Tom advanced on him. "I'll come after you, Potter. I'll find you. Wherever and whomever you are with will be destroyed. Just remember that before you go out and make yourself an easy target."

Okay, so Harry got the message and warning. If the Order tried and kidnapped him again and if he ended up someplace like the Burrow for whatever reason, than the Weasleys would pretty much be toast when Tom managed to find him. And he would find him. Harry was certain of it. And even though Tom was rearing his bloody Dark Lord head right now, Harry couldn't help but feel flattered by the warning. And that was insane! Still, all Harry felt was warmth from the warning and assurance that he would be found.

Harry's breath caught when he realized exactly how close they were. The Dark Lord was watching him with that furious gaze and only an inch of space lay between them. He tried valiantly not to be affected by such an intense look. He tried to keep his thoughts completely neutral. But Harry was determined not to back away from that gaze either and he was left with studying Tom's face. Of course the wizard looked older but not much. Tom was a mature version of the Tom he'd seen back in his second year. For an evil git, young Tom had been good looking, but this new older version was gorgeous. Dark brown hair that would have fallen into his eyes if Tom didn't constantly brush it away from his face. A strong jaw line Harry itched to ki—moving on! Well he didn't really pick a great spot to move on to. Tom's lips were, for lack of a better word, sensuous. Full and firm, not soft looking in the least and Harry could just imagine how it would feel to have those lips and that mouth against his skin.

Then those lips moved and red eyes narrowed. "Potter? Have you caught on to my meaning?"

"Yeah," he breathed as he backed away towards the door. "Yes, I understand. I'll be careful."

He then started to whistle 'it's a small world,' and turned around. Whistling loudly as he left the office. Making sure to whistle so loud he knew Tom could hear the tune as he entered the Floo room at end of the hall.

"POTTER!"

Harry grinned as he quickly jumped into the green fire.

Harry understood the plausible threat he was walking into by meeting Draco in Diagon Alley, but it was like he'd told the blond before. He would not hide and he would not be made to keep a low profile either. And the only reason why he was caught last time was because he'd not been completely well. He wasn't going to be such an easy target the next time they tried to ambush him.

Stepping out of the Floo within the Leaky Cauldron, Harry quickly scanned the fairly empty dining room and at once spotted the blond hunkered down in the shadows in one of the booths.

"Draco," he murmured, sliding in across from his friend. Immediately a brow rose at having a proper view of the blond's face. "What the hell? Looks like you've seen a ghost! What's wrong?"

Draco's eyes traveled across the room and he hunched down further, an anxious expression on his face. "Received an owl this morning... I think perhaps we should reschedule for today, Potter."

Harry frowned and leaned forward. "Has someone threatened you?"

"N- Not really. Well... maybe. In a way, I guess... It's not really important."

"Something has you scared, Drake. Tell me what's going on."

Draco suddenly straightened and glared. "I'm not scared!" he snapped. "And you're no longer a hero so I don't know why you care so much."

"You're my friend," Harry replied simply.

Draco sneered even as he rummaged within his dove gray robes. Harry watched him curiously and narrowed his eyes when the blond finally pulled out a letter.

"Do. Not. Laugh," Draco instructed as he held it out to the young man across from him.

Harry took the letter. "Why would I laugh at something that clearly has you terrified?"

"I am not terrified!"

The brunet refrained from answering and instead opened the letter, smoothing it down on the table. He scanned Draco's pale face once more before focusing on the letter. "Dearest Soon To Be Ours-" he began, only to have the parchment snatched out from beneath his hands.

"Don't read it aloud, you moron!"

"Okay! Sorry. Give it back," Harry said in worry. The greeting seemed kind of ominous. Either someone was stalking Draco or the greeting was an indication that someone planned on abducting the blond soon. Harry wanted to make sure he had all the facts before making a plan.

Draco gave it over once more, if a little reluctantly. He then glared at Harry for the hell of it, though the brunet was back to reading the following words. Draco cleared his throat as Harry's eyebrows hit his hairline once he had moved passed the first few lines of the letter.

For his part Harry didn't know whether to laugh aloud or run to the nearest loo in order to wank. Once he'd passed the first two lines-which talked about the gift Draco had received along with the letter- Harry finally recognized the handwriting, and his worry for the blond had immediately vanished and was quickly replaced with surprise and humor. After telling of the gift, the rest of the letter was filled with erotic scenarios involving Drake and two certain redheads. And these scenarios were written in great detail. One included Draco on all fours being fucked at both ends. Another involved Draco fucking one twin while the other fucked him from behind... it went on and on for five paragraphs. Finally, because Harry had a raging hard on, he had to skip the rest and go straight to the end. The last paragraph was a bunch of assurances that the twins would eventually have the blond and that Draco should just get used to it now rather than later. Harry was more than amused. The twins were being completely serious. Otherwise they would not have gone through so much trouble writing out this letter, nor would they have sent the blond a gift. A gift Harry was sorely curious to see.

Harry lifted his gaze to meet that of Draco's, noticing the dark blush on the blond's face. "Merlin, Drake...this is fantastic wanking material!"

Draco nodded before he could stop himself. Then he straightened and ripped the letter from Harry's hands, stuffing it back into the folds of his robes. "No! This is atrocious, Potter. Who in the blazes do they think they are?"

Harry shrugged. "That's the twins. So... what was this gift they bestowed upon you?" he asked curiously.

"Not on your life, Potty," the blond hissed. "I've let you read that ridiculously randy letter. I refuse to disgrace myself further."

"How is that disgraceful?"

Drake gave him one of those not very patient looks. "Why do I even bother with you?" he asked quite seriously. "How can you ask that? It's... it's written sexual harassment!"

Harry laughed. "It's the red hair, isn't it? Otherwise you'd probably jump at the chance for a threesome."

"I would not!" The brunet gave him a stare. "Yes, alright! It's the hair," the blond amended with a shiver. "And their manners!"

Harry leaned towards the blond and in a conspiring whisper said, "just so you know, when they boast about being big, they aren't making it up."

Draco jumped from his seat. "This conversation is over! I do believe it's time to go home."

Harry quickly slid out of his seat. "No way, Drake! We've got things to do!"

"You. You have things to do. They have a store here. There's no way I'm going out into the Alley!"

Harry adopted an innocent look, inwardly grinning. Knowing Draco would never turn down the opportunity to inflict his superior shopping skills. "Didn't you want to help me find new clothes? I'll need your help. If I go home with crap, Tom will go ballistic!"

"Low, Potter. Very low," the blond murmured. He glared at the ground for a moment. And then suddenly looked up with a smirk. "Just now... that sounded very domestic. Ready to marry the Dark Lord already?"

Harry froze in shock, going over his own words. "N-no... Stop twisting things, Drake!"

"Sorry I'm late!" someone called from behind them. Draco mewled in terror and hid behind Harry.

"It's Hermione," Harry replied. "Not the twins."

Draco sneered at the witch from over Harry's shoulder. "Like that's any better."

"If you don't stop that, I'll hex you."

"As if that would scare me."

"I'll give the twins your complete address and ways to ambush you."

"Whatever." But Draco did look a little more pale and refrained from speaking the snide comments on his tongue to Hermione.

"Change of plans," Harry told Hermione. "We're going straight to shopping."

She looked at him curiously. "But why? Thought you wanted to see Fred and George. Harry, you know they want to see you right? They've been demanding it."

Draco whined and grabbed the back of Harry's shirt in a death grip. Harry chuckled, "apparently they've been demanding a lot of things... but yeah, I want to see them. Just not with Draco around. He's terrified-" the point of a wand shoved painfully under his ribs made him rethink what he was going to say. "Just want to go shopping now. I'd rather see the twins at home, you know? I want to be able to talk to them somewhere in private."

Hermione dropped her fists onto hips. "Harry," she glared. "I did not leave work early just to go shopping!"

Before Harry could answer, Draco sneered. "Then go back to work. You have no fashion sense anyway. We're better off without your disgusting-"

Hermione's wand was pressed firmly against his nose and the blond went cross-eyed trying to see it before he ducked, using Harry as a shield.

"Could you both cut it out," Harry snapped. "And do you want to go shopping with us or not. I just want to get this over with."

"So you can return home and start the honeymoon?" Draco breathed into his ear. Harry's cheeks flooded with heat and he jabbed an elbow into the blond's stomach. Hermione had not missed Malfoy's little taunt, and her eyes narrowed onto her best friend.

"No I am not going back to work. You and I need to have a little discussion, Harry. And you aren't getting out of it either."

Harry's gaze swept out around the place, exceedingly grateful the Leaky Cauldron was doing horrible business. He didn't want to talk to Hermione about Tom. He didn't want to explain that he really had no clue why he agreed to stay at the Dark Lord's home. And he knew she knew he was attracted to Tom. She'd seen it that first day when Tom had come over as a bunny. He really really didn't want to talk about that. However he knew without a doubt he wouldn't get out of that talk.

"Fine, Hermione."

"Can we go now?" Draco whined.

Shopping wasn't a horrible affair. For which Harry was grateful. Draco and Hermione spent most of the time in muggle London bickering, which left Harry alone to do most of the choosing. He wasn't getting anything extravagant. Just clothes he felt comfortable with. Clothes he liked and that fit properly. He did allow Draco to pick out a few muggle outfits, but again Draco adhered to most of his wishes and didn't go too overboard. And he allowed Draco to take him to an upscale wizarding shopping district so that he could pick up a few formal dress robes as well.

By the time they were through, it was nearing dinner and Draco insisted on taking Harry to his favorite restaurant. He didn't invite Hermione and sneered at Harry when he invited the muggleborn along. Draco led them in and as he discussed tables with the concierge, Harry and Hermione took a look around. Harry whistled lowly at the wealth thrown about the place. Turning to Hermione, he was prepared to say something about the multiple crystal chandeliers, but Hermione was looking across the room, smirking.

"Malfoy," she called. When the blond turned to her with a sneer, she smiled brightly and pointed across the dining room to a table in the dim light. "Zabini's here."

Draco gasped and started to run his fingers through his hair as he turned to look. Harry frowned, both at the table and then at Hermione for bringing Draco's attention to what was going on across the room. Blaise was apparently on a date and was heavily lip locked with a very attractive witch with brunet hair. Draco's hands fell limply at his sides when he saw this. His eyes going wide and brimming with unshed tears.

"Hermione. There's no reason to fall to his level," Harry whispered. "You knew how much that was going to hurt him."

Hermione's smile slipped when Draco turned back to them, emotions not quite so hidden by his cold mask.

"Going home," Draco whispered hoarsely as he swept by them and quickly out the doors. By the time Harry and Hermione left the restaurant moments later, Draco had already Apparated home.

"It's not like he didn't know," Hermione grumbled. "We've been telling him Zabini is straight! I mean... that's why Zabini has no idea Malfoy was even interested in him."

"Zabini is a bloody idiot," Harry snapped. "How could he not want Draco?! Everyone wants Draco! Have you seen the git? Who wouldn't want that?"

"You don't want Malfoy," she pointed out.

"No! But that's only because it would be weird. But honestly, I think he'd be a great catch."

Hermione's brows furrowed and she opened her mouth to reply. But then shut it, seeing her friend's look. Then she smiled softly. "It's cute how affronted you are on Malfoy's behalf. Even if he doesn't deserve it."

"You don't know him like I do. He's very sensitive, Hermione."

Hermione sighed and took his arm. Somehow she doubted that. "Let's go have a quick dinner, and then I'll let you desert me to go and stroke the Death Eater's rumpled feathers."

Harry smiled gratefully. "Thanks, Mione."

Instead of staying at the upscale restaurant, Harry and Hermione went to a muggle diner down the street from Harry's flat. They were half way through with eating before Hermione commented on the fact he kept fingering the dagger necklace he wore under his shirt.

"When did you get a necklace, Harry?" she finally asked, watching as he pressed a finger against the collar of his t-shirt. "And why do you keep touching it? You've never worn jewelry before."

"Tom gave it to me earlier. It's a Portkey." Hermione's eyes narrowed and she set aside her utensils. Harry sighed. Here it was. "The answer to all your questions is I don't know," he said before she could start.

She raised a brow. "You don't know if your back is feeling any better?"

"What? No. Yeah, I know that. Back's fine... except that it's left a long scar..." He frowned at her.

Hermione smirked. "Don't be such a smart ass then Harry."

"Well... I know what you want to ask, Hermione. About where I'm living and with who. I don't know and I'm not really ready for you to examine the situation."

"Which explains why you've been avoiding me."

"I haven't."

"Please..." she gave him a sardonic look. "You've been healed for over a week. I've gotten one letter from you and zero visits before today. Why is that?"

"Just been... familiarizing myself with living there. Catching up with Drake. The bloke's funny when he's full of wine."

She leaned forward. "And what about Voldemort?" she asked quietly.

"He's funny when he's annoyed with me."

"That's not what I meant!" she snapped.

"I've already told you... don't want to talk about it, okay."

"But Harry. You're living with the Dark Lord. You expect me not to worry when I know very well he has a motive."

Harry smiled. "He's admitted to having several motives. Though he won't tell me what they are, except that I'm safe. Really, Herm. I'm safe there. And he's... he's taking care of me," he finished softly, fingering the necklace again.

"I saw the way you were looking at him."

"The evil arsehole is fit, Hermione! You have seen him right? The wizard's gorgeous now. Tall and handsome- big hands. Drop dead sexy voice... Anyway," he hurried on from the incredulous look on her face, "like I said. Don't really want to talk about this."

Hermione nodded and returned to her meal. "Will you at least talk to me when you do figure things out?"

"Yeah. Course."

They shared a smile and started to talk about other things. Hermione's job- which she disliked very much. Harry's plans for the future... he really didn't have any at the moment. Except to annoy the Dark Lord every chance he could get. And that reminded him to tell her about what he'd done in Tom's office before leaving.

She nearly spit up her soda. "No you didn't."

Harry smiled brightly. "I think he liked it!"

"You are insane."

"You keep saying that," Harry returned in amusement. "Are you hoping if you say it enough times it'll turn out to be true and then you'll have a legitimate reason to stick me in St. Mungo's? If that's it, I'll go along. Honestly I think something is wrong with me."

Hermione laughed. "There's nothing wrong with you. This is you. I like this you actually, despite you saying and doing crazy things. You've grown so much since school, you know. You're happier now. Also way more interesting."

"Oi! You saying I was boring before?"

"Just a tad depressive actually. But that's to be expected when you've been oppressed your entire life."

"Oppressed is a bit strong."

"If you think so," Hermione murmured around her glass. But she was certain she'd got it right. And that was one reason why she gave unquestionable support when Harry decided to step back from the war. The way he'd been treated as nothing more than a tool instead of a person with his own wishes was just plain barbaric in her opinion. Honestly, what kind of nation looks to a boy to save all their arses time and again? She wasn't impressed. In fact, she would never have taken a job in the Ministry if she hadn't needed it really badly. If it were possible, Hermione would quit that place in a heartbeat.

"That reminds me," she said of her thoughts. "Had an owl from Ron couple of days ago."

"Yeah?" Harry asked with indifference as they stood to leave. He really wasn't all that interested in hearing about Ron.

"He's still with Charlie."

"Wonderful," was his sarcastic reply as he held the door open for her. "Maybe the dragons have knocked some intelligence into his stubborn skull."

Hermione sighed and shook her head. "Still going on and on about your betrayal. Still trying to convince me to convince you."

"My betrayal..." Harry snorted. "At least I'm still here. What did he do when school finished? Ran off to Romania. He's got some nerve."

"I know, Harry." She smiled. "Anyway, better get home. Crookshanks needs to be fed and you need to go insure Malfoy doesn't do anything too dramatic from the heartbreak. Like trying to kill himself with too much chocolate."

Harry snickered as he pulled his friend into a hug. "I think Draco will be over Blaise soon enough."

"What makes you say that?" she asked as they separated.

Harry told her about the twins' letter and everything it entailed. Hermione's eyes were wide when he finished. "Don't think they're going to leave him alone, so he won't have time to actually pine over Blaise anymore."

"Merlin, they really were serious."

Harry laughed and nodded.

The Dark Lord's scowl was horrendous as he sat listening to Death Eater reports. The meeting had gone on for over an hour and though it wasn't the fault of his Death Eaters, he took it out on them anyway; hoping their screams would drown out the annoying song now stuck in his head. The obnoxious whistling that would not cease playing over and over again within his mind.

Potter was going to pay, Voldemort thought as another minion was subjected to the Crucio. Another twenty minutes passed with him flinging out punishment and finally he stepped back from the writhing McNair before he turned the wizard insane. "If you are not gone from my presence in the next five seconds I will kill you. All of you!"

All but three scampered away so fast it was all really a blur. Only Lucius, Severus, and Bellatrix retained some decorum and simply walked quickly. When the room was empty, Voldemort Apparated back to his manor to his office. Immediately he ordered a house elf to provide a headache potion. After taking the potion and hurling the vial into the fire, Voldemort went in search of the cause of said headache. It had been Harry's intention to get that blasted tune stuck in his head.

"It's a small world... what rubbish!" he spat as he glided down the halls, red eyes narrowed to seething slits. Barging his way into the brat's private quarters, he found Harry not there. With a little more searching and finally calling a house elf for information, Voldemort learned Harry was not at home and hadn't returned since he'd left earlier in the day. It was nearing midnight. Surely Harry should have returned by now.

He was purposely overlooking the fact that Harry was eighteen and could do what he wanted. Free now to stay out as long as he wished. But the Dark Lord worried. Until he'd won the war, the Order would be after Harry and as time went by and they realized the Chosen One was absolutely serious about staying neutral, he feared the Order would take drastic measures to ensnare Harry to them. More drastic than the Slytherin attacks. Cursing Harry had been an accident, but Voldemort knew eventually... the next time would not be.

Returning to his own chambers, he discarded the dark robes he always wore during Death Eater meetings and raids. The robes Harry had said one time were his Voldemort persona. The brat insisted he was no longer Voldemort when the robes were off and instead was just Tom, a Dark wizard with issues. Tom had laughed and then hexed him, even though the idea rang true. Honestly he preferred Harry refer to him as Tom anyway.

Tom stood in the middle of his room and closed his eyes, breathing deeply and activating the tracking charm he'd placed on the young wizard. He had asked Harry for permission to do so. And Harry had refused. Of course he would. But Tom also knew that Harry knew he would place a tracking charm on him regardless. And he had. Tom had done it right after the boy had been healed.

Moments later, he Apparated to Harry's location; his wand firmly gripped in hand in case he arrived somewhere neither wanted to be at. His hand relaxed seconds later when he realized where he was. The middle of Malfoy Manor's Entrance Hall. Voldemort hissed in annoyance.

Of course. Harry had been spending a large amount of time here. During the evenings. He'd be damned if he were going to say that he was jealous, but he had begun to be very annoyed that Harry spent so much time with Draco. Especially when he knew they both preferred boys and seemed very fond of each other. It was not jealousy, he thought firmly.

"C-can T-tripe be doing s-something for Lord M-master?"

Voldemort looked down to find the Malfoy's house elf bowed low in front of him. "Where is your Master?"

"M-master Malfoy be in the study with Mr. Snape, Lord Master."

"Announce me."

"Yes, Lord Master!" it squeaked and then disappeared. Tom strode down the hall towards the study and met Severus and Lucius halfway.

"Was I interrupting something?" he asked in amusement after taking in their less than perfect appearances.

"No, my Lord," Severus intoned flatly as he and Lucius bowed to him.

"Where is Potter?" he asked them. "The tracking charm I placed on him has led me here."

Lucius and Severus shared a look as they straightened from bowing. Severus knew what Lucius was thinking and his lips pressed into thin lines in answer. Lucius pulled in a breath before releasing it slowly. "If he is here visiting Draco, then they are probably within my son's quarters."

"Lead the way, Lucius," he ordered coldly.

Lucius nodded and turned towards the spiraling staircase. "My Lord..." Lucius paused on the first step. "Draco is unaware of your plans for Potter. That is my fault. I never thought to explain to him-"

"Lead on, Lucius."

Tom smirked at the blond's back. Did he actually believe he would kill Draco should they find the two in a position he would not like? He wouldn't. Not to say Draco would walk away without injury, but it was true he nor Lucius had warned him away from Harry. And how much harder would it be to lure Harry to him if he were to kill the young blond? So no, he would not kill Draco. But he wasn't about to tell this to Lucius. He enjoyed watching the blond perspire in worry and trying to keep that worry off his face and out of his voice.

Finally they arrived in front of Draco's closed doors. "Move aside."

Lucius stepped back to stand beside Severus, leaving the Dark Lord to open the doors. The blond was slightly relieved when his Lord did not need to unlock the door and no wards had been placed around the room. Draco hadn't been seeking complete privacy. That was a very good sign.

The first room beyond the door was Draco's small sitting room. It was empty. The room beyond that was the bedroom and the Dark Lord strode towards that closed door and flung it open. Empty. But the double doors leading to the veranda were open and all three wizards immediately spotted legs stretched out in plain view. Lucius hurried over and stopped dead in his tracks. Harry Potter sat a little off to the sides of the door. His back pressed against the balcony railing, head tilted to the side. His mouth was slightly parted and he was snoring. Within loose fingers was a bottle of wine that was nearly finished. Draco's legs had been the ones he'd seen. The blond's head was lying on Potter's shins, a small amount of drool dripping onto Harry's pant leg, and he too was clutching an empty bottle, hugging it tightly to his chest like he used to do at night with his teddy bear. Three more empty bottles were carelessly discarded around the balcony.

"They've pilfered my best wine! Five bottles!" Lucius bent forward and wrenched his son off Potter's legs. "My best wine, Draco!"

Lucius' shout caused both boys to react. Though Harry didn't awaken, he did shift, head falling to the other side as the wine bottle slipped from his fingers. Draco's eyes blearily opened as he sagged against Lucius.

"Blaise was snogging that bint, Father," he slurred, before dropping his head against Lucius' chest. "Nobody wants me!" he wailed.

Lucius nearly growled and yanked his son back into the bedroom. "Draco, what were you and Potter doing?"

"Drinking, obviously," he stated and then giggled in a ridiculous manner. "Potter... can't hold his drink."

Lucius shoved Draco onto the bed and began to take his son's boots off; aware the Dark Lord was leaning against the doorway of the veranda, watching them. "Draco, you can't... you must—I forbid you from starting an affair with Potter!"

Apparently Draco found that hilarious if his laughter was anything to go by. "Harry? And me? Not a chance! That would be too strange!" he exclaimed as he fell onto his back, eyes still closed. "Besides," he paused to laugh hysterically, "Harry wants to shag the Dark Lord. Isn't that amazing, Father? The freaking Boy-Who-Lived wants to shag the Dark Lord! Is the world coming to an end? I think it is, because really... or maybe Harry's right and he has gone insane— do you know what Harry calls him, Father? He calls him Bunnymo-"

"Obliviate him immediately," Tom announced. "Has he always been this talkative when drunk?"

As Lucius obliviated his big-mouthed son, Severus answered. "Yes, my Lord. Can't seem to help it. It's especially embarrassing when he's gotten into the wine."

Tom made a noncommittal sound as he stepped out onto the veranda, eyeing up the young wizard who apparently wanted to shag him. So at least on that front their feelings were mutual. "Potter?" he questioned, poking the boy in the side with the toe of his boot.

Harry answered by gracelessly slumping over until he was stretched out on the ground. "Enough whining," he mumbled, his words trailing off and followed by more snoring. Tom's lips twitched in a smile as he crouched and took Harry's arm, placing it around his neck and then standing again, supporting the drunken wizard against his side.

"What is this?" Lucius exclaimed. "Did he steal our whip?!"

Tom turned to find Lucius at a round table, staring down into a box. Severus went to stand beside his lover, gingerly picking up the dark green leather whip from within the box. There was also a blindfold, shackles lined with fur, and a bottle of something that Severus suspected was lube. He did not touch that.

Wrapping a tight arm around Harry, Tom pulled the young wizard back inside just as Lucius discovered a card within the box.

"Dearest Draco," Lucius read aloud. "Please accept this as a token of our appreciation of your luscious body. We will all be having fun with these gifts in the near future. Adoringly Yours..." Lucius gasped and dropped the card, "Fred and George Weasley," he ended in a strangled voice.

Severus dropped the whip back into the box before wiping his hands on his pants.

"Well..." Tom chuckled. "Apparently someone does want your son. Or should I say someones?"

"Weasleys," Lucius croaked, turning to stare at his unconscious son.

"Get used to it, Mr. Malfoy." Everyone turned to find Harry's eyes were slightly open, if a little blurred, and he sported a lopsided grin. "The twins are determined. It's only a matter of time before they break down Draco's defenses."

"I'll have them killed."

"I'll kill you," Harry returned, and though that lopsided grin was still intact, his eyes were surprisingly clear where they weren't a moment ago. "Touch the twins and I'll kill you."

Severus sneered at the boy. Obviously he was letting the wine get to his head. "You are in no position to threaten anyone, Potter."

"Snape. You are a bastard and I hate you. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to go to bed. The world seems to be spinning really fast... don't think that's normal." He tried moving, only to realize someone was holding him up. His eyes landed on the hand resting over his stomach. He followed the hand and the forearm and then looked to his side, eyes going wide and cheeks flushing. "Oh, it's you. Thought I was standing on my own."

"And you're awake." Which meant he didn't need to hold the brat up anymore. But when Tom removed his arm, Harry fell to the ground in a heap. Harry sighed as he rolled onto his back and closed his eyes. Surely he wasn't going to go to sleep right there.

"Potter, you should-" Harry had reached up to stroke his necklace and whispered the activation word. Tom growled. The boy would end up in his office and he sincerely hoped Harry would not be sick upon landing there.

Tom turned to his minions. "I do not think he was bluffing when he threatened your life, Lucius. The Weasley twins will be left alone." He then smirked an evil smirk. "I wouldn't want to lose one of my very best supporters."

He was gone the next moment, leaving Lucius to sputter incoherently.

Harry was unconscious again, sprawled out on the office floor when Tom found him. "If you can't handle the alcohol, then why drink?" he muttered as he picked the boy up once again. Half way to Harry's room, the dead weight decreased as Harry slowly came to and started to walk on his own, kind of.

And then Harry started humming horribly out of key. Humming *that* tune, reminding Tom of why he'd gone looking for Harry in the first place. "Potter. I will put you under unspeakable torture for the annoyance you've given me today," he hissed and released the boy. Harry stumbled away into the wall. He slumped and blinked in confusion before the lopsided grin took over his features and he took in Tom's form from top to bottom.

Harry licked his lips before answering. "It worked then... wonderful," he practically purred.

Tom scowled and approached the idiot. Invading Harry's personal space, he was preparing to explain the workings of every hex he was about to send the brat's way when suddenly a hand was thrust into his hair and a mouth was pressed firmly against his, moving and biting at his lips. Well... this was unexpected, and perhaps a little unwelcome as he knew it was the wine inspiring these new bold moves of Harry's. Still, he was the Dark Lord and if there was anything he knew how to do, it was taking advantage. And Harry had started it, after all.

Harry pressed in further by rising on his toes and fitting his body against his and Tom could feel the younger wizard's arousal pressed against his thigh. "How do you do that?" Harry mumbled against his mouth. "Make me ache? It's wrong, but I want more."

Tom raised a hand to the boy's neck, thumb lightly caressing the flesh as his hand traveled up to tangle into the boy's hair. "You're being stupid again, Harry," he whispered against those lips.

"No I'm not... can't help it," Harry breathed in contradiction. "Kiss me or back away."

Tom chose the first of course. He shifted, ensuring Harry felt his own arousal and the young wizard gasped at the contact, leaving Tom free to plunge into his mouth and possess the wizard's mouth. Harry turned into a trembling warm mass in his arms as he tasted and dominated the intoxicating cavern that seemed to always spew out boldness. Harry pulled back once, his eyes blinking rapidly as he tried to clear his mind. Then he shook his head and pressed in again. Tom couldn't help but chuckle against his eager mouth. Oh and Harry was eager, and pliable, and Tom desired all of him with a force that worried him.

Tom moved his hand in between them; moving low to the fastening of Harry's jeans, skimming by to run a hand over his cloth covered erection. "What is it you want, Harry? Do you want me to touch you?"

Harry pulled back panting, though his hand was firmly attached to the back of Tom's neck. Tom returned to those swollen lips, pulling Harry's bottom lip into his mouth and sucking as he pressed against the erection beneath those annoying muggle pants. Harry moaned into his mouth and bucked his hips, seeking out the pressure of his hand again and again.

Tom pulled his mouth and hand away before smirking at the wild-eyed teen. Delighting in the darkened color of Harry's eyes and the swollen red lips. "I asked you a question, Harry."

"Yes! Yes, I want you to touch me!" Harry gasped, lurching towards the Dark Lord again.

"Beg for it," Tom purred against Harry's lips, his fingers poised at the zipper of his jeans.

A frown crossed Harry's face and he pulled back only a little. "No, I don't want to beg you," he whined. "But, could you touch me anyway? That's not a beg by the way."

Tom didn't know how Harry's continued resistance, even in his inebriated state, could endear the boy to him more. But it did. And Harry suddenly found himself thrown back against the wall and his wish finally granted. Tom's hand slipped underneath his jeans and a large calloused hand was touching him. Stroking his hard leaking cock, sending ecstasy spiraling through his veins and making it nearly impossible for him to breathe.

Tom held the young wizard against the wall and watched that expressive face as he touched him. Watched the expressions intently, enthralled by the whimpers and gasps passing Harry's swollen lips as he stroked the ex-Gryffindor to the edge. Watching and bringing Harry to climax was better than Tom had imagined. Seeing Harry come undone was enough to tide him over until he could really have the Gryffindor. Tom pressed against Harry's heaving chest, and locked their lips together, catching Harry's tongue in a spiral with his own, before pulling away. He was not prepared to take full advantage of his house guest at the moment.

When he pulled away, Harry took a deep breath before speaking very quietly. "I'm gonna regret all this in the morning..." his brow furrowed. "I don't want to regret it."

And Tom knew he would. The moment Harry pressed their lips together, Tom had known Harry would regret it in when the effects of the alcohol had gone and he was left with nothing but a headache- and Tom hoped it was a horrible one- and a nauseous stomach. Tom couldn't let that happen. Harry regretting. It would be a step back in the progress he'd made. It would close Harry off to him and he could not have that.

Tom pulled Harry into one more kiss, one that stoked the simmering fire in Harry before pulling away from the teen. "No, you will not regret it," he promised as he raised his wand to Harry's face. Smiling when Harry only blinked lazily at him. His smile was from knowing the young wizard trusted he wasn't about to hurt him. "*Obliviate*."

Chapter Four

The Black Bunny

Chapter Four

He wanted to die. He wanted to die in any way possible. Surely that would be less painful than the torture currently going on in his head at the moment. And Harry was sure most of the pain came from the blinding light shining against his closed eyes. Whimpering pitifully, he rolled over and pulled the comforter over his head. There shouldn't be any light shining into his room right now. No matter the time of day. He'd shut the curtains tight the day before and the drapes were a deep purple color so nothing should have been able to shine through. Harry appreciated Tom giving him a room that allowed plenty of sunlight to come through during the day, but it was only the mornings when he had a problem with it. Which is why he requested darker drapes than the light blue the room had at first.

And that brought him back to the point. Those curtains were shut now so why the hell was he being blinded even when his eyes were firmly closed? He could even *feel* the light from beneath the heavy comforter over his head. It was excruciating! Growling, Harry ignored his roiling stomach and his brain-exploding headache and kicked the blankets off him to go and shut the curtains. Only when he gingerly sat up and opened his eyes, he cried aloud and had to cover them again. It was like the sun was set up right in front of his window and it had only taken him a second to realize all of that light wasn't natural. Not only that but the fucking curtains were gone! There was no escape from the horrendous light making his hangover three times as bad.

"I'm completely blind now!"

He twisted around and started running hands along the bedside table, looking for his wand. He found his glasses and then cursed after accidentally pushing them off to the ground. He refused to open his eyes in order to retrieve them and continued to feel around for his wand. Once in hand, he moved until he faced the area where the light seemed painfully brightest and pointed his wand. "*Finite Incantatem!*" Nothing happened. "Err... *Nox!*" Still nothing. "Fuck!" Harry tried everything he could think of to douse the light and nothing worked. He even tried blacking out the window. That didn't work and he knew then that this was Tom's doing.

Harry blindly stumbled his way to the bathroom, falling three times on the way, and vowed revenge. Tom must have been severely annoyed with the song by that time and somehow found out he'd been over drinking with Draco. And what better way to get back at him by making his hangover so bad he'd rather die.

Harry jumped into the shower after stripping. He couldn't even remember most of the night. And he didn't remember leaving Draco either but he must have. He'd been sleeping in his bed with his clothes still on, so he must have made it to his bed before passing out. It was strange that he couldn't remember most of last night. Usually he wasn't one to forget things, no matter

how much he drank. Which was sort of a curse, Harry thought with a wince. Because when drunk, he tended to let go of his inhibitions with relish; doing and saying whatever he felt like, not caring in the least about consequences of any kind. And then waking up with explicit memories of the night before...

Harry leaned forward with a groan. If he had seen Tom last night, what could he have said to the Dark wizard? Honestly, he thought with a pang of embarrassment, there was no telling what he'd said... or what he might have done because he found his control slipping every time he was within the same room as Tom. And it was worse since he couldn't remember a damn thing from last night.

"Calm down," he murmured, dropping his forehead against the tiled wall, letting the hot water wash away much of his headache. "Maybe he wasn't even around." He prayed that was the case.

The light was still excruciating when he left the bathroom and his headache came back tenfold. All the good the shower had done was instantly vanished in the face of such a boiling light. It was so bad Harry had to hurry to the bed, grab the comforter and throw it over himself as a tent while he looked around the ground for his glasses before moving on to the wardrobe.

"Mr. Potter, s-sir?"

Harry sighed and stuck his head out of the wardrobe, squinting until his eyes were nearly closed to spot the small house elf standing in the bright light. The creature didn't seem fazed by the light at all. "What?"

"Master wishes to see you."

"Right now?"

"Master says when you can."

"Thanks... err, can you fix my window and block out the light?"

Harry nearly growled when the house elf began shaking its head rapidly. "Master say we not allowed to stop the light or bring back curtains."

"Can I get a hangover potion at least or a headache potion or something?!" Harry growled with each shake of the poor creature's head. He sighed in defeat. "You can go now."

Harry turned back into the wardrobe when the elf disappeared. He grumbled as he rifled through his clothes. "Bunnymort, this isn't over."

"Do you understand what needs to happen in this time, Severus?" Tom sat behind his desk, eyes narrowed on the Potions Master who sat beside a still Lucius.

"Yes, my Lord. I should be able..." Severus then went on to say things that were probably important but Tom ignored him for he'd just caught sight of Harry, who stumbled right into

the door frame and fell down onto his back with an oomph! A sadistically smug smile appeared on Tom's face.

"Sorry," Harry mumbled to the door frame as he climbed back to his feet and stumbled into the office.

"Potter, your stupidity astounds me," Severus murmured.

Harry stuck his middle finger up with a smile. "Right back at you, Snape! And it's not my fault anyway! Your stupid Dark Lord blinded me! I can hardly see, even with my glasses! Large bright white spots wherever I look!"

"Harry," the Dark Lord drawled, drawing the youth's attention. Tom barely refrained from chuckling at the wince crossing Harry's face when he quickly turned his head in Tom's direction.

"What do you want, torturous fiend?" Harry snapped.

Tom sat back and flicked his wrist. The drapes over the study window flew to the sides, flooding the room with blinding light.

Severus and Lucius hissed as they covered their eyes while Harry cried out in agony. "Ahh! It burns!" He fell to the ground and scuttled around to cower in front of Tom's desk to hide from the light, ignoring the legs his body was pressed against by doing so. But Severus and Lucius were too busy trying to protect their eyes from the light that they didn't seem to notice the young wizard's body pressed against them.

"You two may go," Tom told his minions, not the least bit perturbed by the light. Lucius and Severus rushed away out of the office as if they were vampires.

"Turn it off! Tom, you monster! Turn it off!"

Tom dimmed the light a little and rounded his desk. He felt a delicious kind of amusement upon seeing the young wizard curled into a tight fetal position with arms wrapped firmly over his head and face. "Do you have a headache, Potter?" he chuckled darkly and squatted. Lightly he brushed the fringe away from Harry's forehead and then snaked a finger between the brat's arms to press against the lightning bolt scar. "It must be terrible."

Harry whimpered and convulsed before uncurling. He then promptly vomited all over the Dark Lord's shiny boots. Tom slowly stood, staring at the mess on his boots as Harry fell onto his back; Tom leveled furious eyes on his house guest and suddenly found his fury vanishing once seeing Harry had passed out and was looking paler than he should.

When Harry came to, it was blessedly dark and something cool was laying upon his forehead. "What happened?" he rasped without opening his eyes, knowing Tom was near. He could feel another person's body heat near his own, and it was confirmed when he felt a body press shift beside him. Not to mention Tom's magic. It was swirling around and teasing his as it usually did when they were near together.

"I may have taken my vindictiveness a little too far," Tom murmured. Harry would have grinned if his head still hadn't been pounding. Tom had sounded a bit petulant and a lot apologetic. "You can open your eyes now."

"No."

Tom chuckled and crossed his legs, looking at the boy half sitting half laying beside him on the chaise lounge. Harry's eyes were tightly and stubbornly closed. "There's not much light in here," he promised.

"Am I supposed to trust the word of the fucking Dark Lord?!"

"Yes, Potter. You are."

Harry snorted.

"Here's a headache potion for you and herbal tea for your stomach. Try not to vomit on me again."

Harry cracked an eye open as Tom leaned forward to pluck the hangover potion off the small coffee table near them. Harry studied the back of Tom's head, both scowling and staring in wonder at the man. So before, in a roundabout way, Tom had been taking care of him, just as he'd told Hermione. But never like this. And... Harry reached up to touch the cold compress on his forehead and the scowl part of his expression died immediately.

"Sorry I threw up on you."

"I caused it," Tom murmured, having no wish to hear his apologies.

"Do you feel... bad about that, Tom?"

Tom turned back and sneered at the cheeky grin aimed his way. "Not in the least, Potter. For that song you deserve every bit of pain I caused you. Probably more."

Harry let his head fall back against the lounge, though he continued to stare at Tom's back and tried not to notice how well Tom's black tunic molded against broad shoulders or the way the Dark Lord seemed to have muscles that rippled as he moved to pick up the cup of tea as well. Were Dark Lords supposed to be so bloody fit?

"Ug... Never drinking like that again," he muttered when Tom handed him the potion.

"What made you drink so much wine?" Tom asked as he settled beside him.

"Draco. We- Draco, myself, and Hermione- went out to dinner last night. Blaise was at the restaurant he took us to..." Harry paused to drink the potion and handed the vial back. "He was there with a date. A female date. They were snogging at the table."

"Ah."

"Yeah. He was really upset about it. Most likely still is. He can do so much better! Zabini is a nitwit anyway."

"No one can control whom they become attracted to or not," Tom said as he handed him the tea.

The softly spoken words had Harry blushing and hiding behind his teacup. Tom hid a smirk as he turned to the side to pick up a book.

"What did you want to see me about anyway?" Harry inquired after moments of surprisingly comfortable silence.

"You have permission to invite Granger over here. As long as her visits are stealthy and you are sure she will not betray you and inadvertently me."

"You saved my life. She would never do that. Just like I would never do that. But... are you serious? I can invite friends over?"

"I said Granger. That's one friend."

"But why?"

"I'll be going away. In three days. I would... appreciate it if you remained between here and Malfoy Manor while I'm gone and I thought you'd enjoy more company than just Draco and his whining."

All Harry heard was the fact that Tom was leaving somewhere. "What do you mean you're going away?"

"It deals with the war. You don't want to know."

"How long will you be gone?" Harry asked, trying desperately not to sound like he was whining. It annoyed him that even a tiny sliver of him would miss the evil bastard.

"A month. Perhaps longer."

That tiny sliver grew. It grew and worry clouded his mind, aiding his traitorous thoughts. He wanted to ask. Harry wanted to break the don't ask, don't tell policy they had. He wanted to know if the Dark Lord were going to put himself in danger.

Tom stood then and it looked like he was about to pace and only caught himself at the last moment. Instead he turned and faced Harry fully. Looking down at the young wizard with narrowed red eyes. "And since I'll be away for that long, which is enough time for you to be stupid again thus letting the Order grab you, you will remain here and at the Malfoys."

"I'm not stupid! And I have plans to go out."

"What plans?"

"I want to see the twins," he murmured.

"Fred and George Weasley?"

Harry nodded. "I miss them. Hermione said they were the ones to help her out, finding the information for you that helped with my healing. She says they didn't do it for the Order."

There was more silence, in which time they both stared at each other. Tom was giving him such an unreadable stare that Harry began to squirm. "Look. I'll be careful when you're gone. Don't worry about it. Don't even see why you're worried anyway."

"Three friends then."

Harry blinked up at him. "Pardon?"

"You can have Granger and the Weasley twins over," Tom ground out as if the words were painful. Harry stared at him wide eyed. "But you must promise to stay here. It's not as if my home is small. There are plenty of things to do to keep you occupied. Perhaps you might open a book. There are these things within called words and put together they tell stories and impart factual information. You might actually learn something useful."

"Hey, I read!"

Tom ignored that. "There's also the acres around the mansion that are warded. You could play Quidditch with Draco; horses to ride-"

"You are coming back, right?" Harry burst out as he shot to his feet. "I won't promise unless you promise to come back."

Harry fought the blush taking over his face. Something in the way Tom was talking had him fearing for where the Dark Lord was going. And despite it being wrong- because this was Voldemort and he shouldn't care- he did fear that Tom wouldn't come back. And he knew this worry was displayed perfectly on his face. Still he didn't care. At the moment he couldn't think about why or what was happening to him concerning Tom. All he cared about at the moment was Tom's promise that he would come back.

All at once pleasure seemed to soften Tom's features and his genuine smile was truly beautiful. Harry had never seen that smile before. It took his breath away. "Of course I will come back. Wouldn't want you to burn my home to the ground."

"Promise," Harry ground out. "You didn't promise."

Tom approached slowly until they were nearly touching and waited until Harry raised his eyes to meet his before speaking. "Why do you want this promise so much, Harry?"

"Can't you just promise me?" he pleaded. Having no idea why his heart was suddenly beating rapidly in fear. He shouldn't care one whit if Tom returns.

Oh, Merlin, but he did. It wasn't as if they were complete strangers any more. He'd spent enough time with the Dark Lord to learn things about the man beyond his evil ways. He knew some quirks. The Dark Lord had a lot of quirks. Harry knew the man liked to laugh when sharp wit was presented. He knew Tom refused to eat chicken and rarely drank red wine. He

knew Tom loved to spend hours in his library with only a single candle for light. He knew Tom preferred silk to satin. He knew Tom had an unbelievable fondness for bunnies of all things- but really that was expected since he could turn into one. He knew some of Tom's wicked grins were downright perverted on occasion. And Harry knew most times than not, Tom did not resemble the mass murderer he was when around Harry and it was not a charade. There were so many sides to the Dark wizard and Harry was dismayed to realize he *needed* to learn them all. "Just promise," he finally whispered.

Tom would have said anything to wipe all that worry from those eyes. "You have my promise." He rolled his eyes when the boy breathed in relief. "I shouldn't even have to make such a ridiculous promise, Potter. I am Lord Voldemort. What exactly do you think is going to happen to me?"

Harry took a step back. It helped him breathe better. "Anything could happen. You wouldn't be gone a whole month if whatever you're doing was simple and easy."

"Maybe you aren't stupid," Tom muttered. "Now, I'll have your promise."

"I'll stay here until you get back. Promise."

"Splendid."

Suddenly Harry felt really very awkward standing there with little room between them; with those gleaming red eyes on him after he'd displayed so much emotion for his former enemy. He took another breath and then fled as regally as he could with Tom's amused chuckles following him, sending delightful shivers down his spine.

Two days later found both Tom and Harry once again in the library, playing a game of wizard's chess. Tom had been spending most of their time together laughing at Harry's frustration at being beaten so badly.

"Your chess skills are deplorable."

"I'm letting you win. You need to win at something right?"

Harry laughed when Tom's eyes narrowed and his scar stung. "Ah, what's the matter, Bunnymort? Afraid of the truth?"

Okay now his scar was throbbing. But the look on Tom's face was priceless and therefore the pain was worth it. However, he knew more pain was coming and was grateful for the sudden appearance of Tom's house elf. Tom, however, wasn't so pleased and scowled tremendously at it.

"M-Master... Mr. Malfoy has come to see Mr. Potter," it squeaked. Harry perked up. He'd not heard a word from Draco in two days. He'd even tried to go visit, but the house elf informed him Draco was refusing visitors for the foreseeable future.

Tom sighed, seeing Harry's pleasure at hearing the blond had come calling. "Very well. Show him in."

The house elf bowed before disappearing. Harry turned to Tom, who'd deserted their chess game to sit down with another book. "Do you beat your servants? Your house elves, I mean," he elaborated, knowing very well Tom took great pleasure in torturing his human minions.

"Why should I waste time doing such a thing when it's apparent they already fear me? My house elves follow my every order without question. Hardly do they make mistakes."

Harry turned away with a noncommittal sound. Tom sat back and opened his book. Pretending to read, most of his attention was on the young man standing a few feet off, watching the door for the blond. Harry hadn't any idea how hard it was for him to keep from touching him these past few days. Especially after the events of three nights prior. Tom clenched his fingers around the book in his hands. What he wouldn't give to be able to do what he's always done in the past. Take what he wanted without caring about the consequences. But doing that now would damage any chances of Harry willingly tied to him. And that's the only way Tom wanted the young wizard. Willing and open and bright.

His eyes dropped down to his open book and he frowned. He did feel slightly guilty for what he'd done... the obliterating part. Definitely not the touching part. But he couldn't have Harry pulling away from him. He was very aware taking that memory might backfire on him, especially when he planned to reveal to Harry that he'd done it. He would tell because he did want Harry's trust. But what he wasn't prepared to do was deal with the things that would come along because Harry had been drunk and threw his inhibitions out the window. Tom did not have enough patience for that. So he planned to wait until after Harry had willingly become his lover before telling about that memory incident.

"Draco."

The softly spoken greeting had Tom looking to find young Malfoy shuffling into the room, looking less than perfect; which was an odd sight indeed. Draco had dark circles around his eyes, and his lips were pinched in thin lines. He looked dreadful and despondent and half his usual whiny spoiled self. It was a disgusting display.

"Did we... Harry, my father has been eyeing me in a strange manner lately. Did we leave my rooms that night and do something incredibly stupid? Honestly, he's been looking at me and scrunching up his nose as if he smelt something horrible. Like Mother does sometimes. But I can't remember anything of that night."

Harry cleared his throat; Tom saw him throw a discreet look his way, a blush coloring his face before turning back to Draco. "Don't know, Drake," he whispered. "I can't remember either. But I hope to Merlin we didn't leave your rooms."

"Obviously you did. You ended up back here somehow. It irks me that I cannot remember... and Father keeps giving me these stares," he whined.

Tom silently cursed. If they continued to talk about it, it was going to lead to questions and demands of answers before he was ready to explain himself to Harry.

"Tom? Did you see me the other night?"

Tom looked to find Harry facing him as well as Draco, who looked astonished to see the Dark Lord there. Harry's eyes were wide and amusingly terrified. Apparently the young wizard knew how he acted when drunk. *Why yes, Harry. I saw quite a bit of you actually. And I'd very much like to repeat our performance.* "Yes. You must have Portkeyed into my office. Which is where I found you, passed out. I then helped you to your bed."

Harry's head looked like it was ready to explode, there was so much blood pooling there. Tom grinned before returning to his book.

Harry turned back to Draco and swallowed thickly. That grin had been one of those perverted grins. "So... how are you doing?"

"How do you think I'm doing, Potter?" was the hissed reply.

Harry sighed. "Still down about Zabini, then. Course you are," he went on before Draco could deny it. "Look at you."

Draco stood there, trying desperately to keep the stoic look on his face. But all at once his shoulders sagged and he leaned forward, dropping his forehead against Harry's shoulder. "I tried for years," he blubbered. "Years to get him to look at me like he does at those bints. Then I tried so hard to not feel anything for him, and then I swore I wouldn't give up. Blaise was being thick and would eventually see... I've been in denial for soooo long!"

"Potter, take him away before I do something drastic."

Harry snickered as he threw an arm around the blond. "You need cheering up! I know just the thing!"

"What?"

"Fudge."

"Fudge?"

"Yeah. Eating fudge always makes me feel better."

"You have fudge?"

"No."

"Then what-"

"We're going to make it! Making the fudge is half the fun! Tom can I-"

"By all means, use the kitchen. Should you need any ingredients not stocked then call the house elves to fetch it for you."

"You know how to make fudge?" Draco asked, perking up a bit as they left.

Tom heard Harry reply that he knew how to make a lot of things.

Draco leaned against the marble island in the kitchen, feasting on Harry's fudge; moaning and groaning around the delectable chocolate giving his taste buds multiple orgasms. "This is decadent, Harry. You could sell this stuff and make a fucking fortune! Savior Fudge! Or something like that..." he ended with another moan. Harry stood across from him, smiling brightly; sincerely touched that Draco liked his fudge so much.

"Feeling better?"

"Hardly," the blond replied. "But I do feel stuffed and fat, thanks so very much."

"Oh well..." Harry moved forward to take the fudge tray away. Draco lunged forward, wrapped arms around the tray and hissed at him.

"Back away, Potter."

Harry laughed as his hands launched into the air in surrender. "Listen. You need to get over Blaise and find another bloke to take up your time... I think we should go out tonight."

"Go out?" Draco asked slowly, eyes perusing the remaining squares of fudge in a covetous manner. "No. I don't think so."

"C'mon, Drake. It'll be fun. Besides, after tonight I'll basically be under house arrest. I want to go out and have some fun before then."

Draco crossed his arms with a petulant pout. "I. Don't. Want—what do you mean, house arrest?"

"Tom's going away for a while. I can only go to your place if I leave here."

Draco's eyes narrowed. "And you agreed?"

"Erm..." Harry squirmed under the speculative stare. "Yeah. I kind of promised. But anyway that's why I want to go out tonight."

"No. I don't feel like it. I'm going to return home and hide from the world for a while. And I'll be taking the rest of this fudge with me."

Harry eyed his friend. Draco was acting half the man he usually was and over a straight bloke. It was pissing him off.

"ARE YOU A MALFOY OR AREN'T YOU?" he suddenly bellowed, surprising Draco into backing up. "You're not acting very much like one now! You're acting like a little boy whose teddy bear has been ripped to shreds!" Harry spun around and grabbed a shiny pan off the burner before twisting and sticking it in front of Draco's face. "And look at you! What the fuck is up with your appearance? The Malfoy I know would never have left his room looking as disgraceful as you do now, no matter what has happened! What the fuck, Drake?! I know

for a fact there are over a dozen blokes out there who would do anything for your attention! You need to pull yourself together!"

As his shouts died out, Draco was left staring at Harry with his mouth parted in slight awe of the ex-Gryffindor. "You've just given me the shivers," he whispered after a few moments.

"Merlin, please not the sexual kind."

Draco straightened with a sneer. He was back to looking normal. "You wish, Pot Head."

Harry grinned widely and Draco joined him a moment later. Soon after Draco left Harry-taking most of the remaining fudge- and promised to return that evening for their night out. In order to keep him in a good mood, Harry promised to let Draco dress him for the evening and the blond left with a bounce to his step. Harry hoped Draco didn't think about the possibility that the twins might be out and about tonight, as it was a Saturday. And if anything the twins were very resourceful and would have probably already researched all of Draco's regular haunts. But then again, if they did run into the twins, it was a sure bet Blaise would be the farthest thing on Draco's mind. So in Harry's mind all that was a win-win. He just wanted Draco to get over this thing with Blaise.

Harry had a couple of hours to kill before Draco returned, so he went in search of Tom. Knowing he'd probably find him in the same place he'd left him. Which was exactly right. Harry hovered on the threshold, staring at the wizard who was even now hunched over a book with that single candle for light. The wizard's brows were furrowed in concentration. Harry had to smile a little at Tom's form. The way he was sitting. It wasn't at all how he thought Tom would be. He thought... well Tom was the Dark Lord and everything he did had to be evilly perfect, right? Even his posture. But this was not the case and Harry was slightly annoyed to discover this. He liked Tom's imperfections.

Hissing from near Tom's feet attracted both Harry and the Dark Lord's attention. Harry watched Tom straighten before looking to the side of his desk where Nagini lay curled up. Since Harry could understand her as well, he was prepared for it when Tom's eyes lifted from his snake to the doorway where he stood.

"How long have you been standing there?" Tom inquired as he not so subtly closed the book and vanished it somewhere. Most likely to his locked office.

"Only a minute or so." Harry stepped into the humongous library, eyes scanning the miles of aisles of books, smiling slightly at the thought of finally bringing Hermione into this place, before finally looking at Tom. "Where are you going?"

"Thought you didn't want to know."

Harry remained silent. Their eyes stayed locked on each other as Tom wordlessly summoned a chair to sit on the other side of the table. Harry sat down before speaking again. "What would happen to our world if you win?"

"If? Surely you mean when. When I win," Tom corrected with a smirk. "And you're breaking all your rules, Potter."

"I... want to know. That's all."

Tom seemed to close up on him. His amused red eyes dimming to pools of cold jewels. Harry clenched his fingers tightly over his knees. "Remember what I told you about Hermione? About how she could win this war for you single-handedly?"

"Yes I remember that impassioned speech," Tom drawled. He'd been impressed with it actually.

"Did you think I was only boasting?"

"I know you believe it. And I suppose, knowing something of her, that you may not be too far off from the truth. Despite being a muggleborn, she is very bright according to my sources."

"Right. Well... she works at the Ministry, you know. She hates it. She says it's like working in a chicken coop. Chickens running around at all times, nothing gets done. No one in that place takes anyone else seriously. What are your goals, Tom? What are your real goals?"

"Harry, I want you to stay neutral," Tom whispered furiously, slowly standing.

"I only want to know what's going to happen to our world when you win," he replied softly. His tone steady and reasonable.

"If you're worried that I'll end up killing every living thing, then your worries are unjustified. If you think I plan to destroy the wizarding way of life, you are wrong. My aim is to make things better. By doing it my way. Because obviously their way doesn't work."

Harry's fingers relaxed a bit. "You're right about that."

"I'm a genius, Harry. Of course I'm right."

Harry laughed. He couldn't help it. "Yeah, suppose you are very smart for an evil git." And then he looked back into Tom's eyes. Eyes that had warmed upon watching his laughing face. "Why did you kill my parents, Tom?"

Tom looked rooted to the spot. The shock of that question coming from nowhere was evident in his wide eyes. "I'm..." Tom cleared his throat and sat down again. Harry felt better knowing he was uncomfortable now. He damn well should be! And the fact the subject pained him just as much as it pained Harry. "I'm not prepared to speak about this with you right now."

"Why?" he asked roughly. "You didn't care then. You shouldn't care now."

Tom dropped his elbows onto the desk and ran hands through his hair, pushing loose strands away from his face as his eyes danced upon the desk. Finally he took a deep breath. "Believe me when I say if I could, I would take it back. Knowing what I know now... Harry, I would take it back."

"Why? I don't believe you care for them one way or the other."

And that was true. James and Lily Potter were of no consequence to him. But Tom had to wonder would they even be where they were if he hadn't killed the Potters? Would Harry be the way he was? Would Tom even want the Harry that would have grown up with loving parents? Still to answer his question, "it would make this so much easier."

"Make what easier?"

Tom sighed. Granger was right. Harry was incredibly oblivious to some things. "Tell me about Granger. About her job."

Harry took the subject change in stride because they both knew the subject of his parents would surface again. "She hates her job," he restated.

"And? Specifics, Potter. I want specifics."

Harry narrowed his eyes. "Why? So you can use it against her?" Tom pursed his lips and gave him a look that said he was being an idiot again. "She works for the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures."

"Ah... S.P.E.W."

Harry blinked at him in surprise. "Uh, yeah. How'd you know about that?"

"Sources, Potter."

"Right. Draco. Anyway, it was for house elves, but not only just for them. Hermione wants to help out all intelligent and semi intelligent magical beings. Werewolves and Vampires and Dwarves and the like who are treated like second-rate trash. But she can never get anywhere. She's never taken seriously. She's given crap assignments time and again. Hermione's brilliant, and yet they stuff her in the back loaded down with stupid paperwork and ignore her ideas... She would really quit if she could. She swears her brain is turning into mush."

"And if I wanted to offer her a job?"

"She's her own woman. Mione makes her own choices," Harry replied, standing. Tom watched him sink a hand deep into his pocket. When his hand reappeared, his fingers were wrapped around something white. Harry placed the object on the table and leaned towards Tom. His eyes shuttered. "I hate you," he whispered vehemently.

"No. You are upset with yourself and me because you don't hate me at all."

Harry released the object in his hand and slid it towards Tom. "Bollocks," he murmured before turning and departing.

Tom watched the empty doorway for a moment before turning to the object, which happened to be a large white napkin. A smile crossed his face when he found several pieces of fudge within.

Tom was in his office when Draco returned, the house elf letting him know. Tom ordered the house elf to bring the young Malfoy to his office.

"Draco, what brings you here... again?" he asked lowly, eyes traveling over the immaculately dressed blond.

Draco bowed before answering. "Harry suggested we go out tonight, my Lord."

"Out where?"

The blond cleared his throat when Tom stood and circled his desk to stand in front of him. "Harry's choosing some places and I'm choosing some places."

Draco fidgeted when Tom did not reply, just stood silently giving the blond a hard look. "Let me make myself clear, Draco," Tom finally spoke. "Harry is not to be touched. You are to make sure of this. Is this understood?"

The blond's eyes widened. "You- you want me to ward off suitors tonight, my Lord?"

"Yes."

"I can do that."

"You will do it." Draco nodded quickly. "And let me give you this one little warning now-"

"Father forbade me from having an affair with Potter." Draco cringed seconds later when he realized he'd interrupted the Dark Lord. Which usually meant a painful Crucio.

Tom remained silent for long moments and Draco was sure it was only to play with him until he cast the curse. "And did he tell you why?" Tom finally asked, allowing Draco to get away with the interruption.

Draco swallowed thickly. Having not expected to get off. "Vaguely."

"And since you are a smart boy, of course you've figured it out."

"Yes, my Lord."

"Good then. Not a word to Potter about this."

Indecision flashed in Draco's eyes even as he nodded and replied, "of course, my Lord."

Tom sighed. "It will not be for long, Draco. He'll figure it out soon enough."

"Not likely," he muttered.

"Soon I'll make it abundantly clear." Draco seemed to breathe a little better after this was said. "You may go."

Draco bowed again. "Thank you, my Lord." The blond straightened and turned to go. Tom was just going back to his chair when Draco called out to him. Looking up, the blond was

poised on the threshold with a hand tightly gripping the doorframe. He looked ready to bolt.

"Yes?"

"My Lord, forgive me for asking..."

"Continue."

"Do you know why my father continues to stare at me strangely? I thought perhaps it was a mission you have planned for me that he doesn't particularly like. Beyond the 'you are forbidden to fuck Potter' speech I had earlier, Father hasn't said two words to me since the other night."

"Language, Draco," Tom murmured as he sat before shaking his head, even as the corners of his mouth twitched. Of course Lucius was thinking of the Weasley twins every time he looked at Draco. "Take no note of it. Your father is very busy and is probably thinking of other things when he's looking at you."

Draco looked unconvinced though he nodded anyway before leaving. Once Draco was gone, Tom summoned Lucius to his office.

"I thought I made myself clear the other night," he began when Lucius had knelt at his feet. "Potter and your son were not to have known we were there to see them that night."

"Yes, you did, my Lord," Lucius replied carefully.

"Rise."

When Lucius was back on his feet, Tom withdrew his wand and began to twirl it around his fingers. "You are making Draco suspicious and therefore making Harry suspicious. Giving your son disgusted looks now, Lucius?" the blond opened his mouth reply, but the Dark Lord cut him off. "*Crucio*."

Tom watched unflinchingly as Lucius tried but failed to stay on his feet. The blond fell to his knees, teeth grinding together as the bolts of pain ran through every inch of his body. Tom was pleased Lucius refused to utter one cry. Finally he released the curse. "At least," he began softly, "they are purebloods."

"M-my Lord. They are blood traitors."

Tom turned away to round his desk. He took a seat and beckoned Lucius to do the same before pulling a large folder out of one of the doors. He slapped the folder down in front of the aristocratic blond. "I've found out interesting things concerning the Weasley twins. Things I'm sure not even Potter is aware of. Read," he instructed, and Lucius immediately opened the file.

The office was silent save the scratching of Tom's quill over parchment and the sound of pages being turned as Lucius read through the entire folder. Five minutes in and Tom looked across his desk to find Lucius' eyes were wide as saucers. Smirking a little, Tom returned to his notes.

"My Lord," Lucius murmured once he was done. Tom set his quill aside and folded his hands over the parchment. "May I ask... why do you have this information? And how?"

"Aside from Granger and your son, those two wizards are the only people Potter talks about. I thought it best to learn everything about them beyond their blood traitor status. And as for how... I have my sources as you well know. Anyway, we've moved beyond the point. The point is you are not supposed to know the Weasleys are trying to court your son. We were never there in your son's room. You never read that card. We never heard Draco's drunken ramblings. Am I making myself clear now, Lucius? I was certain I had made that clear the other night."

"It was a shock, my Lord. The Weasleys..." the blond trailed off with a shudder.

"Stop looking at Draco as if he's done something wrong," Tom hissed. "I don't want either of them to think too much of that night."

"Yes, my Lord." Lucius glanced back down to the report, shaking his head in awe. "They really smuggle..."

"Yes, that is what I've learned."

"Right under their father's nose!" Lucius exclaimed before snorting in a very unMalfoy like way.

"Perhaps you should speak with them," Tom suggested and grinned in that evil manner when Lucius' eyes gleamed with the prospect of doing business. Lucius was so easy. "They'll be visiting Harry while I'm away."

"Draco, I don't know if-"

"Relax," Draco answered, eyeing the brunet who was dressed in a deep violet robe. One that Draco had picked out. The outfit hugged Harry in all the right places and made his eyes and dark hair stand out fantastically. "You look brill." The blond swept his eyes over Harry's form again. Yes, he'd probably dressed Harry too fine which meant he would be busy all night carrying out the task the Dark Lord set him.

Harry ignored the compliment. "But this is a pureblood establishment."

"As long as you're not a mudblood, you'll have no problems here." Harry flicked Draco's ear for saying that word. "Besides, you are with me. No one would dare ruin our good time. Come," Draco prodded as he descended the few steps onto the main floor from the entrance. Harry remained where he was for a minute, eyes scanning the pureblood club. He didn't see how Draco thought they could have fun in this place. For one, there was not one single witch or wizard about the place that looked below the age of forty. Another, there were only a scattering of people amidst the round tables and dim lighting and all of them were simply sitting around sipping drinks and speaking lowly.

Harry eyed the back of Draco's head as he finally descended the steps, wondering if the blond had lost his mind. Draco glanced over his shoulder to make sure Harry was following, gave the bewildered brunet a smirk, and continued walking to the back of the room where there was a single unassuming door. Harry ignored the looks aimed his way as he followed the blond, knowing somehow his visit here would be front-page Prophet news... but he really didn't care about that. He cared about Draco opening that door with three taps of his wand.

Draco waited until Harry was standing beside him before moving through the door, descending down a narrow staircase. The door shut soundly once Harry had stepped over the threshold. "This is all so very odd, Draco."

"Kind of mysterious, don't you think?"

"You're having fun leading me on." The blond's snicker was answer enough. "Draco? Have you figured out why your father keeps giving you odd stares?"

"Your future husband has probably given him a difficult task. I'm assuming that's what it is."

Harry tripped on a stair, fell into Draco, and they both went tumbling down. Luckily Draco was quick enough to cast cushioning charms on the steps and at the bottom. Harry landed on top of him, and even though that fall could have been brutal, all the blond could do was laugh.

"QUIT SAYING SHIT LIKE THAT, DRAKE!" Harry pulled in a deep breath before climbing to his feet. Carefully aiming an elbow into the blond's back as he pushed himself up. "What the hell?! I could have broken both our necks!"

"Lucky I'm quick with my wand then," Draco laughed as he too stood, trying to sooth the part of his back where Harry's elbow had dug into.

"Just for that insane comment I hope we run into Fred and George tonight," Harry muttered as they went on to fix their appearance before going on down the tunnel Harry saw was beyond the blond. Draco turned to him very slowly, his eyes gone horribly wide. Harry grinned like a lunatic. "It's Saturday, Drake. Those two love to go out. With their business doing so well, they go out every weekend. Or at least they used to. But don't worry. You look good enough to eat. Positively delicious. I don't think that'll attract them at all."

"Fuck you, Potter."

"Well come on. Show me this place you're taking me to. I'm curious as to why we're headed underground."

Draco sniffed before turning and leading Harry down the hall. "They wouldn't be here anyway. Only the oldest of pureblood families know of this place. They probably wouldn't make it through the door even if they did know of it. And from this moment on," Draco went on while Harry studied the hallway, noting the stone wall was now covered by black velvet, "your privilege of choosing future places for us to go is revoked. I don't trust you not to lead me into the lion's den."

Harry hummed in absent agreement and said nothing else as they were reaching the end of the hall and there were several witches and wizards loitering outside a pair of double doors. Draco paused and strategically leaned against the wall, dipping his chin in acknowledgement to some of the wizards near them. Harry watched, openly curious. *This must be some pureblood thing*, he thought watching Draco languidly relaxing and then watching the others watching Draco.

"Stop looking like such an ignoramus, Potter," Draco hissed from the corner of his mouth.

"What? You want me to pose like a peacock too?"

Draco's sharp look told Harry the blond would have cursed him for such a remark if they weren't quickly being approached by two wizards. "These two are Spaniards. You'll find many who come here are not from British families. But that makes sense as we're almost all gone now."

He said this last part as if it were Harry's entire fault British purebloods were dying out. "Suppose you'd like me to cry a river of sorrow now."

Harry's smile was broad as he took in the affronted fury in Draco's blue eyes.

"Malfoy," greeted one of the Spaniards while the other said nothing and openly eyed Harry up and down.

"Montiel," Draco responded semi-warmly. But his eyes went frigid on the other man. "Gaudi."

Harry simply quirked an eyebrow at them as if he didn't find them at all that important to greet before crossing his arms over his chest. His stance was lazy, but with the way his head was tipped back slightly, it was not hard to tell he was ready for any type of confrontation. The brilliant flash of Draco's eyes as he pushed off the wall told the brunet he was pleased with him for that. But then Harry had to stand there and listen to Draco and these other purebloods talk back and forth for no other reason than to reiterate their claim as purebloods. Every word the three spoke was like wielding a double-edged blade and soon Harry found himself getting a headache. Harry was almost glad when Gaudi made one comment about Harry's blood status, and Draco quickly cut off the conversation. He dealt the two Spaniards sharp yet subtle cutting barbs before leading Harry away. Harry had to admit, the blond had a way with words and he was sure the two Spaniards were hurting right now.

"That was... enlightening," Harry murmured as they stopped in front of one of the double doors.

"And what have you learned?"

"Glad I'm not a bloody pureblood and all of that seemed tedious and pointless. I thought we were here to have fun, not play political hopscotch."

"Political hopscotch. I like that," Draco murmured as he gripped the handles of the double doors. "You should be hexed for the other comments though."

"Yeah, whatever. Open the doors. Want a drink and we need to get you laid."

Draco sighed dramatically and pushed the doors open in an even more dramatic gesture, drawing the eyes of everyone in the room.

"Now this is more like it!" Harry exclaimed taking in the crowded gyrating heat seeking scene before them. He bounced on his toes in excitement, ignored the wide-eyed stares he and Draco were receiving and grabbed the blond's arm to drag him through the crowd to the bar.

Nearly there, Draco stopped short and hugged onto Harry's arm. "I see red hair! Red blazing hair! Two heads, Potter! Two!"

Harry turned to look, caught where Draco was looking, and indeed spotted the twins standing amongst a small group halfway up the winding stair to the second floor. The twins had spotted them along with the rest of the club when they'd entered. He waved as they departed from that group, aiming for him and Draco. And then he realized Draco was no longer cutting the circulation off of his arm and looked only to find the blond had disappeared. Harry caught sight of blond hair disappearing into what he assumed was the loo.

The twins were on him in short time, squeezing the life out of him before pulling him out of the crowds to a table at the back, squeezing him again in between the two of them, and then staring. Nothing but chastisement upon their faces.

Harry's happy smile turned sheepish. All he could do was shrug when twin brows rose in question.

"Harry," said one twin- he could never tell them apart until they voiced it, "what the blazing fuck did you think you were doing cutting us off?"

The brunet opened his mouth to give his excuse, only to be cut off by the other twin. "Did you honestly think we'd turn away from you because you went neutral?"

"Well... err... yeah. I hadn't heard from you and then the rest of your family-" both twins knocked him upside the head.

"Rubbish!" the cried in unison.

"You know us better than that."

"Fred's right..." Ah so George was on his right. Fred on his left. "We've talked about this enough that you should have known better."

"Maybe I didn't want to cause problems between you and the rest of your family."

Both twins snorted. "As if we'd let that bother us."

"You could have owled me," Harry murmured.

"We didn't know where you were!" Fred exclaimed heatedly.

"Not to mention we were afraid to let anyone else know where you were in case the owls were intercepted."

Harry looked down at the table, feeling a sting behind his eyes. It felt so good to be squeezed against two of his closest friends again, nothing but loyalty and love and playfulness between them. "Really missed you two."

"Ah, Harry," George murmured, throwing an arm around his shoulders and squeezing. Fred mimicking the action. And they spent moments cuddling him.

"We missed you too. You have no idea-"

"How worried we were when we heard-"

"About the Order kidnapping you and then-"

"Hermione told us about the curse you took-"

"And the worry doubled."

Harry laughed. "Sure. You were so worried that you've been trying to woo Drake with pornographic letters and gifts. That was great by the way. The letter."

"How'd we do?" Fred asked with a devious grin, both their gazes going back to the crowds as they no doubt spotted Draco before he ran away.

"Um... he's being defiant. But really... you're Weasleys. You didn't think it was going to be that easy, did you?"

"Course not!" Fred exclaimed. "That letter was only the ground work!"

"But we'll get him, Harry. Make no mistake."

"It's mainly the red hair, you know," he told them with a laugh.

The twins adopted sinister smirks. "Yeah. We know," answered Fred. "Have a solution for that as well."

"And can we just say," George went on, "the both of you are looking oh so delicious. Care for a foursome?"

Harry laughed. "We've been down that road before. No thanks."

The twins grinned. "Taught you everything we know."

Harry blushed at some of the memories. "So, err... what are you two doing here anyway? I would have thought this was the last place you'd hang out."

"We've been coming here for ages, mate," George told him. "And we found out the luscious blond comes here, though we've never seen him before. Probably because we've been coming

here while you all were away at school."

"Ah, excuse me you two," Fred said as he slipped out of the booth. "I'm just going to... pop off to the loo."

"No fun without me!" George snapped.

Harry snickered at the caught look in Fred's eyes. "And no raping my friend."

"Harry! We'd never do such a thing! Unless he asks for it." Fred hurried away after stating this, leaving Harry to follow his quick departure with narrowed eyes.

"No worries, Harry. It's just a bit of heavy flirting at this stage. Gauging Malfoy's reactions..."

"Which would be violent hexes."

George laughed. "Hope so. He couldn't possibly be any less cute than you when he's riled up." The red head grinned when Harry blushed. "Anyway... so when did you two become such good friends?"

"What's to say we're good friends?"

George waved his arm around the pureblood club. "Someone like Malfoy... he wouldn't have brought you here unless he counted you a good friend. Purebloods like him just don't do that unless the other person is worth it."

Harry felt a pleasant bubble of warmth spread through him at this. "Well... At Theo's insistence, we broke our feud off and then he came with his father, Snape, and Tom to help me. We've been close since then I guess."

George dropped an arm over his shoulder again and leaned in for a hug. "Fred and I... we really wanted to tell you how sorry we were about Nott. He really was an alright bloke."

Harry nodded. Accepting his condolences without words.

"That whole Slytherin incident opened our eyes, you know."

"How so?"

"The Order isn't exactly law abiding, is it? We figured if they weren't, then why should we be?"

"What do you mean? What have you two been doing?"

George grinned, but didn't answer. Instead his eyes traveled across the crowds. His smile grew a moment later and he slipped away from Harry to sit on his own. And then Draco was beside Harry and pressing into his side. The blond watched George and then the approaching Fred with narrowed hooded eyes. At least, Harry thought with a silent chuckle, Draco wasn't

looking like a terrified child just now. He looked more like a man hanging on to his last breath of patience.

Surprisingly, Fred took a seat beside his brother and they turned their attentions onto Harry, completely ignoring Draco. Another ploy, Harry was sure.

"So," he ventured.

"So, Harry. Tell us about You-Know-Who's place," Fred began.

"Does it have fountains of blood?"

"Walls made of human flesh?"

"Piano keys made of bones?"

"Dusty? Dark? Creepy?"

"Does the atmosphere make it hard to wank?"

"I doubt he has problems with wanking there," Draco mumbled, then hissed when Harry jabbed his side.

"Do tell, gorgeous."

"It's nothing like that," Harry replied. "It's very nice there. Tom likes luxury and his comforts. And he's very into art as well. You should see the study he had built for me and the atrium. It's brill... What?" he asked seeing the twins eyes widen in astonishment on him.

Draco leaned in. "Do you have any idea how soft your voice goes when you speak about him?"

"I... no, it doesn't."

"Draco's right. What's with the soft voice? We know that voice, Harry." George said with a knowing look. "If I didn't know any better, I'd say--"

"Who gave you cretins permission to use my name?" Draco snapped.

The twins grinned at him. "Just practicing for when we're yelling it over and over, love."

Draco went rigid beside Harry and then sneered, desperately hanging on to his control. "Keep dreaming, fiends. As if I'd let red and freckles anywhere near me!"

The twins produced their wands and tapped each other on the head, changing the color of their hair. Instead of blaring red the two now sported an attractive copperish color. And with those twin roguish smirks the new look didn't diminish their attractiveness. Harry thought they were attractive enough before, but with their hair now that color... Draco's sharp intake of breath and sudden stillness told him the blond was thinking the same. Though it was only

the hair they changed. The freckles were still there but without that red hair somehow the freckles didn't stand out so much.

Harry turned to Draco with a smirk. "Change back at once," the blond hissed.

"Why? Did you just get hard for us?" George asked. "Perhaps you've had thoughts of giving in to us so early in the game?"

"For you, Draco, we'd leave our hair this color," Fred added. "Permanently."

Harry rose a surprised brow. The twins were not conformists. For anyone. They were really, really serious about this.

"That better be your foot climbing up my calve, Potter!" Draco shrieked in an undignified manner as he practically jumped to crouch on the booth seat.

Harry laughed uncontrollably as he tried to calm the blond back into sitting properly. The twins sat across grinning not so innocently.

"I want a drink," Draco murmured a few moments later, scooting closer to Harry.

"And we'll be happy to buy you two handsome devils anything you want," Fred said, tapping his wand on the table. The table instantly glowed a faint yellow.

"Double shot of Firewhiskey," Draco immediately ordered. If they were going to buy, he wouldn't complain on that front.

Harry restated that order, the twins doing the same. The glow disappeared and after a few short moments four double shot Firewhiskeys appeared before them.

"Drink up then, lads," George cried as he and the others grabbed their drinks.

"There's much fun to be had tonight!"

Chapter Five

The Black Bunny

Chapter Five

"That place was posh. But not stifling at all!" Harry exclaimed as he, Draco, and the twins exited the pure blood club. Preparing to move on to another haunt. "You'll bring me again sometime, right Drake?"

"Absolutely, Potty! We can—Back off! He doesn't want you!" the blond snarled. Harry, George, and Fred turned to find a bird running away from them.

"Draco, did someone slip some kind of jealousy potion in your drink?" Harry asked, staring hard at the twins. "Because you've been growling and snarling at people all night."

"Hey, it wasn't us!" George exclaimed. "First, why would we make him jealous of anyone going after you?"

"And secondly, we would never drug our dear Draco."

"And why are you chasing birds and blokes away from me anyway, Drake?"

"I'm not your dear Draco," the blond growled slowly, completely ignoring Harry's question. "Cease this ridiculousness at once!"

The twins moved like flashes of lightning. Fred moving to press against the blond's back while George pressed his front. Draco squeaked as Fred wrapped a tight arm around his middle to keep him in place.

"You're going to be ours, Malfoy," George promised as he slipped a hand around the back of the blond's head, fingers tangling into his hair. Fred hummed in agreement as he bent to press lips against Draco's neck.

"Unhand me at once! Harry!"

Harry could only stand there and watch the scene unfold. Maybe he wasn't helping as a way to get back at Draco for running off anyone who thought to ask him to dance or buy him a drink. Not that Harry would have agreed to anything from someone who'd been seeking to get into his pants and he really didn't mind Draco running interference, though he did wonder why Draco had been doing it. In truth Harry hadn't wanted to get close to any bloke since Theo's death. And again he wondered why Tom was so different. The thought of being close to Tom didn't instantly make him think of Theo like other blokes did. In fact, the thought of getting close to Tom strangely made him smile in a silly fashion.

Draco sucked in a breath when George pressed in and took advantage of the fact that Draco couldn't move away due to Fred keeping him in place. He slid his mouth over the Slytherin's;

sucking Draco's bottom lip in between his teeth while Fred continued to lavish the blond's pale neck with licks and kisses. Harry's mouth parted slightly in a soft pant as he watched George move a hand around to lightly cup the blond's arse and Draco could do nothing but whimper, being pressed in between the twins.

"Give us a try, Draco," murmured George. "Promise you won't regret it."

Draco remained perfectly still or at least he thought he was being still, but Harry could see him trembling and knew it had nothing to do with being disgusted or incensed.

Fred ran the tip of his tongue along the shell of Draco's ear. "Did you like our letter?" he breathed. "My particular favorite is the one where you're sitting on my cock and George is sucking you off."

An unconscious moan passed Draco's lips, his eyes fluttered closed, and he started panting against the mouth very near his own. Victory flashed in George's eyes and he grinned. "Yeah, he likes that one. Feel it against my thigh."

Harry couldn't believe what he was seeing. Draco seriously looked like he was giving in... Then again, he would give in too if he were the Slytherin's shoes right at that moment- and he had been at one point in the past. So it looked like Fred and George were on their way to crumbling Draco's wall. Even now George had covered Draco's mouth again and had somehow coaxed the blond into a kiss and Draco didn't seem to mind at all that Fred's hand was now rubbing against his straining crotch.

But then *he* came along to fuck up the twins' progress.

"Draco?" a voice inquired incredulously.

Draco jerked away from George as everyone turned to find Blaise Zabini standing several feet away near the club entrance. His arm around the same brunet who had been at that restaurant. Zabini's eyes were a mixture of shock and disdain while the witch on his arm watched on with a detached interest.

Harry cursed softly under his breath even as he glared at Zabini. There was no reason for him to be staring at Draco in such a way just because the twins were wrapped around him. Okay, so yeah it was a shocking sight to anyone who knew Draco but Zabini was supposed to be Draco's friend. And for that to be his first expression upon catching Draco in such a position... Harry could tell the scorn was all for the blond.

Over Draco's head Fred and George shared a look before stepping away from him, but only a few steps. Fred remained behind Draco and George moved to stand beside his brother, both with straight mouths and unreadable expressions. Of course they knew about Draco's unrequited crush, having learned about it from Hermione. But they'd also seen Zabini's expression and were offering silent support even though they knew Draco wouldn't want it.

"Blaise," the blond answered after only a moment of composing himself, speaking as if nothing out of the ordinary had been going on. "Haven't seen you in a while." The aversion in

Zabini's eyes did not diminish in the slightest with Draco's cool and composed greeting. If anything, it grew. Harry watched his friend flinch inadvertently and scowled at the Italian.

"Draco, what the blazes do you think you're doing? The Weasleys?" his eyes traveled over to land on Harry, "and Potter? Still, you're associating out with Potter? Did you not hear a word I said to you the last time we had lunch together? How can you continue to associate with him even when you know it's his fault Theodore is dead?"

Harry sucked in a sharp breath and backed up a step. Draco's eyes widened before narrowing on his friend. "It was not Harry's fault," Draco replied calmly, belying none of the turmoil he felt at having Blaise coming at him like this. Fred left his place and moved to Harry, who'd grown completely still, staring at nothing but the ground. "And I continue to socialize with him because I can and because I want to. A Malfoy will do as he likes."

"It's because of them," Blaise sneered at the three Gryffindor's, "half the Slytherin population of Hogwarts was killed."

Draco lifted his chin and a sneer curled his lips. He turned his back on Blaise and headed to Harry. Only the ex-Gryffindor was shaking his head, eyes gone wide, his fingers flying up to finger the dagger necklace around his neck. Harry quickly shrugged Fred off him and then disappeared. The blond paused mid step, staring at the spot Harry disappeared from. His hands curling into fists at his sides. Fred and George stood silently, seething as they looked between Zabini and Draco. They would have immediately gone after Harry except they had no idea where he'd gone.

"Where did he go, Draco?" Fred asked tightly.

"You can't associate with them and me," Blaise called out. "Theodore is dead. Why continue to see Potter? What would your father think?"

The blond raised his gaze, eyes cold and face a mask of stone. "When was the last time we associated beyond an hour lunch here and there?" he asked as he turned to face Blaise.

"When was the last time you actually wanted to listen to anything I had to say? Have you ever taken me seriously, or did you only associate with me because of my name? Did you honestly think I would stop seeing Harry just because you said so?"

"Draco, if you continue on this way, you'll end up an outcast like Potter."

"Suppose I have my answer then," he whispered. "There's nothing more to be said, Zabini. I choose Harry. Just as I chose him that first day on the train. This time I'm not going to fuck it up with him. I never really understood what a true friend was until I had Harry by my side. You can bugger off." Draco gave him a particularly disgusted look. "And to think I actually thought you were worth something. Every word you've just said has been nothing but rubbish. You have no idea the kind of damage you're doing to yourself by judging me and Harry."

Draco turned and walked away with his head held high. He would not let Blaise know how hurt he was from this confrontation. But he held tightly to the knowledge that he'd made the

right choice just now. Blaise wasn't worth it like Harry was. He would not regret this moment.

Behind him, the twins followed silently. A huge surprise, the silence. But not unwelcome. "I'll bring Harry back to the Wizards' Den."

Draco Apparated away before they could find their voices again. When the blond was gone, the twins turned to each other, looks of shock on their faces.

"That was Draco Malfoy right?" Fred inquired.

"That bloke who just valiantly defended our precious Harry and turned his back on that bastard in the span of two minutes... that was the same Malfoy right?"

"That must have hurt a lot."

"Not only because it was Zabini..."

"He was so vocal and said exactly what he was feeling. The Malfoy of Hogwarts would never have done that."

Both suddenly smiled together. "Our plans need to be changed."

Harry landed on his arse in Tom's office. He sat there long moments without moving, without really seeing anything and he didn't notice the wizard staring at him in surprise the first few minutes he was on the floor. Harry just sat there, throwing arms over his bent knees and lowered his face to stare at the floor. Zabini's words drumming around in his head.

"Harry?" inquired Tom after some silent moments of studying the young wizard.

Harry ran a hand through his hair as he finally looked towards the desk. "It is my fault, you know," he murmured, seeing Tom but looking straight through him as he dropped an elbow on his knee and cradled his cheek. "Theodore would be alive if we hadn't been seeing each other. And now Zabini seems to have lost respect for Draco because of me... instead of being neutral, maybe I should disappear off the face of the earth. Everyone would be much happier, yeah? Then maybe I could walk down the street without most people spitting at me. And Draco will choose Zabini over me of course, so that's someone else I've lost. And I could say I don't care about losing Drake but that would be a horrible painful fucking lie. And purebloods are just so... weird. You know, Tom? Just weird. I'm glad I'm not one. How bout you?"

Tom stood and rounded his desk. He did it slowly so as not to disturb the young wizard's thoughts. Harry had a lot on his mind and it was obvious he wanted and needed to speak about it.

"Everything was going well," the brunet continued, watching Tom but not really seeing the Dark Lord as he approached and then crouched in front of Harry. "Draco took me to that hidden pureblood club down Knockturn Alley- I'd never been that far down. At first I was

sure I wouldn't like it. But then he took me downstairs. And it was great," he paused and laughed, if a little sadly. "The twins were there. You should have seen Drake. He took off to the loo faster than a Snitch!"

"How were they?" Tom asked softly, reaching forward to lightly grasp Harry's trembling wrist.

Harry's eyes seemed to get a little wet as he smiled. "They chastised me for cutting them off. Said they missed me as much as I missed them. T-they told me I'm never allowed to do that a-again," he choked this last part out. When Tom tugged lightly, Harry went without any more prompting. He shifted and moved around until he was sitting in Tom's lap, his back pressed against the Dark Lord's chest. "We were having fun. Even Draco, when he finally reappeared. The twins were still flirting with him but it was less extreme since we were there having a good time. After a few drinks we all decided to leave, to move on to somewhere else."

Harry paused to breathe deeply, enjoying the warmth surrounding him. The heat and Tom's scent and the arm wrapped around his stomach. He wasn't at all perturbed to be in Tom's lap. That was why he'd used the dagger to get to Tom's office after all. He'd wanted Tom and there was no point in trying to deny it.

Tom's face appeared beside his, their cheeks brushing and pressing together and Harry was surprised to feel rough stubble from Tom's jaw. It felt more than nice and Harry had to restrain from nuzzling against the man's face in an obvious way. "Go on," Tom prompted.

"We left and were standing in the alleyway beside the entrance...." Harry started laughing. "That's when the twins struck. One behind Draco, the other in front of him. Tom, they were easily destroying his defenses. It was crazy and everything was brilliant... and then Zabini showed up. You should have seen the disgust in his eyes when he looked at Draco. It was awful. I thought he was supposed to be Draco's friend. I mean even though Ron and I had a falling out, Ron never looked at me like that when he found out I was dating Theo. He didn't understand, but he didn't think I was disgusting either. And it turns out Zabini's been trying to get Drake to stop hanging out with me. Says I'm to blame for Theo and the other Slytherins deaths... and he's right. He's right-"

Tom suddenly squeezed him around his middle and cut off the breath he would have used to continue speaking. "Perhaps you'd like me to Crucio you for your stupidity."

"Crucios hurt, Tom. Specially yours."

"The Order is to blame for the Slytherin massacre. Not you. And you know this so I don't know why you're letting Zabini win by thinking as he does."

"B-but... Drake's not going to want to play with me anymore."

Tom rolled his eyes before dropping his forehead onto the youth's shoulder. "How old are you, Potter?" Harry didn't answer, but Tom knew he was pouting. "I could always force him to—"

Harry twisted around in a show of great agility and gripped Tom's shirt in a vice grip. "No! You can't do that. That would be completely pathetic. Like a parent paying kids off to play with their unpopular kids or something. What's wrong with you, Tom?" he yelled in the Dark Lord's face, shaking the man slightly. "How could you even suggest something like that? Draco would never respect me again if you did that! Do you have any idea how hard it was to get that whiney prat's respect? DO YOU?"

Tom was barely able to concentrate on the irate brunet's words. All he could think about was Harry straddling his lap, dressed like sex on legs in those dark purple robes, clinging to him and vibrating incredulity. It was pure torture! *Willing, willing, you want him willing!* "You ran away from the confrontation," he finally replied, congratulating himself on sounding perfectly normal under the circumstances.

Harry blinked. "No..." he murmured slowly. "I left so that Draco wouldn't have to choose. I made the choice for him. The choice was obvious anyway."

"You ran away. To me."

Harry sighed and dropped his temple against Tom's broad shoulder, feeling he owed the both of them the truth of the matter. "I don't know why, Tom. You're Lord Voldemort. I shouldn't want anything to do with you. I know you're a killer. I know you're a dictator and you will never stop until things are the way you want them. Until you rule. I know you're still the same... except with me. Why is that? You... you are being truthful with me, aren't you?"

Tom allowed a soft smile to grow on his face at hearing Harry's insecure tone, even though the young wizard couldn't see it. "Yes. The way I interact with you now, the way I treat you is how I will always treat you. No matter what I do to others. You are extremely special. I would never hurt you."

Harry pulled his head back abruptly and glared. "What are you talking about? You threw a tame Crucio at me yesterday!"

Tom matched his glare. "You were singing that ridiculous song all throughout the day again! How did you expect me to retaliate?"

"You could have used your vampire light again!"

"That would only work against you if you had a horrible hangover, you ungrateful brat!"

Harry sighed and returned his head to the man's shoulder. "Why do you I even put up with you?"

"Because I'm irresistible to all."

"That was a rhetorical question." And never mind that it was too true.

Tom allowed himself the luxury of running a hand through Harry's hair. The young wizard may not realize that he was admitting plenty of things in his own oblivious way, but Tom was

grateful for this moment they were having and thought it was about time he was honest with Harry about certain things. "You make me feel young again, Harry."

Harry blushed and was glad Tom's shoulder hid it. "You make me feel safe."

"I want to keep you safe, Harry. Safe and happy. Believe that."

Harry smiled brightly against Tom's shoulder. "It should be impossible, but I do."

"POTTER!"

Harry pulled back only slightly to stare at the doorway. Moments later a seething blond came into view. "Drake?"

"Know anyone else who looks this good? My Lord," Draco said as he bowed, quickly erasing the shock on his face at finding his Lord on the floor, holding the Boy-Who-Lived in his lap.

"Draco," Tom drawled as if nothing out of the ordinary were going on because he was in no way ready to release his oblivious soon to be lover.

Harry blinked rapidly at Draco. "But... what are you doing here?"

"Our night out is not over, Potty. I came to get you and to hex your arse off for leaving me alone with the twins!"

Harry reluctantly pulled away from Tom, avoiding the Dark Lord's gaze as he did so. What had he been thinking using Tom as a comfy teddy bear? "What about Zabini?"

Draco waved that away. "I'm so over him. I'm actually disgusted with myself for having put any effort into him at all."

"You never told me he wanted you to stop seeing me."

"Why should I have? It didn't matter. I wasn't going to do it just because he thought I should. Anyway, he doesn't matter. And what he said wasn't the truth, Harry. So you need to stop moping and come back with me. Your fiendish twins are waiting."

Harry smirked. "Fiendish, huh? You didn't seem to mind them that minute before Zabini showed up."

Draco's cheeks flooded with color. "T-they were all over me! Touching and kissing and whispering promises and maybe... that one in front knows how to kiss."

"What one knows so does the other."

"Doesn't matter! I'll tolerate them for your sake, but I will never sleep with them. So come on. I promised to bring you back to them."

"For my sake? Really?" Harry asked with a bright smile.

Draco sighed and then nodded. "I told Blaise where he could shove it, suppose I can deal with your fiends for a short-"

"Why do you two insist on talking like this as if I'm not here?" Tom suddenly hissed from where he stood in front of his desk. "Get out before I torture the both of you until you are mute!"

Draco didn't need to be told twice. He was gone. However Harry lingered only a moment more. He approached Tom with a shy smile, rose on his toes, and kissed Tom on the cheek.

"Thank you for making me feel better."

"I'm being destroyed by too much sugar."

Harry grinned impishly. "If I'd known it would be that easy, I would have sent you heartfelt valentines every February. Dear Bunnymort... Roses are red, violets are blue, if I had long black fluffy ears I'd look just like you!"

"When was the last time I threatened to kill you?" Tom inquired very seriously.

Draco remained silent until after he'd Apparated them to an alley beside the mainstream club they were going to go in next. He waited until he'd vanished their outer robes, leaving them in regular muggle clubbing attire. And then he pierced Harry with a stare.

"What was going on in that office when I walked in?"

"Err... nothing."

"That was not nothing! You had him on the floor cradling you in his lap! And he looked okay with that!"

"He wasn't cradling me! We were just talking."

Draco ran a hand through his impeccable hair and then poked Harry's chest. "You don't just want to shag him," he hissed. "You fancy him too!"

Harry opened his mouth to deny, but the words got caught. "I don't hate him anymore," he finally admitted.

"Clearly."

Harry smiled a little. "Drake. I'm sorry about Blaise."

"Fuck Blaise."

"Did you... are you doing this in fear of what Tom might do if you turn your back on me?"

"That's a ridiculous question."

"I don't see how."

"Because. I know for a fact you wouldn't let him do anything to me for that. And besides, you make fantastic fucking fudge, Potter. There's no way I'd turn my back on anyone who can make fudge like that. Honestly!" Draco cried enthusiastically as he threw an arm around Harry and they began towards the entrance, "you should sell it!"

"Thanks."

"Moronic git. How do I look?" Draco inquired just before they went in. Harry eyed him, studying the fitted black slacks and dark blue silk shirt that left nothing to the imagination.

"You look like a gorgeous prat who occasionally models for Witch Weekly and receives thousands of indecent proposals afterwards."

Draco smirked. "Jealous of my looks, Potter?"

"A little."

Draco was surprised by the admittance. "Surely you're joking."

"Well... you kind of stand out in a great sexy way, while I'm nothing much to look at. Unassuming is the correct word to describe me when standing next to you."

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you were fishing for compliments. But I do know better and know you meant everything you've just said. And frankly I don't know whether to laugh, cry, or hex you for saying such stupid things. Despite a lot of people despising you at the moment, do you have any idea how many blokes I've had to run off tonight? DOZENS! Now why would it be dozens if you're nothing more than unassuming?! Really, Potter. Catch a clue!"

"And why have you been running people off?" Harry inquired. Draco's lips pressed into thin lines before he spun around and entered the club without another word.

For the most part, the rest of the night went well at the second club. There were the usual patrons that recognized Harry and immediately approached him, demanding to know why he thought he had the right to show his face after turning traitor. Harry would always laugh at them. Because if being a traitor meant gaining one's life back, then he was all for the title. He was used to it and the word of strangers meant nothing to him anyway. It might have helped that he was usually backed by one of the twins or Draco at these times. And despite these ignorant people, he had a good time anyway; catching up with the twins and watching Draco eye Fred and George suspiciously.

Throughout the night Draco would cast narrowed suspicious glares at them, both of who seemed to have forgotten Draco was there. Aside from buying all the drinks for Draco and Harry, the twins hadn't said one word to Draco, nor had they really looked at him. At least that was Draco's observations. But Harry saw differently. Every time Draco's paranoid attention was off them, the twins would stare at him; surprise mixed with attraction and Harry was curious to know what had changed to make the wonder appear in their eyes. Usually

nothing surprised the twins. Not only that, but their gazes were always calculating as well, but that wasn't such a surprise, seeing as how they were trying to get the blond into bed. But this calculating seemed different. More intense. As if it weren't a game anymore.

And every time the blond went off to dance and found an eager partner, the twins would watch enraptured as the blond moved fluidly with whatever partner he was dancing with. Harry was sure he'd caught the two drooling several times. He had to mentally laugh. Fred and George were kinky bastards. And so was Draco, now that he thought about it. Apparently this was a match made in a pervert's heaven.

Finally Harry had enough of trying to speculate on why Fred and George weren't up on the dance floor right now trying to force Draco to dance with them. "Okay, you two. What's going on?"

"Not sure what you mean, Harry," George responded. "Thought we were having fun."

"I can literally see you two eye fucking him! And yet you've been sitting here with me and have been ignoring him since we came in."

"Draco doesn't seem to mind."

"No, but that's not the point! You're acting... suspiciously," Harry answered with a narrowed look on them.

Fred grinned around his shot glass before tossing the shot back. "Listen, Harry. We've got to run... have someone to meet."

Harry was taken aback. "Right now?"

"Yeah. Sorry, mate. Didn't know we'd be seeing you tonight. If we had, we would have changed the appointment.... Anyway, we'll see you later, yeah?"

Harry nodded mutely, wondering whom the hell they could be meeting so late at night. But knowing Fred and George, if they wanted to tell him about whomever they were meeting, then they would have. They waited until Draco returned to the table, but as soon as the blond sat down, they were up and leaving with a quick goodbye to Harry and Draco.

"Finally!" Draco exclaimed. "They've regained their senses and realize how ridiculous it is to think a Malfoy would ever sleep with them."

"Shut up, Drake. You were so ready to drop your pants for them in Knockturn Alley." Harry smiled when Draco started sputtering. He took a long drink before adding, "and don't for a second think they've given up. They never give up."

"Did you see the way they were touching me?" the blond whined into his ear. "How's any bloke supposed to stay immune to that?"

"I'll agree with you there. Those two are the reason I finally realized I like blokes... and they kind of helped me experiment."

"Are you telling me that you... both of them...at once?!"

"A few times, yeah." Harry laughed at Draco's gobsmacked expression. "How do you think I know for a fact their cocks are huge? How do you think I learned how to do that thing with my tongue that Theo told you about?"

"Oh Merlin," Draco breathed before downing his entire drink. "Theo was raving about that for a week!"

"Yeah, but I'm pretty sure the twins know how to do it better."

"Okay, Potter. Enough."

"I'm only saying..."

Draco suddenly grabbed his hand to pull him away from the table. "Let's go dance."

Nothing more dramatic happened that night, for which both young wizards were grateful. And although he'd had fun, Harry couldn't deny that he was relieved when he returned home. And yes, Harry was aware he was relieved because it was Tom's home and the Dark Lord was nearby.

Harry awoke the next morning and stifled an unnecessary groan. Tom would have gone by this time, wherever he'd gone, which meant Harry was left alone in a manor that resembled a gothic castle. Not that the place itself really bothered him. Harry actually enjoyed living in Tom's place. It was just as he'd told the twins. The place was wicked and Tom certainly knew how to live and not once had he felt uncomfortable there. But somehow Harry could feel the lack of Tom's presence now and instead of him feeling a freedom with this knowledge, it was the exact opposite. He felt restricted.

Harry showered and then meandered to the breakfast room where he and Tom usually ate together in the mornings. The room was built for relaxation. The first morning he came down, Harry had been extremely surprised by it. The room wasn't small but instead was mid-sized and had a single round table up against a large glass window. The room was on the second floor at the back and it protruded a bit from the rest of the mansion, making it possible for three-fourths of the circular room to be nothing but windows and soft mauve drapes.

Breakfast was already laid out for him when he entered and Harry's lips pressed into thin lines when he saw just the one setting. Sliding into his seat, he stared at the morning's issue of the *Daily Prophet*. He could already see a picture of himself along with Drake and the twins on the front. Apparently some pictures had been taken some point during the night. Harry didn't really care though he did scowl at the paper just for the hell of it.

When Tom was around they would spend the first fifteen minutes in silence. They would eat and Tom would peruse the *Prophet*, usually scowling at most of what was printed within. After a certain time Harry could no longer stand to keep silent and would start making fun of Tom's scowls and hissed mutters, which in turn lured Tom's attention away from the paper

and the semi-friendly banter would begin. It was like that every morning and Harry wasn't sure when exactly he'd started to look forward to breakfasts in this room.

Pulling away from those thoughts, Harry tucked into his breakfast and gazed out of the window; looking across the expanse of green lawns and the small lake in the not so far distance. He didn't like this type of silence. There was just something so lonely about it and not at all comfortable. And Tom had lived alone before he agreed to come here. Harry wondered how Tom could have stood it. How long had the Dark Lord lived there alone? He must have been lonely. Harry didn't care if he was the Dark Lord; Tom was still a man and he must have felt it and it was self-imposed really. Deep down Harry knew that was one reason why Tom had turned out the way he had. Loneliness can turn people bitter.

Halfway through his breakfast, Harry gave up and evacuated the room. It didn't feel right. He knew he wouldn't be able to eat comfortably in that room without Tom.

"What the hell is going on with me?!" he shouted when he ended up in the study. Not his study, but Tom's. The Dark Lord's study was nice too. It wasn't as strict looking as his office, but it had a certain uniform quality to it, though also some warmth as well and most of that had to do with the large fireplace demanding attention as soon as he stepped into the room. The fire came to life as he lay on the sofa.

"Thanks," he mumbled to the house elf without looking at it. Harry figured he should do something to keep occupied but he was uncertain as to what. Frankly he didn't feel like doing much of anything. He ended up taking a long nap right there on the lounge and didn't awake until late in the evening. He then spent the rest of the night in aimless wandering; exploring parts of the mansion he had yet to see. There was quite a bit of it. And he found quite a lot of interesting rooms.

The following days were just the same. With Harry feeling like there was nothing to do. With not wanting to do anything. With him taking stupid naps in the stupid Dark Lord's study and trying not to think about what was happening to him. It was true though about what Draco had said. He fancied Tom. Harry feared his feelings were deeper than just fancying. And he wondered how such a thing could have happened and in such a short time.

Harry's monotonous routine was interrupted one afternoon when something started tapping and clawing at the window of the study. For once he was in the study off his room instead of Tom's. Looking over from where he was slouched in his very comfy chair, he noticed something large and dark hovering outside. Harry stood and warily approached the window, finally seeing that it was a bird. It didn't look like any owl he'd ever seen before. Opening the window, Harry stood back as the large bird swooped in like black smoke. Harry's mouth was wide open in shock and a bit of fear as he watched the thing soar up to perch atop his large empty bookcase.

It was a massive bird of prey. He suspected it was an eagle, but it was all black which made him doubt if it were really one. The bird's dark eyes were large and seemed to be narrowed, gleaming maliciously at him. A very sharp long beak snapped menacingly as it raised a talon in a haughty manner and dropped the letter onto the ground. The eagle stared at him once more before shifting slightly to bury its beak underneath its wing.

Harry slowly approached the bookcase in order to not disturb the bird from hell. He bent and snatched the letter up from the floor before returning to his chair and opening the letter. Immediately a smile lit his face, having recognized Tom's handwriting.

Harry,

I trust this letter finds you well. It had better find you well. I'm simply writing to remind you not to leave and that my home should still be standing upon my return. As you may have noticed, the eagle sent with this letter has remained behind with you. You may write back if you are so inclined. Just be sure to indicate nothing of importance whenever you do. I'm sure you know what I mean.

TR

Harry sat there and reread the short letter a few times. How was it possible to be elated because Tom had thought to write to him? Though his worries about whatever Tom was up to diminished slightly. Tom's mission couldn't be all that dangerous if Harry were allowed to write back. Finally he moved to sit at the desk in order to pen a reply.

Dear T,

There's something to be said of this bird, which looks like a demon. A demon bird. Is there such a thing? Only you could find a bird this scary. If you were in your other form it would surely try to eat you. As it is, I think it wants to eat me as a human.

I am relieved to receive your letter. And maybe happier than I should be. Do you know why? I think you do. I think you know a lot of things you aren't telling me. I didn't even know it was possible but I miss you. I've been alone here for nearly two weeks. You need to come back. I miss reminding you that you can never win.

Harry

P.S. Does the scary demon bird have a name?

Harry waited until he was ready to go to bed before carefully waking the eagle and very nicely asking it to deliver the letter. The bird opened its beak and a chilling hiss left it before it swooped down off the bookcase. Harry flinched a little as it soared over him, snatching the letter out of his hand before swerving and soaring out into the night.

He was thrilled the next morning to find the demon bird tapping impatiently outside his bedroom window. Harry waited until the eagle deposited the letter at his feet and then took itself off to perch on top of his outer wardrobe before grabbing the letter and jumping onto his bed; not able to wipe the wide smile off his face as he ripped the letter open.

Impertinent Brat,

Just because I did not kill you does not mean I'm never victorious! For your information, I know a plethora of things you will never know about. I'm pleased you miss my presence. And

pleased more you've admitted it. Perhaps when I return you'll be ready. Is there any regret in your admittance?

And what have you been doing alone? I did give you permission to invite your friends over. I don't want you alone, Harry. Summon them. Yes, that is an order. If you do not do it I shall have your favorite Potions Master pay a visit and make him entertain you for an entire week in whichever way he sees fit. How would you like that? And what of Draco? Surely he's graced your presence with his whining?

The eagle's name is Damas. Do you know the meaning of the name? It's cheating if you need to look it up.

Yours,

TR

P.S. I will reign supreme.

Yours. It was so small. Just one word and probably no real meaning behind it and yet Harry was blushing, feeling warmth spread throughout him. Making him feel giddy and incredibly happy. He sat there for at least twenty minutes, staring at nothing and holding the letter in his hands as if it were his greatest treasure. Trying to decipher the emotions he was feeling from having received another letter from Tom. And then a laugh bubbled out from nowhere as he hopped off the bed and headed down to his study.

Bunnymort,

Damas means ambassador from Hell. Really fitting name and so totally you. And no, I didn't look up the name. As I've already told you a hundred times, I'm not stupid. And don't you dare send that bastard here! I may end up killing him or vice versa. And to keep that from happening I will follow your order... don't get used to that. I'll ask them to stay over tomorrow if they can.

Draco hasn't been around. I think he was more hurt by what happened with Zabini than he let on. He gave up his friendship with Zabini for me and maybe I'm glad Drake hasn't come to see me. I feel very guilty for him having done that. Do I even deserve it? They had been friends for years. Perhaps he's regretting his decision. I really don't think he could have pushed his feelings for Zabini aside just like that.

Anyway, no I don't regret missing you or telling you that I do. I think... I'm way passed that stage. However I'm sure you might make me regret snooping into your bedroom. Ha ha. Your chambers are massive! Your bed is almost as big as my bedroom! I don't think that's very fair. And your bathroom! Who needs a bathroom that large? You're only one person! Did you give me the smallest bedroom in this massive place? I bet you did. Just to be spiteful. And aren't we being a bit cocky? You will reign supreme? What's that even mean?

Yours,

Harry

Hermione and the twins arrived before he received Tom's next reply and so he was easily kept busy instead of worrying about when it would come. The twins took off as soon as they Portkeyed into the Entrance Hall, calling out that they would go exploring and to not worry.

"How can I not worry?" Harry asked Hermione. "Who knows what kind of traps Tom has around here."

"They'll be alright. The twins are smarter than that. Besides, I'm sure the Dark Lord has anything he wants to stay private locked up, right?"

"Yeah, that's true. Um, Mione? I need to talk to you... about something important I think."

"Of course, Harry. Can we have some tea as well? It's been a long extremely tiring day."

Harry led Hermione to the open study. He planned to show her the library but only after they talked. He knew if he took her to the library now she would never hear a word he said. Harry ignored her stern look when one of the house elves appeared with a tray of tea and biscuits.

"They are really well trained here. Most times they do things before you even think to ask them."

"Well of course they do! They serve Voldemort!"

"For your information, Tom does not beat his house elves."

"How do you know that?"

"He told me." Hermione gave him a look. "No really. Tom doesn't lie to me, Hermione. He doesn't need to. If there's something he doesn't want me to know, then he stays silent. He closes off. He's been mostly truthful since that time he came at me as a bunny."

Hermione sipped at her tea, watching him closely from over the rim. Finally she set her tea down and took a breath. "Alright, Harry. I believe you. And I'll believe you when you say he's taking care of you; that he only wants to keep you safe."

"Yeah um... about that... That's kind of what I wanted to talk to you about," he started quietly, avoiding her gaze, though he knew her eyes had narrowed speculatively. "Well, err... I kind of like him. Tom."

"Tell me something I don't already know, Harry."

"No. I mean I like him. As in I fancy the bastard."

"Yes, Harry. I know that."

Harry sighed and met her gaze. "Herm, I don't think you understand. I am severely infatuated with Voldemort and it's so much more than being attracted to him. It's actually been kind of hard to function here without him. I never noticed till he was gone but we had a routine of daily living. Sometimes I'll catch myself going to find him in the library just to sit there in

silence as he reads. It's so comfortable with him. And we talk all the time, Hermione... I don't think this is a flighty fancy. And I don't know what he's doing or where he is but I need him to come back. What if something happens to him? I've thought about it a lot... Hermione, it's hard to breathe when I think there's a chance he may never come back because whatever he's doing is dangerous."

"What exactly are you saying?" Hermione asked, her tone pitched high in understanding.

Harry dropped his elbows to his knees and held his face in his hands. He hadn't actually thought or said the words aloud. Afraid to do so. "Tom says I make him feel young again," he whispered.

"Harry," she replied, her voice trembling slightly. "You've been here long enough and I think you should come home with me."

"I'm not under some spell."

"Of course you are! Being attracted to him, I can understand. But developing real feelings for him? I find that impossible."

"I know this is going to sound cliché, but you don't know him like I do. No one does."

"Harry, this can't be for real! Do you honestly think he cares anything about you?"

He flinched back from her in reflex. "I'm well aware my feelings will never be reciprocated," he replied flatly. "I didn't start this conversation with you in order to be reminded of that. I just wanted to let you know... you've been asking."

"Oh, Harry," she replied softly, getting up to move and sit beside him. "I'm sorry. You know I didn't say that to hurt you."

"I'm here because I want to be. I'm here because it feels right," Harry murmured as he leaned against her. "He killed my parents. He's killed so many people, hurt so many lives. He's done so much damage... and yet I can't help how I feel about him. I've tried. The whole time he's been gone. I've tried hating him. I thought that if he were gone I could go back to hating him since he wasn't around. But it never works. All I can think about is that he isn't here and something is missing."

"Harry, have you... do you have a physical relationship with him?"

The brunet blinked in surprise at such a question. "No."

"I just thought maybe that's why you feel like this. Many people jump into a physical relationship and then think they've developed real emotions only to find out down the road it was just lust."

"You sound like you wish that were the case."

"Harry, I love you and I never want you to be hurt."

"I heard somewhere that it was supposed to hurt. If it's not rough it isn't fun, isn't that what you said?"

Hermione stood and planted her fists on her hips. "You know that's from that muggle song! I never said that."

"Rings true though, doesn't it?" he asked with a grin. Hermione tisked and batted at his arm.

The subject of him and Tom was dropped after that with an unspoken signal. Harry was glad she wasn't pressing the issue as she might have with other things. That probably had to do with him mentioning the massive library and asking if she wanted to see it. Of course her answer was an affirmative. One step in and Hermione was in love and sprinting away to disappear amongst the aisles.

"Stay away from the very back, Hermione!" he shouted after her. "Tom doesn't even let me go back there. Dangerous books back there! I'm not kidding, they'll eat you!"

Harry started to worry when two days had come and gone and he didn't receive a reply from Tom, and then Damas appeared the day after without a letter. Harry tried to shoo the bird out, telling it to not come back without a letter. This earned him a scratch on the face. A week went by and then another and it was time for Tom's return. But he didn't come back and neither did Harry receive another letter.

Harry was sitting in Tom's study in front of the fire place with Nagini in his lap when a house elf appeared beside him.

"Mr. Potter, sir? Mr. Malfoy has come to see you."

"Okay. Show him in," he answered without turning away from the flames. He didn't look away until he heard a throat being cleared on the threshold of the study. Harry turned towards the door and was surprised to find Lucius Malfoy standing there. His presence made Harry both worry and feel a sense of excitement. Maybe Malfoy had come to give him news of Tom.

"Mr. Malfoy. I wasn't expecting you."

"Didn't your house elf announce me?" the tall blond asked as he stepped into the study, studying the young wizard carefully and noticing how tense Harry had become since turning to face him. Nagini was hissing softly and bumping her head against Potter's hand. Lucius had a feeling the snake was trying to calm him.

"Tom's house elf," Harry corrected. "And I thought he meant Draco was here to see me."

"Draco plans to visit you later in the day."

"Right, well..." Harry softly nudged Nagini off so that he could stand and face Malfoy. "What is it I can do for you? Do you have a message from Tom?"

It would have been impossible for Lucius to not have heard the eagerness in the young wizard's voice, nor miss the hope flashing in his eyes. And he didn't take any pleasure at all in his next words which would surely replace those emotions with fear and trepidation. "Severus and myself were hoping you had word from him. We haven't received word in two weeks, Potter and we're aware our Lord should have returned by this time."

Lucius only had a moment to see the fear before Potter turned back to the fire, his hands clenched tightly at his sides. But Potter was breathing heavily now as if keeping a panic attack at bay.

"He hasn't replied to my last letter... the last one was a couple of weeks ago," Harry whispered. "You haven't any idea where he is?"

"No."

Harry didn't reply and Lucius thought there was nothing else to be said. He turned and left, walking briskly down to the Floo room. Lucius scanned the hall as he moved, and his footsteps echoed loudly as if he were the only living thing within the mansion. He faltered and then stopped. Potter was alone in this place... Lucius turned on his heel and returned to the study, finding Potter on the ground, his hands stuck in his hair while the large snake had begun to curl around him.

"Where are your friends? The Dark Lord mentioned you would have friends over."

"They work," Potter whispered. "They can't come back until the weekend."

"Potter... my wife would like to extend to you an invitation to stay at our manor. I think you should accept."

"No, thanks. I promised to stay here until he comes back. Tom promised to come back."

"Very well." Lucius turned to leave again. Perhaps Draco would have better luck changing his mind.

When Draco arrived not long after that, it was to hear Harry shouting in frustration. The blond's eyes widened and he hurried out of the Floo room, using Harry's trembling voice to lead him. He stopped short after turning a corner to find Harry outside of the Dark Lord's office. The brunet was still shouting as he kicked at the door, apparently trying to get in. Harry stopped shouting and took a deep breath before pointing his wand and yelling out a complicated unlocking charm. That didn't work, of course. Harry then went back to kicking the door before grabbing at the doorknob. Draco shook out of his stupor and ran to the brunet when he noticed the doorknob was hexed and yet Harry didn't seem to care at all.

"Harry, stop!" he shouted, and yanked the brunet away from the door. Draco sucked in a breath upon seeing both of Harry's hands. They were badly burnt. He must have been touching the knob multiple times before he'd arrived, even when he knew the doorknob was hexed. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I need to find him," Harry replied calmly. And his composed tone frightened Draco more than anything. A calm Harry meant the brunet was thinking of doing something crazy. "I know he must have notes in there. I just need to get in." He pushed away from Draco and tried to grab the doorknob again, but the blond stopped him by sliding in between the door and Harry.

"You're coming home with me. Right now."

Harry shook his head rapidly. "No. I can't do that. I promised."

"The Dark Lord gave you permission to go to my manor as well," the blond reminded.

Harry swallowed thickly before whispering, "I don't want to leave here."

Draco nearly growled in frustration, cursing stubborn Gryffindors. "At least let me get your hands healed."

"My hands are fine."

"No they are not! They look like burnt bacon, Harry!"

Harry doubled over before he could reply, crying out and clutching at his scar. He felt hands grasp his shoulders, but only barely. The pain stemming from his scar was running throughout his body. It felt as if his blood was on fire. In the far distance he could hear Draco calling his name; shouting and shaking him. He fell out of Draco's grasp as his body went lax and he hit the floor.

As his vision faded, he heard a hiss and felt something coiling around him and immediately knew it was Nagini, as if she were trying to protect him. But none of that was important right now. Not Nagini, not the fire traveling through his body, not Draco's frantic terrified calls to him. All Harry could think about was the vision flashing through his mind; something was happening to Tom and he was feeling the pain through the link of the scar.

"How are we supposed to heal him with her wrapped around him like this?" Lucius wondered while staring at the young wizard lying on the bed with the Dark Lord's familiar wrapped snugly around his unconscious body. He, Severus, Draco, and Narcissa stood around the bed; a few feet back from it as Nagini hissed threateningly anytime she thought they were getting too close.

"What did you say happened to his hands?" Narcissa asked her son.

"Harry was trying to break into our Lord's office. He wanted to search his things, find out where our Lord had gone. Suppose he was going to do the saving people thing again," Draco responded. "He wouldn't stop touching the doorknob even after he found it was cursed to burn the hands of anyone except for the Dark Lord."

"Nitwit," Severus murmured.

"He's beyond worried," Lucius murmured quietly, looking between Narcissa and his lover. "When I told him we hadn't received word in the last two weeks he seemed to fall into a panic. Apparently our Lord has been writing Potter since he left..."

"Can't you do something, Father?" Draco whined.

"What do you want me to do? No one knows where our Lord has gone. We only know what he was going to do. And no you cannot be told."

"Why am I always left out of the important things," Draco whined. "That's not fair at all."

"Draco, dear. We're here about Harry," his mother reminded with a stern look.

Before they could figure out a way to disengage Nagini from around Harry, a house elf popped in.

"Mr. Potter be having guests."

"Who is it?" Draco inquired.

"Fred and George Weasley."

Draco sucked in a sharp breath. Lucius barely resisted smirking at him. "Ah yes. They must have received my owl." Oh, the look on Draco's face was priceless.

"What?! You invited them here?"

"Yes, of course. I thought they would like to be informed of Potter's condition."

Draco had a look of utter betrayal on his face as he peered back at his father. "How could you invite those fiends here?!"

Lucius turned to Severus, amusement shining in his eyes. Severus simply sneered at the young blond. "Fiends?" Lucius inquired, turning back to his son. "Why have you labeled them so?"

Draco gulped and looked down at his boots. "Err... because they're Weasleys. Obviously. No other reason. None at all." With that said, Draco moved across the room to sit in the chair in the corner and glared at Harry's unconscious form.

Narcissa eyed her son a moment before turning to her husband. "Would you like me to greet them?"

"Yes, Narci dear. Bring them here if you will."

"Of course."

"Did you invite the mudblood as well, Father?" Draco mumbled once his mother was out of the room.

"Don't be ridiculous. Of course I didn't."

"You should have," Severus intoned. Lucius sneered at him.

Draco did nothing but pout and cross his arms over his chest. A few minutes later found him gaping at the doorway as his mother returned, laughing delightedly and blushing from something the twins had said. She was laughing now but Draco bet she wouldn't be laughing if she learned they were only trying to charm her because they wanted to fuck him three ways from Sunday. Oh and they'd changed their hair again! The twins walked in then and their easygoing smiles disappeared upon seeing Harry.

"What's that snake doing to him?" one demanded.

"She's protecting him," Lucius replied easily. "Put your wands away. They will not help Harry, and you're certainly not going to be attacked here. The Dark Lord has forbidden it."

"Alright then," they chirped.

Lucius gave a tight smile. "Draco, aren't you going to greet our visitors?"

Draco squirmed in his seat. Why did it seem like he was being set up? And now they were staring at him, giving him their undivided attention, twin smirks on their faces. "This isn't our home, which means they aren't really our visitors. So no, I don't think I will," he mumbled.

"Draco Malfoy! You've been taught better. You will greet our guests!"

"But Mother! Since when have we been nice to Weasleys?"

"C'mon, Draco," said one of the twins. "Say hi."

Draco sneered at both of them. "Hello. You've seen Harry. Now you two can bugger off!"

"We'd rather bugger y-"

"Harry!" Draco exclaimed, shooting a fearful look at his parents. "Harry's awake! Oh, wait... never mind. Thought I saw his eyes open."

Draco didn't like the twins but he in no way wanted his mother to catch a clue here. He would never hear the end of it. Fortunately her attention seemed to be all on Harry now, her eyes narrowed as she studied the brunet and the snake.

"Wizards," she finally murmured, "I think it's time you left the room. All of you. I will see to healing Harry's hands."

"How are you going to do that?" Lucius asked as Narcissa started shoing them out of the room. "Nagini looks as if she will strike if you get within one foot of the bed."

"Such a good snake, aren't you?" Narcissa cooed. "A good mother. Protecting the youngling."

"I trust you know what you're doing, Narcissa," Lucius murmured as he and the others began to file out.

"Yes. I have figured it out."

"Very well." Lucius turned to the twins. "If you two will follow me. There are things I think we should discuss."

"Sure thing, Mr. Malfoy," they responded in unison. They turned to Draco, winked at him, and then followed the elder blond out of the room.

Draco refused to hyperventilate. He refused to do that but he couldn't help but feel panicked not knowing what his father wanted to speak to the twins about. What could he possibly want to speak to Weasleys about? And on top of that, Fred and George Weasley alone with his father. What would they say?!

"Draco, you need to leave now dear."

"I don't want to leave you alone with Nagini."

"I shall be fine. You and the other males are simply making her nervous. Didn't any of you notice her attentions were only on you, your father, and Severus? I don't think she'll trust any male around Harry that isn't our Dark Lord. Go on. I'll make it plain I'm only seeking to heal Harry."

Draco had no choice but to leave then. Wondering what his father was speaking to the twins about. Wondering where the Dark Lord was. Wondering when and if Harry would wake up. And you know what? It was all Harry's fault the twins were with his father that very moment! Potter was going to hear it when he finally woke up! Draco planned to have the prat make him trays and trays of fudge for this inconvenience!

Harry's eyes flashed open not very long after that. There was no one around except for Draco and Nagini; Narcissa having successfully charmed the Dark Lord's familiar into letting her heal Harry's hands. Draco sat forward once he saw the brunet was awake and scowled ferociously.

"Tom?"

Draco's eyes softened for a split second, only to go back to being enraged. "It's about time you've awoken! Don't you think this has gone on long enough? Why are you always trying to seek attention?"

"Draco," the brunet began, in no mood for his friend's usual antics. Since Draco hadn't answered his unspoken question about Tom it was a given the Dark Lord hadn't returned yet

Draco went on as if he hadn't heard Harry's warning. He didn't like the grief he was seeing on Harry's face. Grief that the brunet was trying to cover up by an emotionless mask. Keeping

Harry's mind away from the Dark Lord seemed like a good idea. "Have you any idea what I've had to go through in the last two hours?" he whined.

"No."

"Shall I tell you," the blond hissed.

"Sure," Harry muttered since he knew Draco would anyway.

"You fainted or whatever it is you do when hit in the head with massive amounts of pain and you scared the life out of me!"

"It's not like I do that on purp-"

"I'm not finished, Potter! Nagini wrapped around your body and I thought she was trying to suffocate you and she wouldn't let you go. I had to levitate you, along with the snake all the way up to your room. Then Nagini wouldn't let anyone but Mother heal your hands. Anyway, that's not the most important part of all this. The most important part - and worst, in my opinion- is the fact that Father invited Fred and George Weasley here! He invited them here to see you!"

"That was nice of him."

"Harry," the blond suddenly whined. "Father took them for a talk over an hour ago!"

"The twins aren't going to say anything about wanting to bed you and your father doesn't know about their fixation on you anyway, does he? So stop worrying."

Draco frowned at Harry's flat tone. "But what could he possibly want to talk to them about?"

"Guess you'll just have to wait and see."

"Fine then... you owe me fudge!"

Harry said nothing at first, just stared up at the ceiling, his hand traveling to the snake curled up over his midsection. "I had a vision," he finally spoke. The words coming softly. "When the pain hit. It was pictures really, snap shots... Tom has always been able to send me visions; voluntarily or not. It's been a long time though since I'd had a vision."

Draco leaned forward. "What did you see?"

"Claws and sharp teeth coming at me. And then blood. His blood. I felt pain. And then a bright painful light. But now I feel nothing. What does that mean?" he whispered fearfully.

"It doesn't mean he's dead, Potter," Draco murmured, knowing exactly what Harry was thinking and fearing.

"I can't believe this is happening?" Harry murmured before hissing something to Nagini. Draco watched Nagini uncoil slowly as if hesitant to leave. But finally she slithered off him and Harry sat up.

"Which part?"

"The developing feelings for the bastard Dark Lord part. And it's really stupid. He hasn't shown the least bit of attraction to me. Does he even like boys?"

Harry scowled when moments later the room was filled with Draco's hysterical laughter. Draco dropped his face to his hands and laughed for all he was worth.

"Didn't think anything I said was funny."

"But it was, Potter. Hilarious." Finally Draco lifted his face to look at him and smirked. "Oh don't get your knickers in a twist. There's a reason why I'm laughing and I bet you'll learn why just as soon as the Dark Lord returns."

Harry looked hopeful. "Do you think he will?"

"They say you were the only one who could kill him. And since you aren't planning on doing that, I think it's pretty safe to say our Lord will return for you to annoy another day. Unless you plan to kill him by being a fantastic shag. Death by sex, Potter! That would be a wonderful way to go, don't you think? Even our Lord couldn't complain about dying in such a way."

Draco laughed and was prepared for the pillow that was thrown his way. He tossed the pillow back onto the bed, wincing slightly when he accidentally hit Nagini over the head and received a warning hiss in reply. Harry laughed softly and removed the pillow before caressing the large snake under her chin. After that, there was silence for a few minutes.

"Listen," Draco finally murmured, catching Harry's eyes with his. "I wanted to say... sorry."

Harry's brow furrowed in confusion. "For what?"

"For staying away this whole time I knew you were alone here."

"Oh, hey," Harry quickly waved that away. "I know why. Not a big deal, Drake. I just figured you'd changed your mind."

"Your insecurities are so annoying. I wanted your friendship before Blaise's anyway, didn't I?"

"I'm pretty sure that was a political move of an eleven year old."

Draco looked highly affronted. "That hurts, Harry. Really."

The brunet grinned. "Are you going to sit there and try to deny it?"

"Okay, maybe it was a little. But I really did want to be your friend."

Harry laughed then, studying Draco's slightly pink cheeks. "You're so cute when you're being sentimentally truthful."

"Whatever." Draco stood and brushed non-existent lint from his dark blue robes. "Let's go make fudge."

"I'm not really in the mood, Drake."

"You owe me, Potter!"

Harry sighed. He knew he wouldn't get out of this. He should just comply otherwise he'd be stuck with listening to Draco whining in his ears until he did agree. "Are you going to at least help me make it this time?"

Draco snorted. "Yeah, right. And you need to make a lot of it. I have plans for your incredible fudge."

They soon left the bedroom and stopped short finding the twins leaning against the wall on each side of the door. The way they were grinning told Harry they had been standing there long enough to hear most of the conversation.

"What were you speaking to my father about?" Draco demanded even as he subtly scooted to stand behind Harry.

"Business," George replied as he loped an arm around Harry's shoulders.

Fred snaked an arm around Draco's shoulders before the blond could run away. "Sure he'll tell you soon."

Draco gritted his teeth and ducked away from the arm. "What could he possibly want with you two?"

They ignored him and instead asked Harry how he was doing. Harry tried to put up a good front, but his friends saw right through him, though they didn't call his bluffs. To Draco's horror, the twins lingered at the Dark Lord's manor and eagerly helped Harry make the copious amounts of fudge Draco ordered.

"What exactly are you planning on doing with all this fudge, Drake?" Harry asked as he stood before a large pot, stirring the mixture within, waiting for it to come to a boil.

Draco tried looking innocent. "Nothing, Potter."

"I know you're not going to eat it," the brunet replied with a laugh. "You're way too obsessed about your physique."

Fred grinned at the Slytherin. "And what a lovely physique it is."

"Well yes, of course it is," Draco agreed as he ran hands down his middle, grinning smugly.

"I know what we can do with this," George murmured, staring into another pot with the cooling mixture. He dipped a finger in and brought the warm fudge to his mouth as he eyed the blond. "Think this was number five in the letter."

Draco cleared his throat, announced he needed the loo, and quickly departed.

Harry was kept busy the rest of the day, and kept away from Tom's office as well by an overprotective Draco, who somehow set up wards around the office to alert him whenever Harry stepped within twenty feet of the door. The twins stayed until well past sundown but in the end had to leave. Though they did promise to return for a nice long visit the coming weekend and ignored the blond's mutters of, "don't bother."

"I wish you would come stay with me tonight," Draco implored again before he prepared to leave for home.

"I'm fine here. Honestly. I have Nagini for company. She's really good company, actually."

"Stay away from the office," Draco ordered firmly before leaving.

Harry went flying after that. He let the freedom of flight soothe him as he continued to think about the things that had been going through his mind for the last month. He thought perhaps Hermione was right and he was under some spell because he couldn't deny anymore that he had very real feelings for Tom. But he also knew whatever spell it was, it had not been intentionally cast.

As Harry flew back to the manor, he briefly entertained the thought of confronting Tom about his feelings. Laying it all bare to see how Tom would react. The look on the Dark Lord's face would probably be worth it. Harry grinned with this thought as he soared through his open balcony doors. But then his amusement died. Tom had to return before he could do that.

Does he often go out alone to do dangerous things? he asked the large snake curled up on his bed as he stored his Firebolt away into the outer wardrobe.

Yes, Nagini answered lazily.

And does it usually take so long?

At times. But he always returns. Sleep now, young wizard. Master will return. Come and share your warmth.

Harry softly smiled as he stripped down and replaced his boxers with silver silk pajama pants. Nagini hissed something very softly, and Harry wasn't sure but he could swear she'd said her master would like those.

Chapter Six

The Black Bunny

Chapter Six

A few hours before dawn, Nagini lifted her head from Harry's shoulder to peer across the room at the closed door. She waited without moving, except for the occasional flick of her forked tongue to sniff out the air. The wizard beneath her stirred slightly, as he had been doing throughout the night. His sleep tormented by dreams. Dreams that would be chased away by her master when he returned. As if on queue the door silently opened.

Nagini raised her head just a little bit more though still the rest of her body remained where it was under the covers, curved over the wizard's arm, down his side, and over his legs where he'd allowed her stay for the night and the previous ones since her master's departure. A dark figure filled the empty doorway. Nagini hissed softly in pleasure. Her master had returned home. To her and to his young wizard. She hissed again before lowering her head to rest on the wizard's shoulder once more, though her eyes remained upon the figure standing like a statue upon the threshold.

Tom stood in the doorway, consuming the sight of the young man sleeping on his side facing away from the door. And as he expected the sight of Harry did far more good than his hasty healing had. His time away had not only brought things into perspective for Harry but also for him as well. In much the same way. He missed the mornings together, the afternoons, and the evenings. He missed the comfortable silence they shared. He missed the banter and meaningful discussions. And Tom hadn't known it was possible to miss looking into someone's eyes the way he missed looking into Harry's.

Some of his revelations had been downright startling this past month. Tom had not realized he was capable of feeling emotions of such depth. Somewhere along the way his desire to possess Harry Potter had turned into a much deeper and more complicated needful emotion. He was not yet comfortable admitting- even mentally- of what that was. But he had made the decision. He was going to make his intentions known. Immediately. And he didn't care if Harry were ready or not.

Nagini's eyes caught his attention and he noticed how she was snuggled against Harry for warmth under the covers. He smiled a bit as he walked into the room to stand at the end of the bed. **I see you've been taking advantage of his good nature.**

Yes, Master.

How long has this been going on, my pet?

For many nights now, Master. Your young wizard is very affectionate.

Tom shook his head at her. He never allowed Nagini to curl up in bed with him. Harry's almost inaudible whimper quickly pulled his attention away from his familiar and he rounded

the bed.

He was hurt, Master. Earlier. Your young wizard says he felt your pain. Saw you attacked. He's been very worried about you.

Tom cursed softly even as he knelt beside the bed, hand reaching out to hover over Harry's cheek. He'd tried to keep that from traveling through the link, but he'd literally been fighting for his life and he couldn't have spent extra energy protecting the link even when he wanted to.

"Harry," he whispered, finally deciding to drop his hand into those wild raven locks. It wasn't long before drowsy green eyes were peering at him. Green eyes more brilliant now that glasses didn't obscure them. Tom mentally noted to make sure Harry rid himself of those glasses in the near future. "Who gave you permission to spoil my familiar, Potter?"

Harry murmured something intelligible before squinting, his mind still half gone to sleep. But then all at once he awoke and jerked into a sitting position. "Tom?!"

"Yes," he answered, pulling his hand away to reach up and drop back the hood of his cloak. He expected the sharp intake of breath when Harry saw his face. A face littered with scratches. It was the same for the rest of his body, though now the scratches weren't so bad as they had been. Hours ago they had been life threatening gashes.

"Y-you didn't write me back," Harry whispered in a trembling voice, reaching out to skim his fingers over a long jagged mark down Tom's neck. "What happened to you?"

"That tale should be saved for tomorrow when we've both been rested," Tom responded softly as he pulled Harry's hand away from his neck. He wasn't so tired and hurt that he was immune to Harry touching him, nor was he immune to the fact Harry was half naked in front of him. And he was certainly not tired enough to have missed the silk silver pajama bottoms riding low on Harry's narrow hips. Tom swallowed as he felt a hot stirring in his groin. "Go back to sleep now," he voiced roughly as he stood and backed away before he did something he would regret in the morning.

"Sure you're okay?"

"I'm standing here, aren't I?"

"You don't have to be so snarky!" Harry snapped. "I was really worried! In fact I was almost going out of my mind! And next time you should give a clue as to where you are going!"

"So that you could follow me and get yourself killed?"

"Dueled you and lived, didn't I?" Harry replied smugly as he crossed his arms over his bare chest.

Tom's eyes narrowed. "Go back to sleep, Potter."

Harry finally did as he was told, though Tom felt his eyes on him as he rounded the bed towards the door. When Nagini made to follow, Tom waved his hand at Harry. **I don't mind**

if he spoils you. Nagini hissed in pleasure and slithered back under Harry's covers.

"Tom, this better not be a dream."

"You'll find out in the morning."

Tom quickly left after, knowing if he lingered for much longer, he would disregard every bit of his plans and ravish the young wizard as he was sorely tempted to do.

Harry sprinted through the halls of the second level with a smile threatening to take over his features, but he kept it in check as he was very much afraid his hopes would be dashed when he reached his destination. However that smile finally broke free when he burst into the breakfast room to find Tom sitting at the table, the paper already open in front of him. Harry stood there a moment, smiling and staring. He'd been so afraid when he woke up that seeing Tom last night had been a dream. He would have asked Nagini but she was still asleep when he woke and Harry knew better than to wake that snake before she felt like waking.

When Tom set the paper down to give him his full attention, Harry tried dousing his smile. But it was really a futile effort.

"One would think you are happy to see me," Tom drawled as Harry was finally able to move and take his seat.

"Bastard. Had me worried out of my mind."

"Please explain the scuff marks on my office door and the lousy wards set around it," Tom returned.

"Oh..." Harry's smile turned sheepish as he squirmed in his seat. "Um, it's kind of a funny story."

"I'm all ears."

"Actually I'm sure you don't want to hear it. Not interesting at all you know."

Tom softly chuckled as he watched the young man before him. Harry looked embarrassed and yet that relieved smile hadn't left his face once since entering their breakfast room.

"Recognized Draco's magical signature. Should I plan to punish him?"

"Even if he did do something wrong- which he didn't- do you honestly think I'll ever want you to punish him the way you're thinking?"

Tom made a noncommittal sound and picked up the paper again. "You're in the *Prophet* this morning."

Harry scrunched up his nose. "I was seen with Draco and the twins at that pureblood club. Now the public is thinking maybe I've joined the Dark side along with the twins. The speculating has been going on for over a month!"

"Just because you went to a pureblood club? Idiots."

"Yeah."

"Your friends need to be careful then. They may be investigated. Even if they are Weasleys."

"Why should they be careful?"

Tom lifted his eyes to peer over the paper at Harry. "It's always best to be prepared. The Order will go to extreme lengths in order to win. You've already seen this."

Harry nodded even as he wondered at the two of them. Several important subjects needed to be brought up but neither seemed to want to be the first one to do so. Maybe it was the room. The time and place. They'd easily and quickly fallen back into the routine of a relaxing breakfast. And instead of worrying about why and how he could be so relaxed with him, Harry simply took it and enjoyed his time with Tom.

"You said in your last letter Draco had been absent..."

Harry shrugged as he continued with his breakfast. "He just needed time alone," he replied when he'd swallowed his food. "He came to see me yesterday."

"And how was the time alone for you?"

The fork loaded with eggs inching towards his mouth paused and he lifted his eyes to find Tom staring at him. Using that one intense gaze that always had Harry blushing uncontrollably.

"Surely," Tom went on with one of those perverted grins, "you didn't spend all that time coveting my bed."

"It's huge! And no of course not!"

"Then what did you do?"

"Thought about a lot of things..."

It was the perfect opening and Harry hoped Tom would ask for details. He needed help starting this. But Tom only nodded lightly and returned to reading the paper, his brown hair falling to cover the side of his face. The side facing Harry directly. Harry had the urge to reach over the table and sweep that hair away. And frustration bubbled within him. Before he thought it would be easy to confront Tom about his feelings. But now sitting across from the man, Harry was scared. Scared that should he say what he really wanted, Tom would grow angry. Or worse, disgusted and probably curse him out of his home. The thought of being sent away was terrifying.

"Where did you find that demon bird?" he finally questioned. Tom looked at him. Eyes narrowing as he noticed the excitement in Harry's eyes had dimmed.

"Finish your breakfast, Potter. The house elves have told me you've been skipping meals. And I found Damas on my travels."

"What does it matter if I skip meals?" Harry snapped. "And could you possibly pick a fucking name? Potter or Harry! Stop switching back and forth!"

"There's no need for swearing, *Harry*."

Harry flushed, this time from shame. Tom had used a tone as if he were speaking to a child. "Sorry."

"No you're not."

Harry met his gaze, saw Tom was grinning and instantly returned it. "You're right. Just like you're never sorry for hexing me when I've annoyed you too much."

When Tom's head tipped back to allow a deep and true laugh to escape, Harry swallowed thickly. That was a laugh he wanted to hear for the rest of his life. "The past month," Tom said after a moment, "I've missed hexing you."

Harry frowned. "Course you have... sadist."

Tom dropped an elbow onto the table and leaned forward. "Take out the hexing part of my last sentence and you'll have the statement I was truly trying to make."

Harry took a trembling breath and dropped his eyes to the table. He spent a few moments trying to figure out what to say to that. It was so hard. That hadn't been something Harry ever expected from Tom. "I thought you've always seen things like that as weakness."

"Harry, look at me." When he did, Tom had lost his smile. "Not when it comes to you."

Merlin, how many times was he going to be left speechless in the current half hour? Harry wondered if he should take Tom's words as he desperately wanted to take them. However... Tom could have missed him, but that didn't really mean anything. Or at least not the way Harry wanted it to mean. It could mean Tom thought of him as annoying brother, or Merlin forbid, an adopted child or charge or something. There wasn't anything in Tom's words to make Harry believe the Dark Lord reciprocated the insane feelings Harry felt for him.

"Drake made me make gallons of fudge yesterday," he murmured, ignoring the voice at the back of his mind calling him a coward. A coward who was being purposefully oblivious.

"Whatever for?"

"He wouldn't say," Harry replied, eyeing the faded scratches on Tom's face. The Dark Lord must have furthered the healing last night after leaving his room. It didn't look as painful anymore. The scratches were barely noticeable in the morning light. "I saw what happened to you. Or at least snatches."

"Tried to keep it from you."

"What happened?"

Tom eyed him a moment before looking away. "Vampires."

Harry's lips parted lightly in surprise. "You were attacked by vampires?"

"Many."

"How are you still alive?" *Thank Merlin you're still alive!* Directly after this thought his eyes widened fearfully. "You are still alive, right?" His scar throbbed momentarily; Tom making it clear he didn't appreciate Harry's lack of faith in his abilities. "How did you escape then?"

"It was a test, if you must know."

"So they weren't out to kill you?"

"Oh yes, that was the plan. And if I lived, I passed the test."

"So... what happened? How did you manage to pass?" Harry asked, leaning forward. His eyes going wide in curiosity. Tom smiled.

"You, actually. You saved me, though inadvertently."

"I don't understand. How-"

"The light. You described it as my vampire light the night before my departure. At the last moment I thought of our conversation and was able to conjure it. Worked splendidly. The vampires retreated and I passed the test. Though some said I cheated..."

Harry waited a moment, wanting to know what happened if he managed to pass the test. Waited for Tom to tell him why the vampires had been testing him in the first place. But Tom didn't seem to want to continue. "You're leaving so much out."

"Don't ask don't tell, Harry."

Harry scowled at the reminder of their policy. Tom chuckled at his petulant look.

"M-master, sir?"

Tom's eyes snapped away from Harry to the trembling house elf; his eyes narrowing into slits upon the creature. "This had better be important."

"M-misters Malfoy and Snape are here, Master."

Harry quietly sighed and sat back. Disappointed. Apparently their breakfast together was over.

"Have them stay in the parlor off the Entrance Hall. They can wait until Harry and I are finished here."

"Yes, Master!"

As the house elf disappeared and Tom's eyes returned to him, Harry dropped an elbow onto the table and cradled his chin in hand as he looked out the window. He shifted his fingers over to conceal the happy smile blooming on his face.

Tom entered the parlor and leveled his minions a look. "What could have brought you so early when you came here thinking I was still away?"

"Only here to check on Potter, my Lord," Lucius explained. "Narcissa insisted and Draco was nowhere to be found before we needed to leave."

"Why should Harry need checking on?"

"Fool boy nearly burned his hands off yesterday trying to gain entrance into your office," Severus drawled.

Tom remained silent for long moments after that. Only moving to take a seat across from the couple, but looking off to the side at the fire. Tom took long slow deep breaths in order to keep from showing how uncomfortable he was when he finally did speak. "You two have been lovers for many years."

He said this as a statement and so the two remained silent but they did share a look from the corner of their eyes, wondering where this was going.

"What... sort of gifts have the two of you exchanged in that time?"

At once Lucius flushed angrily and narrowed his eyes while Severus tensed. Tom raised a brow. The blond's narrowed gaze was solely on Severus.

"Gifts?" Lucius drawled, now fully facing Severus. "What is this word, gifts? Is there such a thing? I don't believe I've ever come across-"

"Lucius, not now," Severus pleaded lowly.

"Our Lord would like to know," Lucius hissed. "Some people are unfamiliar with the concept. Not for birthdays or Yule or even anniversaries... hmmm."

Tom smirked. Seems he'd hit a sore spot between the two. "Have you any suggestions on what I may get for Harry?" he pressed on before they could begin to argue.

"A permanent Silencio," Severus suggested.

"You are aware I have my wand with me?" Tom inquired lowly.

"I think we are the wrong people to ask, my Lord," Lucius quickly moved on. "Because obviously one of us never receives gifts and the other doesn't know how to give them even though he has received many... Perhaps you might ask Potter's mudblood."

Severus snorted, but his amusement turned to surprise when Voldemort looked as if he were taking the suggestion seriously.

"Yes," Tom murmured. "I had planned to speak with her anyway." Then he stood. "Wizards. Let us move this to my office."

As he was leaving ahead of them, Tom heard Severus hiss, "I've given you gifts!"

"Are you speaking about that whip you gave me five years ago?! One cheap gift Severus, when I've given you numerous gifts. How about that expensive set of potion vials last year, hmm? Or the rare collection of potion books that took me months to procure? Or," Lucius' voice rose above normal, "the lovely retreat I bought you two years ago, completely furnished with a state of the art potions lab! And what have I received? A whip!"

Tom stood outside in the hall, leaning against the wall beside the door. He'd never really paid much attention to their relationship, as they weren't really vocal about it. But this was amusing.

"I gave you that nice quill.... And I never asked for any of that, Lucius!"

"That's not the point! Those gifts were... I was trying to show you..."

There was rustling from within. "I know. It's your way," Severus murmured lowly. His tone changing. "And I thought I had been showing you in my own way, just not with gifts. Certainly you've been receiving the message all these years?"

"Yes, I suppose I have," Lucius replied softly, warmth evident in his tone.

Tom grimaced and pushed off the wall. It was getting... mushy. Though, as he walked away, he heard Lucius' last statement on the subject as they began to follow him. "But would it kill you to buy me something nice once in a while?"

He heard them exit the parlor behind him and had to smirk at Severus' grumbling. Yes it probably would. Severus was a thrifty man where as Lucius was completely materialistic. Tom didn't know how the two could have lasted so long as partners.

When they arrived at his office, Tom noticed the house elves had already fixed the door, polishing off the scuffmarks. "Harry was responsible for the damage done to my door," he murmured, though he'd already thought that was the case. "And Draco was trying to keep him from touching the door knob again."

"My son said Potter was frantic trying to get in. He thought to get to your notes and find out where you were located."

"Potter's hero complex was kicking in once again."

"Was this before or after he collapsed from the pain received through the link?" Tom questioned. It was important to know. If Harry hadn't known he was in danger before and yet still sought to find out where he was, that was an indication as to how much the young wizard cared for him.

"Before, my Lord."

"Excellent," Tom drawled as he opened the office and led the two inside. "Lucius," he started as the blond shut the door behind them. Tom went to his desk to retrieve the letter he'd written before leaving on his journey. "I want you to give this to Charleston. Have him deliver it to Miss Granger immediately. I would have you do it directly but should you go to the Ministry in order to see her, I'm sure that would look far too suspicious to even the most oblivious of persons."

Lucius took the letter. "As you wish, my Lord."

"Yes. Now," Tom murmured as he sat. Lucius bowed and then departed. Once gone, Tom leveled Severus with a look as he dropped his elbows onto the desk and leaned forward, bracing his chin onto his knuckles. "I want you to teach Harry potions again." The look of shock and then revulsion on Severus' face was priceless. "And I want you to do it without the animosity you've carried over from his father."

"That boy is horrid at potions. I couldn't possibly teach him anymore... My Lord."

"Harry has expressed regret to me many times at not being taught by someone who wasn't constantly trying to make him fail. He didn't try because you didn't care to try. Can you honestly tell me he had the best educator in that field?" Severus remained silent, scowling down at the desk. "He wants to learn, Severus. I will teach him when I can. But when I can't, I want you to take over when I'm gone."

"I will do as you say," Severus intoned gravely, knowing he had no choice. "Have you told Potter about this?"

Tom smirked. "Of course not. Harry despises you. The first meeting should be amusing. I will be sure not to miss it."

"How do you expect me to teach him then?"

"Teach without bias and he will respond." Severus sighed heavily before gritting his teeth and nodding. "If you do not do it without bias, I'm sure I could find a nice quiet hole for you six feet under the ground."

"No, my Lord. I will teach Potter potions without thinking he's a spoiled self-righteous idiot like his father."

"Very good." Tom then chuckled darkly. "Your annoyance and pain from this tickles me to no end, Severus."

"Yes, my Lord." Severus made himself feel better by thinking about how Potter was going to annoy the Dark Lord once he found out about these potion lessons.

It wasn't long before Lucius returned, announcing Granger should receive the letter in short time. Tom dismissed the two Death Eaters, but with a warning to be prepared for his calling later in the evening for a Death Eater meeting.

He paused outside of the kitchens, taking a look down the hallway he was standing in. It wasn't a surprise that he'd never been down that way as he had never once stepped foot inside the kitchen. But by the sounds of it Harry was making himself at home there. From where he stood Tom could hear Harry humming along with something playing on the Wizarding Wireless Network.

The Dark Lord shook his head as he stepped inside. Harry immediately spotted him as he was hovering over the kitchen island, facing the doorway. Two bright emerald eyes widened on him in surprise. Tom didn't see what Harry was working on. He was too busy studying the younger wizard. A sprinkling of flour smudged over his chin and forehead and even some in the fringe covering his eyes as he moved.

Harry sprinted around the island and charged Tom. "Get out!"

Tom had only a moment to allow his eyes to go wide before Harry's palms pressed against his chest, firmly pushing him back out the way he came and quickly. Tom couldn't help but laugh and drop heavy hands on Harry's shoulders. "You do remember this is my kitchen. My home. I go where I want."

"Since when have you ever wanted to come into the kitchen? Your... house elves say you never... come down here," Harry murmured, his voice going soft and drawn out with each word spoken as if suddenly hypnotized.

In the past Tom had never felt the need to travel to the kitchen. But Harry was here. And more often than not, Tom felt the need to search Harry out. He expected- and hoped- Harry had this same need. "You have flour on your face."

Harry didn't seem to hear him. The young wizard's eyes were trained on his chest where his flour-covered hands were pressed. Tom grimaced when he noticed the flour rubbing onto his black tunic.

"Do you work out, Tom?" he asked softly, a finger moving back and forth across the silk material.

Tom smirked and shifted closer until their thighs were pressed firmly together. "I try to keep fit."

Harry pulled in a shaky breath. "Seem to be fit enough."

"And you seem to be very domesticated."

Annoyance suddenly colored Harry's face. "Why does everyone keep saying that shite?" he demanded heatedly. "Just because I'm gay and I like cooking and baking doesn't make me a girl, or a... what does Hermione say... A Susie Homemaker!"

And that may be true, but seeing you like this makes me want to take you right there over that kitchen island. Flour and all. "You're well rounded," Tom said softly, encouraging Harry away from the pout on his face. It worked. Harry flushed and smiled brightly at him. The

same smile Tom thought should be illegal for anyone else but him. "Now why did you manhandle me out of my own kitchen?"

Harry pulled a hand off Tom's chest to rub the back of it across his cheek, leaving a trail of flour behind. "Err... It's a surprise. For you. Didn't want you to see."

Harry had to force his breaths to come out in regular intervals. But it was a hard thing. Tom's thighs were still pressed firmly against his and even there he could feel how hard and defined his muscles were and his hands were still on Harry's shoulders, and now he was pressing Harry back, and holy fuck! The Dark Lord was *strong*. It was such a heady turn on that Harry had to bite back a moan.

"A surprise. I like those. What is it? More fudge?" Tom wondered, continuing to press against Harry, pretending to try and get passed the younger wizard for a look. But in reality his entire attention was on the shorter wizard trying to push him back. When Harry's eyes locked onto his, Tom smiled. "Your fudge is very good, Harry."

Harry stopped pushing back. "You liked my fudge?"

The Dark Lord nodded. "I do see why Draco continues to go on about it. How did you learn to make it?"

"Learned my way around a kitchen at a very early age. It was the first thing I learned to be good at. Cooking. The way I was made to cook... some would have begun to hate it, but eventually it turned into a passion for me and I do it whenever I get the chance."

Something in Tom's eyes changed. They narrowed and darkened a bit. "How old were you?"

Harry finally pulled away from him. "That's not really important."

"Alright." Tom decided to let it go for now. But he would have his answers eventually. "I'm having dinner early tonight." He lifted a hand off Harry's shoulder in order to run a finger along the shell of the young wizard's ear. "I hope you intend to join me."

Harry nodded quickly even as he shivered, his eyes going wide. Tom smirked as he backed up and turned away. The intimate move had obviously surprised Harry. Tom wondered why that was. Had Harry missed all those stares he'd been throwing his way? He was trying to be subtle, but not so much that Harry would completely misunderstand. Still, he didn't think it mattered. After tonight Harry would know exactly what he wanted from him.

Back in his office, Tom thought on how he should conduct the upcoming meeting with Granger. Without a doubt she didn't trust him. Smart witch. Certainly didn't trust him with her best friend- though here her worries were justified but unnecessary. Still, she didn't need to know that just now. And this meeting wasn't about Harry.

Tom pulled away from paperwork and let his gaze travel over to the wardrobe where he kept his dark robes and he wondered how he should go about this meeting. Should he don the robes for Granger or appear as he currently was for this little meeting? He was taking into account this was Harry's best friend and she had seen him more recently as Tom than as

Voldemort. At the time of he had been more concerned about Harry rather than his appearance. According to the tempus charm he only had twenty minutes before she arrived courtesy of the Portkey he'd sent along with the letter. And he knew she'd follow the instructions and take it at the allotted time. She wouldn't dare ignore his summons.

By the time Granger arrived, Tom had decided to stay as he was and was sitting at his desk when the knock came at his door. "Enter," he called out.

The door opened slowly and for a moment all he could see was an empty doorway and he knew the witch was frightened and therefore hesitating. Tom started tapping his fingers against the desk.

"H-Harry?" she called out.

"He's not here," Tom drawled. "It will be just you and me, Granger. Come in now." From where he sat Tom could hear the shaky intake of breath and he rolled his eyes. "I promise no harm will come to you." The witch snorted. Tom's lips twitched. What was it about this generation of Gryffindors that made them seem so... bold? "Are you trying to anger me?"

Outside just out of view, Hermione pulled in a deep breath before biting her lip and entering the office, finding the Dark Lord sitting behind his desk. And it was just as he said. They were alone. As soon as she was far enough in, the door shut on its own accord.

"Is this about Harry?" she asked warily after he motioned over to one of the chairs positioned in front of the desk.

"No."

"Where is he?"

Tom swallowed an angry impatient retort and took a deep breath before answering. "In the kitchens doing Merlin knows what."

"He likes to bake," Hermione said, feeling the need to defend Harry.

The Dark Lord smiled then, catching her completely off guard. That smile was a fond one. "So I've gathered. But you are not here so that we can discuss Harry."

"A-alright," Hermione answered, folding her hands in her lap and trying to keep her courage up so that she could continue to look the Dark Lord in the eye.

"First before we begin, I have a warning." Hermione held her breath. "Should you ever teach Harry any more ridiculous muggle songs again I will personally hunt you down and torture you and your family for months before finally killing you. Is this understood, Miss Granger? No more ridiculous songs about how small the world is."

A giggle escaped Hermione's mouth before she could stop it. Voldemort's eyes narrowed and they seemed to glow brighter. "I'm sorry! Yes. I mean no. No more songs! Promise."

Voldemort nodded as if satisfied before leaning back and crossing his arms. "Tell me about your job, Miss Granger."

Hermione was prepared to answer when the office door was thrown open and Harry came in, holding a covered tray. "Mione! What are you doing here?"

It was strange to Hermione that Harry didn't look at all perturbed that she was alone with the Dark Lord. As if he had no doubts that Voldemort would do her no harm.

Voldemort stood and addressed her grinning friend. "Harry, we were in the middle of something," he chastised softly. Hermione remained quiet. She wanted to see them interact now.

"But I finished and wanted to show you," Harry answered, lifted the tray in front of him.

Voldemort moved until nothing but the tray was between him and Harry. Hermione didn't see why it was necessary for them to be standing so close, but neither Harry nor Voldemort could hear her mental reprimand and remained as they were. "The surprise?" the Dark Lord asked.

"Yeah. Ready?" Harry asked eagerly, nearly bouncing on his toes.

"Should I take cover after removing the lid?" Voldemort asked in amusement.

Harry narrowed his eyes. "Just open it!"

Hermione stood then, curious as to what Harry had made for the Dark Lord. Harry removed the rounded cover without any more prompting.

"You made me a cake," Voldemort whispered, staring at it.

Harry's smile faltered. "You... you don't like it?" he asked and then started to put the lid back on.

"No one has ever made me a cake before," he returned, catching Harry's wrist to stop him from covering it up again.

Sensing his cake was not being rejected, Harry grinned cheekily. "That may be because everyone sees you as a monster. When was the last time you saw a monster eating cake?"

"You think you're so funny," Voldemort hissed.

"I do try."

While they were off in their own little world, staring at each other, Hermione took a moment to study the cake. It was double layered concoction of massive amounts of cream cheese frosting and little orange carrot candies, as well as ... "Are those real carrot pieces?" Hermione asked, moving forward to look closely at the round orange objects placed all around the side of the cake. Harry grinned brightly when Voldemort narrowed his eyes.

"I figured carrots must be your favorite foods. Right?" he asked with an impish grin. "Good for bunnies and humans. Carrots are supposed to help with your eyes too... though obviously you haven't eaten enough since your eyes aren't exactly proper."

"Harry!" Hermione hissed, eyes going wide and to Voldemort, waiting for the Dark Lord's anger to unleash itself upon her crazy friend.

Voldemort took a deep breath before speaking. "If this didn't smell so delicious, I'd whip you."

"No you wouldn't."

Voldemort glowered at him but strangely Hermione thought that was only for show. Only for her. Harry certainly thought so as his smile never faltered for a moment.

"We'll eat this after dinner. You could use the carrots too," Voldemort adopted a grin. "As your eyesight is obviously worse than mine."

Harry laughed. "It's too late to save my eyes. Anyway, I'll go put this away until tonight. Bye!"

And then he was gone and Hermione didn't know whether to feel annoyed or relieved. Harry leaving her in that room with the Dark Lord without a look of worry or question. Voldemort's actions seemed to reflect what Harry had been telling her about him. And Harry never would have left her alone with Voldemort if he had even the slightest thought that her safety was in question.

"He says you are your own woman. You make your own choices," Voldemort drawled, drawing her attention away from the closed door. Now that Harry was gone, he looked less human, more cold and ruthless. Though her fear had diminished slightly. She got the feeling his intention was not to scare her right now.

"What choice do you want me to make here?"

"I've been told you despise your Ministry job." Hermione nodded. "How would you like it if your ideas were actually heard and taken seriously?"

"Right now I'd say that was a dream come true, sir."

"I want you to work for me. We'll start with promoting equal rights for Vampires and then move on to others... though I wouldn't get your hopes up for house elves. That is a lost cause, Miss Granger."

Hermione sputtered. "Y-you want me to join you? To w-work for you?!"

"Yes."

"I can't do that! I'm a muggle born! Someone your side calls mudblood! Why should I work for someone who targets my parents and others like them?"

"Granger, when was the last time you read about muggle and muggle born attacks from Death Eaters?"

"A small village of muggles was attacked just last week!"

Voldemort's eyes narrowed. "Is that so?"

"Yes. Havershire. The entire village burned to the ground! Men, women, and children burned in their homes with no way to escape!" Hermione jumped to her feet and pointed a rigid finger at him. "Your bloody Dark Mark hovered over the burning ashes till morning! I will never join anyone who does these things."

Voldemort stood and Hermione recoiled, nearly falling over her chair at the look of utter fury encompassing his face. "Havershire," he hissed softly as he turned away and walked to the wardrobe. The door opened at the flick of his wrist and he yanked out the dark robes she saw within. In moments he was shrouded in a dark aura and his face was hidden beneath the hood, only his blazing red eyes visible to her.

"We shall continue this discussion at a later time, Granger," he promised as he pulled out his wand. Hermione had no time to reply before the Dark Lord vanished.

"It's pigs blood if that makes you feel any better," Tom said softly to the young man he knew was standing just out of sight.

"Why don't you vanish the blood?" Harry asked. His voice pitched low in fury and derision.

Tom hurried up with washing the blood off his hands. Granger must have gone to find Harry after his quick departure. Havershire must have come up. Tom knew Harry was neutral, but that didn't mean Harry wouldn't care if pointless deaths came about.

"Leave my chambers, Harry. At once," he ordered.

Of course Harry didn't listen. Instead of leaving, Harry finally appeared in the doorway of Tom's huge bathroom, glaring at him. "What's your problem with muggles anyway? If they weren't supposed to inhabit the world with us, don't you think they wouldn't be born?"

Tom sneered at him. "Muggles out populate us and they don't deserve it. They are fungus, destroying the world... contaminating our world-"

Harry's glare intensified. "You're so concerned with the population ratio, but I don't see you making any effort. Efforts that aren't pointless, that is."

"Excuse me?"

"Instead of bitching about muggles, why don't you help contribute to the Wizarding population? You've been around long enough that you should have had a large brood of witches and wizards by now. Stop bitching and reproduce. Put up or shut up, Tom." That said with a firm nod, Harry sauntered out, leaving Tom speechless. For about five seconds.

Tom wandlessly dried his hands before going after Harry, catching the younger wizard in the hall. He grabbed Harry's arm and spun him around. "This is about Havershire," he hissed.

"You didn't need to do that," Harry said lowly, refusing to look Tom in the eye. "And what were you doing gone all day? Off killing more people who've never done anything to you?"

"In case you've forgotten," Tom growled lowly as he bent until their noses nearly touched. "I was not here when that attack took place. It was not done by my orders."

Finally Harry's gaze met his. "Why've you got blood all over you?"

"Had to punish my minions, didn't I? Can't have them thinking they can do things without my say so."

"So... you weren't off on another raid?" Harry asked quietly.

"No," Tom whispered, drawing Harry in and wrapping arms around the younger wizard, relaxing when Harry allowed it. "As I've told you, I did listen to your little speech you gave that first time I visited you in your muggle flat. Killing mindlessly and for no reason is a waste of resources and is pointless. I've decided to stop that and focus on things that are worth the effort."

"You actually listen to me? Take me seriously?"

Tom couldn't help but laugh at the actual surprise in Harry's voice. "You have no idea how engaging I find you."

Harry pulled back, eyes wide on his face. "Tom... I need to tell you something."

"Can it wait a few minutes? I need to bathe," Tom answered, indicating his soiled robes. Harry wrinkled his nose, but nodded. "Have you eaten?"

"I was waiting for you," Harry growled in reply.

"I'm truly sorry, Harry. I may have been over enthusiastic with punishing my minions. Lost track of time."

"Please tell me Snape was one of those unfortunate souls," Harry begged.

The Dark Lord laughed as he turned away. "I'm afraid he wasn't."

Harry watched Tom disappear into his room. The door was left open and he heard the shower come on moments later. Harry was walking back to Tom's room before he knew what he was doing; but he did know the walls surrounding the shower were glass and he figured since Tom had seen him on numerous occasions without a shirt then his wanting to see was justified. Earlier he felt a hard broad chest and now he *had* to see. So Harry crept into the Dark Lord's room, making sure to be stealthier than before, though he hadn't tried to be quiet the first time. He figured Tom wouldn't know he was there this time and couldn't possibly hear him due to the shower running over head.

Harry stopped beside the bathroom door and peeked in. He could clearly see the mirror and thankfully it wasn't yet fogged up. Directly opposite the mirror was the shower and Harry sighed in relief. He wouldn't have to step in at all. But then his jaw dropped when his eyes centered on the shower's reflection and immediately spotted a wet dripping Dark god in all his nude glory. Tom's arms were pressed against the wall- black marble with silver veins- under the showerhead. One arm stacked on top of the other, and his head was bent forward under the steamy stream of hot water. His dark brown hair was darker now, and wet it flattened and flowed just passed his chin and almost to his collarbones at the back.

Tom finally pushed away from the wall and reached behind him for a bottle of something, and Harry nearly swallowed his tongue. Merlin, Tom had a fine arse. Harry was then lost in a very detailed daydream involving himself and Tom and spent several minutes shifting from one foot to the other, trying to ignore the hardness growing between his thighs. Tom was exactly what Harry expected, what he'd felt underneath those posh robes of his.

The shower suddenly turned off, jarring him from his drool worthy daydream, and Harry scampered out of there and to his own room so that he could relieve himself before meeting Tom for dinner.

Dinner didn't go at all how Tom planned. That probably had a lot to do with Harry being so quiet and hardly looking at him throughout the time they ate. It was obvious something was bothering the raven-haired wizard. Harry kept on biting his bottom lip and thrusting fingers through his hair and sighing at every other moment.

After dinner they adjourned to the library where Harry immediately disappeared. Presumably to find a book. Tom sat down on the lounge facing the fireplace and scowled at the flames. "Are you going to tell me why I had to sit through dinner listening to your annoying sighs?" he asked, making sure his voice carried to wherever Harry had disappeared to. All that was met with this question was silence though Tom was sure he heard another sigh come from somewhere.

Tom refrained from getting up and going to find Harry and instead chose to pick up the book he'd been reading and wait for the brat to come back to him. Several minutes later, Harry returned with his own book. He said nothing. Just sat and twisted around until his back was pressed against Tom's arm and used Tom's shoulder as a head rest while he thrust his legs out to hang over the armrest of the sofa. Tom wondered how Harry could be so comfortable with him to do that and yet couldn't seem to work up the courage to tell him what had been bothering the young wizard.

And then the sighs started again and Harry hadn't turned past the first page of the book he'd chosen. Tom snapped his own book closed and returned his attentions to the fire. "If I hear one more sigh from you, I may implode."

Harry let out one loud long sigh that seemed to drag on forever until Tom whipped his arm around the brat's head and covered his mouth with a hand. Harry reacted without thinking. Not only did he giggle like a girl, but then he went and licked Tom's palm.

Both wizards then froze.

"Was that supposed to make me move away?" Tom asked thickly moments later. Harry slowly raised his hands to pull Tom's hand away, only to press his palm against his chest. Tom could feel the heart underneath his hand beating rapidly.

"There's a man I know," Harry began in a quiet tone. His voice trembling slightly and Tom realized he was afraid. "And he has feeling for this other man who some say would sooner kill himself than ever feel anything besides hatred for another human being. And my friend is afraid to tell this monster how he feels and he thinks it would be pointless anyway because he's positive this other man would never reciprocate these feelings. The last thing my friend wants is for the other man to be disgusted by him in any way..."

Tom looked down onto Harry's black hair and the hand covering his was shaking badly. He knew that Harry knew he would understand this was about them. "What kind of feelings?" he asked softly.

"Umm... a lot of mushy Hufflepuff feelings," Harry whispered as he closed his eyes. "And he definitely wants to shag the hell out of this other man... You hate me now, don't you? I've disgusted you."

Tom barked out a laugh and suddenly stood, causing Harry to fall back onto the couch. Harry just lay there staring wide eyed at him. "I'm sure the other man will be the one doing the shagging when the time comes and I think it's time I told you exactly why I wanted you to stay here." Harry scrambled to his feet, barely able to breathe. "You were invited here so that I could court you."

Harry's brows furrowed in suspicion. "Court? What's that mean coming from you? Like persuading me to join the dark side?"

Tom looked up to the ceiling and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Salazar, give me strength... Court, Harry. Letters, gifts, dates, sex- most certainly not in that order- and eventual bonding."

It took Harry a few moments to process what Tom was getting at, but when it did sink in, Harry was sure it was possible for him to faint in shock. And all he could say was, "so you aren't disgusted with me?"

Tom approached and reached up to place hands against his cheeks. "Will you regret it if I kiss you, Harry?"

"You want to kiss me?" Harry asked in awe.

"I wonder why this is such a surprise to you."

"Did you say eventual bonding?" green eyes widened comically. "As in marriage?!"

"I wish you would focus. Harry, a kiss? Regret?"

"You can kiss me as much as you want!" Harry burst out and then recoiled slightly as if he hadn't meant to say what he was thinking. He would have pulled away all together, but

fortunately Tom still held his face firmly in hand.

"No regret then," Tom whispered and then brushed against Harry's slightly parted lips.

Harry grabbed the front of Tom's casual robes tightly as Tom continued to apply little pressure against his lips; softly sliding his firm lips against his while the thumbs of his hands lightly caressed his face. Harry hadn't thought Tom was capable of such gentleness, but he was finding he was wrong. And Merlin! Tom wanted him! It was too fantastic to believe. And no he wasn't going to regret this! He'd wanted this from Tom. How many times had he woken in the middle of the night from visions of this? Well, not exactly this. Much more than this. But still!

His happy awe inspired mental ramblings were abruptly cut short when Tom parted his lips, taking Harry's bottom lip slightly into his mouth. Harry moaned when Tom's tongue darted out to stroke his lip. Tom took a great amount of time simply tasting his lips and Harry was left panting and breathless even when Tom hadn't actually plunged into his mouth yet. Harry whimpered when Tom lightly bit down on his lip and Tom's body stiffened against his.

Harry thought he was going to pull away and because he couldn't bare such an action, he gasped in terror and jerked a hand up to cup the Dark Lord's nape to keep his mouth firmly in place. Tom's eyes crinkled in amusement and he chuckled lightly, his breath mingling with Harry's.

"You're being soft with me," Harry whispered.

"Only ever with you."

Harry didn't have proper time to melt by that statement before Tom angled his head and dived in, spinning the first kiss- soft and gentle- out into a ravenous one. A greedy, passionate, and possessive kiss that told Harry exactly the kind of relationship they would have if he agreed with the courting.

Tom's hands dropped from his face. One arm circled his waist, holding him tightly and the other hand threaded through his hair, sending spine tingling shivers throughout his body. And that body he saw earlier molded against him, trapping him in hard boiling heat. He was being devoured and it was sinfully excellent and Harry never wanted it to end. Tom's mouth was hard and firm on the outside, but inside exotic and wet and the taste of his carrot cake still remained and Harry lapped at the Dark Lord's taste eagerly and was rewarded by a low guttural moan from Tom. The sound empowered Harry like nothing else had before.

Suddenly Tom pulled away, leaving Harry breathless and pouting from lack of contact. "I need to make one thing clear, Harry," Tom murmured, running a thumb across Harry's bottom lip.

Harry blinked dazedly at him.

"If you reject my intentions now, that's fine. But you should know I will never give up. I intend to have you in every sense of the word. You would do well to accept it now rather than later."

"You sound just like the twins." And then Harry made a sound. Half annoyance, half amusement and a smirk suddenly lifted his swollen lips, surprising Tom. "I'll give you a chance, Tom. You better impress me."

He turned and walked out of the library, whistling 'it's a small world'.

"BLOODY IMPERTINENT BRAT! DID I SAY YOU WERE DISMISSED?!"

Harry laughed and practically floated all the way back to his room.

Harry ran into the Malfoy's dining room the next morning, finding Draco and Narcissa having breakfast together. Draco took one look at Harry's face and snorted. "Told you, did he?"

"He wants to marry me?!"

"Please tell me that was an excited statement and not a question," Draco drawled. "I have no wish to explain to you."

"He wants to court me!" Harry exclaimed, taking the seat beside his friend and for the moment ignoring Narcissa, though she didn't mind, as she was finding Potter's current nerves frightfully amusing. "How will that work? He couldn't possibly take me out on dates now can he? He's the Dark Lord! People are going to notice his red gleaming homicidal eyes!"

Draco snickered. That was true. "Are you going to accept?"

"Oh, like I have a choice, Drake!"

"Hmmm... the Potter I know wouldn't say that unless you want to agree, because you want to be courted and marry our Lord."

Harry calmed down a bit, stealing a bit of bacon from his friend's plate. "The thought isn't as horrible as it should be. Does that make me-"

"Yes, you are insane. Let's move on from that already," Draco muttered as he stood and jerked Harry up with him. "Excuse us, Mother. Obviously Harry and I have things to discuss."

"Of course dear."

"Sorry for barging in, Mrs. Malfoy."

"You are welcome any time, Mr. Potter. And under the circumstances, I understand. Let me just say, should you need any help with planning the wedding, please don't hesitate to call on me."

Draco laughed when Harry's jaw dropped.

Chapter Seven

The Black Bunny

Chapter Seven

Draco dragged Harry into his sitting room and thrust the brunet over to the lounge. But instead of sitting with him, Draco went and sat down at his desk and started to read something. Figuring it must have been something important Harry stretched out and closed his eyes, deciding to wait the blond out.

This morning had been... mortifying and thrilling. After he'd drawn up enough nerve, Harry had raised his chin and entered the breakfast room with the purpose of acting as if nothing out of the ordinary was going on. But the moment Tom looked at him and sent him one of those perverted grins, Harry's face had flushed scarlet and he avoided the other man's gaze like it was the plague. Tom had then stated he was sure Harry would have skipped out on breakfast. The Dark wizard had practically purred the words.

Harry felt like bolting at first, but since he wasn't looking at Tom and the man hadn't said anymore, eventually he had calmed down. Until he chanced a peak at the other man to find Tom leaning back in his seat, arms up and fingers laced behind his head, grinning in an absurdly endearingly smug manner. Tom had said his embarrassment was a treasure to watch. Harry had snapped at him to shut the hell up.

"You're grinning like a lunatic. You know that right?" Draco drawled, jerking Harry out of thoughts that had been making him grin like crazy. All Harry could do was shrug. He couldn't remember the last time he'd been this happy. "Harry, I want to say..." the blond's voice trailed off and it was obvious by the look in his eyes that he didn't want to say what was on his mind, but he was still determined to do so.

"Yeah?" Harry asked, sitting up.

Draco sat down when Harry made room and stared at his hands. "Look, Potter. I know how you feel about him. And strangely this has made you incredibly happy," he murmured, turning his eyes to meet Harry's. "But do you know what you are getting yourself in to? You really should think about this before you agree with the courting."

"You're the last person who I thought would be telling me this," Harry responded softly, his eyes pulling away to stare across the room. Draco sighed when he saw the stubborn set of Harry's jaw. Harry was preparing for a verbal attack.

"I'm saying this against my better judgment. We both know how he is. The Dark Lord loses his temper frequently and when that happens, someone usually dies... He could hurt you, Harry."

Harry shook his head then, a slow smile crossing his face as he dropped his defensive guard. He appreciated Draco's worry. And the fact Draco was going against every Slytherin instinct

he had for self preservation because no doubt if Tom knew the blond were trying to keep Harry from agreeing, Tom would punish Draco severely. "No. I don't think he ever will."

"How can you be sure?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm not sure."

"Then how can you even chance it?"

They sat face to face, staring at each other. "Because... I want to chance it. I need to. I need him, Drake. I can admit it now."

"Fucking Gryffindor! Fine," Draco paused to take a deep breath and then went on, "but have you thought about other consequences."

"I don't care about the rest of the world. I care about my friends, my life, and me. Besides, Tom will have his way in the end. We both know it."

Draco smirked. "You were always on the losing side."

"Yeah, whatever."

The blond sighed. "At least give it some thought before you agree. Don't be the hasty lion and jump into anything..." his words trailed off as Harry's face erupted in red and his green eyes scanned every inch of space behind the blond. Draco shot to his feet. "You bloody idiot!"

"He snogged me nearly to death, Drake! How was I supposed to think straight after that?"

Draco blinked several times before cocking his head to the side. "So... how's the Dark Lord at snogging?"

Harry thought about it. Thought about last night and was seized with a full body shudder. "Good," he breathed. "Fantastic. Brilliant. It was so good, Draco."

"Well that's something at least but I can't believe you said yes already!"

"I only said I'd give him a chance. I never agreed to the bonding thing."

Draco groaned, rubbed his eyes, and returned to his seat. He and Harry knew it was basically the same thing. The Dark Lord would have taken it as a resounding yes no matter what. When he opened his eyes, Harry was back to grinning in a ludicrous fashion. "You are hopeless."

"Thanks. Hey, that's why you were chasing blokes away, wasn't it? Tom made you."

"Yeah, sorry. He told me not to tell you."

"Not too bothered by it. Wasn't then either... Mione is going to try and put me into St. Mungo's," he suddenly said; grin slipping like a weight had been released on his lips.

Draco gasped and jumped to his feet. He looked down at Harry with a Cheshire cat grin. "Oh please, Potter. Please can we go and give her the news right now. I want to see the look on her face when you tell her. Please," he begged, batting his eyelashes.

Harry laughed despite the trepidation he felt over telling Mione. "She's coming over later in the week. I'll tell her then—you can stay for when I tell her," he hurried on before Draco could whine, "but right after that you can't stay in the same room. She'll want to talk to me alone."

Draco found that a suitable compromise. He couldn't wait to see the look on Granger's face. It was sure to be priceless.

It was true what he'd told Draco but Harry wondered why exactly Tom wanted him. The Dark Lord hadn't said. And Harry couldn't help the small bit of doubt filling him from the lack of reasons. Harry couldn't see a reason. Especially since he knew without a doubt Tom wanted him to stay away from the war. So why would Tom want to bond with him? What about him had caught the Dark Lord's attention?

It was these thoughts that had Harry searching Tom out. He wanted truthful answers. And he wanted answers that made sense. And not only did they need to make sense, but Harry thought he should come out feeling impressed by Tom's answers as well, because he had said the previous night that Tom had better impress if he wanted this whole courtship to work out for him.

Harry followed his intuition and it led him to the stables. As he neared, he thought about that intuition. He was fairly sure the link he shared with Tom had expanded somehow because they seemed to be able to find each other all over the massive mansion without having to look very hard. If Tom was home, Harry always felt he knew at all times where the other wizard was, even if Tom moved around. Harry planned to ask about that, but it wasn't at the top of the list of things he absolutely needed to know. He had plenty of time to have all his questions answered.

Tom was in the stables just as Harry knew he would be. He was in the process of leaving the stall three spaces over when Harry stepped in. Tom looked over at him just as the head of a beautiful gray stallion appeared, bumping his snout against Tom's shoulder. Tom murmured something and dropped a hand into the bucket hanging on post separating that stall from the forth. As Harry approached, Tom pulled his hand out and held his palm out to the horse. Sugar cubes.

The horse took them without pause and seemed content to chew them and ignore Tom. But when Harry stopped to stand beside Tom, the horse snorted loudly, his nostrils flared, and he started stamping the ground roughly. Harry stumbled backwards when the stallion jerked forward against his wooden gate as if wanting to attack Harry.

"Easy," Tom murmured as he stroked the stallion's snout. Harry was sure he was talking to both the stallion and to him. "Pacorro doesn't like strangers."

"He's beautiful... and scary."

Tom turned to give him his full attention and Harry had a feeling he was reading him somehow. "Never ridden a horse, Harry?"

"Oh sure. I've had loads of opportunities."

"Sarcasm also is not an endearing trait."

Harry grinned. "Does a Hippogriff count?"

"Hardly. Do you want to ride? Not Pacorro, but I have two tame mares..."

Harry quickly shook his head. "No. I came to ask you something. I want to know why. Why me, Tom? Why now?"

Tom stared at Harry for long moments before turning back to the gray stallion. "A week after I bought this horse he kicked out at me. Not once but twice. Broke my arm and leg."

Despite his question seemingly being ignored, Harry's eyes widened and went back to the gray stallion. "He's still alive."

Tom chuckled and rubbed the stallion's snout once more before turning to fully face Harry. "Yes. I bought this horse because I thought he was beautiful. His temperament. His spirit drew me. The fact that he is wild and cannot be broken. And once he learned that I had no intentions of breaking him, he has warmed up to me. There is beauty in wild things, Harry. Wild magic, wild creatures, wild wizards who refuse to back down, give up, or give in... I bought this horse because he reminded me of you. I wanted to save this horse from someone who might have bought him and tried to break him. I want you because you've drawn me to you. I want you because I can't tolerate the thought of another basking in what you have to offer or worse, trying to break you. Does that answer your question, Harry?"

Harry's eyes wavered under the assault of emotion he felt at the moment and also because Tom had been moving closer as he spoke and now stood directly in front of him. "W-why now?"

Tom lifted a hand and thread fingers through that soft hair begging to be touched. Harry shivered from the touch and slid his own hand to press lightly against Tom's chest. "Now was the opportune time for the both of us. It couldn't have been before, even though I've wanted you since you were fourteen... when you had the nerve to duel me and win—by luck, may I add."

"Fourteen... Eww, Tom! You pervert!" Harry laughed before pressing his lips against Tom's smirking mouth. Yep. He was delightfully impressed with the answers.

A few days later Lucius appeared at his son's door. Draco looked up from the letter he had just received from Aunt Bellatrix when he father stepped into his sitting room. "Father."

"Draco. We are going out."

The blond allowed one sculpted brow to rise. It was nearing midnight. Where could his father possibly want to take him at this hour? Unless... perhaps a Death Eater meeting. "May I ask where?" he inquired as he stood after folding the letter back into the envelope.

"The docks," was all Lucius said before turning on his heel and departing.

Draco hurried to grab his traveling cloak and then rushed after his father. Ten minutes later they were standing behind a huge metal crate. Draco wrinkled his nose at the smell of long dead fish and moldy wood. He liked the sea and the scent of it, but he'd never liked the docks. And it was clear they were in the muggle area, which had his nose scrunching up further.

"Father-"

"Disillusion yourself and stay quiet," Lucius hissed, interrupting his son's whining as he cast a Disillusionment over himself as well.

Draco did as was instructed, preening slightly at the knowledge that his father trusted his spell casting abilities, but also at the same time grumbling because now it was drizzling.

"Come," Lucius instructed while grasping his son's elbow to lead him out from behind the crate and to wherever they were going.

Draco had to continuously bite his tongue in order to keep from asking where they were going and why they were there in the first place. For the next twenty minutes it seemed they walked a maze in and out of hundreds of metal crates until Lucius finally stopped before a sickly green crate with one of the doors opened. Parted only enough to allow a body to slip through. It was enough to show that the crate was dark and empty.

"Remain silent," his father warned before moving towards the door. Draco nodded though he knew Lucius could not see it. Draco bit his lip as they approached the crate, not liking how dark the thing looked inside. Why were they entering a darkened muggle metal box? Why did muggles have boxes this big anyway? Was there a purpose? Draco didn't think so. Muggles never made any sense.

These thoughts faded away as soon as his father led him inside and immediately his eyes widened. The inside of the crate wasn't dark at all. Nor was it empty. A small rickety looking table was set up in the long metal box. Upon it was an oil lamp. Around the walls of the crate were medium sized wooden boxes stacked on top of each other. At least two dozen boxes. Another oil lamp had been set upon one box halfway down the crate to light up most of the back.

And sitting at the table playing a game of Exploding Snap were the Weasley twins. Draco started to scowl but then his thoughts turned worried despite himself. Did his father bring him here with the purpose of doing Fred and George Weasley harm? He couldn't think of any other reason, despite the twins having had a long conversation with his father. And Draco vehemently told himself he was only worried for Harry's sake. That was the only reason.

The twins- and Draco wished he could tell them apart just by looking at them- looked up from their cards to peer at the door, eyes scanning the area around it too before turning back

to their game. "He's late," one of them said.

"Yeah, well... not very organized, is he?"

"Thinking we should find someone else after tonight."

"Agreed and a different meeting spot. Different transportation too."

One of the twins set down his cards and leaned back. "Fred?"

"Hmm?"

George rubbed the spot between his eyes with his knuckles. "Think we should trust what Harry's sugar daddy wrote to us about?"

Fred snickered. "Sugar daddy..." and then he nodded. "It makes sense. Not that the Order would ever find anything. But we should be careful."

"Another reason why we should find someone else and move the operation," George said as he pushed back from the table.

"He's coming," Fred said as he too stood.

"Yep."

Draco watched them move away to opposite sides of the crate before leaning casually against a tower of boxes. He stared at the twin who stood only five feet away. He watched the unconcerned look on Fred's face and wondered if he'd followed his father into a different dimension.

He realized several things all at once; realizations that were currently making him dizzy. The twins were obviously doing something illegal. Obviously something they didn't want the Order and probably the Ministry to know about and they seemed completely at ease with it. It was also apparent they had some sort of monitoring charm around the crate and were somehow informed when someone neared because now a man was standing in the doorway. Draco was also impressed with the fact that they were able to create the illusion that the crate was dark and empty within, even to other wizards. It was clear they did not lack magical prowess. He tried to not be impressed.

"Come into the light and shut the door, please," Fred said lightly as he pushed off the crate.

The short squat man did as was told and then shuffled closer. Draco sneered at the man. Reminded him of a rat.

George also pushed off his crate, but unlike Fred he wasn't smiling and his wand was in hand. "You seem to have come a bit empty handed, Gerrald."

"Ah yes, um... here you go," the man said as he fished within his robes before pulling out a fat sack of coins. And then another. He tossed them on the table and stepped back. It was clear he was wary of the twins.

"That's not what my brother is talking about," Fred said. "Where's our shipment? We've delivered," he said, motioning to the crates around him. "Where's our stuff, Gerry?"

"Yes, that..." the wizard twiddled his fingers in front of his fat paunch. "I didn't want to take the chance of bringing it and someone seeing. Decided to lead you to where it is. You can take it right off the boat."

Draco narrowed his eyes. That sounded wrong. Apparently the twins thought it funny because they started laughing. They were still laughing as they grabbed the money pouches and stowed them away in their robes.

And then Fred's wand flashed out and pointed it in the man's face. "You want to lead us there..."

George nodded. "Where you most certainly have someone waiting to ambush us."

"And then you probably planned to take our stuff, your stuff, and take back the money you owe us as well." Draco wondered how the twins had managed to make a deal where not only were they trading things but that they also got paid money as well.

"Have we got that right, Gerrald?"

Gerrald simply opened and closed his mouth like a gaping fish.

"Well we need the items and potions... are you lying about that part too, Gerrald? Is it even on the boat?"

"That part is true," he answered in a trembling voice as now he had two wands pointed at him, both only inches away from his face.

"The boat's name," Fred prompted.

"The Flying Dutchman."

The twins smirked. "Wonderful. Thanks."

"Stupefy," Fred murmured.

"Really!" George exclaimed as the man hit the floor. "Do we have 'stupid' printed on our foreheads?"

"No, but he does," Fred returned, kicking the stupefied wizard in his fat stomach.

Draco released a breath he hadn't realized he had been holding and then scowled because he had been holding it.

"Well played, wizards," Lucius spoke as he appeared before them.

"No prob, Mr. Malfoy," Fred said, speaking and taking Lucius' sudden appearance in stride. As if they knew he and Draco had been there this entire time. "If it walks, talks, and acts like

a rat then it is one. Last time we met, we could tell he wanted to pull one over on us."

"If you would still like to join in a business endeavor, I'm offering now."

Fred grinned. "Impressed Lucius Malfoy, have we?"

Draco watched his father extend a hand, not even sneering at the twins' poor sense of humor.

"First we should be clear on one thing," George stated before moving to shake Lucius' hand. "We refuse to ever move anything that does real harm to wizard or muggle."

"Flat out refuse," Fred joined. "That's not why we're in this game."

"Understood and accepted."

Fred and George took turns shaking his father's hand and Draco was blinking rapidly trying to catch up with things.

"So who'd you bring with you, Mr. Malfoy? Sensed two of you when you came in." George frowned. "You never said you'd be coming with someone else."

Lucius smirked and gestured with a flick of his wrist for Draco to show himself. Draco hesitated. Lucius sighed. "My son tends to join me occasionally on business transactions. Thought this could be a learning experience for him and I did not think you two would mind his presence."

No indeed-y. The two in question adopted predatory smiles. "Our lovely darling Draco is here?"

"Come out, Draco!" George cooed. "It's been a day since we've laid eyes on your- and by *your* I mean *our*- gorgeous arse."

Draco ripped the Disillusionment off him. "You can't say things like that in front of my father!" he whined. "Have you lost your tiny pea brained minds?"

Lucius snorted. "At least it's not in front of your mother. Be thankful for that."

Draco turned and stared at his father with wide eyes. "You've gone traitor!"

Fred grinned. "Just say hi and then we can go to the boat before whomever Gerrald is working with starts to miss him. Don't want them to come snooping around and we don't want them leaving with the stuff we ordered."

George started rubbing his hands together. "We just gained loads of stuff and we got it for nothing. Now we can sell this to someone else. This night has turned us nothing but profit!"

"I do like the way you think, Weasleys," Lucius drawled and then he turned to his still surprised son. "Draco. You will go and assist them. I will stay here and look after this wizard."

"Father," he whined. Why did it feel as if his world had been tugged right out from underneath him?

"Now, Draco."

Draco huffed and followed after the pleased looking twins. "What is all this *stuff* you two continue to speak about?"

"Potions. Illegal but mostly harmless when used the right way and rare ingredients from all over the world. Also illegal. It's great the stuff we can invent with it! We make loads off that too!"

"Hmm. And what were you trading to the rat man?"

"Artifacts we tracked down that the Ministry would frown their pretty little oblivious heads at."

"What kind of artifacts?" Draco whispered as he followed them.

Fred smiled. "You're cute when curious, Draco love."

Draco was preparing a sharp retort when George told them to be quiet as they headed away from the crates to where boats were tied off on the docks. They cast Disillusionment charms on themselves and kept to the shadows as they searched out *The Flying Dutchman*. It didn't take them long to find it. It wasn't anything special. And it was a muggle vessel, Draco saw with a grimace.

Draco pulled out his wand and pointed it at the ship. "*Homenum revelio*." It was revealed there were four persons hiding on the boat.

"Four? For us?" Fred snickered. "I'm flattered."

Draco crossed his arms. "I'm not about to go on that thing with four hidden wizards on board."

"No worries," George murmured as he pulled something out of his robes. "We've got these to help."

Draco leaned over to look into his palm, finding several weird looking horn type things there. "What's that?"

"Decoy Detonators," George responded just before he moved out of sight.

"Be ready to pick 'em off when they pop their heads out for a look," said Fred. Then he tugged on Draco's robes. "Let's get closer."

Draco nodded and followed, and he did *not* look at Fred's arse as he did so. Only another minute passed before loud explosions brought the silence crashing down. A surprised shout came from the boat, and like the twins predicted, the ambushers made themselves visible. A stunner came from somewhere to the right of where Draco and Fred were crouched, and

another down the left of them. Draco and Fred shot off stunners as well and easily hit the targets.

"Too bloody easy," Fred mourned. "Idiots, the lot of em. Probably thought we were amateurs."

"Aren't you?"

Fred snorted. "Please..."

"Making haste would be sensible after that horrid noise you made."

The two looked up to see Lucius boarding the boat. The others quickly followed him and soon the twins were beaming at the four wooden boxes sitting in front of them. "Everyone grab a box and touch this," Fred instructed and held out a tattered old shoe. Both Malfoys sneered at the thing though Lucius leaned forward to touch it after only a moment of contemplation.

"Father, I don't want-"

"Touch it, Draco."

"Yeah, Draco. Touch it," the twins purred in unison.

Draco huffed and did as his father told him. He looked up just after one of the twins activated the Portkey and caught the twins giving him doting smiles. Draco couldn't be blamed for the blush covering his face as they and the boxes were all whisked away.

Hermione stared forlornly at the numbers her tempus charm displayed and sighed heavily. It was only one in the afternoon. Which meant she still had four more hours of tedious and useless paperwork to torture herself with. She thought she could probably take a break and pen a reply letter to the owl she'd received from Ron the previous day, but she quickly discarded that idea. Ron's letters were always the same and her replies were always the same. And thinking about it just made it seem like more tedious paperwork.

That was one reason why she had given up trying to have a relationship with Ron. She couldn't be in a relationship with anyone who refused to at least try and see reason. Try to at least look at things from someone else's perspective for even a moment. But with Ron it was always his perspective. Frankly Ronald Weasley was too hard headed for her to even think of having a relationship with.

A flash of red drew her out of her musings and she turned her head to peer out of her cubicle into the narrow passage between other cubicles and spotted an Auror standing at the end of the aisle, eyes scanning the department floor. Auror Andrew Charleston. He'd been to see her before, dropping off a letter from the Dark Lord. Hermione had nearly fainted in shock when she realized Voldemort had fingers dipped into every department. Even the Auror department. But he'd been nice the first time they met. He smiled at her as he dropped the letter on her desk and asked how her day had been, and his smile was kind of nice. As were

his pretty hazel eyes and the windswept light brown hair. She'd especially been left speechless when he winked at her before departing and told her to keep her chin up.

And now she wondered why he was there this time. Surely he wasn't there to drop off another note. Then again it was possible. The only way to get to Harry was by Portkey and the one's she used before only worked one time. After Charleston's initial scan of the floor was complete, he immediately turned and began to stride her way. The look on his face was drawn and tense, and Hermione felt herself react to that, tensing herself. Though she also felt the need to run her fingers through her hair as he neared. When Charleston stopped in front of her small desk, Hermione prayed her face wasn't as flushed as she thought it was.

"Good afternoon, Auror. Can I help you with something?"

The Auror rounded her desk, placed a hand on the back of her chair and one on the corner of her desk and leaned in until his lips almost touched her ear. "The Aurors are after you. And the Order. They're coming to take you in for questioning. You should leave. They aren't going to follow the rules either. They want Potter and know you have his location. And we both know what other information you have. If they force it out, you'll be going to Azkaban for a long time."

Hermione pulled back in shock. "What?"

"Leave now. You don't want to be subjected to an Auror interrogation. They don't plan to take it easy on you. Leave, Granger," he said again before pulling away and leaving as suddenly as he arrived.

Hermione took all of two seconds to process what she'd been told before she took action.

Harry leaned forward as far as he could go without falling forward to land on his face. He was completely enraptured in the tale Draco was telling. Enraptured and in shock of his friends' business dealings. "And then what happened?"

"Well we Portkeyed into the basement of their store. That's how our Lord found out about them, you know. They have dealings with someone in the Ministry who gives them untraceable Portkeys. The same person many of the Death Eaters deal with," Draco explained.

"Okay, go on."

Draco nodded though he sipped at his tea first before going on, his eyes scanning Harry's private study as he did so. "After that, the twins returned to the docks to secure the boxes they had in that crate and Father returned to the boat after telling me to return home. That's all."

Harry narrowed his eyes. "What happened to that Gerrald guy? And the others who were going to ambush the twins?"

"That's why Father returned to the docks," Draco answered softly. "He made sure those men wouldn't snitch on your twins in retaliation for having their plans thwarted."

"That means..." Harry murmured softly, understanding clear in his voice.

"Don't think too much on it, Harry. Father did it to protect Fred and George. Think about that."

Harry decided he would follow Draco's suggestion and not think about it. They talked about inconsequential things for a bit until a house elf popped in, and as he had been the last few days, Harry blushed and Draco snickered when the elf addressed him as Master Harry. Apparently Tom was working as fast as he could and didn't seem to care if Harry wanted to take things slow. In fact Tom had told him he wanted to bond as soon as possible... Harry really didn't want to think about that either. It made his heart speed up and his hands shake, but it also made him grin like a silly fool.

"You're doing it again," Draco said with a sigh.

"What is it?" Harry asked the house elf after sending the toe of his boot into one of Draco's shins.

"Master Harry, sir! You has guests and they has urgent news! They asks to see you immediately! Your guests be in the Floo room, Master."

"K, thanks," Harry said as he and Draco quickly stood and hurried out of his private study, leaving by the door instead of going up the stairs to his bedroom. Soon they arrived at the Floo room and found the Weasley twins along with Tom there. All three had troubling expressions. The twins looked really worried and Tom looked hassled and angry.

"What's wrong?" Harry demanded as he came to a skidding halt beside Tom.

"It's Granger," Tom murmured lowly. He watched Harry's eyes widen in fear and stepped behind the younger wizard. Even there he could feel how fast Harry's heart had begun to beat. "Tell him," he instructed the twins while laying hands on Harry's shoulders. Harry reached up to grasp one of his hands, while his eyes were riveted on the red heads.

"An hour ago we received a short letter from her. She must have been tipped off-" the redhead on the right broke off and looked down, his hands curling into white knuckled fists.

"She had to run from the Ministry. Apparently the Aurors are after her... and not for a friendly chat."

"Did she get away? Is she okay?"

"We don't know, Harry. She wasn't at her place when we checked. And her message was kind of sparse."

"Even I can admit Granger is smart enough to have known not to go there if the Ministry is after her," Draco murmured. "And she wouldn't have gone to her parent's home hopefully."

"She wouldn't use magic either. They could track her that way," Harry whispered. "So she's stuck as a muggle and running. Tom..." The hands on his shoulders squeezed gently, reassuringly.

"We'll find her." Tom gave one last squeeze before letting go and stepping in front of Draco. The blond instantly held out his right arm. The Dark Lord took it and pushed up the sleeve to reveal the Dark Mark. Both Harry and Draco's eyes traveled to the twins. Draco raised a brow.

One of the twins laughed. "What? You think that's going to deter us from you? Why would it when Harry here is planning on marrying Voldemort."

"Shut up! I never said I would!"

Tom smirked. "Yes you did," he said as he pressed the tip of his wand against Draco's Mark, calling to him those he trusted the most out of his minions.

Harry bristled and clenched his fists. Tom swept out of the room before he could snap out a retort and he was left there feeling embarrassed and annoyed with all of them.

"Does it hurt when he does that?"

Harry turned back to his friends to find the twins rubbing fingers against Draco's Mark, looking at it with morbid fascination. Knowing them it was probably a turn on.

"Yes, but it's something to get used to."

"Poor baby. Lemme kiss it."

Draco withdrew his arm, but Harry was surprised to see no sneer. "Which one are you?" he asked.

"Fred."

"Next time announce your names whenever we come into the room. It's annoying trying to tell you apart," he replied haughtily before holding his bare wrist out to Fred, whose eyes widened. "You can kiss it."

"What about me?"

"No, I don't think so."

"That's not fair!" George exclaimed as he watched Fred laying an open mouthed kiss to the Dark Mark.

Draco shivered and smirked at George. "Next time be the first to ask and maybe you'll gain something."

"What about now?" George asked when Fred pulled away.

"No."

Harry stepped forward and leaned into Draco. "Are you drunk?"

"It's too early for that, Potter," Draco answered as he pulled his sleeve down.

Harry had nothing to say about that at the moment, but he would later. Right now though he needed to find Hermione. "I'm going out to look for her. Could you go tell-"

"And get hexed for my trouble? I don't think so," Draco intoned. "You and I both know exactly how our Lord will react when he finds you want to leave here when the Order and Ministry is most certainly out looking for Granger and in association, you."

Harry bristled again. Tom wasn't his keeper. He could go where he wanted without permission from anyone. "Fine," he growled as he pulled his wand before grabbing Draco's arm. Then he looked at the twins. "We'll go to my flat. She might have gone there. It's a safe place."

He Apparated them away before Draco could say anything, only to end up in a room that was pitch black. "Did I think of the wrong place?" he wondered aloud, although quietly.

"You do realize he will be furious when he finds you've gone somewhere," Draco whispered back.

Two more pops of Apparition sounded and Harry and Draco were suddenly thrown to the ground as the twins practically appeared right on top of them.

"Bloody hell," one of them hissed. "Wrong spot."

"No way, Fred! This is Harry's flat... what's this round firm thing under my hand?"

"My arse," Draco whispered.

"Jack pot!"

Fred shifted a bit in the dark and soon Draco had more than one hand groping him. "Merlin, Draco. Your arse is so fine...."

Several seconds went by without anyone saying anything, but Harry could hear movement; the brush of fingers against cloth...

"Drake, you're getting hard against my stomach and someone's cock is pressing into my back."

Harry's only answer was a low almost inaudible moan in his ear. Despite the situation and the fact that Mione was missing, he couldn't help but snicker. And then the lights came on and four pairs of eyes immediately spotted the witch they were after standing over behind the couch. Arms crossed and a brow raised, smirking at them. Both twins had been caught with a hand on Draco's arse- though one twin also had a hand in between Draco's arse and cloth covered cock. Also one twin had the lobe of Draco's ear in between his teeth and the other's mouth was on the blond's neck. The twins' eyes widened comically on Hermione at having been caught by her in this position. Draco just closed his eyes with a mortified groan.

Hermione dropped her arms and shook her head. "I'm in danger and this is what you lot get up to?"

Before any of them could move, before they could even speak or feel relieved by finding Hermione alive and safe, the room was filled with more pops of Apparitions and three more wizards appeared within the room, though they were lucky enough to have arrived a few feet away from the dog pile.

"What is the meaning of this," Tom hissed furiously.

"It's not what it looks like!" Harry cried as he tried scrambling out from under Fred where the redhead had been straddling his back.

"It's exactly what it looks like!" George responded with a snicker. "Concerning three of us anyway. Harry just got caught in between."

Clearly Tom could see the twins' hands were all over Draco and this was the only reason why he wasn't hissing out Unforgivables at the moment.

"Please tell me our Lord is the only one who came and is seeing this," Draco whined.

"I'm afraid not," Lucius drawled. Draco mewled in humiliation. Fred glanced over his shoulder as he and his brother pulled away from the blond.

"Snape's here too."

"Someone kill me now!"

Harry managed to extricate himself from the heavy limbs, stood up and looked at Tom. The Dark Lord still looked furious so Harry spun around and headed in the safe direction. To Hermione, who was actually very amused by all this. "We were so worried!" Harry cried, throwing his arms around her.

"Clearly."

"No really. We were. What happened?"

Tom moved, skirting around Draco and the twins and headed for the couch. Harry gulped and hid behind his friend. "We will return home before any explanations are given," he hissed lowly before jerking Harry into his arms and Apparating away.

"Ooh," George snickered. "Harry's in for it now."

"Tried to warn him," Draco murmured as he brushed dust from his pants, studiously ignoring his father and godfather.

"Miss Granger, we are taking you to a safe house," Severus spoke, beckoning the witch over. Hermione nodded and went to her former Potions professor without complaint and soon the two were gone.

"What safe house?" Draco wondered.

"The Dark Lord's manor," Lucius replied tonelessly, staring at his son. Draco barely kept from wincing.

"Father, it wasn't what it looked like..."

Lucius surprised him by smirking. "Oh yes it was, Draco. You were being groped and clearly enjoying it."

Fred nudged George's arm. "Draco has the loveliest blush I've ever seen." George nodded in total agreement.

Harry sat in a chair within the library and scowled. Tom hadn't said anything and instead chose to pace back and forth in front of the fire. And even though the Dark Lord wasn't speaking, the vibes coming off the Dark wizard had Harry feeling like a child who disobeyed his parents or something. It was annoying. And what was worse was the fact he knew Tom was going to finally gather his thoughts and lecture him.

A few minutes passed before Snape led Hermione in. Draco and Lucius soon followed. Harry briefly wondered where the twins had gone. Once everyone was sitting, Tom finally turned away from the fire and pierced Harry with a stare. The brunet glared right back. He was not a child and he didn't appreciate being made to feel like one either.

"Explain what happened, Granger," Tom instructed, finally drawing his eyes away from Harry to look at the witch.

"Erm... I was in my cubicle at work when Auror Charleston approached me. He told me the Aurors and some of the Order were upstairs and were talking about bringing me in for questioning. They are desperate to find Harry. He told me to leave immediately." Hermione took a breath and started wringing her hands. "I didn't see what other choice I had if I wanted to keep Harry safe and the fact that I've spoken and corresponded with you," she said to Tom. "I quickly penned a resignation note, sent it off by flying memo, and then left the Ministry before they came for me. I sent a note to the twins as well in case I had been captured. But thanks to that Auror, I had enough time to get away."

"You sent a resignation letter in before leaving?" Snape questioned with a quirk of his eyebrow.

"Yes. I didn't want to make it seem like I was fleeing from the authorities even though that's what I was doing. The Ministry may want to make an example out of me after this but I'm not going to make it easy for them."

"I'm sorry, Mione," Harry whispered.

"Never say that again, Harry! This was my choice, to follow you and support you. You made the right decision in drawing back from the war! You have nothing to be sorry about. And I hated my job anyway. I'm really glad to be gone."

"Yeah, but now you have to hide away..."

"Harry," she gave him a look. "There are these things called disguises. Polyjuice potion and glamours... honestly."

Draco snorted and nodded in agreement with Granger. Tom smirked at Harry. "She has a splendid point."

Hermione started to wring her hands again. "I hope Auror Charleston doesn't get into trouble for helping me."

"Charleston is competent," Lucius murmured. "I'm sure they will never figure out who tipped you off. Though I don't understand why he went to you personally. He could have sent a memo."

"With the possibility of someone intercepting it? Not a chance," Severus replied.

Harry smiled then. "I'm just glad you're okay, Mione."

"And now that she's safe and here, don't you think you should tell her something," Draco prompted.

Knowing exactly what he was talking about, Harry glanced shyly at Tom but the wizard was back to looking angry. "I'm not doing it in front of Snape or your father."

"Not like they don't know."

Harry remained quiet knowing full well Hermione was listening to everything and was trying desperately to hold on to her questions. Finally Tom sighed and motioned for his minions to rise.

"I'll return in ten minutes, Harry. You and I will be talking about this."

Harry ignored the narrowed glare sent his way. It was a bit harder ignoring the sharp pain in his head. He took it for only a few seconds before bolting from his seat and catching Tom at the door, grabbing the Dark Lord's wrist and stopping him from leaving. "Why are you angry?" he asked sharply, though quietly. "Did you honestly think I wouldn't go out to search for my best friend? Please don't be mad at me for that. If you're angry for that than you really don't know me at all."

"I'm angry you left without telling anyone not because you went looking for Granger. Harry, I'm trying to keep you safe. How can I do that when I haven't any idea where you are? And it's obvious by this situation that the Order's desperation is climbing."

Harry supposed he could understand, though it wasn't as if he'd been gone long and Tom had appeared in the flat minutes after him. Still. "It feels odd still to think you could worry about me so much."

Tom smiled then. "Constantly, brat."

Harry returned his smile. Before he could say anything else, Tom grasped his chin and pulled Harry to him so that he could lay a chaste kiss on the younger wizard's lips. Tom smirked when Hermione gasped.

"You're evil," Harry laughed against his lips.

Tom pulled away, still smirking. "Thank you," he said as he turned to head out of the room.

"That wasn't a compliment!"

Harry stood in the doorway, grinning as he watched the Dark Lord stride away. Only when he felt a piercing stare at his back did the smile slip and he turned around to find Hermione standing there with her arms crossed. He tried giving her a sheepish smile as he crossed the room to stand in front of her.

"I have something to say."

"Yes, I figured that from all the talking." She cut a glance to the blond who looked ready to explode with giddy excitement. "And from that KISS!"

"Erm..." Harry rubbed the back of his neck. "Probably not the best time to tell you this. You know, after what you've already gone through today..."

Draco shot to his feet. "Oh for Merlin's sake! Tell her already! I'm dying here, Harry!"

"You're in love with him, aren't you?" Hermione guessed.

"Yeah, but that's not what I need to tell you." Harry was slightly surprised at how easy it was to admit it, but there it was. He was in love with the Dark Lord and he wasn't sorry. Now to the other bit. "And he's courting me. Apparently he wants to marry me. And..." Harry took a deep breath and stared into her widening eyes. "And I want that. I want it so much, Mione. I need to stand beside him."

Draco did a funny little jig where he stood after seeing the shock and horror filling Granger's eyes. Oh it was delightfully funny! She looked like she was choking on her breath. Harry turned to him and waved him away. Draco went without question. Granger's initial reaction was all he was looking for and more. Looked like she was about to have a heart attack.

Harry turned back to Hermione- who seemed shocked into speechlessness- and went on before she could find her voice again. "I'm not under any sort of spell or potion and this isn't some elaborate scheme to get me to join his side. There are no deceptions. Okay, Hermione? Please trust me."

After a moment Hermione's gaze turned sorrowful. "Harry, how can you not even contemplate that he's using you?"

"We both know he doesn't need me to win this war. There's no need for deceptions between us when I want nothing to do with the war." When Hermione still looked doubtful about that, Harry grinned. "I'll prove it to you."

Harry left her in the library for a few minutes in order to go to his room and retrieve his Invisibility cloak. Upon his return, he had Hermione put the cloak on and they made their way to Tom's office. Harry knocked on the door and waited.

"Enter."

Harry stepped in, leaving the door open. "Tom, I need to talk to you. About something important."

Tom immediately waved Lucius and Severus away with instructions for them to wait in the parlor. "What is it?" he asked, rounding his desk and leaning against the front of it, crossing his arms over his chest.

"I want to join you."

Tom's easy smile slid off his face and he dropped his arms. "Elaborate."

"To join your side. Of the war."

"ABSOLUTELY NOT!"

"But... I could help you!"

"No, Harry," he growled, prowling towards the young wizard. "You will stay neutral. If you want to help, wait until the war is over. You'll have the chance to do whatever you want when the war is over. You want the world? I'll lay it at your feet. Only after it's done!"

"But-"

"This conversation is over," Tom interrupted in a cold soft voice that had Harry shivering. Mainly from delight. Harry didn't even try to look dejected as he turned to leave the room. He felt the brush of cloth from his cloak against his hand and knew Hermione was leading him out of the office.

Tom called out to him just as he was turning into the hall. "Keep Granger in the library. I want to talk to her."

Harry nodded and then went on his way, a smug grin on his face. "Told you," he said the moment he and Hermione were back in the library and she had removed the cloak.

Hermione had to concede that Voldemort had seemed incredibly determined to keep Harry from returning to the war. Even more he seemed completely sincere. And to top it off, he'd seemed worried and angered by the thought of Harry joining in any capacity.

"I have one concern," she began when they were sitting.

Harry snorted. "Just one?"

"He might be thinking of you as a trophy, Harry."

The brunet wizard rolled his eyes. "Mione, this is Lord Voldemort. If he wanted Harry Potter as a trophy, he definitely wouldn't use marriage to gain it. He would try to control me and that's not what he's about at all."

Harry knew Hermione would need some time to accept this, accept that hurting him was about the last thing Tom wanted to do. Harry was prepared to give her that time. As long as she didn't try to put him into St. Mungo's or hand him over to the Order for his 'own protection'.

Sometime later, Tom came back to the library, though he wasn't alone. Draco along with a wizard in Auror robes followed after. Harry did not miss Hermione's quick move when she patted down her hair, nor did he miss the light blush spreading across her cheeks. He grinned and dug an elbow into her ribs. "Mione has a crush on the Death Eater Auror," he sang softly into her ear.

"Shut it, you!"

When Harry leered she jabbed him in the side.

"In exchange for giving you sanctuary here, Miss Granger," Tom started once he was standing before them, "I'll expect you to work for me. Starting now. You need to collect all the books on vampires I have here and study them meticulously. You will become the liaison to the vampires. I'm expecting high ranking vampire ambassadors here late next week and you will be prepared to meet them with me."

Hermione's mouth had been opened in refusal when suddenly she snapped it shut and her eyes took on a gleam. "Liaison? As in an ambassador to the vampires? Me? Really?"

"Yes, exactly. Harry has told me you are exceedingly bright and can deal with most situations. I expect you to prove him correct. I suggest you read all the material I have here as I'm sure you learned nothing useful in that institution they have the gall to call a school."

Harry wasn't certain what his friend would do because Tom had basically given her commands without asking if she was prepared to join. But in the next moment he found himself alone on the seat as Hermione had shot up and took off into the shadows of the library, searching out vampire books.

"Unbelievable," he whispered.

Tom smirked. "They'll be in the front right side of the library, Miss Granger," he called out.

"Thank you!"

"Unbelievable," Harry said again. "You didn't even ask."

"That is the power I have."

Harry opened his mouth for a bold retort. Tom glared at him. "Who's this, then?" Harry asked instead, gesturing to the silent Auror who had been studying him curiously.

"Andrew Charleston."

"Hey, you saved Mione! Thanks for that!"

"There were a number of reasons why she needed to be warned," Charleston said with a shrug.

"Indeed," stated Tom as he sat beside Harry.

Harry moved closer until he was firmly pressed against Tom's side. It was a test too. Because even though Harry knew Tom didn't see him as a trophy, he did have to wonder if Tom were going to treat him like a dirty little secret. Keeping their relationship a secret from all his people. That was something Harry was certain would bother him beyond his limits. It was enough that they had to hide it from the outside world at the moment. He would not stand for having to hide it in the place he now called home. And he thought this Charleston person must be of Tom's inner circle because he was in Tom's home now and Tom hadn't donned his Voldemort robes for the Auror.

"You may sit," Tom instructed the Auror as he wound an arm around Harry's back and threaded his fingers into Harry's hair. If Harry could, he would have purred. "Draco. You are to go help Granger. You two will share this assignment."

"What?! My first real assignment is with the... Granger?!" he amended quickly when Harry pulled out his wand and pointed.

"Yes," Tom replied and gave the blond such a stare that Draco would have been crazy to whine about it further. Instead he locked his jaw and sauntered off into the recesses of the library.

"You do realize he's going to demand more fudge," Harry mumbled, though he wasn't all that troubled. Not with the hand in his hair massaging his scalp and turning him into a pile of goo.

Tom tugged lightly on his hair, but addressed the Auror. "I assume by now the Auror department realizes Granger is no longer working there. What is the next plan of action concerning the witch?"

"They plan on staking out her home and that of her parents. Starting tonight, my Lord. Beyond that there hasn't been any other actions talked about. They haven't yet realized she was tipped off and only believe she quit working at the Ministry."

"You will keep me informed on the hunt for Granger."

"Yes, my Lord."

"I have another assignment for you, Charleston. Though you will first remain in the Aurors and keep me informed on who they are looking for. You did very well in thinking to warn Granger. You will be rewarded for your foresight."

"Thank you, my Lord."

"As you did with Miss Granger, you should also warn us if you hear anything about Fred and George Weasley." The Auror nodded. "Your next assignment will be to bodyguard Miss Granger and Mr. Malfoy when they are to meet with the vampires. These meetings will not coincide with your Auror duties. And you will also be given a partner for this bodyguard detail."

"Yes, my Lord."

Tom's next words were drowned out by the loud bickering floating to them from somewhere amongst the aisles of books. Harry laughed when Tom frowned.

"Really, that's not the best of partnerships. You know they hate each other," Harry said. "Draco used to bring out the worst in me. He'll have no problems doing it to Herm-"

"I am one word away from killing you, Malfoy! Back off you whiny little git!"

"You couldn't kill a fly, Granger! Not only do you not have what it takes, but the flies can't stand the smell of filth like you. Not even the lowest of insects will go near-"

By that time, Harry's eyes had been closed and he was prepared for the sound of flesh hitting flesh. Though really, it sounded like heavy books hitting against flesh.

"My nose!" Draco wailed; his voiced clogged as if his nose was full of blood. "She broke my nose!"

"I told you," Harry said to Tom.

"Malfoy had that coming."

Tom and Harry turned towards the man who'd softly spoken. They'd forgotten he was even there. "He did," Harry agreed with a grin. "Yep!"

"You are dismissed," Tom murmured to Charleston. The Auror stood, bowed, and then departed.

"Is he a pureblood?" Harry asked curiously.

"Half blood."

"You are such a hypocrite. Pureblood supremacy and blah blah blah..."

"And you are a bloody headache waiting to happen."

Harry sat up and twisted around until he was on his hands and knees on the couch, facing Tom's side. "Ooh, you said 'bloody'. Though that's not really bad. Do you talk dirty in bed?"

Tom turned and gave him a perverted grin. Harry was really starting to anticipate those. "Are you ready to find out?"

"Um... I've been ready to find out for a month at least."

Shock colored Tom's face for all of five seconds before he pushed it away with an amused shake of his head. "Do you ever think before speaking?"

"Not usually. So then you aren't going to make me your dirty little secret," Harry breathed as he leaned forward, a brilliant smile on his face.

Tom smirked. He knew Harry had been testing him. "No."

Harry continued to move until their lips were touching and Tom's hand was gripping the back of his neck. Harry parted his lips and his tongue darted out to swipe along Tom's bottom lip. When Tom leaned in further to kiss him deeply, Harry pulled back with a soft chuckle. "When are you going to start the courting?"

"It's already started—stop pulling away, insolent brat," he hissed.

"You said there were gifts and dates. I've yet to get any of that."

Tom jerked Harry forward by the collar of his shirt. Harry tried laughing before Tom assaulted his mouth. Teasing Tom was too much fun and it usually ended up with a demanding Dark Lord licking and sucking his soul right out of his mouth. Vaguely he realized the library had grown quiet and that he should probably go and check on Drake and Mione, but as Tom had just dragged him over and plopped him down over his lap, Harry thought those two could disappear off the face of the earth and he wouldn't care at the moment.

Tom was thinking Harry had the unhealthy habit of making him forget the time and place. It was so easy to forget when the young man was pressed against him; moaning and being so eager and responsive when he was touched and kissed. He slipped a hand under Harry's muggle shirt, letting his hand roam free to caress his back, fingers trailing lightly over the scar. Harry shuddered tremendously and Tom momentarily thought it bothered Harry to have his scar touched so he began to pull his hand away. But Harry reached out quickly to keep the hand on him. He even went so far as to pull Tom's other hand under his shirt, sliding it up against his chest.

"Your boldness astounds me," Tom murmured, pulling away from the youth's lips to caress Harry's throat with his mouth.

"So you've said before," Harry whispered. "I love your hands." They were so large and warm and calloused and they easily turned him into a pliable mess with one touch.

Harry laid one hand on Tom's face and suddenly stilled. Tom pulled away from Harry's neck to study his face, only to have Harry shifting closer so that he could rub their cheeks together. Once again, Tom was sure if Harry could purr he would be doing it now.

"Why are you nuzzling me?" Tom asked when Harry continued with the movement; his tone was half amused and half annoyed.

Harry stilled and Tom didn't need to see it to know Harry was blushing madly. "I like it when you have stubble. Think it's sexy... and human." Tom laughed and moved fingers into his

hair when Harry dropped his head onto Tom's broad shoulder. "Why'd you let me hear all that about the vampires and the Auror job?"

"Because it concerned your friends and you really didn't hear anything of importance. You still don't know what the vampires are doing. And I knew you would have wanted to thank Charleston for tipping Miss Granger off."

Harry made a noncommittal sound and remained as he was. Not the least bit concerned he was snuggling up to Tom in his lap like a girl. It felt good to have Tom's strong arms around him like this. It felt good to just sit there, not doing anything and feeling everything.

Hermione stepped back from where she'd been spying on the two, completely shocked at what she had seen and heard. She doubled back and leaned against an aisle, staring up at the arched ceiling.

"Still think it's a trick?" Malfoy inquired from where he stood directly across from her, touching his nose. Surprisingly Granger had healed it only moments after she'd whacked him with the stacks of books she had.

"How do you expect me to take it, Malfoy?"

Draco buffed his fingernails against his chest before studying his nails. "You could trust in Harry. You could trust what you've witnessed just now. Trust the happiness you saw on Harry's face and the fondness you heard in our Lord's voice." Hermione blinked in surprise at the wizard in front of her. Malfoy smirked. "You and I may not like each other, Granger but Harry is liked. No one here has any plans to stab him in the back, despite the fact he's constantly surrounded by Slytherins. We'll use those knives to protect him."

"I don't want anything bad to happen to him," she whispered.

Draco drew himself up. "And neither do we. Look, Granger. The Dark Lord brought you here for Harry. He's let you and the twins come to his home. For Harry. To stay here overnight. And now he's allowing you to live here. He's offering his home to you for sanctuary as he did for Harry. That's unheard of. I've never stayed here before, neither has my father or Severus.... He let you and the twins over when he wasn't even in the country! No nefarious plots would have made him decide to allow that. The Dark Lord is doing these things because oddly he seems to... care very much about Harry. You need to trust that."

Hermione took a deep breath and looked at the ceiling once more. "I suppose I can try."

Chapter Eight

The Black Bunny

Chapter Eight

When Harry sat down for breakfast three days later, a scowl immediately formed on his face upon seeing the front page of *The Prophet*. Leaning forward, he snatched the paper out of Tom's hands.

"That's rude," Tom drawled.

Harry ignored him and studied the large picture of Hermione on the front page. The headline was the same as yesterday, claiming they suspected Hermione of kidnapping her best friend. But today they were giving a reward for anyone who had information on her whereabouts. "They're turning her into a criminal! Ruining her life!"

"You knew there was a very good chance they'd spin it out like this, Harry."

"But I'm not even missing!"

"She's prepared for this."

"I know..." Harry handed the paper back with a sigh. "Doesn't make it any better."

"At least she'll be kept busy. She has something to keep her mind occupied. Her skills will be appreciated here."

Harry smiled a little. "Guess that's true."

"And besides, this little matter will hopefully be cleared up today. For a little time, anyway. I have no doubt they'll try something else, but..." Tom trailed off and shrugged. Tom shrugging like that suddenly made Harry wish there wasn't a small table between them.

He ran a hand through his hair and looked away. "How are you going to clear this up?"

"Me?" Tom asked, his tone laced with amusement. Harry turned back to find him grinning.

"No, I was speaking about you. Have you turned me into your savior now?"

"Since you promised to come after me if I were ever captured... then yeah. And how do you expect me to clear this up?"

"You told me once you weren't hiding."

"Still true."

Tom nodded. "You will be making a quick appearance in Diagon Alley and then to *The Daily Prophet* office. When you return, your first gift will be waiting for you. And you should

hurry and be back by three. Floo into the Leaky Cauldron. From there you'll be discreetly followed."

"Yeah, alright," Harry said as he stood. "I'll go now."

"Do not take Draco along with you," Tom said firmly.

"But-"

"I don't want you seen with suspected Death Eaters on your way to *The Prophet*."

"But I don't care about that."

Tom stood. "Harry, this once do as I say. I promise the gift will more than make up for it. You'll see Draco later."

"Will you come with me?"

The Dark Lord approached the nervous looking young wizard. "You know I would if I could. I don't really trust anyone else to keep you safe... but you need to do this one alone. It would look suspicious if you walked around with an unknown man. People would suspect I had you under a spell."

Harry fidgeted and looked away. "Actually I meant in your Bunnymort form," he replied softly, ignoring the narrowing of Tom's eyes. "You said you would if you could and this way you can."

When Tom opened his mouth Harry knew it would be a refusal, but he couldn't help but smile hopefully and widen his eyes, making them as big as they could possible go. He really didn't think that would work either. He really hadn't.

Harry hopped out of the Floo in the Leaky Cauldron, his smile wide and catching, with Bunnymort held in arms, resting snugly against his chest. Harry's scar was tingling, telling him Tom was annoyed with both Harry and himself for giving in to Harry's whim. And this only increased Harry's happy mood. If he'd ever had doubts about Tom caring for him, those doubts were now laid to rest. If Tom didn't care for him, he would never have agreed to this. Being carried around like a pet.

Lifting the bunny, Harry pressed his nose against the soft black fur and inhaled. The scent wasn't animal, it was all Tom and Harry quickly lost himself... Until Bunnymort shifted and started to nibble on his finger, and it wasn't a painless nibble. "Alright, I'm going."

Looking around as he headed to the back of the tavern, Harry spotted a handful of people within. Three of which stood as he headed to the entrance to Diagon Alley. One he knew to belong to the Order. Harry paid no attention to him. Tom's people would certainly have him in order if he should try and pull his wand on Harry in here.

The owner of the Leaky Cauldron stood behind the bar and his eyes widened when he spotted him. Harry waved cheerfully at him. Tom slowly returned the wave, looking bewildered. At

the last second, Harry turned and headed for the bar. "Hi, Tom."

"Greetings, Mr. Potter... err... aint you supposed to be kidnapped? They say your best friend stole you away."

A confused frown crossed Harry's face. "Kidnapped? By Hermione?" Tom nodded. "Clearly not. I'm right here."

"They're reporting you disappeared, Mr. Potter."

"Well yeah, I was taking a vacation of sorts... It's not mandatory that I appear in public everyday, is it?" Harry asked with a laugh.

Tom's bewildered look lasted only a few seconds more before he joined in Harry's laughter. "Too true, Mr. Potter. The Ministry," he shook his head, "always jumping to conclusions... Especially concerning you."

"Yeah," Harry agreed, his smile growing. "So how's business?"

"Not good. Not good at all. People are afraid to leave their homes, you know."

Harry nodded. "Don't worry. I'm sure when it's all over you'll have your business back. Bye now," he said and waved, turning away before Tom could ask him about the war and his involvement. It was clear in the owner's eyes that he'd wanted to broach that subject.

Harry stood in front of the brick wall and tapped out the pattern. "Hopefully he'll spread that little conversation around," he said quietly as the wall opened for him. Bunnymort licked his finger, clearly pleased with his actions.

They headed straight for the *Daily Prophet* office, Harry's smile not once leaving his face and those about the Alley stopped whatever they were doing to watch him pass, murmuring furiously to each other. Once he stepped into *The Prophet* office, all eyes immediately went to the young wizard dressed in dark burgundy casual robes holding a black bunny against his chest. Movement of all kind immediately stopped.

Harry lifted a hand to scratch the back of his neck, suddenly uncomfortable having dozens of eyes on him. Eyes belonging to hold-no-bounds reporters. "Err... I'm looking for-"

And then it was like a storm hit. Most everyone shot up from their desks, notepads in hand and rushed up to the front to circle Harry, firing out questions. Harry absently rubbed Tom's head with a thumb with he felt the rabbit thrum with annoyance. "Where's the Editor's office?" he called over the din.

A wizard pointed to the back even as he asked Harry another question. Harry ignored them all and headed to the back. He didn't even knock before walking in. Though he did pause on the threshold seeing Skeeter was in with the Editor, Barnabus Cuffe. She gasped and the Editor shot from his seat.

"I trust you have time to speak with me," Harry responded as he moved in and shut the door, silencing all the noise that was being made out on the floor.

"Harry Potter!"

Harry gave the Editor a lopsided grin as he stopped to stand in front of the wizard's desk. "Yes, that's my name."

"Sit down! Sit down, please," Cuffe implored with a jovial smile before turning his eyes to Skeeter, who immediately returned to her seat and pulled out a pad. Harry sat in the chair next to her, though his attention was all for Cuffe.

"What a cute cuddly bunny!" Skeeter gushed.

"Don't touch him."

"What's his name?" Skeeter went on excitedly.

Harry looked down at the bunny with a lopsided grin. "Bunnymo—Ouch!" Harry quickly stuck his finger into his mouth, snorting around the bleeding digit. "His name's Lucifer and he's very moody."

"Still, he's so cute," Skeeter replied, her Quick Notes quill already scratching away on the pad.

"What brings you here, Mr. Potter?" Cuffe finally asked.

"Your reports that I'm missing or could have been abducted by my best friend. It's ridiculous and I'll not have Hermione's name slandered like that. Obviously I haven't been kidnapped. I want you to retract your statements on the matter."

"Mr. Potter, we were only reporting what our sources in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement—"

"They're mad and trying to get back at me. What do you think is going to happen when people find out the government has been lying to them? You know people don't like it when the government blatantly lies... The Aurors have no reason to question Hermione about me. I want you to make this clear."

"Mr. Potter..."

"You are going to look like idiots when everyone finds out I'm not kidnapped. I'm right here and I plan to let it be known." Harry paused and studied Cuffe, and then he smiled slyly. "If you need a donation, I will gladly provide it."

Cuffe's eyes gleamed. "Agreed. We'll have the story out this evening. However," the Editor gestured at Skeeter.

Harry mentally sighed. "Fine. I'll also give a short interview."

"Very good!" Cuffe said as he rose. "I'll leave you two to it."

Rita turned and studied him as the door shut behind Cuffe. "Now then, Harry. What have you been up to?"

"Living my own life. Away from..." Harry was about to say controlling freaks but that would have been a lie because he had a controlling freak sitting right in his lap and Tom was one of the most important people in his life now. "Away from meddlers and those who want to use me as a tool."

"And what's new in your life?"

"I'm seeing someone."

"Ooh! Do tell, Harry!"

"I've been away because I want to concentrate on him. I'm not giving out any personal information about him, Skeeter, so please don't ask." The black bunny shifted in his lap and Harry lifted him to hold against his chest. He smiled widely at nothing in particular.

Uncharacteristically Skeeter giggled like a schoolgirl. "You certainly look happy, Harry." She produced a camera from nowhere and captured that smile before Harry knew what she was up to. "And what does this mystery man think about you and the war?"

Harry frowned, pretending he didn't like the question. "He supports my decision," he snapped defensively.

"Your decision..."

"I'm staying neutral, Skeeter. And I want everyone to know it and stop asking me. I haven't joined the Dark side and I don't plan on it. But I'm not going back to be the Light's tool either. I'm going to do what all of you have been doing these past years as Voldemort rose to power. I'm going to do nothing.

"As for this Hermione thing. She has not disappeared. She's taken a holiday like I have. And she has acquired solicitors that are drooling at the chance to fight against the Ministry's slander against her. This kidnapping thing is ridiculous. And did you know it was the Order that kidnapped me two months ago. You remember that article, Skeeter? When you reported the Order had taken away a Potter impostor. It wasn't an impostor! That was me! Being attacked in broad daylight!" Harry took a deep breath before going on and noticed Skeeter was practically frothing at the mouth. "There's one question I want all your readers to read and think about. Will you write it?"

"Potter, this time your words will go down verbatim," she breathed, clearly in a hurry to go and write her article.

"I was there at the Slytherin attack that day in Hogsmeade along with most of the older Hogwarts students. We were all wearing our uniforms, specifying which Houses we belonged to. It bothers me that everyone seems to want to ignore the obvious. If it really had been Death Eaters who attacked, why was it only Slytherins that were attacked? Not one student from the other houses had even been targeted. And I was only hurt because I jumped in front

of my boyfriend. Doesn't make sense, does it? For Death Eaters to attack Slytherins. To attack some of their own children. Makes not one iota of sense.

"The Order however..." Harry shrugged and left it at that. "Let's move on, shall we?"

"Where are you living now, Harry?"

"As if I'd tell you and the rest of the nosy population. Though I do think I'll be kicking some people out of my second home. The home my godfather left me. Be sure to write that down, Skeeter. I want them to be prepared."

"What do you plan to do then, Harry? What are your plans for the future?"

Harry grinned and caressed Bunnymort between his ears. "Maybe I'll start a bunny farm."

Half an hour later, Tom and Harry returned home via the dagger Portkey still around Harry's neck. "A bunny farm?" Tom questioned in exasperation.

Harry dropped into the chair in front of the desk and hung his legs over the armrest. "You don't like the idea?"

"I refuse to waste energy answering that." Tom bent over the lounging form, pleased when Harry's breath caught in his throat. "You did very good at *The Prophet*," he murmured, sliding a hand under Harry's shirt, fingers traveling lightly over his stomach. "For the most part."

"For the most part? Thought I was bloody brilliant..." Harry ended in a moan, his head falling back as a hand passed over his chest and a finger scraped over his nipple.

"Are you ready for your first gift Harry?"

Harry opened darkened eyes to focus on the lips that were very near his own. *Please tell me the gift is you and me in a bed all day.* He opened his mouth to say this but Tom dropped his other hand onto Harry's leg, letting it travel along the inside of his thigh. Harry could only nod at this point. His cock was inflating quickly and straining against his pants. Harry whimpered and shifted, lifting his hips minutely into the air. His eyes drifted closed and he made a pleased sound at the back of his throat when Tom's palm finally pressed against the hard bulge underneath his pants.

"Eager, are we?" Tom asked after a moment before suddenly pulling back.

"Tom," he murmured. "You're a teasing bastard."

Tom turned away to go sit behind his desk in order to hide the evidence of his own need. *Not for long*, he thought as Harry glared balefully at him. "Your gift is sitting on the desk in your study. Do not open it before two-thirty."

Harry cast the tempus charm. "But that's an hour and a half away!"

"I'm sure you can find something to occupy your time until then."

"We could-"

"Afraid not. I'll be leaving soon."

Harry glared at the man across from him. Tom sounded so dismissive. He wasn't even looking at him and was instead choosing to read from the stack of parchments in front of him. "Fine," he growled and stood.

Tom lifted his eyes and watched Harry storm out of the office, a smirk tugging at his lips. "I'll meet you there, brat," he said softly after his door was slammed shut.

The clock on his mantle told him it was a quarter to three and with a grin he moved over to snatch the silver rectangular box off the desk. Harry eyed the box a moment before finally opening it. Inside he found a Snitch resting atop a silver card. Harry eyed the nondescript Snitch a moment before reaching in with both hands to simultaneously pick up the Snitch and card. Immediately he felt a lurch in his gut, but Harry had already half suspected it was a Portkey and was prepared for it when he was suddenly whisked away. He only hoped wherever he landed, Tom didn't want him dressed beyond what he was wearing at the moment. Muggle jeans and a t-shirt. But Tom was a man of details and Harry knew the Dark Lord would have told him if he needed to dress formally.

He landed on his arse in the center of a grove of trees. He was momentarily confused, especially since in the near distance he heard enthusiastic singing. Before he could think upon it further, a pair of boots appeared in his line of vision very near his own. Looking up he found Drake standing there grinning down at him.

"Now who's the one grinning like lunatic?" he asked with his own grin.

"Have you any idea how lucky you are?!" Draco exclaimed as he pulled Harry to his feet. "Your first courting gift is an all access pass to Quidditch! Not one, not two, not three... but all teams and a private box in every stadium! Harry!"

Harry dusted the back of his pants off in a daze. "An all access pass?"

"You have a premium pass that will automatically renew every season and you have box seats in every stadium!"

"Yeah you said that one before."

Draco huffed and grabbed Harry's arm. "I'll have to show you. You are being a bit slow today. Did you, perchance, get shagged?"

"Unfortunately, no. Hold on." Harry pulled away to pick up the Snitch and card that had fallen upon his arrival. He shrunk the Snitch and put both it and the card into his back pocket before allowing the blond to lead him away. As Draco dragged Harry out of the tree grove, the brunet noticed two men he'd never seen before were following them. At least he didn't think he'd ever seen them before. They didn't exactly look like they were following either but he knew they were employed by the Dark Lord.

Hastily, Harry looked around for Tom because if this was a courting gift, shouldn't the psychotic git be here as well. But when Harry saw exactly where he was, he realized that wasn't going to happen. They were at the Falmouth Falcons stadium. Despite knowing Tom wouldn't be there, Harry's excitement quickly matched Draco's. The Falcons were both young wizards' favorite team.

"Guess who they're playing today, Potter? Just guess, oh it's lovely!"

"The Cannons! I wanted to see this match!"

"The Chudley Cannons are going down!" someone cried out behind them. Draco and Harry turned around to face the grinning twins just as a group of fans cried out in agreement with the twins' statement.

"Who the fuck is that bimbo hanging off your arms?!" Draco seethed, pointing a rigid finger at the blonde woman standing between Fred and George- both of who had changed their hair to copper again. The woman's arms were entwined with both twins and Draco's eye began to twitch.

"Don't call me a bimbo, Malfoy!"

Harry and Draco blinked. "Granger?!" Draco gaped.

The blonde rolled her eyes. "Announce it to the world. Thanks."

"This is great!" Harry exclaimed; excited that he'd be able to spend the afternoon with his friends out in the open, watching his favorite team hopefully thrash the Cannons.

"This is not great! I demand she change her hair! She'll give all us pure blonds bad names!"

"Believe me, Malfoy. I much prefer my hair. Pure blonds. Purebloods... This color makes me feel like a slut! You would know a lot about that, wouldn't you?" Hermione hissed back.

Harry laughed and grabbed Draco's arm before he could do what he looked like he wanted to do. Pounce on Hermione like a vicious scorned cat. The twins were standing back, grinning outrageously, and it was clear they wanted to see a cat fight. And their grins were also there probably because Draco was clearly being driven by jealousy. "Come on. Both of you are not allowed to fight until the match is over. Draco, you wanted to show me what was so great about my courting gift," Harry prompted.

Draco went back to leading Harry into the stadium, though the blond was tenser, the excitement dulled a bit.

"Oh, come on, Drake. It's only Herm. They aren't trying to replace you or anything."

Draco lifted his nose and refused to acknowledge that he'd even heard that. "Do you have the pass card?"

"What? Oh, you mean this?" Harry dug out the silver card from his pocket and held it out to Draco.

"Yes, now hand it to this attendant who surely wishes he had our wealth." Draco motioned with a sneer to the wizard who stood half a foot away and heard all of that statement.

"Draco ... don't be like this now."

Draco turned away and crossed his arms over his chest, his gaze bypassing the thick crowds to the open entryway where he could see part of the Pitch. He shifted a bit and lowered his eyes. It was idiotic but he'd been seized with a mighty jealousy at seeing another blonde in between the twins. And a woman no less! And what's more, he'd clearly expressed that jealousy for all to see. The blond pouted. He didn't like that kind of thing.

Before he could stew longer, the attendant- who had stared at Harry in surprise long and hard- finally moved to show them to their seats and Harry grabbed Draco to pull him along. The attendant led them up many stairs and down a long corridor before stopping outside a door with a bronze plaque centered at eye level. "If you would press the tip of your wand against the card."

Harry did as instructed, and the card lit up. Moments passed and it looked like his wand had sucked up the light. After that the attendant told him to press the tip of his wand against the door. Harry followed that order as well and as soon as the tip of his wand touched the door, the empty plaque lit up, his name appeared upon it, and the door opened. The attendant gasped and all looked at him.

"Y-you really are Harry Potter!"

Harry swept the bangs away from his scar, "clearly."

"But you're supposed to be kidnapped!"

"Well I'm not. I'm right here... geez," Harry mumbled.

Draco made shooing motions with his hands. "You can skip off now, lowly attendant."

The attendant gave Draco a nasty look before running off. Draco, the twins, and Hermione immediately entered the large VIP box, but Harry lingered outside staring at the plaque with his name on it. "Don't think I like this. Having it announced to everyone this is where I am."

"It can be camouflaged. Want me to do it?"

Harry turned to find the two wizards who'd been following since the grove of trees. "Yeah, thanks."

The man who spoke stepped forward and Harry realized that he was wearing a glamour. He had dark hair and brown eyes and was no taller than Harry. He looked different, but his voice was familiar. "Charleston?" he whispered. The wizard nodded before he spoke an incantation and waved his wand over the plaque, making Harry's name blur. "Wicked. You guys coming in?"

"That all right with you, Mr. Potter?"

"You can call me Harry and yeah, that's fine. I insist actually."

Harry was grinning and practically skipped over to where Hermione stood with the others in front of the viewing window.

"Tom sent security," he whispered in her ear. "The bloke by the door. That's Charleston. Seems you're not the only one in disguise."

Hermione's lips pursed into thin lines. "And? Why do you think I would care?"

Harry snorted at the tell tale blush on her face and turned to Drake, who was sitting in the seat in the front row, dead center. His arms crossed and that pout still on his face. His back was ramrod straight. So straight Harry feared if he moved his spine might shatter. But the twins were on the move again so Harry turned away from him. The twins would bring Draco out of his funk. Probably by molestation.

"Draco, don't be jealous," one twin purred as he and his brother sat on either side of the blond.

"Leave me alone."

"You've ruined us you know. No other witch or wizard will do now."

"Fuck off. How can you say such a ridiculous thing?! Ruined you... what utter rubbish! It's not like you ever shagged me so how the fuck can you say I ruined you. Stupid Weasleys..."

Harry grinned. He sounded so petulant. Apparently Fred and George thought the same. Harry caught their grinning reflections in the glass. Then he saw the twins move, one wrapping an arm around Draco's waist and the other throwing his arm over the blond's shoulder. Draco wriggled his shoulders half heartedly to try and dislodge the limbs touching him, but stopped the movement after a few seconds. He still sat tensely though, but only for a few more minutes. George whispered something into the blond's ear and after a moment Draco perked up, suddenly smirking. And by the time Harry and Hermione took seats to wait for the start of the game, Draco had completely relaxed with the arms around him. He seemed to be preening too and Harry even caught the blond smirking smugly at Hermione. Harry laughed. Draco was such a child sometimes.

The game had been going on for about an hour; Draco and the twins were out of their seats, standing on the balcony. Hermione was standing beside Charleston. Neither of them seemed all that interested in the game and were quietly talking to each other. The security detail Tom sent had relaxed after Harry and the twins basically demanded it, and now the other bodyguard was also watching the game.

Harry was on the balcony, or between the balcony and the box, leaning against the pillar separating the inside and outside, his arms crossed over his chest. He was enjoying himself and more because his friends were enjoying themselves. And he found it funny also that their presence here was very much known. He could see reporters in the stands and he knew there were some outside of the door as well. That didn't bother him. This is what he and Tom

thought would be best. To be seen. To be seen living and make it plain he wasn't gone and he had nothing to hide. But as much as he was enjoying himself, Tom's absence was heavily felt.

"Harry! Ah, Harry you missed it! A brilliant Wronski Feint! What are you doing over there?" Draco demanded.

Harry ignored him for the door, which had just opened to reveal a man. The wizard's light brown eyes quickly scanned the room before lighting on Harry and a slow smile lifted his lips. The glamour was subtle, not much had been changed of the Dark wizard's looks beyond the eyes and the fullness of his face. Before Tom could even shut the door Harry had belted across the box, practically throwing himself into Tom's arm. He ignored the bright flash of a camera from outside in the corridor as Tom embraced him.

"You got me Quidditch!"

Tom slipped an arm around his waist even as he glared at Charleston and the other guard who'd hurried across the box to stand at attention against the wall. It was clear Charleston had been chatting up Hermione. "Wonderful way of putting it. Are you pleased with this gift?"

Harry pressed his lips against Tom's in answer and was surprised when Tom responded. They were in public after all. But Tom didn't seem to care. Harry noticed that all of Tom's attention was on pushing him back into a corner. The brunet laughed. "It's Quidditch! Anytime, anywhere! Of course I like it! It's like owning a team, but not really..."

Tom pulled back, eyes narrowed in worry. "Would you rather have a team? I can buy you whatever team you want."

The younger wizard smiled and let his fingers dive into Tom's hair at the nape of his neck. "No. That's Draco's dream. To own a team. I love your gift—How'd you do that to your eyes?" he asked, enthralled by the look of them.

"A spell. Not permanent. I'm working on the permanent transformation. What do you think?"

Those eyes were delightfully dangerous to Harry. Thrilling as well. Tom's red eyes struck fear in everyone else, but they had actually put Harry at ease. And now, Harry could look into the sharp brown eyes and... it gave Tom so much more depth. The way in which Tom looked at him, there was more there and Harry felt himself reacting to that, blushing furiously. With these eyes it really did seem as if Tom could see into his soul.

"I like them," Harry whispered shyly, gaze skidding away from Tom's.

"Pot Head! You're missing it! The pathetic orange team is.... Oh."

Draco quickly faced the Pitch, shaking his head in awe. The Dark Lord had Harry pressed into a corner, his thigh lodged firmly in between Harry's legs. Draco looked over to find the twins watching the couple without shame. "How did you two react when you found out about Harry and our Lord?" he asked curiously.

"First, we feared for our lives," George said as he leaned against the railing and watched as one of the Falcon beaters nearly knocked an opponent off his broom. A trademark move of the Falcons.

Fred laughed. "Yeah, we caught them snogging in the Dark Lord's parlor. Voldemort was ticked off we interrupted them. We Flooed over from your place- just had a meeting with your dad. Since we Flooed over, the house elf didn't announce us."

"How did our Lord react to your intrusion?" Draco inquired eagerly.

"He was going to curse us. It was plain as day on his face, in his glowing narrowed eyes... oh and we knew because the tip of his wand was fucking green!"

Draco's eyes widened on George from the implication of what that meant.

Fred nodded when he saw Draco understood. "But Harry saved us. Distracted the pissed off Dark Lord. We quickly backed out and raced as far away from that room as possible. Later Harry told us the house elf that was on visitor duty died a quick death when Voldemort caught up with it."

"But what were your initial reactions? Did you get all horror struck like Granger?"

"Nah. Clearly Harry fancied him before we found out like that, and then seeing him... he seemed happy," George said with a shrug. "We want Harry happy. Not going to hate anything that makes our Harry happy."

Fred nodded. "But it was kind of shocking when Harry told us the Dark Lord wanted to bond with him. Harry said he hadn't agreed to that part, but we all know..."

Draco grinned. Yeah. They all knew Harry wanted the same thing.

Quidditch was never really a passion for Tom. He enjoyed it on occasion but clearly he wasn't a hard-core fan like the four boys standing out on the balcony practically hanging over the edge watching the match. Granger for her part seemed to hold the same views on Quidditch as he did. She was seated a few chairs over from him, studying the note cards she'd made about vampires.

"Sir, is this meeting going to be formal?"

"The meeting, yes. Dinner, not so much. Granger, you're not supposed to be working now."

Hermione pulled her eyes away from the note cards and looked towards the balcony where the boys stood. Tom watched her wrinkle her nose before looking back to her notes. "I've never really felt the need to watch Quidditch if Harry's not playing. Have you ever seen Harry fly, sir?"

"No. I haven't had that pleasure yet."

"It really is a sight to see. He's amazing!"

An unholy roar went up about the place, the loud cheering practically made the stadium tremble on its foundations. Tom scowled. The noise was more annoying than Harry's stupid song... but he supposed it was worth it, seeing the bright smile of victory on Harry's face. Apparently the Falcons had won. And it had only been a four hour game. He'd spent the last hour sitting in that very chair and watching Harry, or mainly his arse. Tom suspected Harry bent over that railing on purpose half the time, wriggling it around in Tom's face. Course it was Harry's way of getting back at him for the constant teasing. But that was fine. Tom was stock piling a list of things he planned on doing to Harry at the appropriate time. That list was steadily growing each day. When the time came, he planned on devouring Harry.

Harry spun around and faced him. "That was brilliant! Tom, did you... see?" the brunet's voice caught when he saw exactly how Tom was eyeing him. Those eyes... they were so expressive and Harry hadn't any problem figuring out what Tom was thinking.

Tom's eyes lifted after a slow perusal of the young man's body and the perverted grin made an appearance. "No. I was busy looking at better things."

Harry shifted in place; color blooming in his cheeks and Tom's gaze dropped down to the front of his pants where a clear reaction was taking place.

"Oi, Harry! Draco agreed to go to the pub with us for a victory drink!"

"I said only if Harry comes along."

Harry spun away from Tom, relief clear on his face. Hermione snickered and Tom turned to her.

"He's so funny when he's horny and embarrassed about it," she said.

"Hermione!"

Draco laughed. "That was funny, Granger! I can forgive your blonde hair now. But that's about all."

"Don't strain yourself, Malfoy."

"Be sure to pick somewhere crowded," Tom ordered as he stood. "And you should leave now before the stadium crowds thin out too much. No doubt the Aurors and Order know you're here. The Evening edition of *the Prophet* will have been delivered by this time."

"Don't worry so much, Tom. We'll be fine," Harry murmured, feeling a little sad that Tom wouldn't be coming. But he knew drinking at the pub was not one of Tom's things and it was a miracle Tom had come to the game at all. "Do we get to take those two with us?" he asked, gesturing to Charleston and Lustre.

"Of course."

They went to a Wizarding pub not far from the stadium and as expected, it was packed with happy Falcon fans. The group was lucky enough to have acquired a round table along the back of the pub. Draco of course was seated in between the twins and Harry sat beside

George. Hermione was gone at the moment, she hadn't said where she was going but she popped off five minutes ago. Harry wasn't too worried. She was still glamoured and Charleston had trailed after her.

The other wizard, Louie Lustre, was seated across from him. Both Louie and Andrew were Aurors. Partners also. It turns out they went to Hogwarts but had been in fifth year when Harry, Draco, and Hermione entered first. The twins remembered the Aurors, and Fred even said he'd dated Andrew's sister at one point. The two glamoured Aurors were nice blokes-surprisingly- and even though they were relaxed and drinking with them, they were also committed to the task given to them by the Dark Lord. They didn't relax completely and they were always scanning the crowds for trouble.

"I'm back!" Hermione announced as she appeared beside him and sat. "And look what I found!" she slapped a copy of *The Prophet* in front of Harry.

The Boy Who Lived: Not Gone And Certainly In Love! Harry gaped at the headline and at the picture of him smiling widely. It was the picture Skeeter had caught in the office. Another picture was printed beside that one. Harry's eyes widened when he saw it was of him and Tom within his VIP box. Clearly embracing in an intimate manner. "Merlin... he's going to be furious."

"Doubtful," Hermione said with a comforting pat on his arm. "He knew the reporters were there. And it proves a point. To me and to everyone else who might have doubts when the truth finally does come out."

"What point?"

"Really, Harry. How thick can you be?" Draco questioned.

"He's about average thickness," George responded with a grin. "A little on the short side though."

"Oi! You big fat liar!"

Everyone beside Harry and Hermione shared a laugh. "He wants to make it plain this is not a game and it's real," Hermione went on with a flat look around the table - even the Aurors seemed cowed under her look. "And he's not afraid to show it."

Despite his worry that Tom was still going to be furious when he read this, Harry couldn't help but smile.

"Look! It's that same smile!" Fred exclaimed, pointing from Harry to the picture of Harry.

Harry went on to ignore them all and read the paper. He wanted to make sure Skeeter wrote down everything he said. And she did. This time she did write his words down verbatim, though she also wrote down her own opinions about who might be the mystery man seen at the Quidditch game with him. Everything he said about Hermione was there as well as the fact he would be taking the Black home away from the Order soon. She added her own

opinions about the Slytherin massacre. But her opinions ran along the path he'd wanted, so that didn't bother him any.

"When are you going back to work?" he asked Charleston after passing the paper over to Draco when the blond asked for it.

"Tomorrow."

"Could you tell us if this article helps Mione? Hopefully she won't need to go out anymore wearing disguises."

"Don't get your hopes up, but yeah I'll let you know," he said, looking at Hermione. Harry watched his friend blush. It was odd looking at her with a different face, but he couldn't help but smile at that blush. And he watched with growing fascination as she reached up to grab a strand of blonde hair, twirling around her finger, avoiding Charleston's gaze shyly. It was funny. Hermione had never acted like this with Ron.

"We need another refill," Draco announced.

Harry stood. "I'll go. George, come with me?"

"Sure thing, mate."

When they were at the bar, Harry leaned into George. "What did you whisper into Drake's ear earlier to make him preen and relax like that?"

George grinned widely. "Told him you may have a rich powerful wizard on your arm, but he has two successful entrepreneurs on his. Two wizards who are completely devoted to him."

Harry laughed as he lifted a hand to one of the bartenders. "You worked on his pride. Good job!"

George shrugged. "Draco's selfishness helps out. But what I said was the truth. We're devoted to him and he can't deny how much he likes that."

"I'm glad you're getting somewhere with him."

"He's lonely too. We want to fix that."

Harry nodded. Theo, Crabbe and Goyle had been killed along with other Slytherins. And Pansy had lived, but she took off across the pond first chance she could. And Zabini... well Zabini was hopefully no longer in the picture. And as close as he and Draco were, Harry knew Draco wanted to explore an intimate relationship with someone and experience what that kind of relationship could bring him. And for so long he'd harbored hope that it would be Zabini, only to find out Zabini was a jackass. So of course Draco was hurting on that front.

"You'll take care of him?"

"Nothing but the best for our Draco." George laughed. "And Mr. Malfoy gave us permission to go after him."

"No. Way."

"Honest. But Draco doesn't know it yet so don't tell him."

Harry walked into the Malfoys' parlor three days later and found Draco standing near the fireplace. The blond spotted him and smiled. "Oh, good. You're here."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Well yeah. Your Floo message demanded my immediate presence."

"Sit down, Potter."

When Harry was sitting, he watched Draco curiously as the blond began to pace back and forth. "A golden opportunity has presented itself to us, Harry. I'm sure you'll have grievances at first but after a moment of thought you'll see my way of thinking and join in... But of course you'll join in because I can't do it without you and your extraordinary talent."

Harry leaned forward. "What are you talking about?"

"Last week I sent Aunt Bellatrix a gift. Actually I sent several gifts out to dozens of people whom I thought might appreciate such delicacies..." Draco paused then and moved to sit beside Harry and suddenly he had parchment and a quill in hand. He turned to lay the parchment on the table beside the sofa. "What other things can you make, Harry? Besides the fudge and cakes?"

Harry narrowed his eyes. "Lot's of things," he said evasively, thinking he'd caught on to what Draco was about.

"Come now, Potter. Details."

"I'm not selling it, Drake. No."

Draco sighed and lay the quill down before suddenly spinning around to thrust the back side of the parchment in Harry's face. His vision swam with names and numbers. "What's this?"

"Orders, Potter! And this is only one parchment! There are three more parchments upstairs full of orders for that wonderful fudge!"

Harry stood and stared at his friend incredulously. "How many people did you send the fudge to?!"

Draco tried looking innocent. "Only sent samples to a few acquaintances... and I may have asked them to share the samples with their friends and acquaintances. So on and so forth."

Harry groaned and dropped his head into his hands.

Draco practically thrummed with excitement. "Just think about the things we could buy with the profits we make! And..." he was smirking now, "just think about the money you would be taking away from all the Death Eaters that have annoyed you over the years. You could

charge whatever you want! Look at the prices I marked for the fudge. It's ludicrous! And yet not one of the people I sent it to have a problem agreeing with the prices."

Wordlessly Harry held out his hand for the parchment. Draco fairly squealed with delight as he handed it over. Harry couldn't help the low chuckle that escaped him. He scanned the orders and the prices Draco set and he nearly swallowed his tongue. Yeah. The prices were ludicrous. And yet the orders were huge. "Guess it would be cool to practically rob the rich and evil."

Draco laughed. "I knew you'd see it my way!"

"The only way I'd do this is if my only job is to create. I don't want to deal with anything else."

"Potter, I wouldn't trust you with anything else." Draco smirked at the narrowed look he received. "Besides I'm sure you're also far too busy planning your wedding." Harry hissed out an unintelligible reply and slumped back, wrinkling his nose in annoyance. "Something wrong?"

"Haven't seen much of Tom lately. He's been busy preparing for those vampire ambassadors. Haven't seen much of Hermione lately either even though we're living together again... though I guess it'll be over soon. The vampires are coming tonight. By the way, aren't you supposed to be helping her?"

"I know my part. She knows hers. There's no reason why we need to study together."

Harry laughed. "Yeah, you're safe from harm that way."

"Shut up."

"Honestly, Draco. You need to hold your tongue around her."

Draco sneered at that suggestion and then chose to change the subject. "Are you meeting the vampires?" For some reason this had Harry blushing and looking away from the blond. "Harry?"

"He wants me to come to dinner here, so I agreed to that. Nothing else though. I'm not interested in anything else."

"Potter, you're leaving something out."

"Well, you know the vampires are going to be staying at Tom's place while the meetings go on. He's... making me stay in his room while they're visiting. Says he doesn't want me alone in my room all night when the vampires are awake and would probably be wandering his place."

"Oh right, like he doesn't have the power to block the vampires from anywhere in his home."

Harry grinned. "That's exactly what I said. Told him his seducing plan was lame and all he had to do was ask."

Draco snorted. "You would."

"It does have me nervous though," Harry confessed. "I'm not a virgin so I don't know why I'm this nervous."

"Because you're in love and it's different. Not to mention this is the Dark Lord you're about to spread them for."

Harry's lip quirked. "You don't have to make it sound so perverted."

"Really now, Potter. Of course I do."

Before any more could be said, a house elf informed Draco he had a visitor. The house elf announced Blaise Zabini was waiting to be let in.

"What does he want?" Harry spat.

"He's probably come to apologize because he realizes what a folly it is to shun me. You may show him in," Draco told the elf. "Oh, but first tell Father I need to see him immediately."

"Draco! You're not going to accept his apology?"

"We'll see."

"But Drake!"

Draco smiled. "Harry, pull out your wand and then sit there looking sexy. That's a good boy."

Harry huffed, but did as he was told. He reclined against the sofa and crossed his legs. Wand in hand, Harry began to twirl it around his fingers, adorning an unconcerned lopsided grin. He wondered why he was doing this. Was Draco trying to make Zabini jealous? He didn't think so. Not only was Zabini straight but he was also certain Draco was well past that crush. Especially when it was clear Zabini preferred brain dead partners to hold on his arm. Draco couldn't stand the thought of filling that role. It had literally made him sick when he found out just whom that brunette witch was and how she didn't have an IQ to speak of. Zabini's other conquests were of the same caliber. Pretty things with no substance. Harry wondered how Draco could have missed all that before, but then again denial did wonders to people's vision.

Zabini strode into the room as if he owned it, as if he and Draco had never had a row and Harry barely managed to keep the smile in place. Until Zabini spotted him and his steps faltered. After that Harry's smile simply grew. For one thing, Zabini never expected to see him there within Malfoy Manor. Ever. Even if he and Drake were friends. And another, Harry now knew why Draco wanted him to wield his wand. It was a well-known fact many people feared him. And for good reason. Harry was very adept with his power. He just didn't go about advertising it.

"Zabini, what an unexpected and unwanted surprise," he stated softly.

"Potter. I'm surprised to see you here," he drawled, his gaze going to Draco as if accusing. He opened his mouth to say something but then shut it again as if he'd thought better of it.

"What do you want, Zabini?" Draco inquired. "I'm sure everything needing to be said had been said the last time we met."

"Draco, are you sure this is wise?" Zabini asked, gesturing to Harry. "Your father-"

"Draco, what is it? You know I'm very busy. Hello, Potter. Doing well?" Lucius Malfoy asked after striding in. He went straight to Harry and they shook hands.

"Yes, sir. Thanks. You?"

"Well I was doing well before this little summons," Lucius said as he turned to his son. "Severus and I were busy."

Draco smiled innocently "I just wanted to make sure you knew Harry was joining us for dinner tonight."

"And you couldn't have spoken to your mother?"

"Of course not. She's out with Rabastan."

"Yes, yes. I've forgotten. Besides that, yes I know Potter will be joining us. Now if you'll excuse me. I've left Severus... tied up with something." The look in the elder blond's eyes made Harry scrunch up his nose. He never wanted to picture Snape in any type of sexual situation. EVER! Lucius paused besides Zabini and looked at the young wizard as if only then noticing his presence. Lucius sneered at Zabini and then departed.

"What were you saying about my father, Zabini?" Draco asked as he sat down beside Harry.

Zabini chose to stay silent a moment to compose himself. Obviously he'd been thrown for a loop. Still suspecting Draco's friendship with Harry to be completely private and unknown by Lucius Malfoy. Finally he spoke. "I don't understand. Have you joined the Dark Lord, Potter?"

"Not in the way you're thinking. I'm neutral, Zabini. I plan to stay neutral. I'm sure you've read the newspaper."

"In what fashion then, if not for the war?"

"That is certainly none of your business. Why have you come here?"

"Draco, I hoped we could put our disagreement behind us."

"You made Harry feel bad and you sneered at my friends. I don't think so," Draco stated, smiling as Harry dropped his head against his shoulder. "You can leave now."

"The Weasley twins are your friends?"

"They want to be much more than that," Harry offered, and quickly scooted away before that elbow could end up bruising him.

"Anyway, Zabini. It's time you departed. I don't want reconciliation. You're lucky to still be alive you know. If it weren't for Harry, the Dark Lord would have had you killed already."

Harry looked at him from the corner of his eye. That was a blatant lie. Why would Tom waste time on someone as insignificant as Zabini?

Draco gracefully climbed to his feet and then stalked towards his former friend. "And if you breathe so much as one word about this, about Harry being here and involved with the Dark Lord in any way, I promise you'll not live a day beyond that."

Now that was absolutely true. When Zabini's wary eyes moved over to him, Harry grinned and began to twirl his wand between his fingers once more. Zabini fled as gracefully as he could after.

Draco returned to his position beside Harry, laughing. "That was fun! Did you see his face? I feel so much better about him now. Like closure."

Harry bit his lip nervously, staring at his reflection in the mirror. He looked all right. Draco suggested he wear the sky blue formal robes with the gold inlay. The colors were lovely and the robes fit nicely. But it wasn't the robes at all making him nervous. It wasn't even the dinner he was about to attend. A dinner that would have a number of Tom's inner circle there. He was actually pleased with Tom for wanting him to attend the dinner. Harry was a little worried about Hermione being there though. Surrounded by people who saw her as nothing except a mudblood, but Tom assured him Hermione would be shown the utmost respect. Harry suspected a lot of torturing had gone on before this dinner was to take place. Just to make sure his minions knew he was serious. Harry really didn't care about that. Whatever it took to keep his people in line.

It wasn't any of that that had Harry's hands sweating and shaking. It was after the dinner. It was after the meeting that was to take place after the dinner. It was Harry finally sleeping on that huge gigantic thing Tom called a bed. Tom never really indicated if he planned to... seduce him. In fact Tom seemed to want to take that part of the relationship slow. Perfectly happy with snogging here and there and mild groping. Harry would be lying if he said he was happy with it staying like that.

He took a deep breath and turned away from the mirror. There was no point in working himself into a frenzy about this. In fact Harry was a little annoyed with himself. There wasn't any reason why he should be so nervous. Like he'd told Draco, he was no virgin. Harry refrained from tugging on his hair as he left his chambers. Maybe... maybe he felt this way because somewhere deep down he feared this was all a game. It was a ridiculous thought. But he loved Tom and he knew if it turned out Tom had been stringing him along simply to get him into bed. Well, it would shatter Harry. That would certainly break him where nothing else could. But Harry held fast to his strong belief that Tom was not playing with him. How could all this be a game?

Stepping into the parlor, Harry tried to push the worry away when he met the eyes of the wizard he loved. Tom gave him that smile which made Harry breathless. Tom never smiled like that for anyone else. Tom never allowed this type of emotion to be displayed for anyone other than Harry and his insecurities were easily swept away in the wake of that knowledge.

"Draco help you dress?" Tom inquired.

"Gave me pointers earlier," Harry replied with a quick smile at Hermione, who sat off studying her notes. She didn't even seem to notice him. "I take that to mean you agree with my attire."

Tom nodded even as his eyes narrowed on him. "I don't feel like burning your robes—something bothers you."

"No," Harry murmured as he shifted in embarrassment. In no way did he want Tom to know what was going on in his head. "Just a little nervous I guess. About dinner."

It was clear Tom didn't believe him, and Harry thanked every star in the sky when a house elf appeared announcing the arrival of the vampire ambassadors. Things moved along quickly after that and Tom didn't have a chance to inquire any further.

Three vampires stood within Tom's Entrance Hall when they arrived. Two males and a female. They were all thin and pale. Gaunt looking. Decidedly creatures of the night. They were a little creepy to Harry, even in their fine robes and the nice blood red gown the woman wore. But Hermione didn't seem to find them creepy at all if the smile on her face was anything to go by. She was so excited. Very eager to get to work. Harry suspected his friend was annoyed that they had to sit down for a stupid dinner before the negotiations took place.

Harry barely paid attention to the initial greetings exchanged. Apparently Tom had met these three before and was somewhat acquainted with them beyond the test that nearly killed him!

"Oh, he looks delicious. With that yummy glare," the woman purred, her voice heavily accented. Was it Russian? Harry couldn't quite tell, but he did know he didn't like the way she was studying him. "His glare is divine! Is he yours, Lord Voldemort?"

Harry bristled. She asked that as if he were some type of pet! He only settled slightly when Tom's arm moved to curve around his back. Tom gave him a sharp look which silently told Harry to stop glaring before he turned and narrowed his red eyes on the female vampire.

"My partner, Harry Potter," he introduced to the vampires.

"Harry Potter?" one of the males inquired. This one had long auburn hair pulled back in a ponytail.

"Why do people always need to repeat the name over and over again?" Harry whispered, annoyed. He then blinked and was suddenly face to face with the female.

"For Shame, Lord Voldemort. You never let on that you had *the* Harry Potter within your grasp. Would you permit me a taste?"

Tom's wand was in hand and under her chin in moments. "It would take seconds to turn this place into a vampires' tomb. Do not think to insult me or my betrothed again, Nadia. You will keep away from him."

Nadia didn't seem at all affected by the threat. She was still staring at Harry. But the other two looked to be taking Tom's threat seriously. The male who'd spoken before hissed out something in Russian and the female pouted slightly before stepping back and bowing her head. Harry didn't like the gleam in her eyes and he pressed tightly against Tom's side. This was probably one reason why Tom insisted Harry sleep with him during the vampires' visit.

"Forgive me, Lord Voldemort. I meant no offense."

"I think you and Bellatrix Lestrange will get along well," Harry heard himself say and the hand on his hip squeezed painfully. "What? It's the truth. She's somewhat unhinged!"

"Harry!" Hermione hissed. Harry shrugged and pulled away, looking at the three vampires in turn. "Nice to meet you." He then turned and strode down the hall to the Floo Room. He'd wait with Draco at Malfoy Manor.

Tom grit his teeth as Harry's footsteps faded.

"He's feisty!" Nadia exclaimed, smiling. Hermione agreed with Harry. She did look unhinged.

When Harry appeared within the Malfoy Floo Room, he was met by Draco who gave him the nod of approval. "See? Didn't I say you would look dashing in this?"

"You did, yes. And now I have a psycho vampire drooling over me, asking for a taste. Thanks."

Draco blinked in confusion but Harry didn't elaborate. Soon Tom, Hermione, and the vampires arrived and Draco introduced himself. Nadia went crazy over Draco too and Harry thought it was a good idea of Tom's to have given Hermione and Draco bodyguards. Though the male vampires quickly pulled Nadia under control. The males were perfect gentlemen, very formal, and treated this occasion with the respect it deserved.

When they were all ready to leave the Floor Room, Harry took a step and cringed when a hand wrapped around his arm. He looked up at Tom through his long eyelashes, trying to look innocent. Tom's face was emotionless, his red eyes narrowed on the door. Tom waited until Draco led the others away before turning to Harry.

"She is unhinged!" Harry defended before Tom could chastise him. "Did you see the way she was licking her lips? Why would the Lord of the vampires send someone like that for a gathering such as this? I mean, honestly!" A deep rumble within Tom's chest had Harry's eyes widening. Tom was laughing. "You think it's funny that woman wants to taste me?"

Tom spread hands over Harry's hips, gripping tightly and pulling until Harry was pressed against him. "I want to taste you so I'm not much better."

Harry cleared his throat and dropped his eyes to Tom's chest. "Y-yeah, well... you're allowed so it's completely different."

Tom made a noncommittal sound. He was more focused on touching Harry, sliding his hands over the curves of his arse and squeezing, delighting in the wanton moan elicited from those lips. He was focused on the erection pressed against his thigh and the shallow breaths coming from Harry's slightly parted mouth. Tom wanted nothing more than to forget about the vampires and return home so that he could peel Harry's robes right off.

Harry laughed then and pulled away. "You can't skive off, Tom. What would your minions think?"

"Did I say anything about skiving off?"

Harry shook his head, moving towards the door. "You were thinking it. I could practically feel it." Tom scowled and strode after him. "You're staring at my arse. You should really stop that too."

The stinging hex thrown his way caused Harry to yelp so loudly that he was sure the entire manor had heard him.

Dinner, for the most part, had been amusing. If not a little boring. It was amusing because it was clear the Death Eaters were on their strictest behavior. No one even looked at Hermione the wrong way, even though Harry knew they wanted to. Harry had been placed beside Tom at the head of the table with Hermione beside him and Draco beside her. Those two had also been on their best behavior and even managed a civil conversation, though it was a little strained.

Harry spent most of his time looking around at the Death Eaters, who in turn watched him curiously. Lucius, Narcissa, and Snape were there, along with Bellatrix and the Lestrangle brothers; McNair and Parkinson and a few others he didn't recognize. The conversation around the table was boring. They talked about trivial things and he knew this was because he was present and Tom had forbidden any talk of the war.

So since he wasn't interested in the conversations, Harry mainly focused on Tom. Discreetly of course but that was probably a mistake. More often than not, Tom was giving him those perverted looks. He was half glad Tom's eyes were red, blocking out most of the desire he knew to be there, but that still didn't prevent Harry from reacting to Tom's looks. His stares. The hand riding high on his thigh!

"Are you alright?" Hermione whispered after he jerked in his seat.

Harry quickly nodded, taking deep breaths and trying desperately to keep his cock from reacting to the attention his leg was getting. He didn't want to be sitting beside the woman he thought as a sister with an erect cock. Harry turned and glared at Tom. **Stop it!** Tom smirked at him. **You are not being very... appropriate.**

Harry, I'm the Dark Lord. I do what I want and I dare anyone to stop me.

You're driving me mental!

Yes, that was my purpose.

Harry huffed. **Meanie.**

Tom laughed; momentarily forgetting minions surrounded him. Minions who had stopped their conversations the moment Harry started hissing in Parseltongue and were listening and watching the two unabashedly. **Shall I make it up to you?**

Harry swallowed thickly. **How?**

Hmmm. I will need to think upon that.

While you're doing that, stop touching and driving me crazy with those perverted looks!

All Harry got in response to that was another perverted grin.

Harry was thankful dinner ended soon after, leaving him free to return home. Tom promised to follow in a few hours but he wasn't sure how long these nightly meetings would end up being. Harry returned to his bedroom and changed into jeans and a t-shirt before going down to the kitchen. Since he'd agreed to make fudge and allow Draco to sell it, Harry thought he ought to get started on the orders now since there was nothing else to do. And working in the kitchen might take his mind off Tom's maddening behavior.

He managed to make two batches of fudge before he decided to stop. He'd been staring at that chocolate, wondering how it would be if he could slather it all over Tom and then lick it away. And in thinking like that, he was back to sporting a painful erection and cursing the teasing Dark Lord. Harry quickly cleaned up the kitchen and put away the made fudge before running upstairs to take a shower. Harry went to his bedroom to grab his nightclothes before going to Tom's room. Since he was sleeping there he thought he'd just take a shower and then go to bed.

It was a mistake, taking a shower where he'd seen Tom. Harry tried to shove those thoughts away as he washed but it didn't work. Harry thought about wanking because certainly he needed a release, but somehow that seemed wrong. Every time he reached down to take his cock in hand, something stopped him. Harry growled in frustration as he turned the shower off. This was all Tom's fault. Teasing him so much when he knew perfectly well Harry wanted to be shagged senseless.

Harry stepped out of the shower and cursed his erection. It would not go down! And Tom could be back at any time and that was an embarrassment he didn't want to go through at the moment. He had no idea what Tom planned when he returned to the bedroom and Harry didn't want to make it plain what it was he wanted.

Harry had just grabbed a towel and wrapped it around his waist when he was made aware of the fact he was not alone.

"There's no need for a towel," a soft voice said from beyond the door. Harry froze in his actions, his eyes glued on his reflection in the mirror. He bit his lip when Tom appeared in the doorway.

"Were you watching me?"

"Is that a problem? You didn't seem to have a problem looking in on me," Tom murmured as he approached to take a stand behind the frozen young wizard. Harry's eyes widened on his reflection and Tom smirked. Of course Harry hadn't known he knew someone had been standing outside of his bathroom that night. And Tom immediately knew it was Harry. Only Harry would have the nerve to do something like that and expect to live.

Harry opened and closed his mouth several times but nothing seemed to be able to come out. How could it when Tom was pressed against his back now. When Tom's eyes weren't red anymore and were staring intently at his reflection; when Tom's hands were now moving around him. One arm circling his waist, fingers sliding over his abs, and the other arm was crossing over his chest to pull him tightly back.

"You were trying so hard not to touch yourself and though I must admit that sight would have been a pleasing thing to see, I'm glad you have restraint. This body is mine to touch tonight."

He didn't wait for any type of response and Harry wouldn't have been able to give him one anyway. The hand on his stomach dropped to the towel and pulled it off, displaying to him all of Harry within the reflection. Harry's embarrassment began to turn into heated anticipation as Tom lowered his head, mouth brushing against the shorter wizard's jumping pulse point.

"I've been restraining myself all night. Truthfully, I've been holding back for years."

"You've been teasing me all week," Harry gasped out after Tom's teeth scraped over his neck.

"I found it an enjoyable pastime," Tom breathed into his ear and Harry's cock throbbed painfully, aching for Tom's touch, "and concluded waiting just a little bit longer to have you was worth it."

"You-" Harry's words turned into a moan when a hand finally gripped him. Caressing from the base and slowly rising to circle the head. Tom's eyes were firmly on their reflections, firmly on Harry as he continued to stroke him with fingers that seemed to have been made expressly for Harry. His head fell back against Tom's shoulder as a shudder ran through him. He reached back to grip something for support. Anything. And as his fingers curled into fists around the fabric of Tom's pants, Tom sped up his ministrations and sent pleasure coursing through Harry like hot and cold water, creating gooseflesh along his body. Tom squeezed then and Harry gasped, jerking into the touch and closing his eyes against the ecstasy burning low in his belly.

"Open your eyes, Harry. Watch," Tom demanded. Harry opened them, whimpering as Tom continued to stroke him slowly. He watched and felt Tom lick his neck as if he had honey coated there. The moan of appreciation from Tom's lips had Harry gasping even as the Dark Lord's thumb scraped over the slit of his cock.

"Tom," he whimpered, scrabbling at Tom's pants because he felt his legs would buckle any moment. "I need to-"

Tom's hands left him and he was suddenly twisted around. "You're not allowed release, Harry. Not until I'm inside you," he whispered hoarsely.

It was Harry who lunged forward to press their lips together and Tom allowed the kiss for a moment while his hands roamed all over Harry's back and down, squeezing his arse appreciatively. And then he pulled away and Harry's eyes widened as *the* Dark Lord Voldemort gracefully dropped to his knees in front of him and wrapped lips around his cock without any hesitation. Harry believed he'd died and gone to a fucked up heaven. A heaven where Dark Lords sucked cock with incredible skill... wasn't that some kind of *faux pas*? Who cared though! Tom said he didn't want Harry to come yet but he was two licks away from shooting down Tom's throat.

"Tom!" Harry grabbed Tom's hair, fingers sliding and digging in even as his hips jerked forward. Tom answered by wrapping a hand around the base of his cock and squeezing before he hummed around the member. Harry's legs went weak and he closed his eyes against the incredible need to climax.

Tom lifted his eyes, finding the stricken look on Harry's face enthralling. The pleasure spiked with shock and pain was ever so sweet, but not nearly as sweet as Harry's arousal and Tom knew that was where the shock came from. He hadn't believed Tom would ever go down on him. Tom knew that for a fact. Inwardly smirking Tom pulled away, letting his tongue trail the length of Harry's cock as he did so. There were probably many things Harry thought he wouldn't do and he was looking forward to showing Harry he was not a selfish or boring lover. He knew their sex life would be one to be coveted by others.

Standing, Tom grabbed Harry behind his neck and jerked the brunet to him, sliding his lips over Harry's, groaning when the younger wizard's tongue immediately slid against his. Tom walked Harry backwards out of the bathroom and into the bedchamber; their mouths solidly connected, tongues wildly dancing together. As he walked Harry back to the bed, Tom produced his wand and tapped himself on his thigh, immediately dispelling his clothes, leaving him nude and pressed completely against Harry, who whimpered from the feel of their nude bodies lining up; cock sliding against cock.

Harry had every intention of lifting his hands in order to trail them across Tom's warm skin but he was rendered immobile when a hand was back to squeezing the base of his cock. Rather roughly. Harry whimpered pitifully. Tom seemed to like that reaction. He swept Harry into a rough bruising and phenomenal kiss before answering in a hoarse voice. "You are not to come until I'm inside you," he reminded and then he spun Harry around and pushed him onto the bed. Grabbing Harry's hips and pulling until his arse was fully on display for him. Harry was far too gone to even care about being embarrassed. He just wanted Tom inside him. He wanted to come so badly. He wanted Tom inside him now!

When he felt more than heard Tom cast a number of charms on him, Harry panted with anticipation though he was also wary for Tom hadn't cast the stretching spell. But then he cried out hoarsely when instead of the head of a cock being pressed against his entrance, he felt Tom's wet hot tongue probing him. He about died. Again.

Harry whined and moaned and cried out within the next few minutes. Tom's tongue felt so good and Harry desperately wanted to dip his hips and rub his painful erection against the silk sheets, but Tom's fingers were digging into his hips preventing that. The unbelievable pleasure and pressure swirling through him as a tongue stroked and licked him to Oblivion was torture! Oh but it was also so thrilling, having Tom tonguing him. He'd never believed Tom would do such a thing or would be this thorough.

Harry shouted out when a finger slid against his hole and then inside and with Tom still tonguing the outer ring... Fucking shit! "Tom, please!" he begged.

"Not yet," was the murmured reply as another finger slipped passed his tight ringed muscles. Harry opened his mouth to beg again but Tom was scissoring those fingers and back to stoking a fire with his tongue, and Harry was left with enough air to only pant, sweat pouring off his body as Tom drove him mental.

Tom pulled his face away but continued to stretch Harry. He could have used the stretching charm, but this was their first time and he'd wanted to do everything himself. He'd wanted to see this. To see Harry trembling under his ministrations. Hot and panting, whimpering for more. Begging. "Merlin," he breathed. He couldn't get enough of this. Entering a third finger, he thrust deeply and Harry cried out hoarsely. But then Tom's breath caught when the brunet started sliding back and forth, impaling himself on Tom's fingers and it was the most erotic sight he'd ever seen.

Tom laughed suddenly and pulled his fingers away before turning Harry onto his back. "Little minx," he murmured as he crawled over his impertinent brat. "Didn't say you could fuck my fingers either, did I?"

Harry huffed between pants and mock glared. "Freaking dictator! I'm dying here!" Harry then pouted. "Let me come already."

Tom lifted Harry's legs, throwing them over his broad shoulders, smirking when Harry held his breath. Tom bent over him, staring transfixed into darkened lust filled eyes as he lined his cock up with Harry's entrance. There was more than lust there too and it made Tom's chest constrict almost painfully. Did Harry know he was this much of an open book? "You're mine in all ways, aren't you?"

"I want to be... so could you get a move on!"

Tom drove in with a snarl and it was the reaction Harry was looking for of course. Stupid brat knew him too well, it seemed. The first thrust nearly shattered him and his eyes slipped closed from the feel of Harry around him. Sliding his hands over Harry's body, he leaned forward and grabbed his young lover's shoulders for an anchor and continued to drive into Harry, repeating the action in order to hear Harry scream his name. His strokes were fast and he dived into that tight lithe body with purpose. Tom was dismayed when he opened his eyes to find his own hands shaking from their joining. But when their eyes met again and a smile curved Harry's lips, he didn't care at all about how this joining was affecting him. As long as Harry was feeling it too.

"Ah! Tom, right there!" Harry suddenly yelled, his back arching off the bed; eyes closed tightly. "There!"

"Right here?" Tom questioned, thrusting in and out quickly, hitting that same spot repeatedly, closing his eyes and groaning as his cock was swallowed by the tight glorious heat restricting around him. Fuck he'd never expected it to feel this good. No one's ever felt this good before.

"Yes, yes, yes!" Harry shouted with each repeat thrust. "Fuck, YES!" And Harry was coming. So hard, so fast he felt dizzy from it. From the lack of air, from the climax crashing through him like a tsunami. His eyes struck Tom. They were as potent as the Killing Curse the way they changed color during an explosive orgasm.

Tom wasn't sure how long he lasted after that. But he'd been staring into Harry's eyes and his young lover's muscles were squeezing around him to the point that it hurt, and he could do nothing but hold onto the boy and continue to snap his hips forward, thrusting into the trembling writhing body beneath him until the muscles constricting around him were too much and he felt his own release crash into him.

Tom dropped his face against Harry's heaving chest, his lover's name slipping by his lips in a moan of pure bliss. Beneath him, Harry was still panting for breath but his body had tensed as if waiting for something dreadful. Tom lifted, bracing himself above Harry with his arms to find Harry looking away from him. Tom smirked. *He's worried this might have all been a game and now that I've bedded him it'll end. Oh no, Harry. This will never end.*

Tom grabbed Harry's chin and pulled until those gorgeous swollen lips were accessible. Harry immediately relaxed into the kiss, twining his arms around Tom's neck. It was when Tom pulled away to suck on Harry's neck, one hand trailing down Harry's side, did Harry finally see the ring adorning his left hand. Flat and silver with one diamond in the center.

"What's this?!"

Tom grinned against the Adam's apple vibrating. "A ring, obviously."

"How did this get here? When?"

"I may have slipped it on around the tenth time you screamed my name."

"I did not scream your name... ten times. And I never said I would-"

Tom's tongue prevented him from spewing out that same lie. When he pulled away, Harry was laughing. "Really... when did you put this on?"

Tom didn't answer. He went back to assaulting Harry's lips.

Tom lay on his back with one arm up and a hand tucked beneath his head as he stared at the ceiling with unblinking eyes. The other arm was curled around the boy who after long silent moments of deliberation had finally moved to snuggle up against him. Throwing half his body over him. Harry was sprawled over his chest, his black hair was even now tickling

Tom's chin. When they decided it was time for sleep, it was clear- though Harry hadn't said anything- that the younger wizard didn't want any space between them but he'd been afraid to say that or show it not knowing what Tom preferred in the aftermath of sex. Tom had finally had enough of Harry's annoying internal debate and dragged his lover over against him.

Which was where he was now, staring up at the ceiling and marveling at himself. Of course Harry was different. Harry was his partner. But Tom had never taken a lover in his bed and he'd never slept beside one. In the past, the thought of holding onto someone in this manner had actually made him sneer in disgust. And even as he frowned at how much that had changed, the arm around Harry tightened. For Harry he would do almost anything. With that thought, Tom finally allowed himself to sleep.

He woke up several hours later and he was painfully aroused. He felt hands roaming over his body, hair tickling his chest and a tongue lapping at a nipple. Tom remained still though his breathing was hard to control as Harry slithered down his body, tasting everywhere. And when Harry's tongue dipped into his naval, Tom's hips bucked and his hands flew into Harry's hair.

Harry's eyes lifted to his, his green orbs were alight with mischief and Tom found he loved that look, especially when those eyes dropped away to peer at his erection. Harry moved a hand slowly down from his stomach where it had been caressing lazy patterns. Harry's fingers wrapped around his cock almost reverently, his lips parted and a tongue peeked out to wet them. Tom groaned. That's not what he wanted Harry's tongue to be doing. Harry then grinned without looking at him as if he'd heard that thought, and slowly the brunet dipped his head and finally, *finally* the head of Tom's cock disappeared into that pretty mouth. Harry didn't hesitate to take Tom's entire length in.

Tom pulled his hands from Harry's hair to rise up using his elbows, having the need to watch Harry's mouth move up and down and then using just his tongue, sliding underneath his cock and then wrap around the head. He worked on Tom until the Dark Lord's arms were shaking and he couldn't hold himself up any longer. His dropped back onto the mattress, hands sliding into raven hair once more and he quickly learned Harry clearly was not an amateur at sucking cock. This had Tom's red eyes narrowed into slits. Wondering whom he would need to kill. But then that thought and others completely vanished when Harry's teeth lightly scraped across his shaft.

Now, Tom prided himself on control. Control of his emotions and his body but apparently when it came to Harry all that went up in flames. But he couldn't be blamed for this. He couldn't be blamed for the full body shudders going through him, nor his rasped breaths coming out, nor the moans of Harry's name. He couldn't be blamed. It was Harry's fault. Harry and his talented mouth and the fact that Harry had just *swallowed him whole* before humming. Tom hadn't thought that were even possible.

"Harry," he panted. Harry hummed again in answer, his tongue wriggling around the cock in his mouth as he did so, and Tom came before he could give a warning.

Harry had never in his life thought to see Tom come this undone. Not even last night had Tom lost this much control, even when he'd practically shattered Harry with mind blowing sex. The best ever! But never mind that. At the moment he was watching Tom with a growing

sense of power as Tom's seed shot down his throat while the man gasped his name. Oh, it was beautiful.

When Harry pulled back, licking his lips and rubbing the back of his hand across his chin, he grinned. "Morning."

Tom lunged forward, wrapping an arm around Harry's waist and pulled him up against his chest. "Whom do I need to kill?"

Harry blinked in confusion. "What?"

"Who else have you done that too?"

"Oh." Harry laughed and bent forward to nuzzle Tom's cheek. "Don't you think you should thank them instead of trying to kill them?"

"Why would I thank them?" Tom murmured, running a hand through Harry's hair, smiling a little as Harry continued to rub against his stubble.

"Cause they taught me."

Tom paused in his petting. "They?"

Harry moved until their noses were touching. "Promise you won't kill them." Tom frowned ferociously. "Promise," he prodded.

The Dark Lord sighed. "Fine. I promise not to kill them."

"Promise not to curse them. Maiming and torturing is out too. You can't order someone else to do it for you either."

"I promise," Tom growled.

Harry narrowed his eyes. "You swear?"

"Just promised, didn't I?" Tom snapped.

Harry lay over Tom and smiled a little. "The twins. I was sixteen and it was a bit of experimentation. That's all."

Tom ground his teeth together and dropped his head back to the pillow. There was no way he could kill them. Anyone else he probably would have gone against the promise. But the Weasley twins meant the world to Harry so he had to keep that promise.

Harry grinned against the chest beneath him when Tom cursed under his breath.

Chapter Nine

The Black Bunny

Chapter Nine

Harry finally left Tom's bed around noon, leaving the Dark Lord sleeping and figured the man needed it after being up late for the meeting and then up later than that for the fantastic rounds of shagging. And he knew the meetings would go on again that night so he didn't try to annoy Tom and get him out of bed. Though he had been sorely tempted to pounce on Tom like a cat just to see how mad he could get the Dark Lord when he was tired and cranky. He chose not to do that because he knew he would be pressing his luck, so instead he went to his own room, had another shower, and then dressed before heading down to the kitchen.

He'd been in the kitchen a couple of hours and was in the process of wrapping up another tray of fudge and wondering how they were actually going to ship it off when he heard voices approaching the kitchen. Loud bickering voices. He sighed just before plopping a square of fudge into his mouth from the bowl he placed on the counter full of his concoctions. Seconds later Draco and Hermione appeared in the doorway and Harry threw out a hand to keep them from entering.

"If you want to come in here, stop fighting. I'm in a great mood and I refuse to let anything ruin it."

Both his friends took a good long look at Harry. At his shining green eyes and the bright smile on his face. Draco smirked. "Must have been spectacular last night, Harry."

Harry blushed and refused to answer that. "Look! I think we have enough to start filling orders," he said, waving around at all the trays.

"Brilliant!" Draco exclaimed as he pounced in. "Last night Aunt Bella was going on and on about your fudge! I think she likes you now that she knows you are the creator. Mother too, though she's already warmed up to you..."

"How was last night?" Harry asked, watching as Draco and Hermione went to the bowl and snatched out pieces of fudge.

"It was great," Hermione responded.

"It was boring," was Draco's input. "Nothing was really decided. The vampires refused to say anything about anything! And we have another boring meeting tonight."

"You can't expect things to happen overnight, Malfoy!"

"Apparently some things do," Draco said, pointing to Harry's left ring finger. Hermione took one look and lunged forward to grab at her friend's finger. As she studied the ring, Draco leaned in for a closer look as well.

"Did you get a romantic proposal?" Draco cooed. "Did our Lord get down on one knee and profess his everlasting love?"

"Your Lord," Hermione muttered.

Harry pulled his hand back and snorted at the very thought. "Actually, he kind of snuck it on my hand when... I was distracted. Didn't ask anything." He then sighed like a lovesick fool, "completely Tom."

Hermione frowned. "Harry, I think you're moving too fast with this."

"Maybe," he replied with a shrug. "But it feels right." Hermione tisked and shook her head at Harry's utter lack of worry. "So the meetings went well then?" he asked, thinking to change the subject.

This made Hermione laugh and look at Drake, who scowled. "Voldemort was right to assign bodyguards," she said. "Nadia tried all night to suck Malfoy's blood. Especially after the Dark Lord left the meeting... in a hurry, might I add," she ended with a narrow look at Harry.

"That vampire is crazy," Draco whined. "She was purring down my throat all night!"

"Yeah, tried to warn you..." Harry studied Draco for a minute. The blond was staring at his ring. Frowning petulantly. Harry looked at Hermione. "Do you think you could give us a few minutes, Mione? Need to talk to Drake for a bit?"

Draco perked up and looked smug at this request, no doubt thinking Harry would rather talk with him than with Hermione. But his smug look disappeared when all Hermione did was smile and nod.

"Sure, Harry. I'll be in the library."

"Thanks." Harry watched her leave before looking back to Drake, who looked severely put out. "See... that's what makes you a prat. Why should she be jealous? She knows you're both my friends. And she knows I'm not choosing you over her."

Draco huffed and crossed his arms. "Whatever, Pot Head. What did you want to talk about?"

"The twins."

"What about them? Have they fallen ill with an incurable disease?" Draco asked hopefully.

"That's not funny," Harry replied flatly, glaring at the blond.

Draco's hopeful look turned to complete worry. "That's not it, is it? I was only joking!"

Harry's anger immediately lifted and a lopsided grin curled his lips. "I knew it. You fancy them back."

Draco recoiled. "We're not talking about this," he hissed.

"C'mon, Drake! We talk about Tom and me. You press me for details every day. Don't see why we can't talk about you and the twins."

"There's nothing to talk about. There's nothing going on!"

Harry sighed and went back to the pot on the stove. Draco was such a liar. "I should lock you in a broom closet with them," he mumbled as he began to stir the fudge mixture. "And then we'll see how far you take to denying it. Then again, they may very well give up."

"But," Draco began in reply, his voice at first small and then he cleared his throat and went on more firmly. "You said they would never-"

"I keep telling you Fred and George want something serious from you. Not just shagging. But maybe you're not worth the trouble and patience. Maybe they really are wasting time. That's what Hermione keeps telling them anyway. Maybe the twins will listen to her the next time she tries to tell them you will never fancy them and that you aren't good enough for them."

Harry grinned when complete silence followed the last of his words. He was sure if he had a mirror in front of him, his grin might reflect one of Tom's more evil grins... in that way the Dark Lord was rubbing off on him. But he knew Draco was still there. Could hear the blond breathing and knew his words had the desired effect on his friend.

"You don't think I'm worth it?" Draco finally asked, his voice hollow.

"That's not what I think and you know it, Draco. It's just what they might start to think if everyone keeps telling them. You're not exactly encouraging."

"If they start to believe it just because everyone says... But the fiendish twins aren't like that! They don't take others opinions of people! They make their own opinions!"

Harry's grin grew to no bounds. "Maybe... but really, you never know. They may meet someone new tomorrow. Or even today. They meet loads of people at their store..."

"But that's cheating!" Draco whined. Harry turned to face him and raised a brow.

"Thought you said nothing was going on. How can they be cheating if nothing's going on?"

"It's cheating in my book, Harry!"

"That doesn't make sense. You said you don't even like them."

"Of course, I..." Draco paused and looked away. "I-I may consider them good acquaintances."

"You are hopeless, Draco Malfoy."

"Hey! That's my line for you!"

"You fancy them! Just admit it!"

"No!"

"You neither encourage nor have you once really rejected their advances in a serious manner. They won't chase after you forever, Draco. That being said... don't blame me if you should come across Fred and George with another man squeezed in between! Or maybe even a woman!"

Draco's eyes narrowed and Harry knew if gazes could kill he would be dead. The blond aristocrat spun on his heels and strode from the kitchen, leaving Harry to snicker after him. And when he was done laughing about it, Harry turned back to the stove with a devious smirk on his face.

Unbeknownst to him, a wizard powerfully Disillusioned to the point of being invisible stood only a few feet away, leaning against the counter and studying that evil little smirk. Harry manipulated Draco flawlessly and Tom was beginning to think the Sorting Hat had placed Harry into the wrong house. Harry had also handled the editor of the *Prophet* flawlessly. Insuring nothing but Harry's opinions hit the paper thanks to his 'donations'. Tom was perfectly aware Harry had made more than one donation to that paper since their outing there. Since then not one word against Hermione or Harry had been printed. Not only that, but Harry- on the few occasions- could even manipulate him and that was both enlivening and annoying. But it also reaffirmed Tom's thoughts on how right it was to have Harry with him. Harry wouldn't join the war but after... after, Harry would help him build the world up to how he wanted it.

"Poor Draco. Falling into your trap like that," he said as he made himself visible. Harry made a sort of surprised squeak and nearly toppled over the large pot on the stove.

"Must you sneak up on me? Almost spilled my fudge!"

Tom suddenly had a vision of a chocolate covered Harry and his mouth started to water. And though he very much wanted to make that sudden vision a reality, there were other things that must be seen to before he could indulge in his fantasies.

"Finish up as soon as you can and meet me in the office. Your potions tutor is here."

"Who is it?"

Tom moved forward and dipped his head to brush his lips against Harry's, who sighed pleasantly against his mouth. "You'll see."

Tom turned away and Harry watched him go, smiling brightly when the Dark Lord plucked up the bowl of fudge while doing so and carrying it out of the kitchen with him.

"Bugger," Fred murmured as he and George waved half-heartedly at their mother as she headed out of the store. They'd just had an hour long conversation with Molly Weasley and most of that time was spent with Molly begging her sons to come to dinner next Sunday.

"We've been skipping Sunday dinner for the past month and a half. Knew this was going to happen."

"But they know we're still close to Harry. It's not like they haven't been reading the *Prophet*."

"Yeah, and her excuse about Ginny being home for Easter holiday is lame."

Unfortunately they knew part of their family would stoop low enough to trick them in some way to try and give away Harry's location. More unfortunate, the twins had given in to Molly's pleas and agreed to go to dinner. And she hadn't once mentioned Harry which was a clear indication that she was saving that interrogation for the Burrow. The Weasley Matriarch firmly believed Harry was going through a phase and simply needed a guiding hand to bring him back to his senses.

"Need to set up precautions before going," George murmured as they faced each other, ignoring the rest of the store. Not that many were in the shop this time of day.

"We should probably warn-"

"If we do that, what's to say *he* won't kill us just to make sure Harry stays safe?"

"*He* wouldn't do that," input someone beyond the counter. The two quickly turned, finding Draco standing just on the other side. They seemed especially shocked into silence at seeing him within their store. "Haven't a clue what you're talking about beyond the fact you think he will kill you. That will never happen now. He needs you alive to keep Harry happy. So... what are you two blubbering on about?"

"Mother pestered us into agreeing to attend Sunday dinner. Say Draco, you wouldn't want to come with us, would you?"

"Certainly not! I may tolerate the two of you but the rest of your family..." the blond shivered with disgust.

"Draco, c'mere," one twin said, beckoning with the crook of his finger. Draco narrowed his eyes suspiciously but he did start moving slowly around the counter until he was standing a few feet in front of one copperhead with a sinful smirk. "What are you doing here, blondie?"

Draco huffed and crossed his arms. "Have a feeling I was coerced into coming," he mumbled.

"As in forcibly pushed inside?"

"No, I walked in on my own," he ground out. Draco couldn't understand why he felt slightly better a second later when the two in front of him smiled broadly at his admittance. And Draco would never admit to being 'managed' by Harry, but he had been halfway to the store when he realized Harry had set him up. Still he came. He only shrugged when the twins continued to smile, somewhat bemusedly. "Which one are you," Draco asked to the twin who had beckoned him.

"We've both had something made for you and only you that will tell us apart. But you need to search us and find the answer. And then you can't tell anyone else about it."

Draco remained where he was and let his eyes scan over them. And in no way was he admiring their tall lean forms. Not much anyway.

"You'll need to move much closer than that to find it."

Draco ignored that for a moment and circled around them, checking their hair first. The styles were the exact same. He went back to face them and his gaze roamed their faces, checking their ears and necks for any kind of jewelry. Nothing. "Cold," one twin said with a smirk. Draco's gaze slid lower to their identical dark blue long sleeved button down shirts. Nothing. "Still cold but getting warmer."

Huffing, Draco stepped closer until he could feel the body heat. As he reached out with both hands to touch the buttons of their shirts, he admitted this was kind of fun. And he was no longer disturbed by the way their eyes made him feel completely bare. Those looks, the hot gazes full of hunger was always present when they looked at him. That was kind of fun too. Fun and tempting.

"Warmer," the twins responded when Draco's fingers neared their abs.

He glared at them. "You're just trying to get me to grope you!"

"True, but you really were near."

"What are your cocks different?"

"That's not it—not to say we don't want you looking there."

"Yeah, we'd enjoy a thorough check over in that area whenever you want. We'll try to hold still and everything."

Draco laughed and resumed with fingering the identical pearly white buttons. "Warmer." He looked down at their pants and tugged them up so he could see their footwear. Both had black dragon hide boots on. He raised a brow. Draco knew the designer. Those boots were in no way cheap. "Cold." The blond nodded and gripped the hem of their shirts, lifting until he could see the waistband of their pants. "Hot, Draco. Smoking hot, just like you."

Dammit, but a smile curved his lips when he saw what it was and maybe he smiled from the compliment too. They were wearing belts. Black nondescript belts. The only thing of interest about the belts were the buckles. The twin on the right had an F for a buckle and it was Slytherin green. The other twin had a G and it was silver. Draco let go of their shirts but didn't back away. "That's how I'm supposed to tell you apart?"

"Today, yes. But just remember the colors, Draco love. Remember the colors and who has which color. Fred has green. I will always have silver."

For some reason a tightness that he'd had in his chest since speaking with Harry finally and suddenly released. Draco shifted over until he was standing directly in front of Fred and hooked his fingers into the wizard's belt loops, drawing the taller man against him.

"George kissed me before. I don't believe you've had the pleasure yet."

"But he got to suck on your wrist," George whined.

Fred tisked and shoved his brother away. "The delicious blond has spoken. Why don't you go and take the deposit to the bank."

"No way, Fred! You'll ravish him without me and then he'll like you more than me and then that would just suck!"

Draco ended up snogging the both of them because surprisingly George's kicked puppy look worked wonders. He had seriously been afraid Draco would grow to like his brother more than him. And though he'd only meant a little kiss, both were easily able to pull it out of his control and they very well may have ravished him if it weren't for the customers suddenly filling the store. Draco wasn't sure if he wanted to hex the customers or thank them.

George went off then to Gringotts and Draco thought he'd better leave to let Fred work... or do whatever it was he did at the store. Draco very much doubted the twins thought of this as work.

"Don't go, Draco. George will be disappointed to come back and find you've left."

"Suppose I can stay... for a little while. Not that I care at all about what you and George want. And don't think for a moment all that snogging meant anything! It didn't!"

Fred said nothing to this, just turned away to help a customer, grinning all the while.

Harry gaped at the two men standing before him. One was staring with a blank expression and the other was grinning sadistically. "No way!" Harry finally responded. "He'll sneer and snark and take House points!"

"Potter," Severus muttered, his blank expression morphing into a sneer. "This isn't Hogwarts."

"Look! He's already sneering!" Harry scowled and turned to Tom. "This isn't funny."

"Severus will be your potions tutor," Tom repeated, the grin not leaving his face for an instant.

"No fucking way! I took his shit for seven years! I'm not spending another minute with him and potions! I'll never learn anything with him sneering down my neck and his hatred contaminating the potions."

"Harry, this is nonnegotiable. Aside from myself, Severus is the best at potions and you will learn much from him. You haven't a choice really."

"If you think I'll let you fuck me again after you've thrust this nightmare upon me then you've gone COMPLETELY FUCKING BONKERS! AGAIN!" With that said, Harry spun on his heels and stormed out of the room.

Severus knew he should remain silent, but he couldn't help himself. "That went well."

"*Crucio!*"

Tom spent long minutes taking his ire out on Severus. It wouldn't do to go after Harry when he was this enraged from that stupid comment. Of course the brat was going to let him fuck him again... but to say that in front of Severus. It was not to be tolerated!

"You must learn to hold your tongue, Severus," he hissed softly once he was done and replaced his wand.

"Forgive me, my Lord."

Tom sneered and strode out of the room and quickly caught up to Harry. The stupid brat looked to be trying to find a place to hide. Unfortunately there was no place there that Harry could hide where Tom would not find him. Harry saw him and tried to dash away down the hall. Tom shook his head and raised his wand. "*Stupefy!*"

Tom strode towards the unconscious figure shaking his head. "Stupid child," he muttered as he leaned down and scooped Harry up, holding him like a rag doll under his arm. As he was passing the library, Granger poked her head out and caught sight of them. Tom grinned darkly at her widening eyes. "It's only a stunner," he assured her.

Granger sighed and shook her head. "Really, he needs to hold his tongue," she muttered as she disappeared back into the library.

Tom laughed. He was seriously beginning to like Hermione Granger. Tom toted Harry back to his office, shut and locked the door, and then deposited his young lover on the edge of the desk. "*Ennervate.*"

Harry awoke and blinked slowly. As Tom's face swam in front of him he pouted. "I don't want Snape to teach me anymore. He's horrible!"

"He's agreed to keep the animosity out of the tutoring sessions. Can you do the same?" Harry scowled in answer. "I did threaten death should he not do as I say. At least he will make an effort."

"You could've asked me first or at least warned me," Harry mumbled, shifting so that he could wrap long legs around the Dark Lord's waist and pull the older wizard closer; nestling Tom firmly in between his thighs. He laid his head against the Dark Lord's collarbone and smiled slightly when Tom's breath caught.

"He will be your tutor and you will make no more complaints," Tom commanded hoarsely.

Harry snorted. "You wish." He wasn't surprised when Tom grabbed a fist full of hair and gently pulled his head back, exposing his neck. "Can I have a room here?" he blurted out. Tom's bewilderment at the question had Harry laughing.

"You already have a room, even though you will no longer be sleeping in it," Tom finally answered.

Harry didn't get a chance to reply as his mouth was suddenly engaged with Tom's and he much preferred to be snogged senseless than speak at the moment anyway. This kiss didn't last long however, for Tom suddenly pulled away and spun Harry around, pressing the younger wizard's stomach against the desk. Harry's breath caught as Tom leaned over him to whisper in his ear.

"You will be punished for your impudence," the Dark Lord hissed, sending shivers across every inch of his body. Instead of fear, Harry was gripped with a world of anticipation. He knew Tom would never do anything to actually hurt him. The only torture Tom would put him through was the sexual kind and Harry was more than willing to go through that.

Tom wasn't prepared to take his time with the punishment. In moments found Harry's pants down around his ankles and his shirt quickly discarded. Tom quickly murmured the necessary spells, spread Harry's legs further, and drove into him. It wasn't a sweet slow shag like the night before. This was a fuck and Tom fucked Harry hard and fast, right there over the desk and Harry loved every moment of it. He loved it rough. The pain mingling with the pleasure was brilliant. He loved feeling Tom's fingers gripping his hips to the point of bruising. Loved the harsh panting in his ear. But the best part was at the end, after Tom had caressed him in and out to a quick climax. The Dark wizard had leaned over him to trail a long line of kisses down the scar of his back before pulling out and cleaning them up. Harry's heart had clenched painfully at the soft gesture.

"Are you ever going to talk back again?" Tom murmured as he pulled Harry into a standing position, wrapping tight arms around the raven's chest.

Truthfully Harry was still reeling from the desktop sex that had just gone on and wasn't sure if he were yet capable of complete sentences. But he did manage to say, "yes."

Tom laughed against his hair. "Go on, brat. I have work to do."

"But what about the room?" Harry asked as he stumbled away to grab his discarded shirt.

Tom eyed the expanse of flesh as it disappeared under the shirt with a frown. Harry cleared his throat, finally drawing his gaze to the brat's face. "Why do you want a room?" he finally asked, moving around the desk to the tall cabinet placed against the wall.

"Because I want to turn it into something."

Tom glanced at him as he opened the cabinet and retrieved his Voldemort robes. Harry wasn't looking at him now. In fact the boy's face was flushed darkly. Tom was intrigued. Harry hadn't even blushed like that when he'd been pounding into his tight sexy body minutes before. "Harry, you can have whatever you want here."

"And do whatever I want with it?"

"Yes. Unless it's a room that I obviously use."

Harry watched silently as Tom put the robes on and his eyes went back to glowing red. "You should fuck me like that. Merlin! That would be so hot!"

Tom couldn't help it. He gaped. "Are you really Harry Potter?"

Harry walked along a corridor in the dungeon, searching out the perfect room. He wasn't looking for anything big really, but wide enough to hold everything he planned to put in there. He knew since he was in the dungeon a lot of work would need to be done and he wasn't sure how he would accomplish it. He'd ask Drake and the twins for help. He would *not* go to Hermione. She wouldn't want to know what he was planning anyway. He could have found a room above ground, but he liked the thought of it being in the dungeon. It just added a little something extra to the tone and atmosphere he was going for in the long run.

It took him over an hour walking around, looking through every room until he found the perfect one. Ironically, he found it on the way out of the dungeons down the corridor that connected with the first he'd gone down. Harry stepped in and immediately knew he'd found it. The room was bare and cold but just the right size for what he had planned and it even had a small room off across from the main door like an antechamber. And that was even better! Harry grinned as he headed back to the stairs, intent on getting started right away. He could probably head to the twins shop now. They should know where he could get some of the stuff.

"Ah, if it isn't Lord Voldemort's pet," a voice purred from the darkness behind him.

Harry cursed his stupidity. It was probably nearing sundown and even if it wasn't, he was down in the dungeon where there was no sunlight! And Tom wasn't even home now so that meant he was pretty much fucked. He wasn't cocky enough to think he could out maneuver a vampire. Tom had once told him the older the vampire, the harder they were to kill and he knew Nadia was very old. Centuries old. But despite the danger he was in, Harry allowed his annoyance to cloud good judgment.

"I am not his pet!" he snapped as he turned around to face Nadia, his wand gripped firmly in hand.

Nadia smiled. "If you aren't his pet, as you claim, then why are you here?"

"I'm here because I want to be—mind staying where you are? I don't trust you."

"He says you are unaffiliated with the war," Nadia said and continued to approach him.

"That's right."

"Which makes me believe you are his pet."

Harry ground his teeth. What would it take to get this vampire to stop calling him that? "We're engaged. Didn't you hear him when he called me his betrothed?" he finally replied and then narrowed his eyes. She'd stopped short at his first words. Then she was suddenly gone; no longer standing in front of him.

"Engaged?" a voice purred in his ears and Harry blanched because she was right behind him and she now had hold of his wrists. All Harry could do was nod and hope this wouldn't turn

out as bad as he thought it would. He'd been stupid again and if he made it out alive, Tom would surely punish him for his stupidity. "You must calm down, kitten. I can hear your heart beating. Right out of your chest."

"Let go of me." Nadia's grip tightened, not that that was necessary for her strength was super compared to his and he wouldn't have been able to move an inch anyway.

"Calm," she whispered with a giggle against his ear. "I could not bite you even if I wanted to. My father would surely be displeased."

Despite the situation, Harry was intrigued. What did her father have to do with anything? "Your father?"

"Yes. The Lord of the Vampires, of course."

That explained so much... like why the lord of the vampires would send an ambassador such as her here. "Oh, right."

"And it's different now that I know," she said, releasing his wrists and suddenly standing before him again. She didn't look like a predator anymore. Or at least she didn't look like she really wanted to bite into *his* neck anymore.

"Know what?"

Nadia slowly reached out for his left hand and raised it between them. She stared at his ring. "You love him," she said simply. "I can practically smell it." Suddenly she dropped his hand and spun away, heading back the way she came. "My father will be pleased. You've helped your lover, delicious one. Father will surely join with him now."

"Wait! Hold on," Harry called as trotted after her. "What do you mean? How did I help?" he called, but she was gone and nothing but shadows surrounded him. "Err... please don't tell Tom I was down here alone and spoke with you!" he yelled out before turning and jogging up the stairs into the main part of the manor.

Nadia appeared after he was gone, giggling. Her two comrades appearing beside her. "He really is cute. And smells so yummy! But alas, I will never be able to drink from him."

"Our Lord will be pleased," the vampire on her right said.

Nadia nodded. "I do not think Lord Voldemort would go back on his word. He may have once in the past, but no longer. He will keep his promises to us."

"How can you be sure?" the other male asked.

Nadia shared a look with the first male. "That boy. He isn't evil and yet he loves the Dark Lord. For such a thing to occur, the Dark Lord must have some compassion where he never had any before. Tonight we shall agree with their terms and return to report to father."

Harry ran into Draco some time later when the blond was on his way to a meeting room. "Hey Drake." The blond aristocrat spun around to face him and glared harshly. Harry smirked, "have fun?" Draco sneered and crossed his arms over his chest. After a minute when all they did was stare at each other, Harry finally laughed. "Listen, I want to talk to you about something."

Draco hesitated before responding and his glare diminished. "The meeting's about to start," he replied morosely. "How about tomorrow? Need to talk to you about something too. It's kind of troubling."

"What is it?"

Draco pondered a minute. Harry needed to know about the twins' probable ambush at their parents' home and he didn't like the thought of waiting to speak about it. But he also knew he couldn't be late to this meeting. "Go see the fiends. They'll tell you about it. Just... just don't let them go there, Harry."

"Go where?"

Draco shook his head. "Don't let them go," he said again and then returned on his way to the meeting room.

So Harry ended up going to visit Fred and George for the night and as he knocked on their door, he thought this was probably a good idea. He wouldn't be left bored out of his mind while everyone else at home was busy.

The door opened to Harry and immediately one of the twins dragged him inside. "Did you come alone?" the red head asked.

"Yeah, sorry. No Drake this time."

"No, Harry," the wizard tisked. "You shouldn't walk around alone! Especially at night! Does your sugar daddy know you're here?"

"Geez... am I really going to get this from you two now?" Harry griped as he pulled away and looked around the modest flat. "Where's..."

"Fred went to get food."

Harry went and made himself comfortable on the sofa and waited for George to sit beside him. "Drake said there was a problem or something. He seemed really bothered."

"Hot and bothered?" George asked hopefully.

Harry laughed. "Nope. Just bothered."

"Damn," George sighed and dropped his head against Harry's shoulder. "Mum managed to convince us to go to Sunday dinner."

"Suppose you couldn't avoid it forever and they are your family. They probably miss you two."

George closed his eyes with a heavy sigh. "Harry, you gotta know they're going to try and pry information from us."

"Yeah, and to tell you the truth I don't want you to go. Draco doesn't either. He told me not to let you go."

"It's not as if we're in mortal peril," George muttered.

"If you see Moody or Shackbolt then get the hell out of there. And watch out because they might slip you Veritaserum."

"A high possibility, but we'll know if they do that. We'll know because Ginny will tell us. She won't be able to hide it. Fortunately for us, she was never very good with keeping secrets off her face."

Harry wrinkled his nose. He couldn't stand Ginny. Not really. Especially not after she learned he was gay and would never go after her. Then she turned into a scorned harpy. George laughed at his expression. "She's still pining after you. Hoping one day you'll sweep her off her feet after you've decided women are better."

Harry snorted. "Never going to happen. No offense but even if I liked girls, I wouldn't go after her. She's too spoiled and I've learned I much prefer to be the one spoiled," he murmured, fingering the diamond on his ring.

Without raising his head from Harry's shoulder, George snatched up the hand to inspect the ring, giving out a long whistle of appreciation. "So... when is it?"

Harry shrugged. "He'll probably spring that up on me as well. Whenever he feels like it."

George finally pulled away to look at him. "And you're alright with that? You're okay it could be tomorrow that he'll come at you with an Official and a document for you to sign?"

Harry grinned. "Yeah." He was silent a moment, fretting. "Don't go there without a plan."

"Harry, this is us. Course we'll have a plan. We'll have several. Still have plenty of time to prepare, days... Now then, tell me. Did Draco tell you not to let us go because he was afraid of the secrets we could reveal? Or is he afraid for our well being?"

"I think he's afraid of your well being," Harry replied with a smile. "At least that's how it sounded. The tone of his voice. Anyway, while we wait for Fred, I want your opinion about something," He pulled a piece of parchment from his pocket. It was a list of things he needed and a basic description of how he wanted the room worked on. "I need to know where I can get these things and the quickest way to have it installed or built the way I want it. And I'd really prefer to do it on my own without having a professional come in and work on it... and I was hoping you two would give me a hand." He passed the list over to George without any

explanation, knowing once George had read it he wouldn't need an explanation. Many of the needed items made the entire thing self-explanatory.

When George was finished, he cleared his throat and lay the parchment on the coffee table before turning to Harry and saying very seriously, "Harry, forget the Dark Lord. Please marry me."

Harry laughed. "But what about, Drake?"

"Him too. Oh, Merlin," he gazed at the ceiling, "the both of you on that thing..."

"Learned all the moves from watching him at the Slytherin parties Theo took me too. Those were fun..." Harry trailed off, the smile suddenly falling from his lips. George murmured something and wrapped a comforting arm around him.

Fred returned to find them in the same position, but Harry was in the process of telling George about the multiple times Draco had been running nearly starkers all around the Slytherin common room by the end of the night. "It wasn't just him either!" Harry laughed. "You thought you were pervs. Ha!"

"Bro," George said to Fred, "we should have been put into Slytherin."

Fred nodded as he dropped the takeout onto the coffee table. Spying the parchment, he picked it up and read over it while George rummaged into the food bags. A devious smirk curled Fred's lips. "Harry..."

"George already proposed and the answer is no."

It was very late by the time Harry Portkeyed back home and landed in Tom's office. Tom was there and he wasn't alone. Both Draco and Hermione were sitting in front of the desk as well. "Meeting's over already?" he asked as he picked himself off the floor.

Tom slowly stood; his eyes were gleaming red and narrowed dangerously. "It's been brought to my attention that you were down in the dungeon, alone. Nadia caught you. Alone!"

Harry jerked back a little and swallowed thickly. The psycho vampire squealed on him! "I... I was looking for something."

"ALONE?!" Tom raged, causing not only Harry to flinch again, but Draco and Hermione flinched as well.

"I forgot the time... and the fact there's no sunlight down there," he said and unfortunately it was in a tone that made it seem like he didn't think it was a big deal.

Draco snickered into his hand, but abruptly cut off when Tom's gaze slid to him. "Leave us," he hissed. Draco and Hermione shot from their seats and sprinted out. Harry followed their exit with wide eyes. Traitors!

"Nothing happened, Tom. Don't see why you're so mad. Got away alright... She said I helped you!"

Tom said nothing. Instead he began to stalk around his desk, heading for Harry. The brunet swallowed thickly and moved also, putting the chairs between them, and then the desk. Outside in the hall, Draco and Hermione heard the Dark Lord hiss something and Harry returned, yelling he was too old for spankings. The door audibly locked and all noise was suddenly silenced.

Draco spent a few moments leaned up against the wall, laughing at the knowledge that Harry was probably right now getting his arse spanked by the Dark Lord. Hermione stood back, looking amused and worried. Worried because she was amused.

"Don't worry, Granger. You know Harry's enjoying it," Draco murmured as he finally straightened and wiped a tear of mirth away from his eye.

"I'm not worried. Harry had it coming. It was stupid of him to forget where he was or when. He's very lucky Nadia didn't suck him dry... then again if it weren't for him, the meeting tonight would have gone on just like last night. With the vampires neither agreeing or opposing to anything we say."

"Yes, it was odd. They came in and agreed to our terms and listed their own, which were acceptable. But I'm not complaining. Tonight was far less boring."

"Suppose we should get to work on the draft of the formal contract," Hermione murmured as she turned away, aiming for the library. "Your Lord will want it done immediately."

She was surprised when Malfoy didn't say anything against it and instead fell in step beside her. Then again, Malfoy may be a monumental prat but he did take this assignment seriously.

The day for the dreaded Sunday dinner came all too soon. Both Draco and Harry appeared at the twins shop before Fred and George left for the Burrow, demanding to know what kind of plans they had.

"We've a few Portkeys hidden away on us. We also have spell detectors. They'll vibrate if we're charmed or cursed in any way. And hopefully we'll be able to scat quick enough before the spells take hold."

Harry held out a bag. "Inside are two Portkeys straight to my home-use them anyway when you leave after dinner. All you need to do is activate them. And my cloak's in here. I know it's only one, but... Oh! And Tom promised to come rescue you if something happens."

"Ah, well... not sure we want him to do that even if we do need rescuing. Appreciate it though."

Draco produced a rectangular box and handed it to the twin wearing a necklace with a green inverted triangle. Fred took the box and opened it. Two forks and two spoons lay within. The twins looked at him for explanation. "Any food those touch instantly vanishes. I... I can't

help you with any drinks and that's probably what you'll need to look after the most. Just make sure you don't use the utensils in an obvious way."

"Did you charm these yourself?" George asked, staring at the forks as if they held the world's secrets.

"Yes. And I'll have you know I forwent sleep the last few nights trying to get the charms right."

"Brilliant," Fred breathed. "We've never come across something like this. It's not obvious like it is when using your wand to vanish stuff would be... could have been useful as kids when Mum tried stuffing us with all those nasty vegetables."

"You're a genius," George murmured, boldly running his thumb over Draco's bottom lip. Draco backed away as a blush colored his face.

"Hey, I just offered you my cloak," Harry laughed, not the least bit offended the twins were ignoring him to make moon cow eyes at Draco. "Besides, Hermione helped hi-"

Draco harshly stomped on his foot. "I did it all on my own, Potter," he growled.

"Don't worry, you two. We'll see you tonight in one piece and we can work some more on your room, Harry."

"Please be careful."

"We promise."

Harry eyes fell to the floor. "This is one reason why I never contacted you."

"Harry," Fred said firmly, "you are not the only secret we're keeping from them. And it's not any of their business anyway. We support you in this because we think you're right. Our world should have been doing something already about your sugar daddy instead of waiting on you."

Draco snickered. Before he hadn't any idea what they meant by the words 'sugar daddy' until Harry explained. And now every time he heard it, Draco couldn't help but laugh because in a way it was true, despite Harry being wealthy himself.

"Besides," George went on with a firm hand on Harry's shoulder, "they may not try and pry, but if they do... they're the ones in the wrong. They're the ones that will put us in a bad position. And they'll know it. It's our family that should start to feel guilty then. Not you. Not ever, Harry."

Before Harry could reply the twins turned to Draco. "Kisses before we go?"

"No."

"Aw. Draco, you were so giving last time you were here."

Harry turned and cocked a brow at his friend. Draco ignored him. "Maybe I'll dance for you in Harry's room... maybe. But I can't do that if you don't return tonight."

Harry didn't think he'd ever seen the twins' eyes get so bright and round and hopeful before. Draco was offering them a real treat so he didn't blame them either for that reaction. Harry laughed, wondering what Narcissa's reaction would be if she ever caught her son dancing in the way they were talking about.

Soon the two younger wizards were gone and the twins handed the store over to their employees before heading to the Burrow. "Actually, Harry's cloak can come in useful," Fred murmured as they left the store. "Let's Apparate way outside the wards. One of us can use the cloak and go inside to spy around before they know we're there. We're bound to learn something that way."

"Good thinking."

They did as planned and Apparated outside of the wards. George chose to go inside with the cloak; murmuring about how he was going to need to crouch the entire time to make sure the cloak hid his entire body.

"I'll give you... twenty minutes before meeting you outside the front door?"

George turned and studied the path. "Hmm, better make it thirty."

"This will be a horrible fail if Moody's in there."

"When was the last time Moody was at the Burrow for Sunday dinner, Fred? They aren't stupid. Moody being there would tip us off right away."

"True. Okay. Good luck."

George made it to the front door in ten minutes, though he didn't go in that way. Instead he circled around to the back door. Surprisingly he spotted Charlie sitting there with Bill in front of the opened back door. The twins had been unaware Charlie had come in from Romania. This meant... George silently groaned. This meant Ron was probably here as well.

"I don't want to be here like this," Charlie hissed. "Not for this. It's wrong."

Bill nodded. "Just stay quiet. Ignore Mum's pointed looks. I'm not joining in on this," he whispered back. "Personally I think Harry's better off wherever he is. In the *Prophet*... he seemed happy for once. Fred and George... they'll be coming here expecting this."

Which was true but when George stepped inside he was completely floored to find Remus in attendance. Molly was in the kitchen and beyond her sitting at the dinner table were Remus and Arthur, who was speaking to the werewolf lowly. George silently cursed when Remus immediately raised his head. He could see the werewolf's nose flaring, sniffing out the air and George knew he'd been caught.

A moment later George was able to breathe again when Remus' gaze finally returned to his father. But still he knew Remus could smell him and wondered why the wizard wasn't

warning anyone. He didn't particularly look like he wanted to be there either. George turned back to the kitchen, eyes passing over the counters, looking for vials of potions. There were none but that didn't mean anything. His best source of info was probably upstairs. George traveled to the stairs and stared at the first step, thinking it would be a miracle if he could get up there without one step creaking.

Fuck it. The house creaks all the time. George climbed up and then froze on the fifth step, quickly looking over his shoulder when it creaked horribly. No one paid any attention to it. Except for Remus. His face was half turned towards the stairs. But again he said nothing. George thought maybe Remus didn't like this either. Maybe Remus wanted Harry to stay where he was. Happy. He knew the werewolf would think differently if he knew exactly where it was and with whom Harry was with, but no one knew that part. Maybe Remus respected Harry's decision to back out of the war. And George knew a little something about the Dark Lord's plans, in that he sought equal rights for werewolves and vampires and other magical creatures, to an extent. George wondered what kind of stance Remus would have on the war when he learned that part. If Harry could fall in love with the man who'd killed his parents, surely Remus would find it easier to overlook the fact the Dark Lord had killed his best friends. Then again, maybe not. Fenrir was still under Voldemort and Remus hated that sadistic werewolf with a passion- and with good reason.

George stopped on the first floor where Ginny's room was located, but the door was open and no little sister was within. Since he didn't see her outside or downstairs, he assumed she was in a room above and quickly traveled higher and was unsurprised to find she was in Ron's room. With Ron. Ginny was pacing back and forth ranting on and on while Ron lay on his bed, an arm thrown over his eyes, though he nodded every once in a while to what she was saying.

"They had better tell us where he is!" she spat. "How are we supposed to win this war without Harry?"

"Now that the Slytherins are gone, it should be easy to bring him back," Ron muttered.

"Um... hello, Ron! Have you not been reading the paper?!" Ginny shrieked. "Harry's best friend is Malfoy! Malfoy, for Merlin's sake! And if Harry really were neutral and acting on his own, even then he wouldn't have kicked the Order out of Grimmauld Place. His hand must have been forced on that!"

"Slimy snake must have Harry under some spell or potion," Ron answered. "Hermione too. Where's she gone, Ginny?"

"According to the interview Harry gave Skeeter, Hermione's gone off on a holiday. She quit the Ministry and she's even trying to sue the Ministry for slander and false accusations. Though I don't blame her. It was stupid of them to try and say she kidnapped Harry."

"Still, she knows where he is... Haven't received an owl from her in weeks!"

The rest of the conversation went on and on about that and finally George left them, feeling annoyed and shaking his head over their single-minded stupidity. George was at first relieved that they weren't talking about any potions being used on him and his brother. George figured

if that were the plan, Ron and Ginny would have been discussing that excitedly. Those two still hadn't really grown up. But then he thought it was more than likely that they didn't know about it. The adults wouldn't have told them about it, if potions were actually going to be used. So their reactions during dinner weren't going to help one bit.

George quickly left the Burrow, eyes once again scanning around for anything incriminating and finding nothing. He rounded the house to find Fred leaning against a post staring into the sky. With a look around, making sure the coast was clear, George took the cloak off and carefully stuffed it in the bag Fred had.

"Remus is here," George whispered. "He caught me but didn't say anything about it. Ron and Charlie are here too. Charlie and Bill don't want to take part in this. Ginny and Ron think Harry's been coerced in some way."

Fred snickered. "Coerced by love."

George flashed a grin. "Yeah. Let's get this over with."

The two walked in without knocking and as George loudly announced their presence as they had always did Fred placed the bag just beside the door. Shoving it behind the umbrella holder. Molly pulled away from the kitchen only long enough to bustle over and give them hugs before returning to the food. Doing so, she loudly called up to Ron and Ginny announcing dinner was almost ready and that the twins were here. Bill and Charlie came in soon after and Molly instructed them all to sit down in the living room, giving her eldest sons pointed looks. Fred watched his father and Remus get up from the table and disappear towards the back of the house, still talking quietly, barely registering their appearance.

As the twins sat down with their brothers in the living room, Molly began to set the table. She set it as she always did. With all her children always sitting in the same spot, which probably made it easier for her to sabotage them. But the twins figured it didn't matter since they didn't really plan to eat or drink anything anyway. Not unless they knew for sure there wasn't something in it.

When Percy arrived, Fred and Bill headed to the table and the first thing Fred did when he was sitting was to grab his pumpkin juice and pretend to drink it. He was rewarded with a subtle shake of Bill's head. *Bless you, big brother.* He hadn't caught his mother putting anything in the cups, but that didn't mean she hadn't. Apparently Bill was certain she had. Fred waited until no one was looking and then vanished the liquid in his cup and George's. He then quickly scourgified the cups and refilled them. Next he replaced the silverware with the ones their lovely Draco gave them. Fred was momentarily surprised to see the silverware matched the Burrows... how had Draco... oh, right. Hermione had helped. She must have found utensils that resembled the spoons and forks she'd seen here.

It wasn't long before Molly beckoned everyone to the table and dinner was underway. Small chitchat ensued until Molly watched one of the twins drink from his cup. She then ignored her dinner to study her sons. "Have you seen Harry lately, boys?"

"Yes, Mum," Fred answered. "Almost everyday."

Molly looked pleased with the answer, her eyes lighting up as if she'd won something. She opened her mouth to ask another question, but was waylaid by Ginny.

"Is it true what the *Prophet* is saying? That he's seeing someone? Were those pictures real?" the youngest Weasley asked, ignoring the stern look from her parents. While Arthur and Molly were busy staring at Ginny, the twins took a quick moment to scrape their forks over the food, vanishing a small portion of it. Only Charlie and Bill noticed the actions, but obviously they didn't care since the two started grinning when they saw what was going on.

"Actually Harry's engaged to him now. Sorry, sis. He'll never be yours."

"He's engaged?" Remus inquired in surprise.

"Yep," the two chirped in confirmation, grinning at each other.

"To who? Is it Malfoy?" Ron snarled.

"No. It's not Draco."

Ginny glared at her brother. "Obviously. Malfoy doesn't have that height or dark hair..."

Ron sputtered. "You're calling him Draco now?"

"Well... we've done enough to him that calling him Malfoy now would be inappropriate," George replied with a devilish grin.

Ron moaned. "I hope you're talking about pranking."

"Nope!"

"Alright boys, we didn't bring you here to talk about Draco Malfoy," Molly interrupted. "But we will be getting to that later... Draco Malfoy of all people."

Fred turned to her. "Thought you asked us here for dinner, Mum. Since we haven't seen you guys in a while. Is that not why we're here?"

"One of the reasons, yes. But boys, we need to know where Harry is."

"We don't know where he is," George answered as he took another sip of pumpkin juice.

"Who is his fiancé? What's his name?"

George stared at her blankly. "Brent Turner," he answered and then frowned and looked at his brother, seemingly missing the pleased look on his mother's face.

"And where does Mr. Turner live?"

"We don't know. Haven't a clue."

The twins sat there silently, waiting for the second round and wishing they could just get up and leave. "And what does Mr. Turner think about Harry staying neutral?"

"Supports him. Just like we support him," George said through clenched teeth. "Can we stop talking about Harry and his fiancé now?"

"Harry is better off where he is," Fred murmured.

"Where does Harry's partner work? What does he do for a living?" Molly inquired.

"Honestly we don't know much about him beyond the fact he's a decent enough bloke... to Harry."

"Where will Harry be tomorrow?" Molly asked directly, apparently tired of these obscure questions.

"Why?" Fred asked, surprising her. Apparently she thought they'd taken the truth serum. He turned to his father who didn't look as ashamed as he should be. "Plan to ambush him again, Dad? Like you did a few months ago?"

"We cannot win this war without him," Arthur murmured. "Only Harry can kill-"

"So we should send him right out to kill or be killed?!" George spat incredulously. "Doesn't anyone else have a problem with that?"

"Actually, I do," Bill muttered. "We're in the war because we chose to be. We haven't any right to force Harry or anyone else to fight."

"You-Know-Who must be destroyed before he takes any more lives," Molly stated firmly, glaring at her eldest son.

"Haven't heard of any more muggle attacks. Have you, George?"

"Nope. None at all. No nonsensical killings lately either."

"Three Ministry workers were found dead in their homes yesterday! Dark Marks floating over their houses," Molly stated heatedly

Fred frowned. "One of those was Emmit Shafer."

George turned to Remus. "He's the leading supporter against magical creature rights. He's the one who keeps you from gaining a respectable job. Isn't that right, Remus? Strange that You-Know-Who would get rid of someone like that. And the other two were no better."

Remus blinked in surprise at that. Molly was shocked at her sons' lack of concern for the Ministry workers who had been found dead. "They were killed in cold blood!"

"Harry would be killed in cold blood! Or you would turn him into a killer!" Fred shouted back to the surprise of all. "How's this any different?"

"It's astounding that you two seem to be so indifferent to what's going on," Percy drawled for the first time. "Harry has a responsibility to the Wizarding World. He needs to man up and deal with it." This statement was backed with nods from both Ron and Ginny.

"Rubbish!" the twins shouted. "How's it his responsibility? He was a baby... and our indifference? We thought it would be completely obvious."

"What's supposed to be obvious," Ron mumbled.

"Our eyes are wide open!"

"We're bloody neutral too!"

Fred went back to grinning. "We'd have to be neutral. Otherwise our darling Draco, the love of our life, would never speak to us. That would be a travesty. Especially when we plan to get him to bond with us."

"Tell you what," George said and he and his brother stood, ignoring the sputtering going on around the table. "You tell us where the new Order headquarters is and we'll try to persuade Harry to go visit..." he grinned and looked at Ginny. "After he marries the gorgeous older wizard who does nothing but spoil him."

Ginny scowled and started stabbing her food with her fork.

"Sit down boys," Molly instructed. "Dinner isn't over yet."

"Didn't work out too well for you, did it, Mum?"

"Can't believe you were trying to use your own flesh and blood," George murmured as he dropped a hand into his pocket at the same time Fred did.

"Is he really doing well?" Remus finally asked.

"Yes."

"Has he joined the Dark side?"

"No," the twins said firmly, "and that's the absolute truth."

"Have you?" Ron asked darkly. "Cause it sounds like you have."

"Why? Cause we're in love with a Slytherin? Bet you think Harry's Dark just because you've been replaced as best mate by Draco Malfoy. You haven't changed a bit."

The twins separated from the table and walked to the door. It was locked. Sealed tight against them. They turned back to the table to see both their parents standing. Their mother had her wand pointed at the door.

"This is fucked up, Mum," Fred said, fingering the Portkey in his pocket while George bent to retrieve the bag. "We're not going to let you or the Order get Harry. You want You-Know-Who gone? Do it yourself."

Molly looked properly enraged but they didn't care. Instead they wasted no more time and activated the Portkeys Harry had given them. Ignoring Molly's screeching, they smiled in

gratitude at the thumbs up Bill and Charlie gave them as they were whisked away.

Draco and Harry were sitting in the brunet's study, playing wizards' chess. Or more specifically, from where Tom was standing at the door, the two were simply staring at the board, their eyes glazed as if they were thinking about anything other than the game. Hermione was in attendance as well, sitting in Harry's favorite chair with a book in her lap and staring into the fire.

Tom had come upon them like this five minutes ago and was leaning against the doorway, watching the three. He shook his head in exasperation. "Sitting here, worrying about them will not make the time go by faster," he finally said, moving into the study.

"We should have set up some kind of warning system," Harry murmured. "How do we know if they're in trouble? What if they couldn't get to any of the Portkeys in time?"

"We did all that we could to help," Hermione spoke, pulling her eyes away from the fire.

Suddenly Draco pulled back and tugged on his hair in a purely Harry fashion. "Maybe we should go down and work on the room, Harry," he suggested. "This waiting is driving me insane."

"Yes, that reminds me," Tom spoke softly, "you've been spending all your free time and mine down in that room. Tell me why I must share you with a room, Harry?"

Harry refused to look at Tom or even act as if he'd heard him. "Why're you so worried, Drake?"

"I'm not worried," the blond replied and crossed his arms. "It's your worry that's transferring over to me."

Hermione snorted. "Yeah. Sure, Malfoy."

Draco scowled at her. Tom moved to stand behind Harry and cupped his chin, lightly pulling until Harry's face tipped up to look at him. "You'll have to wait and see, Tom."

Tom prepared to reply when Draco suddenly whipped out his wand to cast the tempus charm. The digits reading it was only half past six. "Taking too long," he hissed. "No pole dance for them!"

"Excuse me?" Tom drawled. Harry scowled and kicked Drake under the table.

"Nothing, my Lord," Draco hurried to say. "Only saying nonsense."

When a house elf popped in just then, Harry blessed the thing and reminded himself to give them a treat because the small creatures always seemed to pop in at the opportune times to distract Tom.

"G-guests, M-master!" it squeaked. "I-n the foyer."

Draco, Harry, and Hermione bolted from their seats and took off before Tom could ask whom it was.

Harry made it to the room first and practically tackled the twins when he saw them; his relief was so great. The two had been relatively downtrodden after leaving the Burrow but Harry's hugs and smiles were always lightening and they were easily pulled from their depressive moods for the time being.

"Are you okay?" Harry asked, his arms still around them. George and Fred dropped their foreheads onto his shoulders and hugged him back.

"Yeah. We're okay," Fred answered.

"They didn't really do anything all that drastic," George mumbled.

"And we had fantastic help with-"

Harry was suddenly yanked away and the twins almost stumbled from the sudden loss of Harry. They looked up to find Harry in the Dark Lord's arms. Voldemort's red eyes were slitted and glaring harshly. The twins backed up in fright, raising hands in surrender for whatever they had done.

Harry leaned against Tom's chest. "You promised," he reminded.

"They will keep their hands to themselves or that promise is void."

"What did we do?" the twins inquired seriously, for even though Harry was laughing Voldemort was not.

"Only taught me a few things," Harry answered with a smirk and enjoying Tom's show of possessiveness.

The twins' mouths dropped open. "You told him that? Geez, Harry. Why not go and sign our death warrants while you're at it!?"

Tom rose an intimidating brow. "And since he was sixteen at the time of this 'experimentation', is it safe to presume you two stole his virginity from me?"

The twins backed up slowly instead of answering, looking for any place to hide. They quickly zeroed in on Draco who had been hovering at the threshold. The blond smirked and crooked a finger at them. The twins quickly raced to him and hid behind him. Though they were taller than Draco and Tom could easily get a head shot off if he wanted.

"I'll take that as a yes," Tom hissed.

"If you keep terrorizing my friends they won't want to spend time with me anymore."

Hermione laughed quietly to herself and moved over to the group at the door. "We'll go to the main parlor. Is that alright, sir?"

"Yes, Granger. We'll follow shortly," the Dark Lord replied with a pointed look at the twins. The two gulped and raced away. "How is it they didn't claim you permanently? You three seem to have... love."

Harry smiled and twisted in his lover's arms. "Are you jealous?"

"An absurd question."

"You're acting jealous. It's pretty amazing seeing you like this," Harry laughed as he reached up to brush Tom's hair away from his narrowed eyes. As he drew his hands away, Tom snatched up his wrists and pulled until Harry was flush against him. Pressing thigh to thigh, chest to chest. Groin to groin.

"Haven't had you in nearly a week. Tell me why that is," Tom ordered softly.

"You spanked me."

"Not only did you deserve it, but you also enjoyed it."

"The room is almost done," Harry whispered in answer, closing his eyes against the heat and feel of Tom's body, which was doing a good job of clouding most of his senses and reminding him of that oh so enjoyable spanking session.

"I want you," Tom stated while roughly jerking Harry's body against his again. "I want you spread on my bed, Harry. I want you naked and panting and moaning my name. I haven't had you like that since our first night. Tell me why you've been making me wait."

"It's almost done," Harry whispered again.

Tom sighed in resignation. Obviously the brat wanted to keep it a secret. And he didn't know why he'd allowed Harry to keep his distance at night. It would have been an easy matter to have Harry submitting to him in his bed each and every night, even when Harry wanted to fight it for whatever reason. Tom knew the only reason why he didn't press it was because Harry didn't want to be pressed.

"You will make it up to me," Tom commanded. Harry smiled brightly and nodded.

Tom wrapped an arm around Harry's waist and as they left the foyer, Harry demanded Tom stop threatening Fred and George with his eyes.

"They stole your virginity," Tom replied flatly.

"Better them and not some wanker," Harry said easily. "They are two of my best friends and we were only looking for fun... and the three of us knew we would only ever remain friends."

"How could you do that and still remain such good friends?"

"We trust each other. It's only deepened our bond as friends. It was never awkward after the whole thing. Well... maybe I felt awkward after the first time for a bit but they didn't let me

stay like that." Harry shrugged. "I don't know, but I feel blessed to have them in my life. They've done nothing but look out for me," here he grinned, "even if they are perverts."

Tom had a thoughtful look on his face as they walked down the hall. "Who came on to who?"

Harry smiled. It was an odd conversation and yet he was enjoying it immensely. Especially since Tom no longer sounded enraged and was instead only curious. He stopped and leaned against the wall, not wanting to get to the parlor too soon and have to cut off the conversation. "Actually I was kind of swimming in denial. I was also drowning in worry over you; completely stressed out and depressed... they noticed and offered. They never pressed it. In the end it was my decision. I wasn't coerced or anything."

"Do they usually only take one lover in between them?"

"Yeah. Fred and George are too close to part. They don't want to share each other with two different lovers. But they will share one lover between them. They're really good at it."

Tom's brow furrowed and Harry had the incredible urge to rise on his toes and kiss the creases on his forehead. "Do they..." Tom paused and cleared his throat. "Each other?"

It took a moment, but Harry soon realized what he was trying to ask. "Twincest? Not to my knowledge. Not those two." Harry shook his head, laughing at him. "They prefer to have a body pressed in between them."

"It was just a question," Tom muttered as he grabbed Harry's arm and jerked him away from the wall.

When they entered the parlor, it was to find Draco sitting tensely on one of the couches. One twin was stretched out with his copperhead in the blond's lap while the other twin was sitting in between Draco's knees. Both twins had their eyes closed, their expressions pensive and downtrodden. Draco was staring into the face of the twin who was using his lap as a pillow, his eyes swimming with both pity and confusion. He had a hand hovered over the head in his lap, as if he wanted to run soothing fingers through the twin's hair. But as soon as he saw Harry and the Dark Lord, he dropped that hand down beside him on the sofa.

"Do you think you can remove these leeches?" he drawled.

"Leeches suck blood," the twin sitting between his legs murmured. "We don't suck blood, do we, George?"

"No, but we do suck cock. Still want us gone?" When Draco did nothing but bite his lip, George opened his eyes and smirked up at the blond. "Draco, I wanna release my basilisk into your chamber of secrets."

Harry's eyes widened and he quickly looked at the man beside him who had surely heard George. Tom sat perfectly still, his eyes wide also. George dared to turn and wink at the Dark Lord! Hermione stared at the threesome, her mouth parted slightly in disbelief.

Harry giggled uncontrollably and grabbed Tom's wand hand. "That was wicked! Do you have any more?" he quickly crawled into Tom's lap when the Dark wizard's eye began to twitch. "That's a great line... for those who get it. I'd so let you pick me up with that one," he said to Tom, tilting his head back to look into his lover's slack face.

Draco covered his face with one hand and Harry saw his shoulders shaking. He knew Drake well enough to know the blond was silently laughing. And the blond's free hand had sunk into George's hair, apparently in approval. The horrible Sunday dinner was forgotten.

The next evening Tom was in his office reading reports sent from his sources in the Ministry and learning what those fools were up to when Harry sauntered in. The young wizard came straight in and curved off to the side where a lounge had been brought in solely for Harry's use. Tom watched with half hooded lids as Harry stretched out on that lounge, head at the far end so that he was facing Tom and the desk. The lounge wasn't full length, which Harry liked. It allowed him to throw his legs over the arm rests and swing them. Tom wasn't sure why Harry seemed much more comfortable like that... but whatever made the neutral wizard happy. A fleeting smile crossed Tom's face as he returned to his paperwork.

"What are you doing?" Harry asked.

"What does it look like?"

"You're always reading reports."

"It is necessary."

"But I want you to play with me."

"Harry, I'm busy."

"Why the hell do you even have minions? Aren't they supposed to do the work for you?"

Tom looked up just in time to see Harry lace his fingers behind his head, and by doing so the motion had his t-shirt riding up and exposing a nice portion of skin. Harry was staring at him. Bright green eyes fairly twinkling like some blasted jewels. Tom set the parchment down when he realized how clearly he could see Harry's eyes. There weren't any ugly round black frames obscuring the view. Instead thin wire frames took their place which seemed to enhance the green of his eyes. Frames hardly noticeable.

"When did you get new spectacles?"

"Just today. Ordered them last week. Like? I remember you said you hated my last ugly pair."

"Yes. I do like. And they were ugly."

Harry shrugged. "I know... come play with me, Tom."

"When I'm finished here."

Tom expected Harry to whine further so he was surprised when the young wizard did nothing but close his eyes with a sigh. Tom's gaze lingered on him a moment, especially eyeing that strip of skin still visible before returning to the reports. He lasted half a minute before his gaze went back to Harry. The young wizard's eyes were open and staring right at him. Tom narrowed his eyes. Harry was up to something. In response to his half glare, Harry smirked and shifted his palm, trailing it over the visible skin of his stomach. Tom's eyes dropped and then darkened seeing a definite bulge in the brat's muggle jeans.

"Don't do it," he warned when Harry's hand slipped lower.

"Do what?" was the innocent reply.

"That's mine," Tom growled as he threw his quill down and stood.

Harry grinned and instantly shot up from the lounge. "You're finished? Great! Let's go. Want to show you the room."

Tom scowled. Once again Harry had manipulated him. But... he'd rather be with Harry then doing paperwork anyway. Harry's smile and enthusiasm was contagious and soon he found himself being led down to the dungeons and excited himself to see what Harry had been working on so diligently.

"Why did you pick a dungeon room?" he finally asked as they descended the stairs. "Have you picked up the hobby of torturing people?"

"Sorry, but we're not going to have that in common," Harry replied softly.

"You're nervous now," Tom suddenly realized. "Why?"

Harry didn't answer and continued to walk, making sure to keep his eyes straight ahead. At the bottom of the steps, Harry veered away from the main corridor ahead and turned a sharp left. Tom trailed after, wondering what could have Harry so obviously nervous. His lover stopped in front of the second door down and stared at it. He started to chew on his lip. "Open it."

Tom did. And then his mind kind of went blank as he took in the new décor.

"I..." Harry bit his lip again and was still unable to look Tom in the eye. "I don't know if you're into... Thought it would be fun for us. I like being... kinky," he ended in a whisper, his face exploding in red.

Tom said nothing and instead continued to stare into the room, eyes sweeping back and forth. Directly in front of him dead center of the room was a gleaming metal dancing pole connected both to the ceiling and the honey brown wooden floor. To the right and raised up on a platform was a bed. Covered in nothing but black silk. At the opposite side of the room, directly in front of the dancing pole was a small red velvet sofa. Directly left of the door was a black double door cabinet and beside that was a mini bar, complete with two stools and a mirror behind the counter. The bar was fully stocked. The entire room was done in the same warm wood as the floor.

Finally Tom pulled his eyes away from the room to look at Harry, who was in the process of chewing his bottom lip right off waiting for Tom's reaction. Harry's last words echoed in his mind. *I like being kinky. I like being kinky. I like being kinky.* Tom hadn't really ever expected this from Harry but he was not about to give the impression he himself was a prude. Quite the contrary.

He pulled away from Harry's side and moved into the room, striding right over to sit down in the red velvet seat. He threw an arm over the back and began to drum his fingers, arching his brow at Harry. Waiting. At seeing that Tom accepted the room, Harry's embarrassment seemed to instantly vanish and he smiled that illegal smile and dashed inside towards the door directly across from the one they had come in at.

"I'll be back in a few minutes," he gushed and disappeared inside that room.

Tom sat in stiff anticipation, though his gaze continued to travel around. He wondered how Harry had managed to refurbish the room without bringing a professional in. He was certain no one but the twins and Draco had helped him. But that explained the amount of time it took for the room to be completed. This explained why Harry hadn't instigated an intimate touch since starting the room.

Harry stepped out of the room ten minutes later, dressed formally in black robes with a dark green tunic underneath. He even had white gloves on. Tom's eyes traced the length of Harry's body multiple times and Harry stood there, welcoming the appreciative study.

When Tom's eyes finally returned to his face, Harry gestured to the pole with a sly smile. "Do you want me to..."

Tom barely managed to keep from nodding vigorously like an excited child. Just the thought of Harry doing that already had him hard and aching. Instead he gave one curt nod and continued to ogle Harry in those black formal robes. The white gloves he especially liked.

Harry moved slowly and fluidly towards the pole. Tom shifted minutely in his seat, leaning forward ever so slightly when Harry walked behind the pole, trailing white covered fingertips against the metal as he passed. Green eyes staring at Tom from the corner of his eyes as he passed it. As he was withdrawing his hand from the pole, Harry quickly tapped it three times and music filled the silence. A slow sensuous beat. Tom blinked in surprise and Harry's coy smile grew.

"Do you want a drink, Tom?"

Yes, a drink would be good. His throat was too dry. "Firewhiskey," he ordered; unconcerned his voice was low and rough. Harry moved over to the bar, his movements reflecting the beat of the music, and went to stand behind the counter. Tom pulled his eyes away to stare at that pole. Harry returned quickly and set the drink onto the side table beside the sofa and then turned away. Tom watched him walk off as he grabbed the drink. As he was bringing the glass to his lips, Harry stopped in front of the black cabinet and gracefully shrugged his black robe off to hang it up on the coat hanger standing in between the cabinet and the bar. Slowly Tom placed the untouched Firewhiskey back onto the table and stared.

The slacks Harry wore were not the conventional slacks one wore with formal wear, but Tom wasn't complaining. Not at all. Especially when he knew all this was costume. But the pants were black and so very tight. Even with Harry wearing a long sleeved dark green tunic with the hem riding past his arse, Tom could see how deliciously tight those pants hugged his arse.

Harry then stepped out of his shoes to reveal bare feet. Tom was surprised when he physically reacted to that as well. It should have phased down Harry's current appeal, but the young wizard's feet were... cute- Tom mentally scowled at the thought. Harry also simply oozed sex appeal, shoes or no shoes. The lack of embarrassment had a lot to do with that as well. The fact that Harry seemed in complete confidence of his appeal only added another level of attraction for the Dark Lord who was even now frothing at the mouth.

Harry turned back to the pole and wrapped his gloved hands around it, slowly twisting his hands as he leaned against the pole. He tipped his head back, lips parted and exhaled a long breath. His eyes closed and he started to move, hooking a leg around that pole and flowing around it, his body swaying with the music. Harry knew Tom was staring, could feel those eyes burning on him, but that was in the background. Harry allowed himself to lose it to the music, dancing around the pole with a familiarity he was sure would have Tom questioning him after it was all over. But that was okay. The minutes ticked by and neither men in the room noticed as Harry worked up a sweat performing for *his* Lord.

Harry spun around the pole and dipped, arching his back as his hands slid down and the pole rubbing between his legs and finally he turned bright eyes on the man sitting completely still on the couch. Tom had moved forward to sit on the edge of his seat, and his gaze tracked his form ravenously. Harry's breath caught when he saw Tom had his palm pressed firmly against his crotch. And once again he was filled with a heady sense of power being able to strip away the Dark Lord's restraint. He was ready for more of that power.

Tom jerked his hand away and leaned back when Harry smiled smugly and a devious light lit those eyes. Tom watched Harry pull away from the pole and nearly uttered a command for Harry to stay wrapped around it. He needed more. Harry had seemed one with that stupid pole. Like Harry and the pole were lovers. But he said nothing and watched his young lover turn away from him to walk over to the mysterious black cabinet.

His perusal of Harry's arse was soon distracted when Harry opened the cabinet doors, displaying clearly what was stored inside. Tom's lips parted in surprise. Within he could see whips, paddles, shackles, furred handcuffs, chains, rope, and multiple other 'toys'. Harry bent down and pulled open a drawer and Tom was back to staring at that round pert arse that belonged to him. If Harry kept this up, he was going to explode.

When Harry straightened and turned to face him, Tom's breath caught in anticipation. Harry held in his hands a black collar with silver studs around it. With his gloved hand, Harry caressed the collar a moment, eyes transfixed on Tom and then he lifted it to fasten around his neck. Once that was done, he turned back to the cabinet and picked up the chains that hung up on one of the hooks. Tom quickly realized with a racing heart that it was a leash Harry had grabbed.

Harry moved to him and draped the chain leash over Tom's shoulder before straddling the older wizard's lap. Harry leaned over to pluck up the small untouched glass of Firewhiskey

from the small table and drained it; only swallowing a portion of it. After replacing the glass, he pressed forward, sliding his mouth against Tom's while running a gloved hand into Tom's hair. Tom parted his lips, prepared for the alcohol that rushed into his mouth along with Harry's delectable tongue. As Harry's hands gripped his hair, Tom allowed his hands to raise and caress the collar around Harry's neck. As he did so, Tom thought Harry would probably be the death of him.

He was essentially thirty years old and still in his prime, but Harry was a hot-blooded eighteen year old and apparently a closet 'sex kitten'. Tom wasn't certain if he'd be able to keep up with Harry if his lover made this an everyday occurrence. But he certainly wanted to see if he could. Any sensible thoughts disappeared when Harry started dancing in his lap. Tom's head dropped back to the back of the couch with a moan. "You are going to kill me," he hissed as his painful erection was continuously stimulated with the beat of the music and Harry's gyrating hips.

Harry's breathy laughter rang in his ears as the boy leaned forward to lick away a trail of Firewhiskey that had escaped Tom's mouth to dribble down his throat. "Draco did say something about killing you with sex... hopefully you can last a hundred years and more before that happens."

Tom said nothing to this. He couldn't even if he wanted. Harry had pulled away to stand and brought the gloved fingers of his right hand up to his lips. Tom watched as he slowly drew that glove off. With his teeth. Slowly pulling, revealing the flesh beneath the gloves at an agonizing pace. When the right glove was off, Harry leaned down and pressed the fingertips of his left hand against Tom's lips. The Dark Lord immediately mirrored Harry's actions, staring into those unique green eyes as he pulled the glove off, not knowing how long he would be able to keep himself sitting in that chair.

Harry straightened once the gloves were off and resumed his dancing; legs parted and knees aligned to the outside of Tom's knees. As he swayed his fingers drifted towards his shirt, to the buttons and one by one they were undone to expose the toned chest and stomach underneath. Tom's impatience ran out and he reached forward, placing palms against Harry's thighs, running them up and then around to cup the young wizard's arse. Harry's eyes fluttered closed and a wanton moan slipped past his parted lips. And when Tom pulled Harry forward to press his mouth against his lover's stomach, his head rolled to the side with an exquisite whimper.

Tom had just dipped his tongue into Harry's naval when the body in front of him suddenly jerked away. Harry was panting harshly and his eyes were now dark burning jewels of desire. Tom smirked seeing there was also a small amount of chastisement as well. Apparently Harry had an agenda and didn't like it messed with in any way.

Harry undressed right between his legs until he was in nothing but silver boxers. Tom scowled at the boxers. He'd been sure nothing could have fit beneath the trousers. It was just another tease. The brat laughed at his expression and moved to grab the chain off Tom's shoulder. He dropped to his knees between Tom's thighs before connecting the chain leash to his collar. He then handed the leash to Tom, mischief shining brightly in his eyes.

"What do you want me to do, Master?"

Merlin, he really is trying to kill me. "Return to the pole."

Harry returned to the dance pole. A bit eagerly, in Tom's opinion. And Tom tortured himself with watching Harry in nothing but silver boxers dancing around the thing. Using both the pole and that leash as erotic teasing tools. Harry seemed lost to the feel and music. Every move he made had Tom's cock aching just a little bit more. If that were even possible. Merlin, he'd never been so hard in his life.

When he could take no more of just simply watching, Tom slowly stood. Harry noticed the move but he continued to dance, acting as if he hadn't. Keeping the leash tight in one hand, Tom used the other to disrobe until he was standing there nude. The coolness of the dungeon immediately hit him and it felt good. He hadn't realized how hot he'd become watching Harry. He'd been into watching Harry so much he wouldn't have noticed if the world had crashed down around them.

Tom growled and yanked on the chain, jerking Harry away from the pole. Harry pulled away from the pole; his eyes appreciating the view Tom was giving him as the Dark Lord stood there in all his nude glory. Then he tugged back on the leash. Tom narrowed his eyes and yanked again; though he made sure he didn't do it rough enough to cause Harry to lose his footing. "Am I not your master?"

Harry responded with a lopsided grin. "If you want to think so," and he tugged on the leash again, drawing Tom several feet to him. "But really, who's the one with the power here?"

And that was it, Tom realized. Harry may be leashed, but in this room it was the slave who held the power and the brat knew it. It was that exact moment, as he stared into Harry's bright green come hither eyes, that he was made painfully aware of his exact depth of his feelings for the raven haired wizard in front of him. The realization hurt, it struck him so deeply and precisely. He'd known there was a possibility he might be capable of loving Harry the way the younger wizard deserved, but Tom hadn't been sure until this very moment. His heart ached with the realization that Harry had managed to make him fall in love with him. The pain was a glorious frightening thing. Tom held on to it because the pain meant it was real. There was nothing and no one who would take this new feeling or Harry away from him.

In the next instant, Harry's back was pressed against the pole and he could literally feel Tom's magic pulsating around them. It was a toxic and addictive combination and a little bit terrifying. "You're very emotional right now," Harry whispered. He figured he was still insane because that terror was adding another layer to the heavy lustful tension in the room.

Tom captured his mouth in a bruising possessive kiss. "Not waiting any longer," he whispered hoarsely against his mouth. Harry thought he could have been talking about the inevitable sex since the man was now ripping off his silver boxers, but somehow Harry knew that wasn't what Tom was talking about and it made his breath catch in his chest.

Tom's mouth hardly left his for a minute, and when it did, it was because he was busy caressing other sensitive areas of Harry's body. There was something different about the way Tom held him, touched him, and kissed him. With reverence. Tom's tongue caressed the inside of his mouth with a leisurely passion that had Harry clinging to him with shaking limbs. Slowly he was maneuvered to the bed and as Tom stretched over him, Harry

swallowed thickly. He finally understood the emotion clinging with the lust in his lover's eyes.

"Tom," he breathed before pulling their mouths together again. The Dark Lord swallowed Harry's happy laugh and smiled himself before flipping them over so that Harry was straddling him.

"Don't expect me to say it... often," Tom said sternly, which only made Harry giggle as he leaned down to trail kisses across his lover's jaw.

"Of course not. Can't have the Dark Lord being all fluffy in his human form. What would your groveling minions think?"

Tom smirked. "They think what I want them to think," he drawled before he wrapped a hand around Harry's straining cock, smearing the pre cum over the head and watching Harry's face slacking in ecstasy. "Worked yourself up to painful limits, didn't you?"

"Only wanted to please you," Harry whispered between gasps as Tom continued to stroke him.

With his free hand, Tom reached for the leash that had been lying forgotten beside them. He picked it up and used it to draw Harry down. "I was already pleased with you, Harry," he murmured as he unclasped the leash and tossed it over the side of the bed. He did the same with the collar as well. Though next time Tom planned to keep the collar on.

"Don't stop," Harry begged about the hand on his cock.

Tom smirked when Harry came in his hand moments later. "That was quick," he laughed when Harry scowled. "What did you expect to happen? You've been frothing against that pole for the last hour."

"Shut up!"

Tom pulled his embarrassed lover down for a kiss before positioning Harry and wandlessly preparing him. He then pressed the palms of his hands against Harry's collarbones, holding his lover up in an awkward position and then thrust up into Harry; his hips moving quickly, cock striking into Harry at a rapid pace. Harry moaned out a curse and closed his eyes; the feel of Tom rushing in and out of him at such a pace and in such a position was unlike anything he felt before. Harry's hand drifted over to grip Tom's arms where the Dark Lord's muscles were straining with the effort to keep Harry up in that position.

Harry's face was being ravished by the Dark Lord's gaze. Tom's gaze never faulted as he continued to drag Harry higher into exquisite oblivion. His young lover's face was so expressive, framed by damp black hair, long eyelashes drifting over half opened orbs... Harry hadn't any idea how beautiful he was.

He's beautiful and he's mine.

Tom sat up suddenly and buried his face against the younger wizard's damp neck, allowing Harry to fall onto his cock. Tom groaned and sucked on the skin beneath his lips as tight hot muscles quivered around him as he was fully sheathed. Harry began to move over him as Tom's lips crashed against his. He hissed into Harry's mouth as his cock was taken in and out as a torturous pace and Harry grinned against his lips before opening his mouth to allow the Dark Lord to plunder the hot cavern. Tom's hand dove into Harry's hair as they kissed; as he licked and nibbled and stroked with his tongue.

After a time, Tom twisted them around to lay Harry on his back where his lover wrapped around him, trembling in his arms. *Anything you want, Harry. Anything and I'll give it to you,* Tom silently promised as he easily slid into his lover, watching entranced as Harry's back arched off the bed as he was slowly filled again.

Harry was close to climax. Tom could feel it. By the way the tight muscles sporadically clenched around his cock. By the way Harry's breaths were coming out shallow and erratic; the darkening of his eyes, and by the way he lifted his legs to wrap around Tom's waist in order to pull the Dark Lord in deeper with a strangled gasp of his name. Tom bided his time, neither speeding up nor slowing his strokes.

It was only when Harry shouted out, his fingertips digging painfully into Tom's back and body going stiff, did Tom pull back slightly and let go of his restraint. He tore into Harry. Avidly watched his cock thrust in and out of his lover, watched as his balls slapped against the inside of Harry's thighs. Harry's cock sprayed them both with the evidence of his explosive release. It was a beautiful sight. Harry's dazed eyes watching him, his body moving with Tom's continued thrusts. Though Tom didn't last long after Harry came, not with the way his cock was being strangled. Tom hissed out a groan, jerking once more inside Harry before stiffening and pouring his seed into his lover.

When Tom slid out, Harry whimpered in protest, which made Tom grin broadly. "Going to start calling you my little minx," he said softly, dropping a kiss on Harry's lips before moving lower to lap at a nipple. Even after what they'd just done, Tom wanted more. He was still hungry for his lover.

"Tom... I love you. Fucking dictator," Harry murmured drowsily, hands passing through Tom's hair in a lazy fashion while Tom continued to taste him.

The Dark Lord paused in his licks and raised his eyes to stare at Harry's contented smile. *I don't deserve it.* "I will never make you regret it."

Harry awoke alone in bed, though he did wake wonderfully warm as the blankets over him had a heating charm on it. This immediately kept Harry from scowling at the fact Tom had left him in bed after last night's events. And the note beside his head also kept him from pouting and wondering. Harry shifted under the covers and winced from the soreness he felt. His arse had been fucked three ways from Sunday last night. After the first round, Tom had allowed him to rest for a bit, but not for long. Tom's stamina was really amazing!

Harry grabbed the note and quickly read it. Apparently Tom was late for a 'meeting' when he woke and had no time to wake Harry and move him back to their room. But he promised to

return home soon. Tom wrote that they needed to talk. Harry grinned when Tom ended the letter with a Truly Yours. Stretching, Harry winced again. But he winced with a satisfied smile. Tom liked his room! That much was totally obvious last night. Tom had also said Harry could be as kinky as he wanted and he would never hear a complaint about it.

Tom loved him. The Dark Lord hadn't come right out and said it, but his message was clear in every kiss, every look, and touch last night. The lovemaking last night had reverberated with their feelings for each other and it had been decidedly different from the other times they had shagged.

A robe hung on the bedpost on his side of the bed, and Harry sighed pleasantly when seeing it. Tom must have conjured it for him because Harry knew it hadn't been there last night. As he sat up and hurriedly put it on, Harry wondered where Tom really was. When Tom says he has a meeting which was usually code for a plethora of things. It could mean a Death Eater meeting or it could mean raids to anything in between. Whatever it was, Harry hoped Tom wasn't in danger.

That thought had Harry frowning. Both because the thought was half ridiculous, since this was the Dark Lord, but also because he wondered if he were really neutral anymore. Sure, he wasn't going to join the war but what would he do if he knew Tom was in serious danger? He wouldn't sit on his arse that was for sure. He'd go and stand beside Tom and he'd protect his lover because he knew he didn't want to live life without the man. As Harry left the room, he hoped he wouldn't be put in a situation like that.

Speaking of meetings, Harry had his own meeting to get to with Drake. And when he saw the time once in his room, he cursed. He was nearly a half hour late... though the house elf hadn't informed him Draco was there, which meant the blond was running late as well. Harry hurried to the bathroom for a quick shower and then hurriedly dressed. He descended the manor and went to wait for Draco in Tom's study.

When another half hour passed without word from Draco, he began to worry. They had planned to start sending the orders out today and Draco said he had the packaging ready and all they needed to do was separate orders and fill the boxes. The blond was serious about this small endeavor; excited about it too, so Harry knew only something extremely important would have kept him. But even then Draco would have sent an owl if he'd planned to be late.

After another few minutes, Harry decided to Floo to Malfoy Manor and seek out information. Once there he met up with Mrs. Malfoy. "Um... I'm looking for Draco. Is he here?"

"I'm sorry, Harry. Draco left for Diagon Alley a few hours ago... he said he'd be meeting you later," she paused and narrowed her eyes. "He hasn't been by to see you yet?"

Harry shook his head. "Did he say where in Diagon Alley?"

"No, but he did mutter something about fiends. I'm not sure what that meant."

Harry grinned. "Okay, thanks. I know where he is."

Narcissa smiled warmly at him. "When you see him, remind my son he's been taught better and he should not have forgotten about your meeting."

"It's not a big deal..." Harry trailed off because the witch got this look in her eyes, as if she were about to lecture him on the merits of being punctual. "Um... I'll just go now. Thanks, Mrs. Malfoy!"

Harry hurried back to the Floo Room and traveled to the Leaky Cauldron. When he arrived at the twins shop and asked after Draco, the twins frowned. "He hasn't been by."

"We've been here all day," Fred answered. "Haven't seen one beautiful hair of his."

George turned and grinned at Fred. "He was planning to visit us again."

"Score!" Fred and George gave each other high fives and would have continued in their happy stupor if Harry hadn't cleared his throat and reminded the two that Draco hadn't been seen all afternoon, though apparently he'd been on his way.

"And he's over two hours late for our meeting and I haven't received an owl or anything explaining why. He would have sent an owl," he ended lowly.

"Now, now, Harry... no need for that tone. Let's not jump to any conclusions yet," George prodded with a smile that was utterly fake and not reassured at all.

Fred strode out of the backroom into the front. A moment later Harry and George heard him ordering everyone out of the store. When he came back he said he'd locked up the store. Harry held out the small dagger necklace so they could each place a finger on it and then activated the Portkey.

"We gave them too much information," Fred whispered in a trembling voice just before the Portkey whisked them away.

Chapter Ten

The Black Bunny

Chapter Ten

Voldemort shifted in his throne like chair, tapping long fingers absently on the armrest as Lucius recited the goings on in the Ministry. The Dark Lord hardly heard a word, nor was he particularly interested in studying the group of his masked inner circle Death Eaters sitting around. He'd been severely distracted since leaving Harry sleeping in the dungeon. *Should have moved him*, he thought absently as he ran a finger across the stone of his chair. *He'll be sore today.*

That last thought had him grinning sadistically as last night's events replayed in his mind. This was about the fifth time he'd scared his minions with that particular twisted grin. His cloak hid most of his facial features with the exception of his eyes and mouth, therefore when he smiled like that it gave everyone the shivers. Voldemort shifted again and crossed his legs, trying to ignore the hardness growing between in reaction to each passing thought of Harry.

"My Lord?"

He tried focusing on this meeting as well but that never worked out for more than five minutes. And now he had visions of Harry sitting in his lap right here in this chair, back pressed against his chest, levering his sexy body up and down his cock... It was all Harry's fault of course. Talking about how he wanted to be fucked by Lord Voldemort with the robes and red eyes...

"My Lord?"

Voldemort's eyes snapped to Lucius. And now he'd missed whatever Lucius had been telling him. Though by the looks on their faces, it was clear his Lieutenants were almost sure as to what was taking up most of their Lord's attention. He sneered at no one in particular. These meetings were becoming tedious. It was years of meetings. He was becoming tired of it. By this rate he should have won the war already. He'd rather be home with his lover. He wanted Wizarding Britain in his fist already so that he could share it with Harry. But if he wanted Harry to enjoy the world given, Voldemort knew he had to be delicate in the way he gained victory.

"Lucius, Severus... approach," he demanded. When the two were standing before him, he leaned forward, eyes slitted on their faces. "I want Hogwarts now. We will not wait until the summer. From there we'll move on to the Ministry."

"B-but, my Lord," Severus whispered.

Voldemort understood the Potions Masters reluctance, however, "plans are being made. There is a way. You know of one. And Dumbledore is no longer there. I will rip the wards away, Severus." He leaned back and steepled his fingers beneath his chin, noticing the uncertainty

flashing in the wizards eyes. "We will take it quietly. The fewer lives taken the better. I am no longer in the killing children business... unless they become too much of a bother."

Relief crossed Severus' features while Lucius could not withhold a snort. Voldemort glared even as he leaned over to pluck up a cube of fudge from the bowl sitting beside his throne.

"Charleston, Lustre." Two cloaked and masked figures strode forward and bowed.

"My Lord," they spoke and waited.

"Anything of interest?"

Charleston opened his mouth to speak, but was delayed when Lord Voldemort suddenly stood and raised a hand. Several seconds passed in complete silence before a white mist suddenly appeared through the wall and headed for Severus. "This is a Patronus messenger."

Voldemort drew his wand and approached his Potions Master. "You've told me only the Order uses such a thing."

"Usually. There are those who are no longer in the Order who know how..." The mist formed at Severus' feet when it reached him. Severus raised a brow when the mist took the form of an otter. "Granger," he realized and Voldemort relaxed only minutely.

"Professor Snape. A situation has arisen and I request your help. It seems Draco may have been abducted and I'm having a hard time keeping the boys from going off and doing something drastically stupid. I could always stun them but that wouldn't do anyone any good, I suppose. Can you inform Voldemort and Mr. Malfoy? We are at the Dark Lord's home... please hurry! They don't have a plan and I don't know how much longer I can stall them!"

The Patronus disappeared a moment later, leaving the hall silent for a moment until Lucius spoke up. "My son," he murmured quietly. "They've taken my son?"

"You two return to the Ministry. To your department and find out if they have Draco," Voldemort told the Aurors standing near. "The rest of you are also dismissed. Look for Draco. But do it silently."

Severus and Lucius followed the Dark Lord to his manor. Tom himself striding down the halls to Harry's study. As he reached the door, he could hear Granger begging those within to wait.

"Hermione! You know what they'll do to him!" Harry yelled in trembling frustration. "He has the Dark Mark! They'll force information from him and then immediately send him to Azkaban. No trial. You know that's what they've been doing now. Hold the prisoners in Azkaban until after the war for a proper trial."

"Malfoy is not a murderer. And I doubt he's ever tortured anyone before," Hermione replied. "He doesn't have it in him to go that far."

"As if they care about that," said a voice Tom recognized as belonging to one of the twins. "All they care about is the Mark on his wrist."

Tom strode in with Lucius and Severus right behind him. Harry was on his feet, pacing back and forth with his hands in his hair, while the twins were standing near, wands gripped in hand so tightly their fists were white. Hermione stood near the door, obviously in the position to block the boys from rushing out. Tom felt his lips twitch in a smile. Her feet were planted; spread a shoulder width apart with her wand gripped tightly in her hand. He knew she was seconds away from stunning her friends.

"We're going now!" Harry said and spun towards the door, the twins nodding and following after. They stopped short seeing the elder wizards in the doorway. "... to make a plan. We're going now to make a plan. We weren't really going to just go out without a plan whatsoever..."

Hermione sagged; her relief was so great at seeing the other wizards. "Thank Merlin," she whispered.

"Explain what's happened," Tom ordered with a glare at his impetuous lover. Harry launched into the story and by the time he was through, his voice was laced with panic. Something in his gut told him he wasn't jumping to conclusions here. Tom could see Granger and the twins seemed to think the same. She and the twins knew Harry well enough and had been through many situations where Harry was often proved correctly.

"Draco spoke about having several errands to make in the Alley," Lucius spoke from beside him, his voice pitched low to mask the obvious worry over his only child. Tom turned to him and grabbed his arm, pushing back the sleeve to reveal Lucius' Dark Mark.

"We will make sure," Tom responded as he pressed the tip of his wand against the Mark and calling Draco. The young blond had never ignored a call before and was always punctual after being called. They would know in minutes if he were in any sort of trouble.

"Say Harry," one of the twins began and cornered the raven. "Fred and I can't help but notice you've been limping all over the place."

When Harry's face exploded in red, the twins grinned. "He liked the room then?"

"Oh yes," Tom purred from across the room. "It was most enjoyable. Frequent visits are in order."

"Tom!" Harry hissed. Tom smirked and then went back to speaking with his Lieutenants.

"Now is not the time," Harry whined pleadingly to the two in front of him. At once their grins dropped.

"You're right. We need Draco back before we can start to tease you," Fred muttered.

George nodded. "It's no longer the same without him. Draco's wicked funny when he teases you."

"He's got a cute laugh too," Fred whispered. "And his face lights up in an adorable fashion..."

Harry smiled softly at them. "We'll get him back. And take care of whoever did this."

When after fifteen minutes and Draco had not appeared, it was confirmed. Draco knew better than to ignore a summons. He was loyal to his Lord and would have dropped whatever it was he was doing to answer the call. Tom turned back to Harry. He, the twins, and Hermione were standing closely together, murmuring quietly to each other, obviously making plans. They hadn't needed that test to tell them what they already knew. Tom clenched his fists as he watched his lover. He could not keep Harry away from this. Lucius went home to inform his wife of what was happening, while Severus was ordered to stay behind with his Lord. Tom wanted to research several avenues in which he might be able to track the young Malfoy. But he needed his library and an extra pair of eyes and memory for the search.

"We'll go to the Burrow," the twins finally announced.

"Mione and I will ask around Diagon Alley," Harry murmured. "If he was taken from there, someone must have seen something."

Tom closed his eyes briefly. He wanted to demand Harry stay behind, but he knew better than to do so. It wouldn't have been right anyway. Draco was his best friend. And Harry was surely capable enough to handle himself... even if he did occasionally act without thinking.

"You should go now then," Tom replied, nodding when Harry's eyes widened in surprise. "I'll send word when Charleston and Lustre return with news."

As the others were getting ready, Harry went to Tom. "Thanks."

"As if I could keep you here," Tom replied, scowling.

"You know you could," Harry replied with a smile.

Tom rose his hand, slipping fingers into the raven hair at the back. "You'll be timed, Harry."

"You already have a tracking charm on me and I have this Portkey..."

"You will report back here in an hour, Harry," the Dark Lord ordered firmly.

Since he was lucky enough to be able to go without having to convince Tom, he only nodded to this order. It was a reasonable request after all.

Fred and George tumbled into the Burrow from the Floo, raging out of it like two bulls preparing to stampede. And when they saw Charlie in attendance along with their parents and Remus, they were immediately suspicious. Why was Charlie still there when he should have returned to Romania by then? Charlie told the twins on Sunday that he and Ron were only staying until the Monday after dinner. So that begs the question of why Charlie was still around.

The twins narrowed their eyes when their mum ignored them. She turned around and walked away, presumably into their parents' bedroom. It was a given that she was still probably very angry with them over the dinner, but it was suspicious that she left without a word. Molly Weasley never left without a word.

"Still here, Charlie? Any particular reason?"

Charlie shrugged even as he wondered at their desperate and hostile expressions. "Didn't really need to return to Romania immediately."

"Working for the Order then? Just get off a mission?" George inquired through gritted teeth.

Charlie started to really worry and he approached them. The twins looked ready to blow. "What's up?" he whispered to them.

"Draco is missing. Abducted. Know anything about that, Charlie?"

The surprise on Charlie's face was genuine. The twins immediately knew that. He quickly glanced back over his shoulder to his father and Lupin. Those two were standing quietly watching, no doubt wondering what could have brought the twins over when they had been certain it would be a long time before Fred and George visited the Burrow again. Charlie turned back and pressed his brothers to turn around. He slung an arm around their shoulders, leading them out of the house. Once far enough away from the front door, he dropped his arms and faced them.

"You've got to know I wouldn't do that. Bill wouldn't either. Not after you made it plain you fancied the spoiled git." The twins continued to glare. "As far as I know, the Order is not responsible. No one has said anything about capturing him. Haven't seen him here, and Remus hasn't spoken about him. They've been speaking about Order news all afternoon. I'm almost certain that line of discussion would have come up if he was really taken by the Order... you two are really serious about him," he ended, his tone awe-colored.

"It could still be the Order," George murmured. "They might not trust you well enough to speak about such things in front of you."

Fred nodded. "Could be members you've never met too. Moody... he's got others working for him you don't know about. Could be Kingsley and his cohorts also."

Charlie couldn't help but laugh. "Cohorts. Don't you mean Aurors?"

"Same thing," the twins answered, sneering slightly.

"It was the Aurors who wanted to drag a perfectly innocent witch into interrogation just to find out where Harry was," George said.

"And then when they couldn't do that, started to make up lies in the paper about her, turning her into a criminal when all she has ever done was protect Harry. Really, Aurors is too good a word for them."

Charlie shook his head. Half agreeing with them, but he also knew the Order and Aurors were only doing what they thought they had to in order to protect Wizarding Britain. "I'm still trusted, believe me. Bill even more so because he works in the country."

Fred balled his fists at his sides. "Draco hasn't done anything! The most he's been doing lately is trying to make Harry's fudge famous!" he burst out, the frustration bubbling over.

"And ticking Hermione off," George went on. The twins shared a small smile at that.

"I'll go to the new headquarters. Try to find something out..." Charlie pinned them with a firm glare. "Don't do anything stupid. Don't start anything until you have facts."

"We have facts! Our Draco has been taken! You expect us to sit on our arses while you go scope out the Order?!"

"What else are you going to do?" Charlie hissed. "What else can you do?"

The two sagged, dropping their chins to their chests in desolation. Charlie sighed and stepped closer to embrace them. "I'll help. You two go question around where he was last seen, okay? Stay with Harry. I know he's looking too." Fred and George nodded. "I'll go right now to the Order. I'll contact Bill from work. He'll help. You two just stay out of trouble."

Charlie turned around and strode back to the Burrow before they could say anything else. The twins walked down the path and through the wards before Apparating. They had to listen to Charlie. He made sense. They couldn't exactly go demanding the Order tell them where Draco was. If they had him, certainly they wouldn't tell. All they could do was go and join Harry and Hermione in their search.

Harry and Hermione had no luck whatsoever in Diagon Alley. They did find Draco had visited the Apothecary, but the clerk inside said the blond had been alone. However, the clerk had come off uncaring and had even seemed amused that Draco could have been abducted. Hermione then had to pull Harry away from the store since Harry had been sorely tempted to hex the bastard. After, they visited every shop they could think of that Draco might have gone to. Even some shops the blond wouldn't have set foot in, just in case the clerks might have seen him walk past and maybe saw something through the window. Apparently no one saw anything. And if they did, they weren't talking.

"How is it fucking possible?" Harry seethed. "How is it possible no one saw anything when it had to have happened here? It had to happen between him leaving one store and heading for the twins store. He was going to visit them!"

Hermione let her gaze travel around the road as she asked, "are you certain he was going to visit them? Why would he?"

Harry grabbed her arm and steered her towards Knockturn Alley for a look there. "Narcissa said he mentioned something about fiends before he left. That's his code for the twins. Draco fancies them. Think he's about ready to give up denying it."

They had no luck down Knockturn Alley either, but the patrons and clerks there were more than willing to keep an eye out and their ears open. They cared if a Malfoy had been abducted... at least most of them.

As they were leaving the Alley he both cursed and waved. "Should have checked in with Tom an hour ago," he explained as he waved to the twins.

"We can go now," Hermione murmured as they approached the twins. "Looks like Fred and George had no luck either."

The four quickly exchanged information. No luck. Harry transported them back home and led the others through the manor, finding Tom in the library with Snape. The Aurors were there as well, apparently right in the middle of giving more bad news.

"Malfoy was not brought in by the Aurors. Officially or unofficially. It was difficult finding this out without alerting anyone that we were looking for him."

"How are you certain then?" Severus asked.

"Kingsley was talking with Moody in the Head Auror's office. The old wizard was going on and on about what they could do to find Harry without turning the world against them. Spitting out different ideas for everyone to hear. Nothing he said indicated they had Malfoy."

"That means," Harry cut in, "that neither the Order or the Ministry has Drake."

"Unfortunately, yes," Charleston replied.

"Why unfortunately?"

Snape frowned. "Because, Potter, it would have been easier to find Draco had it been those factions."

"Oh, yeah," he nodded at Snape. "That makes sense. Isn't there some way we can track him?"

"I'm working on that," Tom replied. "You can help. Grab a book and start reading," he said to the four newcomers and then he sent the Aurors away to conduct their own search. "I'm looking for any information on how I can use the Mark to track him."

Harry opened his mouth and Tom cut him off. "You can go out to search some more in a few hours."

"We could go to the pubs around Wizarding Britain," Fred murmured as they all picked up a book. "Maybe someone would be stupid enough to brag."

"Yeah, we'll try that."

"I concede that is a good idea," Snape replied grudgingly.

"Must have hurt so bad to admit that," Harry spat with a glare. Severus sneered right back.

Hermione and the Dark Lord shared an amused smirk at the animosity swimming between the two across the table.

Draco groaned as he forced his eyes open, or more specifically, one eye. The other eye refused to open. He was momentarily confused, his mind in a painful haze. The last thing he remembered was leaving the Apothecary and preparing to drop in on the twins when something suddenly slammed into the back of his head. And then he knew pain and darkness. It was still dark. He was surrounded by it, but there was some light. Not much just a sliver of it coming through from the bottom of the door directly across from him. Looking over he spotted a window also, but that had been boarded up tight, allowing no light through.

Draco gathered his strength, trying to wiggle out of his bonds. He cried out as that brought another agonizing wave of pain through his body. His stomach and ribs were on fire. Not to mention his arms were pulled back at a painful angle and tied too tightly to the back of the chair he was apparently sitting in. Draco dropped his chin to his chest and tried to breathe as deeply as he could. That didn't work out either. He could only manage shallow breaths. Each breath he took caused pain to lace through his chest.

Don't panic, he thought desperately as he licked his lips and then grimaced when a metallic taste coated his mouth. His lips were badly busted and swollen. So was his right eye, now that he thought about it, which was why he was having trouble opening it. He blamed the Order for this. Who else would have dared accost him in the middle of Diagon Alley in broad daylight? They did it to Harry; it wouldn't have been anything to do it to him. Inwardly, Draco smiled with grim satisfaction. Harry would know almost immediately something was wrong when he didn't turn up for their meeting. So he had some comfort in knowing he was already missed, depending on how long he'd been here unconscious. And if the twins were really as serious as they had been saying, they would also be looking for him. And his father... heads were going to roll when his parents found out. If his body didn't hurt so much, Draco would have bounced in his seat with eager anticipation. But he was in pain so all he could manage was a pitiful whimper. *Beating me up while I was unconscious... how cowardly. The Order is truly nothing but dregs.*

Draco realized this abduction could be one of two things. He was brought here for information or this was a trap to catch Harry. Either way, if he weren't rescued before his captors returned, there would be a whole lot of trouble. For his side and for Harry. He didn't want that to happen. But he was stuck. Tied so tightly against the chair with his wand nowhere in sight. He thought about trying to stand, maybe running backwards to slam the chair against the wall to break it, thus freeing him since it was only his arms tied to the chair, but when he tried to stand, Draco quickly found out that plan was impossible. Standing on his legs for even a second caused him great pain. He shouted out and slumped back into the chair, pinching his eyes shut against the pain. Well, there was that reason why his legs had not been tied.

He sat in the darkness for a long time. And during that time all he did was stare at that light under the door, watching with a sinking heart as that light slowly faded, making him realize it was the light of day he was watching disappear to be replaced by night. And he wondered again how long he had been there already. Were his captors planning to return that night? Did

they plan to starve him? Keep him battered and bruised? Did they think he'd talk easier if he were exhausted and hurting? All these questions and more ran through his head as the time went by and he was almost relieved when he finally heard voices beyond the door. As they neared, his eyes narrowed as he recognized those voices.

"...could get in trouble for this, sis."

"We need Harry! Since they were all going to sit on their arses, we had to do it ourselves! Malfoy's his best mate, and you know Harry. He'll come find him."

"Maybe we should have told someone else about this..."

"No way! They'd ruin everything."

"Percy might have helped."

"...take a moment to think about what you just said."

"Yeah, yeah. Fine. We're better off doing this alone. This way we can get rid of Malfoy after and no one will know we were involved."

Despite the pain, Draco had to fight hard to keep the glee off his face when the door opened to reveal Ron and Ginny Weasley. Draco quickly went limp and feigned unconsciousness. From what he gathered, those two were the only ones involved in this kidnapping. That was good, but it also infuriated Draco for he'd allowed himself to be taken by the lowest of low.

"Good Merlin, Ron! You weren't supposed to beat him to death!" Weaslette screeched the moment she saw him. "I only said you were supposed to bring him here, tie him up, and leave him till we had the time to deal with the arse."

"S'not like the slimy snake doesn't deserve it. And he's still alive... pity," the Weasley mourned when Draco reared his head up angrily at Weasley's words.

Draco calmed himself and smirked at his captors when his Mark began to tingle. He wasn't sure why his Mark was tingling. It wasn't the usual pain felt when the Dark Lord summoned. Draco wondered what his Lord was doing. Perhaps he was trying to pinpoint Draco's location using the Mark. As far as the blond knew, the Mark's had never been used or could be used as tracking devices; that was not one of the purposes of the Mark... but this didn't mean the Dark Lord couldn't make it so. The Dark Lord could do anything, given enough time.

His smirk grew malicious with these thoughts. The changing of his expression surprised the two and both looked visibly worried at his unconcerned expression. Or as unconcerned as he could manage around the swelling of his face. "Did you have a plan when you captured me? Or was this a spur of the moment thing? Did you think about the consequences of your actions?"

"Shut it, Malfoy," Ginny hissed.

"No, because really... you two doing this alone means you have no back up. Who do you think is going to come after me? Besides the one you want to come along?"

Ron scowled. "The only consequence we'll have is what we want."

Draco rolled his tired eyes. That hardly made any sense. Typical. Ginny huffed and crossed her arms over her chest. "Harry will come and we'll be able to take him from your clutches. And then after, we'll give you right over to the Aurors. It's the Kiss for you, Malfoy."

Draco laughed. "Where have you been, Weaslette? The Dementors follow the Dark Lord."

"Azkaban, then," she returned with a nasty laugh. "That's worse, isn't it? For someone like you in a place like that. Even without Dementors, Azkaban is a horrible place. I'm sure there are a lot of wizards in there that your father has pissed off." She smirked triumphantly when Draco's face paled and the smirk slipped from his lips. She was right. The Dementors may not be there, but that place was filled with rapists and murderers. Pedophiles, scapegoats, and all around scum. Draco wouldn't last a day. The guards would see to that.

"My father will have your heads!" he hissed.

"Your father isn't here," Ginny replied.

"How did you do it, Malfoy? How'd you get Harry? Our brothers? Gave the twins a love potion, didn't you?" Ron demanded.

"I did no such thing! A love potion? I'm above such things!"

"They claim to be in love with you!" Ginny spat. "They would never fall in love with someone like you."

Draco's swollen lips parted in surprise. His heart sped up exponentially and it had nothing to do with his current predicament. "They said that?"

"They said they wanted to marry you," she answered with a nasty twisting of her face. "Which is ridiculous, so you must have poisoned them with something."

"What did you give them?!" Weasley shouted.

Draco ignored them and sagged in his seat. He would say no more.

"Malfoy, I asked you a question!" Weasley spat in his face.

"Bugger off," Draco whispered. "You aren't worth the air I breathe. You can ask all you want and I will never answer to someone as worthless as you."

Weasley's face exploded in red and before Draco could flinch, the redhead had drawn back his fist and punched him. Repeatedly in the face until the Weaslette dragged her brother away. Draco sat there limp, leaning to the side. He spat out a mouthful of blood, grimacing when there was also a tooth mixed in with the blood. Draco thought these two had better kill him in the end, because if they didn't and he got away... he'd make them pay.

For the next half hour he was questioned. Draco would have laughed if he weren't in so much pain. They didn't have any truth serum. It was ridiculous! But every question he refused to

answer, the Weasels would either hit him or send a hex his way. Draco was supremely grateful neither of them were particularly brilliant or inventive with their hexes. The two were letting the anger get the best of them and nothing they sent his way was more painful than the physical pains he already had. And nothing would get him to reveal anything about Harry, the twins, or the Dark Lord.

Finally the Weaslette dragged her brother out of the room when it seemed Weasley was really prepared to kill Draco with his bare hands. She muttered something about needing to go home before their mother missed them. As they left, Draco managed to lift his head and yell out, "next time prepare before you abduct someone. This is pathetic! Bet you wish you'd learned the Dark Arts now! I would have talked an hour ago if you knew decent spells!"

Weasel tried to barrel his way back into the room, but Weaslette grabbed his arm and kept him in the doorway.

"Let's see how cocky you are after being left in here for two days straight. Alone without any food or water," Weaslette threatened. If Draco didn't hate her so much he would have applauded how really threatening she was just now with that sinister smirk on her face. She might have made a splendid Death Eater.

Charlie sat at the kitchen table, staring hard at the flat scarred surface. There had been no sign of Draco Malfoy and he and Bill had searched all day. The Order knew nothing about his disappearance and neither did the Ministry. Which was a shame because it might have been easier to find him had the Aurors or the Order taken him. Now though no one knew who had taken him. No one knew where to start looking for him.

As Charlie stood to go out and search some more, Ginny and Ron made an entrance, bickering quietly to each other. The both of them had been hanging out together over the last few days, and they seemed entirely too bitter when together. It was very strange. Charlie studied them, an odd feeling washing through him when he noticed Ron had spots of blood on his shirt. Narrowing his eyes, he also noticed his younger brother's knuckles were red and cut up. "Where have you two been?"

The two paused and turned to him. Though Ron didn't meet his eyes. Ginny did and she tried hard to look perfectly innocent. "Diagon Alley. Met up with some mates again," Ginny answered. "Where's Mum?" she asked, Charlie went along with the subject change. even as he mentally shook his head in rising suspicion. They wouldn't have... would they?

"Out. How'd your knuckles get busted up, Ron?" he questioned.

"Fell. Busted nose too," the young wizard muttered and gestured to the blood smattering on his shirt before disappearing up the stairs.

Charlie turned his attention to Ginny. "Did you know Draco Malfoy is missing?"

"We're supposed to care?"

"Do you realize how upset Fred and George are?"

"It'll be better for them if he never comes back," Ginny said with a shrug as she too turned away. Charlie heard her mutter it would serve the Death Eater right if he were to die from lack of food and water since he wouldn't open his fucking mouth to answer even one question.

Charlie watched her go up the stairs with a sinking heart and then turned, dropping his elbows on the counter. He didn't think Ginny realized he'd heard that whisper. "Bloody idiots."

How long had he been there, Draco dazedly wondered. His head moved slowly from side to side like a snake as he had little strength to keep it still. He was famished and so thirsty and he was sure Weasley had broken several of his ribs. He couldn't breathe through his nose, couldn't see... his entire body felt broken and bloodied. Despite what he'd thought earlier, he began to despair. Were they looking for him? Would he be found before he died from starvation? He couldn't believe the little Weaslette had actually left him alone for two days without food or water.

What kind of monster is she, he wailed in his mind. He gave Ronald Weasley no credit. All he was good for was being a barbarian. But the Weaslette... only she could have planned this and followed through, even if it were a ridiculous plan. But still! Leaving him alone without food or water for days?! Leaving him alone to freeze to death during the nights...even now he was shivering uncontrollably. Felt like his body was a block of ice that would shatter at any moment.

His father never left prisoners in the dungeon to starve to death... though the prisoner usually ended up dead anyway, but at least not by starvation or frostbite. Draco moaned when a horrible thought entered his mind. The little Weaslette should be returning to Hogwarts soon. Easter holiday would be ending... sometime soon. His sense of time was severely skewed. He didn't know what day it was. Only that it was early evening told by the fading light under the door. Would the bitch leave him here to die?

A soft sound left his lips as he started tugging in a futile effort to free his arms again, and as before, the ropes didn't bloody give an inch. Draco murmured incoherently, his thoughts starting the blur, head dizzy. The kind of dizziness that seemed to wash all throughout his body. He knew he would fall unconscious again. It was inevitable. Weasley's punches to his head had not been light taps. More than once he'd been hit against the temples. *My fiends... what will the fiends do when they discover who was behind this? Would they leave me to stand with them?* Draco whimpered pitifully at such a thought.

Just as he was happily slipping away to the blackness, he heard voices again. His heart soared at the thought that it might be his rescuers and he made himself stay awake. Weren't people with concussions supposed to stay awake? He stayed awake because no matter how long he'd been there, Draco knew there were people who were looking for him and would keep looking for him.

"Bloody hell," he rasped when he recognized the youngest Weasleys voices.

The door was thrown open and the light from the hallway spilled into the room. Draco tried looking through his bruised eyelids, maybe get a sense of where he was, but that was also a futile effort. The two came in and slammed the door closed. Ginny cast a spell to light the few candles placed around the room.

"Feel like talking, Malfoy?" Weasley questioned as they approached.

"Fuck off," he replied in a slow manner as if it had cost him much energy to even speak those words.

"Didn't think so," Weaslette murmured as they came to stand before him. Then she laughed. "Look at you. Horrible. The twins would never want you, looking like this... wonder if any of the damage could be made permanent," she mused, and smirked seeing the fury enter Draco's eyes.

"Weasley," he hissed, trying desperately to keep his teeth from chattering from the cold that had seeped into his bones. "I doubt the twins are as shallow as you are."

"Yes that's true..."

"I'll give back all I'm given. To both of you," he promised lowly.

"Yeah, whatever, Malfoy," Weaslette laughed away his words and Draco swore to himself one day he would come through with his promise. No one laughs off Draco Malfoy.

"Can we get a move on? Don't have much time left," the weasel murmured.

"I have a question," Draco hissed. "Since this is a trap to get Harry, obviously, did either of you actually let him know where I am?" the blurred looks on their faces told him no. They hadn't even thought about that. "You two must be the most dimwitted kidnappers I've ever come across!"

That earned him another punch from Weasley. But honestly he couldn't care now. He went numb over the nights, freezing in this small room. "That's all you're good for, isn't Weasley? Hitting an incapacitated person." Once again Ginny had to grab her brother to contain his fists.

"We have this," she announced, pulling a potion vial out of her pocket and holding it up. For a moment Draco feared they'd done something smart for once and finally acquired Veritaserum. Only to breath in relief when he saw the potion was light purple.

"And what is that?" he drawled, his tone unconcerned.

"A strong love potion, Malfoy. I'm going to give this to you and make you fall desperately in love with me."

"Eww, noooooo," he moaned, at once losing his calm composer at the thought of being made to feel anything remotely good towards Ginevra Weasley.

"Yes, and you'll want to be mine to the point where you'll give all your secrets to me just to prove yourself. Its quite like Veela allure."

"I'd rather you kill me right now!"

"No way. I spent a lot of money on this potion. Lavender practically cleaned out my savings with her price. We couldn't get any truth serum quick enough so this had to be it. I rather like the thought of you pining away for me."

"But you're a girl!" Draco whined. "I don't like girls! Especially girls with red hair!"

"I could have Ron give you to you."

Draco shuddered in disgust, at the same time Weasley shouted, "no way do I want the ferret in love with me! Even if it is because of a potion."

Weaslette snickered and Draco desperately wished he could kick her face in. She withdrew her wand and pointed it at his mouth. "*Adaperio!*"

Draco tried fighting the spell that would force his mouth open, but that only caused him more pain and dizziness. Weasley moved forward and roughly grabbed his hair, jerking his face up towards the ceiling so that his sister could dump the potion down his throat. Still as Weaslette moved forward with the potion, Draco thrashed around in his binds, trying to move away with little effect.

As Weaslette began to tip the vial, water leaked from the blond's eyes. *Don't! I don't want to be in love with anyone else! I'm already...*

Harry, Hermione, Fred, and George Apparated to Hogsmeade. Hermione was the one to spot Charlie and he waved them over to the alley in between the Hogshead and the Quill shop. As soon as they were near, he turned around and led them through the alley and out onto the dirt road that led to the homes surrounding the village.

"Charlie?" one of the twins inquired.

"Found this earlier today," he murmured, pulling something out of his back pocket and handing it to his nearest brother.

"That's Draco's wand!" Harry exclaimed when he made it out in the dim light.

Charlie seemed to sag at his words. "I thought so... I took the wand and followed them here. Knowing they would lead me to him."

"You found Draco?!" the twins asked excitedly. Charlie stopped beside a house, motioning them all into the shadows.

"Think so. Can't imagine why else they would go there," he said, pointing to a cottage down the road that looked empty. Unlived in. "They went in ten minutes ago."

Hermione narrowed her eyes. "Who are they?"

Charlie didn't face them. He seemed terribly bothered by something. "They put our family into danger by doing this. Even more danger than we were already in..." Finally he turned to look at his brothers. "I expect you to teach them a lesson. Don't worry. You four will be more than enough to take them." With that said, Charlie Apparated away.

Without wasting a moment to ponder on his words, the four ran down the road and easily slipped into the house. Hermione laid her wand in her palm. "Point me, Draco Malfoy," she whispered. The wand spun around before pointing straight ahead towards the stairs. They crept through the house and followed Hermione's wand up one floor. There were only two doors down the hallway and one was wide open. Moonlight spilled in from the open door, filling the hallway.

"This one," Hermione whispered, gesturing to her wand where it pointed at the closed door directly opposite of the open room. Harry and the twins crept forward and readied themselves. George blasted the door open while the other three had spells on the tip of their tongues. For a moment they stared, dumbfounded. They found Draco bound tightly to a chair. His face bruised nearly beyond recognition. Ron and Ginny stood beside him. Ron had a fist full of blond hair, pulling it so that Draco's face was tilted up in order to allow Ginny to pour a potion down his throat.

"*Accio* potion!" Fred yelled, wand pointed to the vial very near Draco's forced opened mouth. George, Harry, and Hermione came to stand beside him as the potion flew to his hand, still in shock at the scene before them.

"*Accio* wands!" Harry and Hermione cried. Harry pointing at Ginny and Hermione at Ron. Their wands instantly flew into Harry and Hermione's outstretched hands. Fred handed the potion over to Hermione before he and George ran forward to Draco, eyes filling with fury as they untied their blond. He was almost unrecognizable. Draco barely even had enough strength to moan from the pain felt as his body was suddenly released from his bonds. He slumped forward, certainly going to fall in a heap, but Fred swept him up into his arms, trying very hard not to jostle Draco too much, terrified he would do more damage.

"What the fuck?!" he shouted, eyes zooming back and forth between Ron and Ginny.

"What did the two of you think you were doing?!" Hermione shouted; enraged that not only did it look like Malfoy had been severely beaten, but also it had been Ginny and Ron behind it all.

"Granger came too?" Draco rasped lowly.

"Suppose you've grown on me, Malfoy. You two take him to St. Mungo's," she told the twins.

"We'll go," George murmured and then glared at his younger siblings, "but you can bet you'll be seeing us soon!"

"Don't want to go to St. Mungo's," Draco managed to whine.

"Gods, Draco. You're burning up," Fred murmured fearfully, his forehead pressed against the blond's.

"Really? But I'm freezing."

Fred and George exchanged a worried look before they Apparated away with Draco.

"Well I'm here," Harry snarled once Draco and the twins were gone. "What's the next part of your brilliant plan? Have a net lying around? Should I take a few more steps to help you out?" he hissed. The walls around them began to tremble; the windows of the cottage began to crack, and then completely shattered. Harry's anger inducing his magic to become almost visible with his rage.

Ron and Ginny looked like they had nothing to say at first; they simply watched Harry and Hermione warily. There wasn't much they could do without their wands and the two knew they could get in real trouble for what they'd done. At least that was Ginny's thinking. But Ron scowled and opened his mouth, glaring at his former best mate. Harry strode forward and pointed his wand in Ronald's face. "You say one thing about my betrayal... about running away and I will hex you. You haven't any right to say that shite. You ran away to Romania. At least I'm still in England. At least I'm not afraid to walk around with my head held high. I don't see you doing anything for the war, Ron. Your hypocrisy is disgusting. At least I don't pretend, fucking coward!"

"How dare you call him a coward?" Ginny screeched. "You left the war because you're scared."

Harry laughed. It was low and bitter and sent chills down the spines of everyone in the room. "You don't know anything about me, do you? I'm not scared. Was never scared to do what they said I had to."

"Sure, right," Ron muttered his disbelief.

"I left the war because you all make me sick. Did I want to give a helping hand in saving your arses? No. That's why I left. I left because no one seemed to care about the murders of an entire House!"

"Better off without them!" Ron snapped.

"You've just proven my point," Harry hissed. "That's why I'm neutral. At this point I think you deserve to lose...either way, I'm not concerned any more. I'm content with my life now. How about you?"

"Do you know what's fun about being neutral," Hermione went on, nearing Ginny. "We can do this—*Petrificus Totalus! Silencio!*—and not feel any guilt about it."

Harry followed her example and did the same to Ron before smirking. "We'll just leave you two here... hopefully someone will come along before you die from starvation."

The two left the room and quickly walked down to the ground level. "That's far less than they deserve," Harry muttered.

"It's the only kind of real punishment they'll get. Can't tell the Aurors, they wouldn't press charges-"

"Probably give them medals," Harry interrupted bitterly. Hermione gave him a look and he smiled sheepishly.

"And they may get into trouble with Molly, but I doubt the punishment would last a week..."

"Merlin... did you see Draco? He looked half dead!"

Hermione nodded and entwined her arm around his. "We'll go tell Voldemort and his parents and then we can go see him at St. Mungo's. They'll fix him up good as new, Harry. Don't worry."

"We found him!" Harry announced when he and Mione appeared within Tom's office and found him with Lucius and Severus. "We found Draco. The twins took him to St. Mungo's."

Harry didn't think he'd ever seen so much emotion on Lucius Malfoy's face. "Thank Merlin," the blond murmured as he quickly swept out of the room. No doubt going to fetch his wife. Severus soon followed him, leaving Hermione and Harry with Tom.

"How did you find him?" Tom demanded as he came to stand before the two.

Harry and Hermione shared a quick hooded look before Harry faced his lover. "Charlie showed us. Somehow he found out where Draco was being kept."

"It was the Order then?"

"No, sir," Hermione answered. "The persons responsible... were working on their own."

"Who?"

"Tom, please... we can't say. Draco's safe now and those responsible will be dealt with."

The two lovers then had a staring contest. One in which Hermione wanted no part of and began backing away. It was a clash of wills and she could distinctively feel their magic swirling around, battering away at each other. Briefly she wondered how the sex must be... *Exceptional*, she thought a moment later. If they shag as passionately as they clash wills, then it had to be exceptional. Hermione wrinkled her nose in embarrassment and hurried out of the room. Having no idea why she'd suddenly thought of that.

Inside the office, Harry's stare turned pleading and Tom cursed, unable to stand against such a look. "Please," the young wizard implored.

"Harry, I want to know who did this," he returned softly, reaching forward to brush fingers against Harry's cheek. "Lucius and Narcissa deserve to know who did this."

"If they find out, Lucius may never allow the twins near Draco again," Harry muttered. "You know they're in love with him. If they find out... the twins will be hurt either way."

"This has to do with their family," Tom assumed then. "But not the Order?"

"Not the Order, I swear. And not all of their family. Please, Tom. I think Draco should be left with the revenge. He'll want it."

Tom sighed and conceded. "Go to St. Mungo's. But I don't want you there all night. Come home soon. You need sleep."

Harry grinned. "You as well, Tom. You may have tried to hide it, but I know you've been awake worrying about Draco too."

Tom snorted and looked away. "Ridiculous. Why should I worry over the whiney brat?"

Harry moved forward, pressing against Tom's broad chest. He replied in a singsong voice, "because you care." He snickered when Tom scowled and pushed him away towards the door.

"Impertinent brat," the Dark Lord hissed.

Harry nodded. "Come with me?"

"No."

"Come with me, Tom."

"No."

"I want you to come with me," Harry whined.

Hermione pushed away from the wall when Harry pranced out of the office, a glamoured Dark Lord in tow. Voldemort looked just as he did when he'd come to the Quidditch game, except instead of smiling, the wizard was scowling horrendously. Hermione held back a laugh. Every time the Dark Lord scowled like that, Harry was always grinning outrageously. Which meant he was the cause of the scowl.

The three of them quickly traveled to St. Mungo's. The Malfoys and Snape were already there, having been told to wait out in the hall while the Healers were inside mending Draco's injuries.

The three gave imperceptible bows to Tom when they saw he'd come along. He nodded at them, while Harry went on to study Snape. The wizard was standing behind Lucius and Narcissa. His chest was pressed against Lucius' back with a hand on the blond's hip and an arm curved around Narcissa's back so that he could hold onto her shoulder with his free hand. Both Malfoys seemed to take comfort in his presence. Harry tried not gaping. It was just... he'd never ever thought to see Snape like this. Even the expression on his face as he murmured something to the two was... tender.

"Fuck it all!" he hissed and turned away from them to stare at the closed door of Drake's room.

"What's wrong?" Tom inquired, slipping an arm around his waist, holding Harry tightly against his chest.

Harry shook his head. He'd wanted to keep thinking that Snape was a complete bastard with no redeeming qualities whatsoever. "Where are the twins?" he asked no one in particular.

"In with Draco," Lucius drawled. "They refused to leave and Draco refused to lay still until the Healers said they could stay. Apparently he doesn't trust this place, but he'll trust them to keep him safe."

Snape stared at the door. "Frankly I think he's delirious and didn't know what he was saying."

"They're very nice and clever boys... for Weasleys," Narcissa whispered, her voice thick with emotion.

Harry and Hermione grinned at each other. Tom led Harry over to a chair and pushed him down, motioning for Granger to take the chair beside them. He knew they were exhausted, having done most of the searching the last few nights. Granger seemed surprised at his gesture, but did as he silently suggested sank beside Harry. They both shifted until Hermione's head was against Harry's shoulder and the brunet's head fell on top of hers. Tom didn't react to this as he might have done a couple of months ago. Harry was his and he knew Granger had a little... crush on Charleston. A crush that didn't seem to be one-sided. Not that he much cared about all that.

Draco's door finally opened three hours later to reveal three Healers. "Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy," one of the Healers inquired as the other two walked away down the hall.

"How is he? How's my baby?" Narcissa implored. The obvious distress over her child must have surprised the Healer, for his flat look morphed and he smiled gently.

"Your son's physical injuries were... extensive. But they were also easily healed. He'll have bruises for several days and he'll be given pain potions over the course of that time. Your son also suffers dehydration. This will be taken care of over the course of days as well. He'll take nutrient potions and drink plenty of liquid. But what we're worried about now is... It seems the external conditions he was left in with the injuries has caused him to come down with an illness and he's developed a high fever. It could be dangerous so your son will be constantly monitored until the fever passes."

"Explain his physical injuries," Lucius demanded.

The Healer took a breath. "Three broken ribs. One of which came very close to puncturing a lung. Dislocated shoulder, fractured forearm. Both his shins were fractured as well as a cheekbone. Broken nose, a few teeth missing. He was also severely concussed." At the stricken look on Narcissa's face, the Healer shifted forward and raised a hand, as if he meant to lay it on her arm to comfort. He dropped it a moment later when Lucius glared at him. "As I've said. Those injuries have been taken care of."

"We want to take our son home," Narcissa said.

The Healer frowned. "I understand your need to do so, Mrs. Malfoy, but until the fever passes, I can't in good conscious allow that to happen. But as soon as he's free of the fever, you are welcomed to move him home. But he'll need those potions I spoke of."

"He will have them," Severus answered with a firm nod.

Draco awoke in a soft bed, and after being held captive in that cold room and sitting in a chair for days, this was a blessed thing. His body was still sore, but it seemed his injuries had been taken care of. He hadn't wanted to go to St. Mungo's because he didn't trust anyone there. But the twins promised they wouldn't leave his side. No one would get through them. He'd fallen unconscious again after that, but he'd been reassured by their promise. He'd been reassured by the fury still swimming in their generally warm bright eyes. Fury against their siblings at what they'd done to him. He'd gone under with the knowledge that the fiends were still his.

His mind cleared and he heard voices very close to him. Harry, Granger, and the twins. "Thought you should know... we left Ron and Ginny incapacitated in the Shrieking Shack," Harry was saying.

"Good," one of the twins growled.

"We'll leave them there overnight," the other hissed.

"And some time tomorrow evening we'll go back and beat the living shite out of Ron."

"What about Ginny?" Granger asked.

"As much as she deserves it- trying to give our Draco a love potion- we can't hit girls. Our baby sister especially. Why don't you do it, Hermione?"

There was silence, but Draco could swear Granger was staring at him. After another silent minute, she completely surprised him by saying, "fine. I'll smack her around. Malfoy didn't deserve any of this."

Draco snickered despite himself. It was funny hearing Granger talk about 'smacking' someone around.

"Draco?" before he could answer, he felt a hand on his forehead. "He's still very hot," Harry murmured.

"Thirsty," he whispered around a tongue that seemed too big for his mouth. "Not hot... freezing," he said after.

"You have a fever," Granger said softly, and he felt someone messing with the blankets over him. And then a weight settled over him as if another blanket had been placed on top of the others.

"Ah, look at that," one of the twins cooed. "Hermione's mothering Draco."

Draco's eyes popped open just in time to see Granger straightening up after adding the blanket. "Don't think too much of it, Malfoy," she said with a smirk at his wide surprised eyes.

"How did you find me?" he asked after Fred helped him to sit up in order to sip water.

"Tom was trying to find a way to locate you through the mark since you disappeared off the face of the earth," Harry started. "But doing that would have taken time."

"We kept looking for you," George went on; Draco noticed he was wearing a silver snake pendent on his shirt. It made the blond smile. "Eventually it was Charlie who figured it out. We're not exactly sure how he figured it out, but we received word from him late afternoon."

Fred joined in. "He told us to come to Hogsmeade. So we did. He had your wand and pointed us in the right direction."

"Thank Merlin too, 'cause we got there just in time to stop Ginny from giving you that love potion..."

"How'd you know about that?"

"You were whining about it when we brought you here," George said with a grin. "You were sick and whining about their stupidity. About how they were the worst sort of kidnappers ever!"

"Well they are!" Draco snapped, slumping back against the pillows and burrowing under the covers.

The twins gave him fond smiles; one threading fingers through the blond's hair. "Lucky for you and us."

Draco turned away, though he allowed the hand to remain in his hair. He'd had a startling epiphany the moment Weaslette had been about to pour the potion in his mouth. He hadn't wanted to be drugged with a love potion. He hadn't wanted that potion to destroy the feelings he'd already developed for the pair beside him.

Harry leaned forward and dropped a hand on his shoulder. Draco gave him a small smile. "You'll be alright, Draco. Your parents are going to take you home as soon as the fever passes."

"Did you tell them who abducted me?" Draco asked suddenly.

Harry shook his head and Draco relaxed. "Good."

Lucius and Narcissa entered the room and the twins hastily backed away before Narcissa spotted them fondling her son's hair. Draco grinned at them even as he wondered how they knew about his mother's complex. Because apparently they did know. They looked half fearful and half guilty.

Lucius demanded everyone leave. The twins were the last ones out the door, shooting the prone blond sinful smirks as they left. He couldn't react in any way; too busy fearing the cold look in his father's eyes. He knew what was coming, and worse, wondering what his father would do once he realized Draco was not prepared to answer any of his questions.

Outside, Tom stood before the twins and Hermione and pulled out three silver rings. He handed the smallest one to Hermione. She smiled when she saw the Latin words etched around the band. *Lover of knowledge*. Fred and George studied their rings, brows wrinkled as they looked at the words.

Tom sighed when he realized they had no idea what it said. "First I wanted it to read 'pain in my-' he paused when Harry threw him a look. "It says 'snakes disguised'. Those are Portkeys to my home."

"Wicked!" Fred breathed as he slipped it on.

"Thanks," George murmured as he slipped his on.

"Thank you, sir!" Hermione gushed. She wasn't staring at the ring on her finger, but instead staring at Tom, in what Harry thought was a new light. Harry grinned when Tom shifted uncomfortably.

"I didn't do it to be nice," he snapped. "I don't do nice things."

"Oh, of course not," the twins said, their tones a bit mocking, their grins wider than ever. Tom whipped out his wand. Fred and George laughed and tore down the hall. "See ya in a bit, Harry! Need to check up on the store!"

"Sleep too!" Harry called back. He got waves in answer.

"Harry, I'm going to go visit my parents. Maybe stay the night," Hermione said.

"Okay. You'll be careful?"

"Always," she smiled and walked after the twins.

Harry, having had no idea Tom had planned to give them Portkeys, turned to his lover with wide eyes full of thanks. "You put tracking charms on them as well, didn't you?" he asked with a knowing smile.

"Stop smiling at me like that, brat!" Tom demanded as he began to push Harry down the hall to where he could Apparate them home. They entered the foyer of the hospital and were instantly surrounded by flashing lights and shouted questions. Tom cursed lowly under his breath as his arm tightened further around the waist of his young lover.

Harry smiled and wriggled his fingers at Skeeter. Now that he basically 'bought' the *Prophet*, he didn't hate her so much. Especially since she printed his words verbatim. She looked especially pleased to see him plastered against Tom's side. Skeeter was staring at Tom, blinking her eyes rapidly, eyes sweeping up and down the Dark Lord's body. *Yeah, that's right, Skeeter. He's my prize for doing what I want. Bet you wished you had the same.*

Tom's eyes lowered down to study Harry's face. The brat was smirking cockily, twisting his body slightly to press even closer and running a possessive hand up his chest; his eyes not leaving the reporters for a moment. At once he knew what Harry was thinking and emotion flooded him. Harry wanted to show him off. Harry was in no way ashamed to be with him. Harry had said as much before, but seeing it with his own eyes was liberating... and arousing.

"Harry, how is Draco?" Skeeter asked, pushing her way past other reporters.

"Healing. He's going to be fine."

"And have you any idea who kidnapped him? Since it was you and your friends that found him."

Harry hid his surprise. He wondered how she found out about the rescue and who had done the rescuing. Draco's disappearance had not been put in the Prophet. They felt that would have caused more problems... though since they had been going around town asking about him, that aspect was sure to have reached the paper.

"We're not giving out that information," Tom answered before he could.

Skeeter sucked in a breath and was once again studying Tom in appreciation. Harry laughed. *Yep. His voice is sex too. He's mine.* Tom's arms tightened further around him. Green eyes locked with golden brown and his own breath caught in his throat and he completely lost track of the world around him.

"Harry, dear? Is that what I think it is?" Skeeter inquired, pulling him back to the world. Unfortunately.

"What?" he asked, blinking owlishly against the continued flashes of cameras. Skeeter pointed at his hand.

"What does it look like, Skeeter?" Tom inquired smoothly.

"Well... considering its position, that looks like an engagement ring."

Instead of giving a verbal answer, both Harry and Tom smirked at her. After that Tom allowed no more questions and quickly ushered Harry home. Once there, he ordered Harry to bed with a tone that brooked for no arguments. Harry pouted when Tom said he had a meeting with Fenrir to attend to. He had hoped Tom would come rest too so that he could snuggle around him. Harry had taken to using Tom as a huge snuggly bear. Tom often grumbled about it, but not once had his grumbling seemed real. It was just for show. Harry knew this because Tom's arms would always circle him protectively as soon as Harry reached for him.

"Fenrir," Harry grumbled as he traveled through the manor to the room he shared with Tom. "Stupid werewolf. Walking around with a stupid glamour just like Tom does to produce fear. Stupid."

Yes he was aware his thoughts were childish. But he was cranky dammit. He hadn't had more than a couple of hours sleep since Draco had been taken. And Fenrir... annoyed him. He found out the werewolf wasn't as scary looking as he portrayed himself to be. He'd run into the werewolf one evening at Malfoy Manor and at first had no idea who the wizard was. He didn't smell rancid, nor were his real teeth stained and putrid. He was a decent enough looking bloke without the scary werewolf glimmers. His eyes weren't rabid either... He had only figured out it was Greyback when the werewolf smiled at him, showing off his sharp teeth. Everyone knew Greyback's teeth were still sharp in his human form. Harry briefly wondered how Remus never realized that Greyback's normal grotesque appearance was nothing but a glamour used to cause fear.

Thinking about Remus put Harry into an even sourer mood and he scowled as he slammed into the bedroom. Remus had been... good to him over the years. But the wizard still put too much hope, too much of his loyalty into the Order. Then again, Remus had nothing else to hold on to. He was basically alone. No parents, friends all dead. Being in the Order was the only thing that was probably keeping the werewolf sane.

Harry stood at the foot of the bed and stripped down to his boxers, kicking his clothes into a pile right where he stood. As he was climbing into bed, a hiss at the door caught his attention.

Nagini! Want to come lay with me?

Of course, young wizard.

Tom paced back and forth within Lucius' study until someone knocked on the door. "Enter!" he snapped and waited for the werewolf to enter. "I want you to approach Remus Lupin," he commanded just as soon as Fenrir was finished bowing.

A small snarl escaped the werewolf's lips. "Must I?" Tom raised a brow and his wand. "Yes, my Lord. I will do as you say. Approach and then what?"

"Let him know what we're doing about your kind and others. Speak about that and nothing else and leave. Go as yourself. Otherwise..."

"I wouldn't get near him without a fight," Fenrir chuckled darkly. "Yes, Lupin is a very feisty cub. He hates me because I contaminated him and believes that I contaminate children on purpose."

"And who was it that spread those rumors, Fenrir."

"It was beneficial at the time, my Lord."

Tom nodded. He, more than most, understood the need and the fun of deceptions. But those deceptions were now hindering his march to victory. Thanks to Harry, Tom saw the folly of his earlier plans and was resolved to fix all of them.

"How will I find him?" Fenrir inquired.

"Use your nose," Tom drawled. The werewolf narrowed his eyes, but said nothing else.

"Also, let him know it is Miss Granger who has been owling him the supply of Wolfsbane each month with the help of Severus. Do not answer any questions about Granger should he ask. He probably will. If he has suspicions about her allegiance, deflect them. I will not have her associated with our side."

"Very well, my lord."

Tom's eyes narrowed, the glamourised brown dissolving into dangerous red. "Do not kill him," he murmured lowly before waving the werewolf away. Once he was alone, Tom returned to his chair, leaning forward and resting his fingers under his chin. Staring at the door, but not really seeing anything.

This had better go well, he thought. This had better end soon. After a few more moments in contemplation, Tom left his office and traveled to his room. He stood at the end of the bed just as Harry had done and stripped. Though he didn't stop with the boxers.

Move to the end of the bed, my pet, he ordered the snake who lounged over Harry's chest. She did as he commanded while Tom slipped in beside Harry, drawing his lover to him. Harry immediately snuggled against him and Tom rolled his eyes as he propped himself up with an elbow gaze at his lover's face. Harry was such an affectionate boy. Tom wondered, and secretly hoped, that that would never change. He also suspected Harry's affectionate and childlike nature came from not being able to be a proper child when he actually was one. Nor was he ever given any affection as a child. It was a wonder Harry managed to turn out as bighearted as he was. Still, Tom wasn't complaining.

Brushing fingers through his lover's thick hair, Tom smiled. There was so much he wanted to teach Harry, especially when he knew his young lover was eager to learn all he could of the world. Tom wanted so much to show him. Tom's smile slipped as he relaxed against the pillow. *First I must confess and then we'll bond. After that the war will be won... he's going to be angry,* was Tom's last thought before he slipped into sleep.

Chapter Eleven

The Black Bunny

Chapter Eleven

Tom walked into the breakfast room the following morning to the sound of raucous laughter. He sighed. This breakfast room was supposed to be peaceful. Though it was his own fault for giving the three reusable Portkeys. The moment Tom stepped in and was spotted, Harry's laughter died and he quickly pulled something off the table to sit on it. The others followed his example, their faces turning neutral.

Tom refrained from rolling his eyes. *Yes, that doesn't make me suspicious at all.*

"Good morning, sir," Granger greeted as soon as he was seated beside her and Harry.

"Morning," he returned to her and then looked at Harry, "but it remains to be seen if it is a good one. Harry, what are you hiding?"

At his question the twins snickered softly, earning a glare from Harry. But they simply shrugged. "Sugar daddy candy," one of them burst out. Hermione giggled.

"Shut up!" Harry hissed. "Do you want to die? He's sitting right here!"

The twins sobered slightly, but not much and Tom was even more curious. Looking over he saw Harry was sitting on the morning *Prophet*. His eyes narrowed. He knew Skeeter would probably have written about them; about the meeting at St. Mungo's and most likely there would be a front page picture of the two of them. He'd expected that. It didn't concern him overly much as no one beyond his Inner Circle would recognize him and they wouldn't dare out him. Truthfully Tom was looking forward to seeing the picture of Harry preening. To seeing Harry on his arm and happy to be so.

"Let me see." Harry quickly shook his head. "Harry, don't make me force that paper from beneath you," he warned.

Harry cursed his stupidity. He should have vanished the thing the moment Tom stepped into the room. "Alright, but don't get mad."

"Making no promises," Tom responded as Harry lifted his bum and he snatched the paper out from under the little minx. He studied the three around the table before dropping his eyes to the paper. Looking at the picture, Tom didn't find anything that could make them laugh as they were. He and Harry looked extremely presentable. They made a fine looking pair actually. Finally he began to read the article and all he needed to understand their amusement was the headline. His lips pressed into thin lines as he continued on to the article.

THE WEALTHY WIZARD ON HARRY POTTER'S ARM. WHO IS HE?

Yours truly had an up, close, and personal interview with the Chosen One and his new beau. One only need look at the wizard on Harry's arm to know he is wealthy and established. Where did Harry meet such a man? Who is this man who clearly makes the Chosen One happier than people have seen in ages? Despite those questions, there's no question as to how Harry was able to make such a fine catch. Harry Potter is powerful in his own right and he isn't exactly hard on the eyes, now is he? After some digging, it has been discovered Harry is in the process of being courted by this wizard. One of his many gifts includes a Premium Pass for Quidditch. We all know how much that must have cost his man.

More importantly, as you can see in this picture, apparently Harry and his wealthy candy are soon to be married.

Tom's eyes jerked away from the paper, a sneer forming on his lips. "Me, on your arm? Me, the candy, the trophy?" he hissed at no one in particular. The twins were biting their tongues so hard to keep from saying anything, thus being killed. Hermione sipped her tea and refused to make eye contact. Harry had a hand over his mouth to hide the huge grin that would not go away. "Did she miss the part where you are plastered all over me?!" Tom snarled, jabbing a rigid finger at the picture of the two of them, where picture Harry was constantly snuggling against picture Tom.

Harry shrugged. He didn't know what to say. It was bloody amusing simply because Tom was right. Clearly Tom had Harry on his arm and yet Skeeter wrote it this way, Harry was sure, so that she wouldn't displease Harry in any way. Oh, if only she knew who exactly Harry's fiancé was. "You guys finished with breakfast? You should probably head to Hogsmeade then and take care of, you know..."

"Right you are, Harry," Fred said and he and his brother jumped up, cringing slightly because the Dark Lord was giving them a death glare again. "We'll see you later."

Hermione stood as well and left with them, leaving Harry and Tom alone in silence.

"This is your fault! Clearly you were showing me off!" Tom burst out.

Harry looked at him and smiled. "I'm happy to be with you." Tom scowled to cover up the pleasure he felt at hearing those words easily spoken. And then he felt insanely guilty and fearful of what he had to show Harry.

Tom stood up and hovered over his young lover. "I have meetings to attend to."

"You haven't even touched your breakfast, Tom."

"I haven't much of an appetite," Tom said in parting and then he was gone. Leaving Harry alone and bewildered.

Harry soon left as well, not wanting to stay in the room by himself and quickly traveled to St. Mungo's. Narcissa was there, sitting beside her son's bed. Draco was sleeping. His breathing slow and deep.

"His fever has faded," Narcissa informed Harry as he sat down opposite of her. "We'll be taking him home very soon."

"May I come with you?"

Narcissa smiled at him. "Of course, Harry."

Harry returned her smile before his gaze drifted down to study Draco's face. The bruising had his teeth clenching painfully. Fury washed through him at the thought of the two who had caused this and he sincerely hoped the twins and Hermione would not go easy on Ron and Ginny Weasley.

"Well, well, well... still trapped?" Fred said as he and the others entered the chilly empty bedroom, finding his siblings still immobile on the floor. He was rather surprised they were still being held by the spells. "Seems Harry and Hermione put a lot of effort into those spells."

Hermione smirked and cast finite on the silencing and petrifying spells. Ron and Ginny, shivering uncontrollably, shot to their feet though they didn't run, as the twins and Hermione were blocking the only exit.

"What do you think you're going to do?" Ginny asked, scowling at them. "You're really going to take that slimy bastards side."

"You could have killed him!" Hermione shouted. "He may be a prat, but Draco didn't deserve that." With that said, Hermione murmured something, flicked her wand and sent Ginny flying back against the wall.

"Hermione!" Ron shouted.

"Shut up, Ron. You both deserve what you're about to get," George responded calmly.

"You're lucky we're here instead of Draco's people," Fred replied. "His mother is ready to literally strip your flesh right off."

"We're your flesh and blood!" Ginny rasped as she pulled herself off the floor, hand reaching back to her head and wincing. Her hand came away with a smattering of blood. "You bitch!" Hermione grinned and shrugged, stowing away her wand. Ginny snarled and ran at Hermione.

Ron had been inching towards the door and when he saw Fred and George's attentions were on the fighting girls, he sprinted forward, hoping for freedom. When an arm locked around his neck to keep him in place against Fred's chest, he howled in desperate rage. The twins smirked and made him watch as Hermione clearly took charge of Ginny.

George snickered when Hermione managed to slap their sister across the face after Ginny tried to punch her in the stomach. "She's having fun."

Fred laughed and then winced when Hermione managed to plant a fist in Ginny's eye and then her stomach, causing the younger witch to double over. "When this is over, if I were you, I'd piss off back to Romania as soon as possible," he told his younger brother as George grabbed Ron and pulled him back to face Fred. "And Ginny might want to run to Hogwarts as well. Draco will be out for revenge and whatever you think about him, you've got to know he'll come after you. Our lovely Draco is no pansy arse. What we do to you is only a fraction of what he will accomplish. And it makes no difference if you're a girl, Ginny."

Ginny wasn't really paying attention. She was lying on the floor, clutching her bleeding nose and crying hysterically as Hermione stood over the youngest Weasley with her fists on her hips. "You can dish it out, but not take it? Pathetic."

"I never hit him!" she cried.

"Ginny, you liar! You even tried to use sectumsempra on him!"

"So did you!"

The twins and Hermione went very still and stared at the two siblings. Both who quickly realized they should have remained silent on that front. Fred moved until he was nose to nose with his baby brother. "Was Draco awake at that time?" he asked softly, his voice barely a whisper. Low and dark to the point that it caused Ron to shiver, never having witnessed such rage in his usually playful brothers' eyes.

"D-don't know. He was in and out and he wouldn't fucking talk! We had to do some-"

Fred broke Ron's nose, not even flinching when he felt the cartilage and bone break beneath his fist. "You better hope he wasn't awake for that, Ronnikins. If he remembers... you'll only deserve what's coming to you. We told you he was ours. We told you... and still you did something like this. It's like you said. We're your flesh and blood, but obviously that doesn't mean anything to you as you went out and hurt someone who means the world to us."

Ron knew he'd messed up. Knew what was coming and he pleaded to his brothers for forgiveness. He pleads fell on deaf ears though. Fred and George took turns beating him up until he resembled Draco when they'd flown in to rescue the blond. Hermione took no prisoners either. After hearing what Ginny had tried to do, she flew into a rage, straddled Ginny and started to hit the younger witch wherever she could reach. Hermione felt a certain amount of pleasure knowing she'd probably broken Ginny's wrist and several fingers. She's also left Ginny with a smattering of unattractive bruises. And using a spell she found in the Dark Lord's library, made sure those bruises couldn't be easily hidden or healed.

"Draco regained consciousness last night," Hermione said to the mostly immobile teens lying on the floor as she and the twins headed to the door. "You'll want to flee. He's sure to have told his family. You know what that means. You know who'll come looking for you. Good luck hiding from them."

Draco opened his eyes and immediately noticed he was not in St. Mungo's anymore and was thankfully in his own bed at home. *When was I moved? How?* "Someone bring me a mirror,"

he asked aloud the moment his eyes adjusted to the sunlight filtering into the room from the balcony and he saw he was not alone.

"Um..." Harry scratched the back of his neck from where he and the others were standing next to the bed. Harry glanced sideways at Hermione, whom studiously kept from returning Draco's widening eyes. "That's not... a good idea right now, Drake," he finally murmured.

Draco turned panicking eyes on the twins. Their faces were blank as they stared across the bed at Granger and Harry. The fact that they weren't looking at him had Draco hyperventilating. It lasted only a minute however. Harry looked at him again and noticed the acute panic. The brunet dropped to his knees and scooped up the blond's hand.

"Sorry, Drake. It was just a joke," he said with a small smile. Granger, the bitch, laughed. George ran to the bathroom and moments later reappeared with a hand mirror.

"Don't joke with my looks, Potter!" he snapped, tearing the mirror from George's hands and only breathing in relief upon seeing he wasn't horribly disfigured. The only thing wrong with his face were the bruises. All broken bones had been healed at St. Mungo's, leaving his features as they had been before the youngest Weasleys dared to touch him.

Arms encircled his head and a face was pressed against his throat. "You're still beautiful, Draco love."

"Get off me," he hissed, pushing at Fred. "How dare you pretend I was less than perfect for even a moment!"

Harry snickered. Then he sobered upon receiving the blond's death glare. He quickly turned to the beside table and picked up a small box. "I brought you fudge! It's got raspberry swirl. I know how much you like raspberry."

"Don't want it," he muttered. Harry's eyes widened. Draco declining his fudge? That was unheard of. "I want to be left alone now."

Hermione left without prompting. Harry shifted from foot to foot, looking torn and down that Draco refused his gift and knowing Draco was going to stew about what happened to him. "Leave the fudge beside the bed, Harry. And come back in a few hours," he commanded.

The brunet perked up, smiled brightly and did as was told. He gave a cheerful wave and left. Draco turned to the twins, who looked absolutely resolved not to go anywhere.

"We're not going," they said, confirming what Draco already knew.

"Go." They shook their heads. "I'm fine. You don't need to be here."

"Draco, we want to be here."

"I don't hold you responsible for the actions of your siblings," he murmured softly, at once knowing he'd soothed them somewhat by the tension that suddenly released from their shoulders.

Before anything else could be said, Draco's parents entered the room. Draco tensed, knowing what was coming. In St. Mungo's his father demanded to know who was responsible. Draco had lied, said he didn't know. And by the narrowing of the elder Malfoy's eyes, he knew his father believed none of it. Draco had not answered even when asked again and had winced when his father hissed the Dark Lord would be by to receive his answer. Draco wisely kept from saying that Harry more than likely would take care of the Dark Lord's wanting to know who was behind it.

Lucius and Narcissa stopped beside the bed now. His mother eyed the twins, giving them small smiles; though her gaze was clearly questioning their continued presence. Lucius cast a hard gaze at his son. "Draco, you will tell us who was responsible for your abduction," he intoned darkly. Draco looked away from his father, his gaze drifted to the end of the bed. He could feel the twins watching him; could practically hear their questions. Why wasn't he telling? Why disobey his father?

If they didn't understand then they were morons. "I never saw them. I was blindfolded."

As much as he hated Weasel and the Weaslette, if he told, his father would make the entire Weasley family pay. He would seek vengeance and so would his mother. Lucius still held a good amount of reign in the Ministry and he would crush the Weasleys. And his mother could be vicious. He couldn't let that happen to the fiends' family.

His father narrowed his eyes and Draco knew his father was aware he was keeping something out. But his mother nodded and took her husband's elbow, gently tugging him out of the room. Draco knew this wasn't the last he would hear about this. His mother was keeping her silence, but he knew she was thinking up a storm, already forming a plan of vengeance for whenever she did discover who dared touch her son.

Draco lifted his eyes to the right side of the bed where the twins sat. They were grinning at him. Apparently they did understand. Draco focused on the one closest to him. Fred. He had an emerald stud in his ear. His eyes were fixated on Draco's face. When their eyes locked, Draco felt a jolt of desire spread through him and it had nothing to do with carnal desire, though that was there too, blast them. His gaze moved to George and he was struck with the same emotion and he didn't think he'd ever felt so pleased and excited. They were identical and yet their personalities weren't entirely the same. But Draco was attracted to the both of them equally. Were they really in love with him?

"They would be killed. All of them," he whispered.

They nodded and Fred ran a finger down Draco's cheek. "You surprise us every day, Draco Malfoy."

The blond huffed and swatted the hand away. "Please leave the fluff at the door," he murmured, though a smile did play at his lips.

"Now then, Draco love," George began, leaving his chair and climbing onto the bed and stretching out next to the blond. "Are you going to accept our offer?"

"What offer?"

Fred followed his brother's actions, stretching out on the other side, trapping Draco in between them. "Dinner. Dancing. Possibly a night of glorious shagging?"

"Dancing where?"

"*Meracus*, of course."

"Fine. Only after the bruising is gone. Don't hold your breath on the shagging part. And... Harry has to come with us to *Meracus*."

The twins grinned. "If we didn't know better," Fred began in his ear.

"We'd say you were scared of us."

Draco shivered from their words ghosting very close to his ear and tried to burrow deep under his covers to hide the blush. Perhaps he was afraid of them a little. He had never in his life expected to fall in love with *two* men. It was a little daunting. Especially since it was these two. "You shouldn't lie here beside me. Mother may come back and then you'll die and I'll receive another insane tirade about my innocence."

"Would you miss us, Draco? If we were to die?"

"Would you mourn for us?"

"Unfortunately."

The twins smiled and settled down beside him and Draco was too tired to make them move. And truthfully he wouldn't really have made them move anyway. They were warm and cocooned him quite nicely. "Tripe," he muttered. When the house elf appeared, Draco told the elf to warn him if his mother approached his rooms. The elf bowed and popped out. Draco felt it was safe enough to slip unconscious with the twins' limbs draped over him.

Harry traveled with Mione through Malfoy Manor after leaving Draco's room, descending the floors to the parlor where he knew Tom was lingering. Hermione laughed quietly to herself. No doubt she was remembering the panic on Draco's face when Harry had implied his face was less than perfect at the moment.

"That was a little mean, wasn't it?" he said, snickering as they reached the bottom step.

"I'll remember the look of horror on his face for years to come."

"Its funny how you two seem to get off by how much horror the other feels. He said the same thing about you and your reaction when I told you about Tom and me."

Hermione grinned. "Guess it's one way to start a friendship. I'm beginning to see what you see. He is sensitive... for a spoiled prat," she said as they neared the parlor.

A voice called out from beyond the parlor. "Hermione."

The two looked down the corridor where Auror Charleston was standing in the Entrance Hall with his partner, Lustre. "Andy," she whispered breathlessly. Harry's eyes widened at her tone and the high blush on her cheeks.

Andy? When did Auror Charleston become Andy to her? "You're on a first name basis now?"

Hermione shrugged and watched Andy murmur something to his partner before striding towards them. Hermione gave a Harry a look. He completely ignored that look and watched the Auror approach. Charleston stopped in front of them and gave Hermione a gorgeous smile. Harry thought the man was good looking enough. Apparently Hermione thought the same if the blush on her face was anything to go by. And then Charleston looked at him and sent him the silent message every bloke sends to another bloke when he wants to be alone with a woman. In answer Harry crossed his arms over his chest and raised an eyebrow.

"I've been putting this off for a while now," Charleston began, ignoring Harry completely and giving Hermione his complete attention. "Circumstances demanded it. But I wondered if I could reserve the right to take you out some evening when it would be appropriate to do so."

Hermione didn't even take a breath. "Yes, of course!"

In response to Charleston's shit eating grin and Hermione's inane giggle, Harry finally and quickly moved away. Hermione... giggling? *So strange*, he thought as he entered the parlor where Tom and Snape lingered. Harry was still shaking his head in wonder when Tom saw him.

"Something the matter?"

"No... Charleston asked Hermione out and she's acting like a girl. It's weird."

"She is a girl," Tom replied.

"But she blushed... and giggled!"

Tom gave him this look. A look that said he was about to say something Harry wouldn't like in the presence of Snape. "I've several recollections of when you've done the same-"

"I do not giggle!"

Tom smirked and that was all. He didn't even drape an arm around Harry's back as he usually would when they sat together. No hair petting either. Harry didn't think Snape's presence had anything to do with it. Tom had done those things before in front of the sour wizard. So why wasn't he doing it now?

"How is my godson today?" Snape questioned. Harry peered around Tom to look at the Potions' Master who sat in a single chair beside them. He couldn't bring himself to glare now. Not after seeing Snape taking care of both Lucius and Narcissa during the time Draco had been missing. His actions and obvious love for both of them... for the entire Malfoy family had been surprising. Especially since Narcissa was married to Lucius. But Harry now knew

Snape felt about Narcissa the same way Lucius did and Narcissa reveled in both their platonic love and care for her.

"He seems okay. Freaked out a moment when we implied his looks had been damaged..." Harry paused and snickered. "He's just angry with the situation."

Hermione ran into the parlor and grabbed Harry's hand, pulling him up and away from Tom. "You need to help me pick out another set!"

"Mione," Harry began, his eye wide in fear and backed away from her. "I helped you two weeks ago... please don't make me-"

"This is important, Harry Potter!" she screeched. "You will or so help me! Your fiancé has nothing on me!" Before he could refuse, and she knew he wouldn't dare, Hermione twisted her ring and vanished on the spot. Harry trembled.

"What just happened?" Tom asked, staring at the spot Hermione disappeared from.

"Hermione has this... obsession. And if anything gets in the way of her 'obsession', she turns into... well, you've just seen."

"What is this obsession?" Snape asked. "And why does she need your help?"

Harry made them swear not to utter a word before he told them. It wasn't a long explanation, and he didn't think it particularly funny the way he was always dragged into Hermione's fascination with expensive lingerie, but Tom thought it was hilarious. Really, Harry loved Hermione and he didn't mind going with her, giving his opinion. He was gay. He could give an honest opinion about the way she looked without drooling over her. But it happened frequently. If she could, Hermione would blow all her money on books and lingerie and forget about eating. And if anything changed in her life, anything exciting or even if her life was monotonous for more weeks than she could handle, it was a new set of lingerie and books.

"Seriously, she needs help—it's not funny!" he snapped in reaction to Tom's continued laughter.

"She... doesn't mind posing in front of you?"

Harry was a little surprised Snape hadn't sneered at the topic of conversation yet. "You're gay, right? One hundred percent?" Snape nodded. "Have you seen Narcissa in her knickers?"

"A few times..."

"You didn't bat an eye right? Bet she didn't either. Because you're gay and you know each other so well. Hermione likes posing for me and receiving an honest answer as to how she looks. Honestly I don't mind it... except it's all the fucking time!" Harry took in a deep breath and then studied Snape before suddenly grinning. "You, Lucius, and Narcissa have platonic sleepovers, don't you?"

He was still snickering over the caught look on Snape's face as Tom took him home.

The tension in Remus' shoulders lessened as he dispelled the locking charms on his door and stepped inside. He'd been out on errands and had been sure someone was following him. He could feel eyes on him wherever he went, but no matter how hard he looked, no matter the spells he sent out in search of a watcher, he'd come up with nothing but the Alley patrons around him, and none of those had been paying attention to him. In fact they had tried to steer clear of him, which was usual.

He'd just set his bag of groceries onto the kitchen table when the hair on the back of his neck suddenly stood on end. He spun around towards the front door just as a voice softly spoke out. "It's been many, many moons since I've last seen you, Remus. That time has obviously not been kind to you."

Remus spun away from the door, his nostrils flaring as his gaze landed on the figure leaning against the wall near the corner, near the window he'd been facing in the first place; the figure's arms crossed leisurely over his chest. Remus' lips pulled back in a snarl as he recognized the scent. The scent was cleaner now, but he could still recognize it. He did not, however, recognize the charmingly dressed werewolf leaning against the wall, even if he did know who it was. "How did you get in here?" he demanded, wand in hand and pointed at the elder werewolf's chest, eyes scouring Greyback's features, unable to connect his scent with his appearance. Fenrir looked clean and... civilized. *And how did he cover his scent until he wanted me to smell him?*

"Such hostility for your Alpha, cub?" Fenrir asked, eyes moving away to study the kitchen and living room, sneering softly at the horrid conditions in which Remus allowed himself to live in. Flea bitten dogs could find better lodgings.

"Don't call me that," Remus snarled. "You are not my Alpha!"

"Have and always will be."

"No," Remus growled.

"Deny all you like, but you know it to be true..." Fenrir locked gazes with Remus and grinned, sharp teeth gleaming in the light. Remus vaguely noticed his teeth were clean and white. "Cub."

"What do you want, Fenrir," he bit out, knowing the elder werewolf hadn't come to kill him. He would have attacked by now if that were his reason for being here.

"I've come with a message."

"From your master?" Remus assumed; his voice a rasped whisper, eyes wide as he studied the elder werewolf.

"Yes. As you know, Harry Potter is no longer involved with the war. And you know what that means, Remus. You know the only real threat to the Dark Lord was that boy. You and your Order made him the only threat. You were involved in making a boy the only weapon against the Dark Lord." Fenrir sneered at the thought. Not because he didn't think the Potter boy was

powerful enough, but that the wizards had been stupid enough to rely on one person. Fenrir waited before going on, watching the emotion play over Remus' face. "But you realize this. Must eat you up with guilt."

"You came here with a point, I'm sure, Fenrir. Get to it."

"The Dark Lord seeks to establish equal rights for us. Werewolves and vampires to start with. He's looking to ingrain us into society. Spread the truth... you of all know we do not mindlessly kill and infect people on thoughtless whims. We can contain ourselves each full moon. There's no reason why we should be treated as nothing more than dangerous animals."

"You are a dangerous animal, Fenrir." The elder werewolf grinned and shrugged. Neither admitting or negating such a declaration. "This is the reason why Emmet Shafer was killed?"

"And the others, yes. Why haven't you tried to incapacitate me, cub?"

Remus blinked at the sudden question and stepped back a few paces. A smile curved Fenrir's mouth at the action. Remus could try and deny the wolf inside him, but it was still there, in his every action.

"I will hear what you have to say," Remus finally replied.

"The Dark Lord wanted you to know."

"Why?"

Fenrir pushed away from the wall and closed the distance. "You aren't stupid. He wants you to think." Remus visibly tensed when Fenrir leaned in to him, when the werewolf's scent washed over him. He then quickly backed away, averting his eyes. Fenrir frowned. "You've been without a pack for too long."

The simple statement cut deep and it shouldn't have. "Get out."

"You've always been stubborn as well. Tell me... do you accept the package you receive every month? The Wolfsbane? Or do you ignore it, thinking it to be poison? Do you turn away from it because it is charity?"

"I dislike going insane during the full moons," Remus answered. "How did you know about that?"

"We have eyes and ears everywhere, Remus. You know this. One Hermione Granger sends that package. Brewed by Severus Snape." Fenrir laughed at the absolute shock coloring his face.

"Hermione?" a small smile moved across Remus' face, thinking about the bright witch. "Should have known... she works with Severus? But he's..." Remus narrowed his eyes then. Gaze full of suspicion.

"No," Fenrir chuckled. "She stands beside her friend. They belong to no side. But that muggleborn is a smart one and she cares. So I suppose you really aren't alone. At least you

know someone cares about your well being."

"Don't talk as if you care!" Remus barked because it had sounded as if he cared and he had no wish to hear this from Fenrir Greyback.

Fenrir bared his teeth at the open hostility. But that's as far as he went with his warning and smirked maliciously when Remus' head dipped a bit. A clear indication that he was submitting, albeit, reluctantly. "You seem alone now, cub. I'll wager you never once saw yourself affiliated with a group who would slaughter children... or were you a willing participant in that attack? You taught some of those very children."

"Unlike some people, I value the life of a child," Remus returned, his voice coming low, the words tumbling from his throat in low growls. "I knew nothing about that attack until it was all over."

"Defending yourself to me," Fenrir murmured. "Why?"

Remus remained silent and settled on glaring, waiting for Fenrir to leave as he knew the elder werewolf would.

"It really pains me to see one of mine living in these conditions," Fenrir remarked as he finally turned to take his leave.

Remus bared his straight teeth. "I am not one of yours."

"I made you," the elder werewolf replied as he continued towards the door. At the last second he side stepped when a curse was thrown at his back. Remus charged him when his spell missed, enraged beyond belief.

"You destroyed my life!"

Fenrir moved swiftly and spun around, grabbing Remus from behind and shoving him roughly against the door. He leaned in, lips hovered next to Remus' ear. "I saved your life and was paid a great deal to do so. Your parents left important things out... suppose they would have eventually told you. When they were ready. A shame they died before they could confess. Suppose... in the end they were ashamed of the solution they came up with."

"What are you talking about?" Remus panted against the wooden door.

"Your father paid me to bite you."

"Liar!"

"You were terminally ill, Remus Lupin. The Lycanthropy killed that illness. You would have died without my bite. Never would have reached your sixth birthday."

Remus closed his eyes against the panic invading his mind. "You're lying," he whispered desperately. "You're lying. Father insulted you. You did it for vindication. You love infecting children."

Fenrir sighed softly against his ear. "Misconceptions run aplenty, don't they?" he asked and jerked Remus away from the door and watched the cub stumble away. "Think about what I've said."

Remus stood shaking in the middle of his one room flat long after Fenrir had gone, hands trembling, lifted and balled into fists, pressed against his aching temples. Flashes of his childhood before the bite forcing through his barriers. Flashes of his parents. Soft smiles. Sometimes full of sadness when they looked at him. Sadness, pain, and grief. But there was also always love and desperation. Going to St. Mungo's several times when he didn't know why. Bewildered when his father took him to a muggle hospital, still not knowing why. Not knowing what the tests were for. He'd only had a cold. He was always getting colds. But they weren't anything drastic. The colds would go away... and they did, after he'd been bitten. He remembered witnessing a quiet discussion between his parents. His father saying he'd found a solution. Still, Remus refused to believe it.

"Lies," Remus hissed into the silent space around him.

Draco was completely recovered. Well, not completely. He determined he wouldn't be completely over the incident until he'd had his own revenge. Not revenge taken out by Granger and the twins. Other than that, he was fine. The poorly planned abduction hadn't been all that horrible. It could have been much worse. But even then he'd only been hurt because the Weasleys had tied him up. Had he been loose, it was guaranteed he wouldn't have gained even one broken bone. With or without his wand.

He was no longer bruised and broken and could walk around without thinking he looked less than perfect and currently he had just Flooed into the Dark Lord's manor and heading for the kitchen where he knew Harry to be. Draco felt guilty over the fact that Harry had been doing all of the work lately when it had been his idea to begin with. Nearing the kitchen, a blond brow arched when he could clearly hear pots and pans being slammed down on the counters with obvious intentional force, and as he crept closer Draco could clearly feel Harry's magic lashing out uncontrollably. Obviously something had ticked his friend off.

"Harry?" he asked softly, walking in slowly. It was always best to be cautious when Harry's magic was lashing out because of his temper. Draco found Harry facing away, standing over the stove. Harry's shoulders had been slumped, head dipped down. But as soon as he heard Draco's voice, the brunet perked up. Harry spun around and the smile on his face seemed genuine. Draco would have thought he'd mistaken the anger and despondency if he hadn't felt Harry's magic lashing out a moment ago. So he wasn't fooled and knew something was wrong.

"Hey! Didn't know you were out and about."

Draco smirked. "Well we can't all laze about like you, Potty."

Harry only nodded and returned to what he was doing. Which wasn't much as Draco saw there were no pots on the stove. "Sent out the first round of orders today. Those boxes you ordered were really nice. I liked the designs on them."

"When we have time we can create a design together, yeah?"

"Sounds good."

After a moment of Harry standing there, not saying or doing anything, Draco lost patience. "Potter, what in bugging hell are you doing? And don't tell me you're making anything. I have eyes and clearly you aren't."

Harry partially turned and peered at Draco from the corner of his eyes. "Have you... has your father mentioned anything about... has he been busy recently? Death Eater things, you know?"

Draco's brows creased in thought. "No more than usual. Why do you ask?"

"Tom's been keeping his distance from me. Haven't really seen him in two days and he hasn't told me why. I know he's in the manor. He's been avoiding me, Draco. Makes excuses when I find him and quickly buggers off."

"I know what you're thinking, Harry. Don't jump to conclusions."

"I'm trying not to."

"He probably has good reason..." Draco murmured, though he wondered what it could be. And surprisingly, he felt a sort of tame panic rise within him. He didn't like that Harry feared the Dark Lord's recent actions. Didn't like the thought of Harry losing any of the happiness he'd found here. But, Draco mentally reasoned, he had seen the recent *Prophet* articles and pictures. The Dark Lord wouldn't have allowed such pictures to be taken if he weren't one hundred percent serious about Harry. "Really, I think you have nothing to worry about. He's the Dark Lord, Harry. He has a war to win, after all. It can't be all about you all the time," he said softly, not trying to be cruel.

Harry looked away, a thoughtful expression on his face. "Suppose so..." then he looked at Draco. "So? How are you and the twins?"

Draco smirked. "They're taking me to dinner."

Harry's face instantly brightened. "You agreed to go on a date? Wicked!"

"And dancing. At the pureblood club you liked. *Meracus*. You're coming with."

"Why do you want me to come?"

"Because... I told them no shagging yet, but if I'm with them by myself I'm afraid I won't have the willpower to say no," he burst out, blushing horribly.

Harry laughed, his mood instantly brightened. "When is it?"

"Haven't decided yet. Fred and George will be a bit busy the next few nights. Illegal endeavors for my father and all that."

"Let me know when. Now get your arse in gear and help me with the rest of these orders. Don't think now that you've got me into this that you can back out and simply rake in the Galleons without lifting a bloody finger!"

"Alright already... bloody annoying nagging ponce!"

Two days later, Harry awoke slowly and blinked away the sleep, immediately knowing he wasn't alone. Usually that wasn't strange, but recently Harry hadn't seen much of his fiancé in the last week and the little insecurities had begun to rise again, just as Draco had seen. This is why a smile exploded across his face when he realized Tom was beside him. And then he realized he was immobilized, his wrists chained to the headboard. His smile disappeared.

"Tom... this isn't our kink room," he said the first thing to come to mind. From beside him, Tom laughed. That only pissed Harry off. "Why the hell are you laughing? You've been avoiding me," Harry spat and tried to kick Tom as he stood up. "You come to bed only after I've fallen asleep. You're gone when I wake. Our breakfasts together seem to be a thing of the past," Harry ended, his voice trembling.

"I've been preparing," Tom murmured. It bothered Harry that he didn't look at him.

"Preparing for what?" Harry asked, his voice lowering into a whisper in his growing worry. Tom didn't speak, but he did finally look at Harry. "Why have you tied me up? Going to torture me now? Tired of playing with me? Is now the time?"

Shock colored Tom's face and then fury and in seconds, Harry had an angry Dark Lord straddling him. "You think this is a game, Harry?" he hissed. "You honestly think this is a game?! Do you think I would give to you all of my fucking soul as a game?"

"You've been avoiding me!" Harry cried in shock. Tom never cursed outside of their lovemaking.

Tom took a deep breath as he studied Harry's face. He had not realized how much hurt he was causing his lover by keeping some distance until he could do what he had to do. He should have known better than to do something like that though. Especially with Harry, since his lover had every right to question Tom's motives. Harry would be an imbecile not to and as often as Tom called Harry stupid, he never meant it.

He allowed his hands to run through Harry's hair, holding his lover's head gently at the sides. "I did not mean to cause you such fear about us," he murmured, finding it painful to look into those terrified green eyes. "Nothing has changed between us."

"Promise?"

"Yes, I swear it." Tom lowered until he could brush his lips over Harry's, smiling when Harry instantly responded, craning his neck so that he could have more contact. When he pulled away, Harry was back to looking bemused.

"Then what's going on? Why am I tied up?"

"I did something. I did something you will not like."

"You do lots of things I don't like," Harry reminded with a lopsided grin.

Tom placed his palms against the side of Harry's head again and lowered his body so that he could press their foreheads together. "I need to show you something. I need to show you and you will not like it. But I must do this. I want your trust, Harry."

"I- You're not making much sense, Tom. Tell me why I'm tied up."

"I'm not going to give you the chance to run away from me like I know you'll want to. We're going to talk about this after." Tom breathed against Harry's mouth, stealing one more kiss before he pressed into his lover's mind, knowing it may be a while before Harry allowed his touch. "Relax. This will not be painful."

"How can I relax when you've started to worry me again," Harry asked, his eyes gone wide. "Did you kill one of my friends in one of your rage induced tantrums?!" he cried, his tone rising into hysterical proportions.

"Harry, you are the only being in this world that I have ever loved. I will love no other for the rest of my days. Think of this after you've seen what I need to show you. Please."

Harry nodded, sure he was incapable of speech at the moment, and he tried to relax. Tom told him he was going to push a memory, a vision into his mind. And Harry was terrified of what he was about to see. Clearly something had Tom nervous. And then his thoughts clouded as Tom pressed in the vision.

Harry saw himself sprawled on the floor in Tom's office; he seemed to be unconscious. Tom appeared shortly after, shaking his head as he looked down at his unconscious body.

"If you can't handle the alcohol, then why drink?" Tom muttered as he bent down to pick Harry up.

Tom cradled his obviously drunk body against his side and carefully began to lead Harry to his room. About half way there, he saw he'd regained consciousness. Harry snorted quietly when he heard his vision self begin to hum 'it's a small world'. Annoyance immediately colored every inch of the Dark Lord. *"Potter. I will put you under unspeakable torture for the annoyance you've given me today,"* and Harry laughed outright when Tom released his vision self- more like shoved- and his vision self stumbled away into the nearest wall. The look on Tom's furious face was gorgeous.

And even as he thought this, Harry wondered when this had happened. He couldn't recall... Harry stood back watching with widened eyes as vision Harry literally threw himself on Tom, initiating everything that happened in the next few minutes. Drunk or not, Harry couldn't believe he'd done that. Though it was kind of hot watching from the sidelines as Tom touched him. Their snogs were hot as hell too! This vision was definitely making his subdued morning erection bloom once more.

"I'm gonna regret all this in the morning... I don't want to regret it."

Tom pulled him into another kiss before saying, *"no, you will not regret it."*

Harry watched his lover pull his wand on him; watched Tom raise it to his face and knew before he'd spoken the spell what he was going to do.

"Obliviate."

Harry's eyes snapped open, meeting Tom's. Their heads still pressed close together. "Why did you do that?" he whispered.

"Couldn't have you pulling away from me—you would have, Harry. You know it to be true," he said before Harry could disagree. "I told you... I told you before how long I've waited to have you beside me. I was not prepared to wait while you got over that regret."

"Perhaps you shouldn't have taken advantage then," Harry hissed, jerking his wrists. The chains gave him no slack.

"But you're so tempting," Tom purred, running a finger down his lover's cheek. "So beautiful, even when intoxicated. I can never say no to you. How did you expect me to say no then?"

He had a very good flattering point, Harry thought. "You lied... you said you would never lie to me."

"I never lied to you."

"But I asked you! That time Draco came over! I asked you if you saw me the night before."

"Never lied," Tom said, unable to hold back a smirk. "I simply left things out."

"Fucking Slytherin! How many times have you done that to me?"

"Touched you?" Tom inquired, his voice trembling. Something was wrong with him because he found Harry's reactions to all this funny. Perhaps it was because his young fiancé's cock was pressing against his inner thigh. Clearly Harry took pleasure in part of that vision. And he may have been amused because he could see it in Harry's eyes that he would not lose his young lover because of this. Because of his impatience. Tom was feeling so good about the situation that he allowed his hand to travel down to rest on Harry's bare thigh.

"No!" Harry yelled in response to Tom's smart ass question and bucked his hips to dislodge the wandering hand that was very close to the hem of his boxers. "How many times have you obliterated me?"

"Would you believe my answer?"

Harry huffed and looked away. "You know I would," he murmured and Tom could see Harry hated that he would believe him no matter what. This was why he would never lie to Harry.

"That was the only occasion. I won't do it again."

Harry nodded slowly though he continued to look away from Tom. A ferocious frown still on his face and wrinkling his brow. Harry would stay mad at him for some time, pout for ages if he didn't do something. Tom's hand resumed its lazy wandering of Harry's thigh and his free hand moved to grasp his lover's chin in order to make Harry look at him. "Let me make it up to you."

"How? And if you're thinking sex will fix this, I'll murder you."

"I want to take you out to dinner."

Harry's pout slowly vanished to be replaced by excitement. "Really, a date? Out in public where everyone can see us and take pictures of the wealthy candy on my arm?" Tom was nodding before the rest of Harry's words sank in. And then he was the one scowling ferociously. "Yes, I accept then," Harry went on, now with a grin. "How else are you going to make it up to me? You gotta give me something else."

"What else do you want?" Tom asked slowly, already recognizing that devious light in Harry's eyes that told him he probably wouldn't like what his fiancé was about to demand. He wasn't mistaken.

"I want Bunnymort. For the entire day—no, for two whole days. With the exception of our date. You can be human then...actually I want Bunnymort whenever I ask for him."

Tom sat back on Harry's thighs. "No."

"Then you are not forgiven for being a selfish spoiled bastard!" Harry yelled. "Now untie me! I'm going back to my flat!"

Tom was staring at his lover and wondering if Harry realized how amazing he looked when flushed with anger, his unique green eyes flashing brilliantly. Tom leaned forward, placing both hands on Harry's thighs and smirking. "You are not going anywhere."

"Watch me!"

Tom's hands began to move slowly up, his fingertips disappearing beneath the hem of his boxers. "Alright. Show me."

Harry hissed and yanked on the chains again. He started wriggling his hips around, trying to keep Tom's fingers from reaching their goal, but that only served to excite him more despite his frustration and annoyance with his lover. "Just give me what I want and I won't be mad anymore!"

"How about I take what I want now," Tom purred, one hand reaching Harry's erection and gripping it firmly. "And then I'll leave you here until you decide not to be mad at me anymore."

"Wha—That's not... You wouldn't dare!" When Tom arched a dark eyebrow, Harry sucked in a breath. He would. "Can't we compromise?"

"Perhaps," Tom murmured, shifting back further until he could ghost hot breath over Harry's cloth covered cock. "But not now. The sight of you angry and chained is leaving me in only one state of mind. I don't want to talk much now."

By the time they were through, both Harry and Tom were sated and feeling pretty damn good. For the most part. Harry had been unchained and Tom now watched his smugly smirking lover limp to the bathroom. Tom eventually conceded to the Bunnymort thing, if only to keep Harry from returning to the flat. No matter what happened, if Tom had not given in, Harry would have gone just to prove a point. Besides, Tom knew he should never have obliviated him. He should have dealt with the consequences of what had happened that night.

"Oh Bunnymort!"

Tom growled under his breath before shifting. After a few seconds he jumped off the bed and hopped to the bathroom.

Bill stifled a tired groan and tried to look at least a little interested in the ridiculous conversations going around the table presently. Beside him, Remus was the only one remaining silent on the current discussion of pulling any and all persons even remotely suspected of being affiliated with Death Eaters. Remus was slumped in his chair, eyes glued to the hands clasped together on top of the table. Despite being quite young looking, Remus seemed more tired than ever. Tired and perpetually shaken up.

"We'll start with those we know for sure are Death Eaters and work down. Lucius Malfoy for one. He's been allowed to strut through the Ministry for too long."

"You can't arrest people without any proof!" someone shouted over the loud din.

"Then make some proof! We need information! The Death Eaters seemed to have disappeared. With the exception of a kill here and there, there have been no group attacks. No muggle or muggleborn attacks. Strange."

"Isn't that a good thing?" Remus finally spoke softly but only Bill heard him.

Moody stood and slammed a fist on the table. "They could be up to anything! Grab whomever you know is affiliated with them. The Malfoys, the Grangers, Henderson, the Turpins, the Patils, the Davies..." Moody trailed off as Bill slowly stood, a look of pure rage on his face.

"Wasn't it enough that you killed the Davies boy?" he murmured, easily heard now that everyone had quieted upon seeing his face. "The Patils? You have no real proof any of them are Death Eaters or affiliated. None. And the Grangers? Muggles?! Have you lost your mind, Moody? Have you all lost your bloody minds?!" he shouted, disturbed beyond belief by the fact most had been nodding along with the old crazed Auror. Even Shackbolt and Tonks.

"Hold your tongue boy or you'll find your young brothers next on the list," Moody threatened lowly. "They've been seen quite often with the young Malfoy, haven't they?"

Bill was relieved he wasn't the only one now looking enraged. *Finally* his parents seemed to have given up agreeing with Moody and stared at the old retired Auror in shock. "N-now Alastor," Arthur began. "That's strictly social."

"My babies have nothing to do with anything concerning to the Dark side!" Molly screeched. "You leave them out of this!"

"All I'm saying," Moody went on, "is that your eldest should stay silent if he doesn't have anything helpful to say."

Molly sent a pleading look at her eldest, a silent command for him to return to his seat. Bill did as he was told, not allowing one ounce of the fury he felt show on his face. That wouldn't help anyone. He knew Moody wasn't simply bluffing. If he caused trouble, Moody would cause trouble for their family, for Fred and George. It was clear as day on his face. Moody knew the plans they were talking about were illegal and should it be made public, Moody, Shackbolt and the Order would be in a whole lot of trouble. And Bill knew if the twins were investigated, it would be a very bad thing. Bill wasn't stupid. He knew his brothers were in to something. They had more money than the profits of their business brought in. He was the only one to notice because he was the only one who cared to know about their lives to the extent that he recognized barely there changes. He kept in contact with the twins far more than the rest of their family.

Bill remained silent for the rest of the meeting and tried to not look as if he were bolting as soon as the meeting was over with. Like many, he had felt strongly in the mission of the Order of the Phoenix. He'd given up his curse-breaking job in Egypt to move back to London for the Order. To take up a desk job of all things. And this is what he got. A bunch of madmen and women? People who easily threatened his family? People who were turning parts of their family against each other? It was heart breaking.

"Bill?"

Said redhead turned as he was leaving the house to find Remus walking quickly towards him. "What?"

The werewolf looked over his shoulder before taking Bill's elbow and leading him away down the road until they could disappear into the shadows. "You speak to your brothers often. The twins?" Bill nodded slowly. "Could they deliver a message to Harry for me?"

Merlin, please don't let this be another ploy. "I'll not be a tool to get Harry for the Order, Remus. If that's what this, then you can forget it. I'll check the letter," he promised. "I'll run tests for spells and Portkeys..."

Remus smiled. "You may do so. I only want to talk to him."

"About the war?"

"Perhaps, but nothing about him returning to the Order. I simply want to... see him again," Remus explained as he reached within his robes for the letter he'd written a few days ago. Bill

took it and stowed the missive away in his back pocket. He would do what he promised and when he got home, he'd search for anything amiss within the letter.

"Remus," he began slowly, uncertain if he should say what he was thinking.

"We mustn't let them terrorize innocent people," Remus voiced his thoughts. And then he cocked his head at Bill. "You do realize what Harry said is true. The Order was responsible for the Slytherin attack."

Bill's face crumpled. "I didn't want to believe it," he whispered. "I didn't..."

"Keep your ears open, Bill. Those we know who haven't anything to do with anything need to be warned."

The redhead nodded and watched Remus back away a bit before he could Apparate. Bill closed his eyes on a sigh and Apparated away himself.

As Harry dressed for his date with Tom, he practically thrummed with excitement. Their first date... sort of. A little late in coming, but still! Tom said he'd made reservations at a restaurant in the upscale portion of Diagon Alley. Harry wondered if it were the same restaurant Draco had taken him and Hermione to. Probably. Tom wouldn't be caught dead in anything less formal and lavish than that.

"Master. Guests here to see you."

Harry turned to the quaking house elf behind him, smiling. "Who?"

"Fred and George Wheezies, Master."

"Tell them to come up, please."

"Right away, Master."

Within minutes the twins were on him, exclaiming over his dapper appearance and inquiring about his hot date tonight.

"We've a letter from Remus for you," Fred told him after a time, holding the letter out. "It's safe. Bill checked it."

Harry stared blankly at the outstretched hand; at the unassuming folded piece of parchment. "Remus?" he asked.

"He wants to see you, Harry. He misses you."

Harry closed his eyes and shook his head. Hands dropped on his shoulders and squeezed. Opening his eyes, he found two blue pairs staring back at him with understanding. "Leave the letter until after your date. But you should read it, Harry."

Harry finally nodded and took the letter, slipping it in the inside pocket of his formal royal blue robes. He cleared his throat and attempted to grin. "How do I look?"

"Very handsome," George replied with a firm nod.

"Your new glasses are divine, Harry. Makes your eyes so bloody big and bright."

Harry smiled and turned back to the mirror. "So where is he taking you?" Fred asked as he and George draped companionable arms around the younger wizard.

"Not sure. Somewhere nice."

"High end too, probably," George murmured. Harry nodded.

"Is it necessary to drape yourselves all over him at every possible turn?" a low silky voice questioned from the door.

The twins hastily backed away while Harry turned and grinned at the possessive gleam shining in Tom's eyes. "They can't do it to Drake since Narcissa has taken to following him wherever he goes."

Fred cleared his throat. "We... we like to coddle."

"Suppose we get that from Mum."

"And Harry is absolutely gorgeously cuddly and we miss our darling Draco."

Harry laughed. "They've always been touchy feely."

Tom sneered. "I'm three breaths away from cursing the two of you."

Fred and George quickly vacated the area after such a threat, winking at Harry as they ran by Tom and out the door. "That's not very nice," Harry said as he allowed Tom to steer him out of his room. "They really do miss Draco."

"They should grow some bollocks and stand up to Narcissa."

Harry paused in his steps, gaping up at his lover. Both from the crude language and from the statement. The crude language had Harry's blood boiling pleasantly. But the statement itself had him shaking in terror for his friends' lives. "That's insane talk! You must have seen her on occasion when she gets that maniacal gleam in her eyes! Not even Lucius has pressed that subject with her." Tom made some sort of noncommittal sound and pressed Harry forward to get moving again. Harry looked at him. "Why don't you broach the subject with her?"

Tom literally paled at such a thought. He rather thought Narcissa would risk death by his temper and still tirade about Draco, her innocent baby. He had no wish to go there with Narcissa Malfoy. "It isn't my business. Why should I waste energy on something I care nothing about? He's not my son."

Harry snorted. "Right. That's why you won't do it."

"Silence, Harry."

Tom Apparated them to the district of Diagon Alley where Draco's restaurant was located, but after a few minutes of walking they bypassed that restaurant. "Where are we going?"

"Servile."

"Merlin, please don't let it be as depressing as it sounds. I don't want slaves serving me."

"Last I checked, slavery was illegal. Stop fretting. You will enjoy yourself."

Harry rolled his eyes. That sounded like a command. Freaking dictator. "I don't fret," he muttered.

Tom chuckled softly and ran a hand through Harry's hair as they walked into the restaurant. Harry looked around as Tom was immediately approached by a hostess despite them being at the back of the line. It was a place of white marble. Everywhere, including tall pillars placed around the main dining area. It would have seemed cold and shallow had it not been for the copious amounts of cushions and soft lighting, warm gleaming wood and soft music playing in the background. Harry liked that it was both soft and cold looking and he especially liked the table he and Tom were immediately led to. He hardly paid any attention to the fact most of the muted conversations had stopped upon their entrance and that he and Tom were being eyed curiously.

Soon they were seated in an alcove. Harry was pleased with this arrangement. They weren't exactly hidden away; the rest of the restaurant was visible to them and vice versa, but here they could speak without being heard and the alcove made him feel as if they were alone when he pulled his eyes away from the opening to look at Tom. They hadn't yet settled down before they were immediately approached by a waiter. Tom ordered them a bottle of wine, with another on standby. Harry blushed when Tom sent him a perverted grin after ordering the second.

"Trying to get me sloshed?"

"Why yes, Harry. I am."

After the wine was brought, Harry asked Tom to order for him. After, they fell into a comfortable silence for a time and Harry's attention immediately went to the letter he'd received earlier. "Remus wrote to me," he murmured, rubbing his hand over his breast pocket.

If Tom was surprised, he didn't show it. Though he did look interested. "And what did he have to say?"

The waiter returned by that time with their meals and Harry waited until he'd left before answering. "Haven't read it yet. The twins thought I should wait..."

Tom held out a hand, palm facing up. Harry sighed and retrieved the letter. "The twins said Bill checked the letter over already."

"Give it to me."

Harry passed it over, watching Tom's face as he quickly read through it. Tom's blank expression never changed as he read and Harry didn't get any kind of clue as to what was in the letter. He figured Tom was checking to make sure Remus hadn't written to him about the war. Finally when Tom was finished he gave the letter back. Harry returned it to his pocket and then grabbed his wine glass to down half the contents.

"Harry... what do you want for the future?"

Harry nearly spit up his wine. The question seemed to come out of nowhere. He certainly hadn't expected this kind of question from Tom, especially since they had never really discussed the future. Tom looked pleased that he'd managed to shock Harry. Because of this, Harry answered truthfully and he deliberately answered with something he knew would make Tom uncomfortable.

"I want children, of course." The stricken look on Tom's face was priceless. Harry covered a laugh by taking a drink when the Dark Lord pulled at his collar as if it were too tight. "Don't you want children, Tom?" he asked sweetly.

"An heir would be nice," Tom murmured, evading Harry's amused gaze to concentrate on his dinner of baked salmon.

"No, not an heir, Tom. A child. To love and nurture. Not a small being that you can mold after yourself. Not a little mini you that will be foisted off on nannies and tutors."

"I'm not... parenting material, Harry."

Harry gave him a lopsided grin. "We'll see."

Tom's eyes locked with his fiancé's and he was suddenly wary. There was a decidedly hard glint in Harry's eyes; cunning and conniving and assured. Tom felt like he was falling. His little lover was certainly going to be a force to be reckoned with. And though he was now nervous of what Harry was planning, he was also thrilled by the deviousness his lover possessed and hid so well from most of the world. He couldn't help the broad smile that appeared on his face. That smile grew when Harry practically melted in his seat, his cheeks exploding in red.

"How is your business going? The baking endeavor with Draco?"

Harry sat straight in his seat and grinned. "Brilliant! I had to start shipping orders off myself since Draco was recovering, but I didn't mind and he came over earlier in the week to help once he was better. One of the shops Drake visited in Diagon Alley make custom boxes- Fred and George told him about it. Getting more orders everyday and making a killing."

"What are you calling it?"

"Draco thought about Savior Fudge." Tom snorted and shook his head. "Yeah, my thoughts exactly. I'm not a savior and I didn't want it to just be fudge since we'll probably start selling

other things as well."

"So what are you calling it?"

"We decided on M.R.'s Decadent Confections."

Tom liked the name. And he rather thought Harry was his own decadent confection. "Can you make candy as well?"

Harry nodded. "I'm experimenting right now, gathering recipes and creating my own. It's fun."

"What does the M.R. stand for?"

Harry fiddled with his fork a moment. "It's... ask me again some other time, please Tom?"

"Alright."

When they had finished dinner and ordered desert, it was then that Tom dropped the bomb. "I'll be leaving on another trip in a few days."

The pleasant warmth from the wine and Tom's presence seemed to vanish in seconds. "For how long?"

"A week. Perhaps longer if things do not go as planned."

Harry gritted his teeth and nodded. There was nothing he could say to that since he knew Tom would go no matter what he said.

"It's almost over, Harry."

"If you're in trouble, please tell me. Send an owl or something."

"I don't want you picking sides."

Harry sighed. "It's a little too late for that, isn't it? You are my side."

Tom's face softened. "It will not come to that, Harry. You will not be put into that position."

Harry returned his smile and as he dug into his chocolate velvet pie, he sincerely hoped Tom could keep that promise. A moment later he was wrinkling his nose, staring at his dessert.

"Something wrong?" Tom asked, amused by Harry's expression. His amusement grew with Harry's next statement.

"This is atrocious! Good Merlin! What did they use for this? Chocolate colored sand? What a fucking waste!"

"It seems adequate to me."

"Then you have no taste. I could make this better."

Harry sat up in the darkness, the sheet falling to pool at his waist as his eyes tried to focus in the dark. He wasn't sure what had woken him but he suspected it was his subconscious telling him not to wait until the morning to read that letter as he had previously thought to. He looked for the mound of clothes near the door where Tom had stripped them off some hours ago the moment they stumbled into the bedroom, already hard beyond limits and panting against each other. The clothes weren't there and he frowned. The house elves must have taken them away. Which was alright, but now he didn't know where his letter was.

A lazy smile grew on his face as he turned to look at his bed partner. Tom did not sleep with a peaceful expression. Even in his sleep, the Dark Lord looked like he was scheming, his brow creased slightly in concentration. Harry caressed the arm lazily draped around his waist before gently removing it and climbing from bed. After collecting his glasses and putting them on, Harry moved around the room, searching for the letter. He ended up by the bed again, finding the letter on the bedside table sitting next his side of the bed.

Harry grabbed the letter and moved in to the sitting room before plopping down on the soft black leather sofa. He curled his legs underneath him and stared at the letter in his hands. He knew it was a short letter. It hadn't taken Tom very long at all to read it. Steeling himself, Harry finally opened it and read.

Harry,

Please forgive me for not writing you sooner. For not finding a way to contact you. I can admit that I'm ashamed. I do not resent you for the position you've taken in the war. And I will not try and change your mind. I would really like to see you again, Harry. To talk to you. About you and not the war. Things have been difficult... Please give it some thought. I await your response.

Remus

"Things have been difficult," Harry murmured, knowing Remus had thought to put more and decided against it. For Remus to have wrote that meant the werewolf was probably overwhelmed by the problems he was facing. They'd always been able to talk to each other without it having anything to do with the war, even when Harry was still the Order's poster boy. Remus had always tried to talk about other things when he seemed bogged down with his worry over the war. Perhaps they could continue on that. And if Remus needed help... and probably companionship, Harry wanted to give it to him.

Harry jumped up and ran down the hall to his own room and then down to his study. He quickly penned out a reply, located Damas and sent him out. Damas wasn't pleased, as usual, to be thrown out of the manor so late at night, but Harry didn't care. He'd long since gotten use to the demon bird and glared at the eagle when Damas hissed at him. "Just take it." Once back in the bedroom, Harry slipped under the warm covers and against Tom.

"What did you decide?"

Harry wasn't really surprised Tom was awake. "I'll meet him tomorrow."

Tom sighed. "Why must you be so hasty?"

"Because I can."

Tom suddenly rolled over to lie on top of him. "You will take someone with you."

"Course. I'll take Bunnymort."

Tom dropped his face down into Harry's pillow. The brat snickered and nuzzled the cheek next to his. "Never should have agreed to that."

"But you did and so you have to."

"Not tomorrow. There is much to do tomorrow... I'll make it up to you."

"You spoil me," Harry murmured, closing his eyes against the feel of Tom's large hands running along his hips and then further down to lift and hook Harry's legs around his waist.

"To make up for my controlling nature," Tom replied in agreement, his mouth moving lazily against Harry's neck. Tom's hips began to rock softly, creating delightful friction and causing Harry's cock to awaken. "Bring someone with you."

"Okay," he moaned out, head rolling to the side to give his apparently insatiable partner better access.

Harry and Hermione met Remus right outside of the Leaky Cauldron on the London side late afternoon the next day. Harry gave Remus a small smile as he led him and Hermione down the street until they could duck into a vacant alley. Harry took hold of Remus' arm and Apparated them to the muggle flat he continued to pay rent on with Hermione following after them.

"I'll make tea," Hermione murmured and bustled off to the kitchen while Harry and Remus took seats in the living room. Harry studied Remus, noticing the changes to the elder wizard and immediately he knew something was up with him.

"It feels weird being here with you," Harry finally said. "I never thought I'd see you face to face again, Remus. Not after all that's happened." Remus looked pained at his honest confession. Harry was only a little sorry, but it had to be said.

"I wanted to let you know I was not a participant of the Slytherin attacks. I didn't even know about it until after it happened. And even then I didn't realize it had been the Order. Denial, I suppose."

"Now that you do know?"

Remus knew what Harry was asking and sighed. "So many lives are at risk, Harry." The brunet across from him tensed. "No, I'm not talking about you returning. You have no idea the kinds of plans the Order is making. Innocent people are being targeted. I can't leave the Order..."

"I guess that makes sense."

Remus looked down at his clasped hands. "Greyback came to see me," he said quietly. Hermione dropped the tea pot she'd been handling. Remus chuckled. "Yes, my reaction felt something like that."

"What did he do?"

"He spoke."

"What did he say?"

"Harry," Hermione interrupted before Remus could say anything. "Are you sure you want to know?"

Harry didn't know what to say. On one hand he did want to know, because he knew Tom must have sent Greyback. But on the other hand, no, he didn't want to know. In the end Remus sensed his warring thoughts and gave him a smile. One that wasn't loaded with his problems. "No worries, Harry. We'll speak of other things. How have you been? I see you've been living," the elder wizard said, pulling out a clipping of the *Prophet* and staring at it. "You look happy."

Harry leaned forward to get a better look. He'd assumed it would have been a picture of him and Tom, since those pictures were printed every day. There had even been one of them this morning. A snapshot caught at the restaurant. Tom had been laughing and Harry had been caught ogling his fiancé like a love sick fool. But the picture Remus held was an older one of him, Drake, and the twins leaving the Wizards' Den, laughing and joking with each other.

"It's good to see you living how you want. It's good to see you sticking to your principles and what you believe in. You're not letting anyone bring you down because of your decision. Your strength astounds me, cub."

"R-Remus..." Harry found himself choked up.

"I think," Remus went on with that same smile, "James and Lily would be proud, Harry. No matter the decision. It's the fact that you made the decision and have stuck to it."

Still Harry could say nothing and he was relieved when Hermione sat beside him, placing the tray of tea on the coffee table and distracting Remus who went on to thank Hermione for the monthly Wolfsbane. She looked shocked that he knew and then a little afraid because he did. If he knew that, then he might know who made it at her request.

"I know Severus makes it. I'm not going to ask how or why you are still in contact with him."

"How did you find out?"

"Fenrir," he answered. Harry heard a growl beneath the name and his lips twitched. "You keep your eyes open and be alert. You two may be neutral but it seems like the Death Eaters are still watching you."

Oh geez. Now Harry felt guilty for making Remus worry needlessly. "At this point I think we're in danger of the Order more."

"Yes, that's true," Remus replied, looking at Hermione.

The witch caught his look and sighed. "Again? Merlin, and I was getting used to being able to go see my parents whenever I want."

"It's not just you, Hermione. Prepare your parents."

"I'll send them on a holiday. Thank you, Remus."

Remus nodded before turning to Harry. "I've learned long ago not to take what is printed in the *Daily Prophet* at face value, but the pictures they've been printing recently are fairly self explanatory." Harry laughed and nodded, knowing what Remus was speaking about. "Does he take good care of you?" the werewolf asked, looking down at Harry's engagement ring.

"Yeah. And I'd like to think I'm making some sort of mark on him as well," Harry murmured, thinking about some of Tom's more extreme malevolent actions.

"You are," Hermione responded quietly.

Remus looked at them in question. "He's been known to throw tantrums," Harry explained with a grin.

Remus' top lip pulled back in a silent snarl. "Is he abusive, Harry?"

"No! Never!" Harry shook his head quickly. "It's just... he likes to lose his temper—but not with me!"

"He treats Harry well," Hermione said more calmly. "He was a very broken man but Harry has fixed him. Well... he's better with Harry around anyway."

Remus sat back, clearly relieved. But then a thoughtful expression crossed his face. "Why haven't either of you spoken his name yet? In fact, his name isn't stated in any of the articles I've read either."

"He likes being Harry Potter's mysterious man," Hermione answered with a laugh.

"I'll tell him you said that."

Hermione crossed her arms. "I'm not afraid of him anymore. Just a little intimidated now and then."

Harry grinned. "You'll find out eventually," he told Remus. It was obvious Remus was still curious, but he let it go and the three spent a good two hours more in lighthearted conversation.

Harry and Hermione returned home from their outing both extremely happy after meeting with Remus. Upon their parting Harry could tell the meeting had also done some good for Remus as well and they'd promised to have another get together soon. A house elf immediately popped in once they'd arrived home to tell Harry he was being summoned to Tom's study and that Master's friend was also needed immediately. "Wonder what the rush is?" Harry murmured as they made their way.

Draco was waiting for them outside of the study. He grinned when he spotted them and rushed over, immediately thrusting fingers into Harry's hair, trying to tidy the wild mess of raven locks. Hermione finally batted his hands away. "It's really a futile effort, Malfoy."

"Are you ready for this?" Draco asked, fairly thrumming with excitement.

"Ready for what?" Harry asked. Draco didn't answer; instead he opened the door and thrust Harry inside.

Aside from Tom, there were six others inside the study. Lucius, Severus, and Narcissa. Fred and George were there, as well as a tall skinny old wizard Harry had never seen before. The man had black robes on that looked official in some obscure way and he fidgeted outrageously. Narcissa beamed such a smile at Harry when he stumbled in that he was left blinded for a minute. And then everyone was staring at him expectantly as if he'd been the one to call this meeting. "Err..."

Hermione took a look around and gasped, figuring it out almost immediately. Tom approached Harry, amused at his bafflement. "Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" he snapped and behind him Draco snickered.

"For our bonding, of course."

Harry's eyes widened as he took another look around at the people in the room. Before he could make any kind of articulate response, Tom took his hand and pulled him over to the official looking man. Hermione squealed softly under her breath and rushed over to the twins. The three hugged each other silently, excited they were about to watch Harry get married. Draco scowled at them, fully aware that he couldn't even be touched by the twins as his mother was in attendance, and she'd been casting the fiends suspicious glances since St. Mungo's.

The following moments were like a whirlwind to Harry. He was happy. Ecstatic, even. He couldn't even be bothered to be annoyed that Tom had sprung this upon him. He had known it would happen this way eventually. So he let Tom hold his hands and turned to the official. The bonding took no more than ten minutes. It was an informal bonding but at the end, Harry's engagement ring disappeared in a flash of light and a golden tendril of magic surrounded his and Tom's ring fingers. When the light faded, they had matching golden rings and the official announced them married and bonded for life. And that's all that mattered to Harry.

Harry's smile threatened to crack his face as he signed the official marriage certificate and then he threw himself on Tom, who had also been sporting a smile akin to the smiles young

excited boys wore when their parents had finally bought them the toy they'd been begging after for months.

"Lucius, if you would see Thurwhorl out," Tom muttered around Harry's mouth. Lucius nodded and led the fidgety wizard away. Harry hoped not to his death.

"You two stop that now. We need to celebrate," Narcissa said, coming over with two flutes of champagne and bravely forcing herself between the newlyweds. As Tom accepted the flute, Harry looked around for Draco. The blond was sitting primly on the armrest of a chair. He shot a grin at Harry who smiled back before looking at the others. Hermione rushed over and quickly embraced him. As he hugged back, looking over her shoulder, he saw Draco and the twins eyeing each other. Rather heatedly. And somewhat morosely on Draco's part. And Harry knew they would have liked to have stood together if only Narcissa didn't have that insane innocent baby complex.

"Hermione. I baked a yummy pie earlier. It's in the kitchen. Can you and Narcissa go get it?"

"Sure."

"Surely you can order a house elf to deliver it," Narcissa asked, her nose rising in the air a bit.

"It's a work of art! I don't trust the house elves not to drop it," he lied. "Please?"

"Very well. Come along Miss Granger. I must admit his baking is exceptional."

Harry shared a smirk with Hermione when Narcissa turned and headed to the door. "Take your time," he whispered.

Hermione winked at him and then mumbled, only half joking, "the things I do for the blond prat."

"Did you really bake a pie or was that a lie?"

Harry turned back to his new husband (internal and completely manly squeal!) and smiled. "No I really made one. Wanted to see if I could make it better than the nasty concoction we were served at Servile."

Tom chuckled and pulled Harry's back against his chest. Harry sighed in contentment when Tom dropped his chin to rest on the crown of his head. The twins rushed over to Draco and the blond nearly fell off the armrest when he was ambushed with four arms, the air rushed from his lungs as they snuggled and groped him unashamedly.

"Get off," he wheezed.

"No Draco, love," the twin with the emerald green shirt on whispered. "We've been without you for too long."

Draco opened his mouth to say something, but George quickly took advantage and slid his lips over the blond's. Harry giggled. Draco didn't even try to push the twins off him. In fact one hand slipped into George's hair while the other slipped around Fred's waist to keep that

twin firmly pressed against him. Harry could see why Draco wanted him to accompany the three to the pureblood club. If Draco was serious about holding out on the shagging for a bit, he would need someone there to help keep the three of them in line. Harry was glad Draco had thought of the no shagging rule. It made sense. Usually the blond shagged first and asked questions later, but since this appeared to be serious for the three of them, holding out on the shagging was a splendid way for them to grow closer together. Harry suspected Draco was scared too and he could understand that.

Pulling his eyes away from the three, Harry found Snape standing back, sneering at the threesome. Harry laughed, pulling Snape's attention. "I'm sorry. The look on your face..."

Lucius returned before he could reply. Harry wasn't sure that he would have anyway. The blond wizard paused beside Draco and the twins. "Your mother is returning."

The twins slid off Draco immediately, but they didn't move far away. They sat beside him, one running a hand through Draco's hair to straighten it while Draco let his head fall back against the leather of the sofa they sat on. Draco knew his lips were swollen from snogging... *Good Merlin, please don't let her notice.*

When Granger walked in after his mother, giving him an apologetic look, he hated her a little less; knowing she'd tried her best to stall his mother. Of course, the fact that Granger had damaged her own hand when she'd beaten the fuck out of Ginny Weasley also had a lot to do with his lightened mood towards her. Fred and George had gladly provided a memory that day they had fallen asleep with him on his bed. Draco had been impressed that she'd held nothing back. Draco narrowed his eyes thinking about it. Parts of that memory had clearly been tampered with and he wondered why.

He supposed now wasn't the time to think of such things. Harry and the Dark Lord had just been married after all. Draco sat straighter, barely able to ignore the thighs pressed against his and looked around. Harry was excitedly cutting up pieces of his pie and distributing it, talking a mile a minute with that ever present smile plastered on his face. Draco stared hard at that pie for a moment and decided he must have a piece of it. As he stood, two hands passed quickly over his arse.

He whipped his head around and glared at the offenders. "Please control yourselves."

Two devilish grins were his only reply. Draco turned away from them with his own little smile and approached Harry, who was passing over a piece of his creation to the Dark Lord. Harry ignored everyone else in the room, obviously eagerly waiting to see how his pie fared. Draco accepted a piece from Granger with a nod and watched as the Dark Lord took a bite. Harry sucked in an audible breath. Seems the entire room had and now everyone was watching for the Dark Lord's reaction.

Tom soon became aware of the scrutiny he was under and looked around as Harry's velvet pie practically melted on his tongue. This, *this* was nothing like the pie they had been served at Servile. Tom hadn't been able to understand Harry's complaint then, but he did now after being presented with an alternative. Apparently his young husband was correct. He had no taste to have not understood. Tom chewed and swallowed and then looked at Harry, who had yet to return to breathing and was now chewing his bottom lip. "You could walk up to Servile

right now and they would pay you mountains of Galleons to be allowed to sell it. This, Harry, is extraordinary."

Harry bounced on his toes and turned to Draco. "He likes it!"

Draco was too busy eating to give one word back, though the blond seemed to take to the pie as well as he took to the fudge. If the moan and eye rolling to the back of his head was any indication.

"Merlin, Harry. You've outdone yourself here," Hermione murmured. Narcissa, Fred, and George concurred with that.

Behind them, Severus sneered. "I don't see what the big deal is. It is only a pie-" Lucius plopped a fork full into his lover's mouth.

"Give credit where credit is due," the blond murmured, watching as Severus slowly chewed. The corner of his lip twitched when Severus' eyelids fell shut and a truly lost look appeared on his face. And then he scowled. Having enjoyed that bite far too much.

Chapter Twelve

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twelve

Tom walked out of his wardrobe and shook his head upon seeing Harry was still sitting on the edge of the bed, staring at him in a morose fashion. "Harry, this is a matter that needs to be seen to immediately. This trip cannot be postponed." Harry narrowed his eyes, but otherwise remained quiet. "I know we were just married... I swear to make it up to you." Harry scowled now. "Do you really think I want to leave you this morning?" he asked in exasperation. At least this time Harry wasn't looking so violent. He wasn't glaring; instead his expression was kind of flat.

Tom moved to stand in front of him and pulled his young husband to his feet. Dipping his head down, he went in for a kiss only to have Harry look away. Tom was not to be put off and placed his lips above the curve of Harry's cheek. "You know I love you," he breathed, his lips moving slowly down.

"That's not fair," Harry finally spoke, his words coming out breathlessly but still he refused to meet Tom's lips, being the stubborn Gryffindor that he was. He braced himself against the feel of those warm firm lips moving down to his neck to lightly suction at the junction between his neck and collarbone. It was delicious there, Tom thought, as was Harry's reaction whenever he did it. "Will it be dangerous?"

Tom's lips paused in movement and he hesitated before saying, "No, I should think not."

"You're not going to kill the Weasleys are you?"

Tom mentally sighed. "No. I'll leave them alone to suffer the outcome of the war. They'll be delightfully upset."

Harry finally moved, his hand coming forward to slip under the only article of clothing Tom wore. A dressing gown. His nimble fingers attached around Tom's quickly rising arousal. "Do you need to go right this very minute?"

"Yes, I should probably-"

Harry squeezed and then caressed with just the right amount of pressure making Tom grit his teeth in order to keep from moaning aloud. Now this was unfair play and Harry knew it. Of course Harry knew it, which was why the little minx was dropping to his knees and spreading Tom's robe open in order to gaze at Tom's swelling cock. "You sure?"

"Now who's not playing fair?"

Harry smirked and trailed a finger along the underside of Tom's cock, licking his lips when the hot member pulsed and Tom's breath quickened. "Does that mean you don't want me to?"

"When have I ever not wanted that bold mouth wrapped around me?" Tom questioned roughly as he grabbed that back of Harry's head. Harry grinned impishly and dived in.

When Harry woke up he immediately cursed the Dark Lord, knowing his husband had slunk away while he was napping. Tom had made sure to tire him out so much that he wouldn't be able to do more than turn over and fall fast asleep after their last bout of lovemaking. "Sneaky bastard," Harry muttered as he sat up, finding a note lying upon Tom's pillow.

Snatching the letter up, he quickly read through it, his scowl disappearing with each word until he was left sighing with resignation. Slightly mollified because the Dark Lord begged his forgiveness and once again promised to make it up to him. And since Harry knew Tom would keep that promise, he couldn't find it in him to really stay mad at Tom. There was a bunch of warning in the letter for him to take care and stay safe, as well as informing him his lessons with Snape would start later that week. His husband reminded him to try and be civil since Severus was going to do the same.

Harry grinned then as he left the bed. Husband. The word sent a rush of giddy emotion through him. It was such a novelty, thinking about it, and he knew he'd feel like this for a long time. Simply because it was almost so sudden. It wasn't just being married to the Dark Lord. It was the fact that he was married, plain and simple. Married to someone who wanted him for him and not his name or anything else to do with what the world thought of him. In the past, Harry had doubted he'd ever find someone like that. He doubted he would ever marry. And it was still shocking to think Tom was that someone.

He was caught up in all these thoughts as he showered and dressed for the day, wearing muggle clothes under an opened informal robe. Since Tom had left him (on their honeymoon, bastard), Harry figured he'd get to work, as there were a number of things needed to be done for M.R.'s Decadent Confections. Which meant a trip to Diagon Alley. Before going, Harry Floo called to Malfoy Manor trying to find Draco, only to have the house elf inform him young Master Draco was not at home.

Harry shrugged that off and headed to Diagon Alley, figuring he may find the blond there. He was mindful of the warnings Tom had imparted in his morning letter. Tom had reminded him of the danger Harry would put the world in should he allow himself to be captured. Harry smiled broadly thinking about those few lines.

Grinning like an idiot, Harry stopped at the twins shop first. There were two employees in the front and one of them (with a gawking expression) gestured him into the back room when he asked for the twins.

"Harry, mate! Out of bed already?" one twin asked with a smirk once he was spotted.
"George! Harry's here!"

"He had things to do and skived off on a business trip when I was asleep," Harry replied as Fred and George approached him.

"Tough luck, mate," George said, giving him a fond pat on the shoulder. "On your honeymoon and everything."

"I know! He left me to sleep and left a bloody note full of orders! Freaking dictator." The twins snickered. "So I decided to come out. I need to order more boxes for MRDC's... Has Draco been about?"

The twins' grins suddenly turned sheepish. "Actually... Draco's gone off too," George said, pointedly rubbing the skin on his left wrist.

Harry groaned. "Where?"

"We don't know," Fred answered.

"Taken a page out of your book and enforced the don't ask, don't tell policy... mostly."

Harry rubbed hands over his face. "It must be big then if he's recruited Draco for this... what do you mean mostly?"

The twins shifted uncomfortably. "Look, Harry. We're mostly neutral like you, but we also want to save as many lives as we can at the same time. Your sugar daddy... his side's not so bad anymore and..."

Harry held up a hand. "I will respect whatever you do, guys, because I know you won't go too far. That's all I need."

"You're a gem, Harry."

Harry grinned. "That's what Tom says!"

"Bet it's when you're sucking his cock," Fred said, grinning and nudging the younger wizard's shoulder.

The brunet blushed. "Among other things," he murmured.

"So how's your business doing?" George asked.

"Good. I wanted Draco too so we could fine tune what we're going to sell and think up our own design. Can't believe the wanker went off without telling me."

"He wasn't expecting a mission so he only had the time to tell us before he had to go."

Harry nodded that he understood, smiling a little at the fact Draco had made the time to tell the twins before he had to leave and clearly the twins were happy about that. The three loitered for a little time longer before Harry left them to get his business done and tried to keep busy in order to keep from worrying about Tom and Draco.

Severus watched Potter- *Riddle now*, he reminded himself with internal awe- stir the potion in a counter clockwise motion. The room had been silent for the last half hour and Severus was surprised to find Potter hadn't made a single mistake.

"Why did you take his name, Pot—Riddle?"

Harry's lips quirked, having caught the mistake. "Wanted to."

"He forced the decision?" it was a question that came out more like a statement.

"No, Snape. I really wanted to take his name. That's why Drake and I decided on Malfoy Riddle's Decadent Confections way before I married Tom."

"What about your family? You are the last Potter. Do you care nothing for your family's name?"

Since Harry could only hear curiosity, he decided not to let this conversation irritate him.

"Perhaps I'll give one of our children the name Potter. The first born son, if we ever have a boy. Tom would probably like the first born son idea. Traditionalist that he is. Therefore our male heir will be heir to both the Riddle and Potter houses."

Snape gaped at him. "You really are serious about this..."

Harry bent over his text book to make sure he wasn't missing a step. Just fifteen more stirs to go. "Even if I wasn't, a little too late to back out now, don't you think?"

"I must confess your involvement with him has thrown me."

Harry turned to him after the last stir. "I really love him, Snape. Do you think I'd be here for anything else?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Though... his kitchen is exquisite. Perfect for my baking. Perhaps that's why I've stayed. For the Dark Lord's kitchen," he added with an impish grin. Severus felt the corner of his mouth twitch.

They went back to being silent while Harry finished the potion under Snape's critical eye. He'd only made one mistake, but luckily that was easily fixed and Severus didn't sneer at him as much as he would have at Hogwarts.

"Have you heard from him?" Harry asked quietly as Severus checked the final product with a raised brow.

"Yes. Everything is on schedule. He asked that you try and restrain yourself from gaining entrance to his office. But we both know restraint isn't one of your best strengths."

"Ha bloody ha, Snape," he muttered. "What about Draco?"

"Draco's task is easy and he should be able to keep out of trouble. He'll be back soon." They were silent some more until Severus could no longer hold back. "How could you love him? After everything?"

"From meeting him after that time of my kidnapping, I've learned he's not a complete monster. He's human too. Only few realize this. You do. You've seen..." Harry paused when Snape nodded. "But living here, I think I'm the only one he's truly opened up to. He doesn't

have to be any kind of Dark Lord around me. And he isn't... most times. He's not sorry for killing my parents. He's not sorry for everything else he has done, but he is sorry for causing me pain and somewhere along the way I forgave him." Harry eyes crinkled in amusement. "And the sex is fantastic."

"Too much information, Potter."

Harry laughed. "Riddle," he reminded, and then sobered, realizing he was having a conversation with Severus Snape and wasn't disgusted by it. "Weird," he murmured, turning away. "What about you and Lucius?"

"What about us?"

Harry grabbed a stool and sat on it, facing the wizard who was leaning against the work table across from him. "It's not strange, being a long time lover to someone who is married?"

Snape crossed his arms over his chest and looked away slightly, as if thinking. "It helped that we were firmly together before Lucius' father demanded he marry Narcissa. It also helped that Narcissa was already a loyal friend to both of us before that. She didn't want to separate us and told us the night of their engagement party. She would only expect Lucius in her bed until they conceived an heir and Lucius was not to complain when after she went off to lay in the bed of others. We were all happy with that arrangement. Luckily Draco was conceived quickly after they were married." Snape smirked. "Narcissa was relieved. She would complain Lucius didn't know what he was doing in bed and he was always whining-" he broke off, remembering just to whom he was speaking to.

Harry had softened under the fondness in Snape's voice. "Completely gay then."

"Oh yes. Completely mine."

Harry smiled at the clear possessiveness in Snape's tone. "Did Lucius' father know he was gay?"

Severus' barely there smirk disappeared. "Yes. But he didn't much care where Lucius' preferences lie."

"I don't understand. If it was for a Malfoy heir, you and Lucius could have-"

"Do not forget I am a half blood. Abraxas never even considered it. Considered me."

"That's not cool."

Severus smiled and Harry was nearly thrown off. "He wasn't completely cold, Potter-"

"Riddle."

"Why do you think he chose a woman, *Riddle*? A woman who was more of a sister to both of us? He could have chosen a wizard of pure blood. A wizard who would not have tolerated Lucius having a lover. Back then pureblood really did make a difference, no matter how fond the old wizard was of me."

"Did he like you then?"

"He offered his home to me when mine became too violent. So I suppose for Abraxas Malfoy, that was a high tolerance of my person and lack of pure blood."

"Is that one of the reasons why you joined Tom?"

Severus inclined his head to Harry. "Perceptive, Potter. Very perceptive."

"Riddle," he interceded, prepared to have to do that a lot now. "Dumbledore thought differently."

"Dumbledore was a great wizard, even the Dark Lord acknowledges that, but he didn't know everything. He only had puzzle pieces that he put together. And some pieces were wrongly connected. Dumbledore never knew of my relationship with Lucius. Only Slytherins were aware, and no one dared breathe a word of it outside of the common room. We were very discreet beyond the borders of Slytherin House."

"That must be nice," Harry muttered. "Sometimes I wish I hadn't begged the hat to keep me out of Slytherin. Most Gryffindors didn't know how to keep their mouths shut. It was maddening sometimes."

"I had heard from Dumbledore you managed to keep the hat from placing you in Slytherin. At the time I decided he was only trying to get me to tolerate you. But you acted too much like a Gryffindor for me to believe it. That was until the Slytherin attack."

Harry stood and turned away, beginning to clean up his workspace. "The world wanted a Gryffindor," he murmured, his tone bitter. "I gave them one."

The Potions' Master watched him silently. There was a lot about Harry Potter no one knew about. No one cared to know. The Dark Lord... he had wanted to know. He wanted to put Potter where the boy would be able to be what he wanted.

"I wanted to say," Harry began without turning around, "thanks for making the Wolfsbane for Remus."

"Don't thank me for that. I receive enough- too much –thanks from Granger as it is."

"Why do you do it?"

"I never hated Lupin as much as I did Black and your father, even if he almost killed me that one time. Lupin, at least, has some sort of intelligence. He's... nice."

Harry snickered. "Nice," he muttered, laughing under his breath. "You actually called him nice. I'm going to tell him that."

Severus sneered and pushed off the table. "I think we're done here for today."

"Suppose I failed," he asked with a knowing glint.

"You passed. We'll try a harder potion next time. I'll also require a three foot essay on the properties of aconite."

Harry balked. "Three feet!"

"Yes, Potter-"

"Riddle," Harry interrupted with a cheeky grin.

Severus sneered. "A four foot essay due the next time we meet."

"You said three feet seconds ago!"

"Want to go for five?"

Harry pressed his lips together and shook his head.

Remus strode through Diagon Alley with a destination in mind. But his strides faltered when the ancient building of Gringotts fell into view. His chest tightened as he thought about the things inside, about what he was going to look for. Items he hadn't laid eyes on since the earlier days of his Hogwarts career. This was one thing that was bothering him, of course. He was about to go seek information. Information that he would probably be better without.

He was also being followed again, but at least this time Remus was aware of who was watching him. Two pairs of eyes were on him. One from the Order- bloody Moody's man- and Fenrir. It was the thought of the elder werewolf's mocking stare that had Remus straightening and continuing on to the bank with a purposeful stride, his wand clutched tightly under the sleeve of his robe. He wasn't oblivious to the irony of the situation. Greyback was the reason why he was even now walking into Gringotts. Greyback was the one who had him thinking it was finally time to go through the items he stored in a small vault Sirius had procured for him long ago after his parents died.

Remus had been so distraught at losing his parents so early in life that he'd never really looked at the journals and pictures and other things he'd cleaned out of the Lupin home. He'd only been to the vault once since then. But he couldn't purge Fenrir's words from his mind and he needed to know. Needed to prove Fenrir was a lying monster. Fenrir would say anything to mess with his mind. He wasn't sure he would find anything within the journals his mother kept, but it never hurt to look.

Before long he was standing before the small vault, the door having already been opened. Remus blinked several times in shock. There were more piles inside than the last time he had been inside. The new piles were made up of Galleons. "Excuse me?" Remus murmured, turning to the goblin standing by beside the cart. "I think you've brought me to the wrong vault."

"No mistake, Mr. Lupin. The key number matches the vault number."

"But I've never made any deposits in here. Where did this money come from?"

"You can find that out once we've returned to the surface."

Remus slowly turned back to the vault, his mind working quickly. He didn't need the goblins to tell him where the money came from. Only one other person knew about this vault and that was Sirius. His deceased best mate had had access to this vault in case something should happen to him... but Sirius had never said anything about putting money in. He would have known not to do that because Remus would have given it all right back... maybe that's why Sirius never said anything.

It was painful. The thoughts about Sirius sinking claws into the forefront of his mind as he skirted around the money to the table and boxes behind. Remus wanted nothing more than to get out of there, so he quickly found the items he was looking for, bundled them all into one box and left without a backward glance. After confirming that it was a certain Black who'd deposited the money, Remus left Gringotts with his items and went straight home. He was prepared to spend all night reading through his mother's journals.

It didn't take all night. At the end of the second hour, he'd finally found what he was searching for. Remus dropped the journal onto the table before leaning elbows on the table to cradle his head in hands. It was true. Every word Fenrir said was true. "How can it be true?" he rasped, even though the evidence was right in front of him, written in his mother's handwriting. According to his mother, he had been plagued with an illness that she only referred to as 'the sickness' whenever she wrote about it. Apparently it was an unidentified illness that no one in the muggle or magical world could cure. She also wrote about researching and finally discovering the abilities of magical creatures. She'd written about vampires, about how she and his father had discussed that possibility before tossing the idea. Should Remus have been turned by a vampire, not only would that kill the illness but it would also kill him and that solution seemed counterproductive.

"Counterproductive," he murmured, raking his trembling fingers through his hair and thinking that term sounded too clinical when she was discussing the life of her only child. But Remus could feel his mother's desperation as he read her words. Begrudgingly he could also see the wheres and whys they'd chosen a werewolf. One day out of every month didn't seem so bad if they could still keep their son. At least that was what his parents had said to console themselves after what they had done.

His mother also wrote about her research into werewolves. It hadn't been a spur of the moment decision. She'd even talked to a few werewolves. None of them turned out the way Remus had, in that he hated his inner wolf. Despised it. Tried to suppress the creature every hour of every day. Beyond the bigotry, Remus' mother had discovered werewolves could live happy lives when they accepted themselves.

Remus dropped his hands and shoved the journal away, watching detached as it slid off the table. He didn't see how that was possible. It's not as if he hadn't tried, but then he'd been left on his own. He'd only ever heard bad things about werewolves. He'd only been treated as if he were a plague by everyone who knew about his infliction- beyond James, Sirius, and Pettigrew. Clearly his parents hadn't thought the plan through enough. Remus held onto that belief with all his heart. It was the only way he knew how to live with the wolf. By denying it

and being miserable. What else could he do? This new information... it wasn't going to change anything.

The soft tapping of his window drew his attention away from the table and the damning truth. Remus stood to open the window for the owl hovering with a package in the talons. He'd expected this, more thankful now that he knew who sent the monthly Wolfsbane. The full moon was in two days and he didn't relish going out there and changing without that potion. Strangely the package was smaller than usual, but he didn't think much of it until he unwrapped the parcel and found a piece of parchment stuck to an empty vial.

You need a pack, cub. Perhaps you'll find yourself some company this full moon.

Maybe you'll finally understand what it means to be free.

F.G

"Why? Why take the Wolfsbane?" his voice coming out high like a painful whine as he crushed the note in his palm.

He didn't know what Fenrir was trying to pull but he knew for certain the Death Eater didn't know where he went each full moon. Because of this certainty, Remus put the note out of his mind beyond the furious realization that Fenrir had purposely taken his Wolfsbane away from him. He knew Hermione would never have agreed to Fenrir sending him empty bottles. In fact he was vehemently hoping the witch never had any kind of contact with Fenrir at all.

Remus took to spending every full moon in a cabin deep within the Forbidden Forest. No one went in that far. It was an obvious place for him to flee during the full moons and he wasn't naive enough to think he was the only werewolf to roam there, but it was safer than finding another place where muggles might inadvertently wander too close. Muggles liked to camp. Some liked to reacquaint with nature in weird ways and often times wandered where they weren't supposed to. But no muggle ever wandered into the Forbidden Forest. And no sane witch or wizard wandered deep into the Forbidden Forest, with the exception of Hagrid. But the half giant knew how to avoid werewolves and Remus doubted he'd ever come into this part of the forest. And the entire time he'd been coming to this cottage, Remus hadn't once caught a whiff of another werewolf, so he thought he was safe here.

And now he was once again entering the small cottage (it was not a shack, and was actually bigger than his actual flat in London), hoping the transformation without the Wolfsbane wouldn't be as bad as he feared as it was going to be. So thinking this, Remus went about fortifying the cottage from the inside. Making sure he wouldn't be able to leave once he'd transformed. Shuttering the windows, sealing the door. After he made sure that he wouldn't be able to leave the shack once a wolf, Remus undressed, folded his clothes and stored them upon a high shelf above the door. Once that was done, he ignored the single chair in the cottage as well as the cot and went to the corner. He sunk down, resting his head against his bent knees, and waited.

Just as he was feeling the painful itching in his bones, a howl rendered the silence obsolete. It was a mixture of human and wolf, that howl. Remus, panting already from the

transformation, lifted his head, staring at the door and windows. "No," he whispered, then gasped and arched back into the corner as his bones began to change. More howls followed the first one. Many. Remus was shaking his head even as his entire body trembled, as fur sprung up along every inch of his body. "No!" he shouted when heard something or someone smashing up against the front door of the cottage.

Minutes passed in this way until there was a terrible crash. Remus was too far into his transformation to pay much attention to it at first. But panic was racing along his body as he convulsed. There were sounds of snarls, maws snapping, noses sniffing the ground, and more howls all around the cottage.

Remus' howl soon joined them. It was one of warning. Moony having taken over completely and now the wolf was enraged there were several werewolves in his territory. One in particular, an alpha, who was poised right over the threshold, staring at him with his black tail poised high with unconcerned dominance while the door lay in splinters under his massive paws. Fenrir had found him after all.

The sligher of the two werewolves slowly climbed to his paws, his growls echoing around them, his fangs bared all the way, ears straight up in defiance as he took a step towards the black werewolf in the doorway. The easy self-esteem and dominance did not leave the alpha, but he did crouch a little, ears lying flat on his head as he also bared his fangs, but not so much as the younger werewolf.

Suddenly the auburn colored werewolf attacked, streaking across the room in a flash. Greyback was ready for him and they fought, wrestled for minutes on end. Moony with feral determination, while the alpha was simply playing with a disobedient cub. Finally the black werewolf seemed to have enough and was able to pin the sligher werewolf to the ground. Later on, when Moony was once again in his right mind, he would look back on that and cringe at how easy it was for Fenrir to wrestle him into the position. But at the moment, all Moony could do was whine when the heavy werewolf bit harshly into his neck until Moony went still, pulling his paws up close to his chest and yielding in a grudgingly manner.

Greyback immediately let up and licked Moony's snout before backing away with a commanding growl. Moony rolled over with a softer growl and faced the elder werewolf, more curious than afraid now, as it was clear the elder werewolf wasn't there to cause harm. Though that didn't stop Moony from tensing in a crouch when the black werewolf padded around to stand behind him. Greyback also crouched when Remus remained still as a statue. He growled lowly, dangerously; his sharp teeth bared and he snapped at Moony's hindquarters. And then he began herding the younger werewolf towards the open door where the scent of half a dozen more werewolves lingered.

Moony put up another fight when he realized what was happening, and this one was more brutal than the first. The alpha was impatient this time and the bite to the smaller werewolf's neck went through fur and skin, drawing blood. Greyback's growls rang through Moony's body like a siren's song and once again he found himself submitting. Once again he found himself being herded towards the door, towards the waiting werewolves outside. Towards Greyback's pack.

Draco returned from wherever it was he had gone and he was tight lipped about what he had been sent to do. Though Harry didn't worry too much about it as Draco didn't seem any different, and knowing the blond, if Tom had made Drake do something particularly gruesome, he would have been able to tell. But Draco visited him the day of his return, exclaiming he was going out with the twins that night and then later Harry was supposed to meet the three of them at the Leaky Cauldron and from there they would all go to *Meracus*.

Harry didn't have a problem with going out. He didn't have to bake anything that night and a fun night out was probably a good idea as it would help keep him distracted instead of being at home to worry over Tom. Hermione had gone off the day after Tom, intent on making her parents take a holiday somewhere out of the country so she wasn't around now to keep him company. It would have been nice to be able to owl Tom, but since he hadn't been owled, he wouldn't take the chance in case Tom was somewhere that an owl might give his husband away. But holy fuck if he didn't miss the evil bastard.

Harry checked himself over once more before leaving the bedroom for the Floo Room. As he approached the room, Harry tried to calm himself so that he could actually have a good time that night. "It's just a week. He was gone longer last time. Tom will be back soon." And Severus did say he had spoken to Tom a few days ago and all was well.

Harry grabbed a handful of Floo powder and threw it into the fire before stepping in and calling out the Leaky Cauldron. Fred, George, and Draco were standing several feet back from the fireplace when he arrived. Fred and George had their backs to the fireplace and their eyes were sweeping across the room, making sure no one was there to ambush them while Draco hurried forward when Harry appeared to catch him before he fell. Harry grinned as he regained his balance.

The blond tsked and whipped out his wand. "See? This is why I detest Flooing," he murmured and sent several cleaning spells over Harry's robes to clear off the soot. "Much better," he declared when Harry was spotless and again.

Harry's smile broadened and the three left the Cauldron. He was dying to ask how dinner had gone but he resisted because he knew Draco wouldn't want to talk about it in front of the twins. Though he was pretty sure dinner had gone great as all three were sporting grins. Draco's eyes were bright and a fresh blush seemed to be permanent on his cheeks.

"So strange," one of the twins muttered as they headed through the Alley towards Knockturn.

"What's strange?" the blond asked.

"We haven't seen a single hair of an Order member all night."

Harry peered around curiously. "Really?" It was dark out, but there were people around. Not many. He spotted a couple of reporters and smiled just for the hell of it when a camera was angled towards them. But there were no figures following at a safe distance, and no one he recognized beyond the reporters.

"Not so strange. The Order is... busy," Draco said in a voice loaded with smugness.

Harry turned back to his friends. A dark brow rose upon seeing the three walking side by side. That wasn't so unusual, especially with Draco between them. What was unusual was the fact that Draco had a half cocked smirk/smile on his lips. Fred had his arm wrapped tightly around Draco's shoulders while the blond's fingers were tightly entwined with George's. And Draco looked very comfortable with that arrangement. Dinner must have gone really well then.

They arrived in the main room of *Meracus* and found it surprisingly full unlike when Harry had visited the first time. Most of the tables were full of witches and wizards with heads bent close together. A steady stream of chatter going about. In several languages. There was a certain air about the place. The talk was laced with excitement. Harry noticed upon their presence the chatter died down a bit and it had more to do with keeping secrets than with being awed by who had just come in. Drake grabbed Harry's arm then and practically dragged him to the back door so fast that he was left tripping over his feet. The blond wasn't exactly being subtle and Harry understood what was going on.

The war. Something big had happened or was happening and everyone in this place was excited about it. For the first time since changing stances in the war, Harry wanted to know what was going on. But Draco had him pulled through the door leading to the downstairs club before he could make out what anyone was saying.

Down the stairs and into the hallway, the twins were immediately recognized and called out to. Draco got this displeased look on his face when the twins went off to say hellos. Lips curling disdainfully. Harry wasn't sure if it were because of the amount of attention his boyfriends (yeah, that's right, he said it) were getting or from the twins boisterous actions- they weren't leaning against the wall and preening like peacocks as Draco had done the first time Harry came around. Harry said that to him and got an elbow in his gut for his trouble.

"What are you mad about?" Harry asked as they walked into the club while the twins lingering behind in the hall as they'd been pulled into one of the groups. "Mad about them being popular here? Just as popular as you when they're Weasleys? Or are you mad because they aren't paying attention to you at the moment?"

"I'm not angry, Potter. Just... just a bit baffled," Draco confessed as they headed to the bar.

"Why? Firewhiskey, please," he ordered the bartender with Draco doing the same. Since Draco wasn't forthcoming with an answer and instead let his eyes wander across the dancers on the floor, Harry answered him. "Because they're well received here even though they don't really act like purebloods when they are."

Draco nodded and knocked back the shot placed in front of him. "Going to dance," he announced and was off. Harry watched him walk off, smirking when the crowds parted for him wherever he went. He turned back to the bar, knocked back his own shot and then went to join. They weren't dancing long before the twins were once again all over the blond. And there was no subtlety in the way they shooed away the other dancers trying to get Drake's attention. Some of their looks were downright violent, which only made Harry laugh in wonder.

An hour later, Harry returned to the bar. He leaned back against smooth wood, smiling softly and watching the dancers. Watching Draco and the twins especially. Draco seemed more comfortable dancing with two partners than he did with just one. Or maybe it was just those particular two. And they danced very well together... if what they were doing could be considered dancing. Harry rather thought it was intense foreplay with clothes still on. Draco didn't seem to care, though he was blushing all over the place. Harry was fairly sure most of that had to do with the twins and not the heat surrounding the dancing bodies.

Those three were gaining a lot of attention, but he didn't even care one of those people staring was Zabini, who'd tucked himself up on the second floor. Zabini still hadn't lost that disdainful look, so it was good for him that he hadn't once tried to approach Drake, otherwise Harry wouldn't be responsible for the outcome of what might happen. After a minute, Zabini's gaze left Draco, traveled the floor and landed on Harry. The Slytherin sneered and Harry gave him a mock salute with his empty glass.

Harry made sure Zabini could see he was being laughed at before he turned away to face the bar again and raised his glass to the bartender for a refill. From the corner of his eye, he caught sight of a bloke walking towards him. Harry didn't pay too much attention- as this was the bar and *Meracus* was crowded- until the bloke sat next to him on his left, practically shoving a witch off her seat to make room for himself. This rude action had Harry preparing for another wave off as he had been doing the entire evening. Which kind of irritated and flummoxed him as his relationship status had been blasted all over the *Prophet* for over a month. He couldn't believe he was still being hit on. And sure enough, the bloke boldly moved his stool closer until he was pressed against Harry's side.

"Are you here alone?" the bloke asked, practically in his ear.

Harry didn't answer. Instead he watched the bartender refill his glass. As he did so, he lifted his left hand to run his fingers through the hair above his ear, making sure the bloke could see his wedding ring. Usually that worked. Usually the witches and wizards took one look and scampered off, probably to start wagging their tongues to their friends. The wedding band was unmistakable and Harry Potter with a wedding band was news worthy. But this bloke didn't seem deterred. He leaned forward so that he could look at Harry's face more clearly since Harry refused to look at him.

"What are you doing sitting here alone?"

"It's a bar. I'm getting a drink."

Harry looked at him then and the bloke smiled. Harry admitted he was nice enough looking. Really nice. He had dirty blond hair, soft brown eyes, and a smile that could kill, but his smile was too smug and it annoyed the raven haired wizard. Harry picked up his drink and pushed back from the bar, not giving the bloke a second look and clearly dismissing him. As he walked away, Harry could feel eyes assessing every inch of his body and suppressed an uncomfortable shiver.

Harry circumvented the dance floor to find a nice quiet table. He found one near the stairs, pressed in the back, nearly covered in shadows and gratefully slipped into the booth to sip his

drink. He was only a quarter done when one of the twins slipped in beside him, throwing an arm around his shoulders. "Why aren't you dancing, Harry?" said twin asked.

"Was heading out there in a minute... which one are you?" Harry murmured distractedly.

"Fred."

Harry could feel eyes on him. And it wasn't Fred. This gaze, from wherever it was coming from, seemed more insistent, more dangerous. It gave a tingle in his gut he did not appreciate. Harry's eyes swept around the floor until he landed on a section of the bar he could see. There was that bloke again, staring right at him. He noticed Harry looking and smirked and once more Harry got that unappreciative flip in his stomach.

"He giving you trouble?" Fred asked lowly, having noticed where Harry was looking.

"Nothing I can't handle. Hopefully he got my message. Not interested."

"Harry! Come dance with me!" Harry looked around to find Draco pushing his way through the dancing crowd.

"Not if I'm going to be poked at the entire time, no thanks," he replied when Drake reached the table.

Draco grinned. "You know you like it. You love the feel of my cock pressed up against your tight arse when we dance."

Fred grinned. "Draco's hot when he talks dirty."

"Agreed," Harry laughed and then quickly downed the rest of his drink before standing. "Where's George run off to?"

"George went to the loo, I think," Draco said, grabbing his hand and tugging the brunet to the dance floor.

Draco was all sorts of debauched looking. His blond hair no longer pristine. Instead it was tussled and damp, parts of it plastered against his forehead and the sides of his neck. His outer robes had been discarded long ago and his silk shirt was plastered against his heated skin. He looked fantastic and more relaxed than Harry could remember him being in a while.

The blond quickly pulled him in and since they danced together all the time, tuning out the world was easy and it was never uncomfortable dancing with Drake. So he lost himself in the music, swinging his hips in time with the beat, teasing Draco's hips with his hands just as the blond was doing with his own, pressing against each other, laughing and having a blast.

At one point Harry's vision cleared from the fog fading in and out on the dance floor and caught sight of that bloke again. He was standing just outside of the dance floor, staring right at Harry. His eyebrow was raised in a way that had Harry pausing in his dancing. Harry had never seen the bloke before but the man's current expression- a dark sort of amusement- and that eyebrow raised seemed kind of familiar. Harry shook his head and turned back to Drake. He didn't care. He was having fun.

"How was dinner?" Harry asked when the music slowed and the two were pressed tightly together, swaying slowly. Draco dropped his head down to the crook of Harry's neck and grinned.

"They have impeccable manners. Where did they learn that?"

"Don't know. So you had a good time."

"Unfortunately." Harry laughed. "They're like two different sides of the same coin... I like them," he whispered against Harry's damp neck. "They make me laugh constantly and lavish me with devoted attention all the time."

They danced together a little bit longer before Drake announced he needed a drink, and probably because he spied the twins sitting at the table watching the two of them with barely contained lust. One of them motioned that he wanted Draco and Harry to snog. "Perverts," he snickered.

Harry watched him go and continued to dance alone. It was something he could easily do without feeling self conscious about himself. Raising his hands to the ceiling and moving his hips with the beat relaxed him, closing his eyes to the rest of the world and pretending he was the only one around despite the bodies pressed up against him from the other dancers who were doing the same as him.

But it wasn't too long after Draco had left him when a hand pressed against his shoulder. Harry didn't stop dancing, but he did open his eyes and turn his head slightly. Not at all surprised to find bar-bloke standing there. Harry inched away until the hand on his shoulder dropped away. But the man pressed closer so that Harry could hear him. "Mind if I join you?"

"Actually yeah. I'd rather dance alone."

"You didn't have a problem dancing with Malfoy," the wizard answered. Harry was annoyed the bloke sounded amused instead of being pissed off that he was being dismissed.

"We're best mates," he answered.

"You were dancing rather close for mates."

"We're mates," Harry repeated, inching further away. "And Draco always likes putting on a good show. Look, I'm not interested. I know you saw my wedding ring. Bugger off!"

Undeterred bloke didn't take the warning and moved until he was pasted against his back and Harry felt the man's hard cock pressed against his arse. "I'll make it good for you, Potter. Give you what you never get at home."

That statement had Harry laughing even as he jerked away. He got enough at home... when Tom was around. More than enough. Sometimes too much. "Not available, not interested. Keep this up and you'll find yourself in a world of pain. Understand?"

The bloody bastard laughed at him. "Is that so? Harry Potter, threatening me with death?"

"It's not me you should be worried about!" Harry snarled and stormed off the dance floor. The twins and Draco had been half way to the dance floor, having seen what was going on. The twins stooped when he reached them, but Draco kept right on to mister-annoying-bloke and raised his wand to the wizard's surprised face, snarling out words the twins and Harry couldn't hear.

The wizard threw his hands up in surrender though he still looked amused and Harry thought the bloke probably didn't have all his marbles.

"I don't like the way he's staring at you," George murmured when they sat down.

Harry looked disgusted. "Know what's worse. He saw my ring and yet he keeps at it."

"He's wearing a ring too," Fred said.

"Really? Didn't notice that."

The twins grinned as Draco slid in across from Harry. "Course you didn't. You don't really see anyone except us three. You two want another drink?" George asked, tapping the table with his wand. Harry and Draco quickly gave out their orders.

Then Draco spent an inordinate amount of time avoiding the twins' gazes and Harry wondered at that since it seemed the three had been having a very good time. So Harry asked. Draco ignored him but the twins grinned in a ridiculous manner.

"Think his walls are crumbling," Fred answered. A blush crept up along Draco's neck.

Harry grinned back. "I'm pretty sure the walls fell a long time-" he pitched forward over the table after having his shin brutally kicked.

"As I've said before," Draco went on, ignoring the hiss of pain coming from Harry. "The snogging means nothing."

"If we didn't know you so well already," George went on in a completely serious manner.

"We'd be severely disappointed and hurt," Fred finished.

Draco cleared his throat and looked away from them. "Harry, he's staring at you again." Harry looked. The bloke was back at the bar and doing exactly as Draco said. "I warned him," Draco hissed.

"Just ignore him."

They were going to try but the three noticed the guy was walking towards them now, passing through the crowds, his eyes still on Harry. The twins shared a look. "Persistent fucker," they murmured and quickly left a table, headed to the bloke who apparently liked cheating on his spouse and thought Harry should do the same. They were over there for some time, standing in front of the bastard, waving their arms around, sticking their faces in his face, and the bloke's amusement never seemed to dampen.

"There's something seriously wrong with him," Harry told Draco and the blond concurred.

The bloke suddenly pushed off the bar and tapped both twins against the chest. He started talking and suddenly the twins were listening intently, having gone completely still. One twin reached back to scratch the back of his head as if confused. And then they nodded and left the smirking bloke alone.

Both Draco and Harry were preparing to ask what happened when one twin reached down to grab Drake's arm and drag him out of the booth. "C'mon, hot stuff. We're dancing."

"Let go! What about Harry!"

"No, I'm good for now," Harry replied. They weren't gone even a minute before another body slid in next to him. "You again? Bugger off!"

"It's nice to know I can leave you alone and not worry about others trying to take what is mine."

Harry sputtered and turned to him, watching the wizard pick up his drink and swallowing half of it. "Are you out of your mind? Get away from me!"

"I didn't even need to give them an order before leaving. They protect you on their own. That's the kind of loyalty I respect, little minx."

Harry's outrage suddenly drained away as he got an up close and personal view of that smirk and those eyes, which weren't as brown anymore. There was a decidedly red tint to them now, though not so much as an outsider would see. "Tom?" he whispered.

"Who else do you think would have the nerve to ignore your dismissals?"

Harry twisted around to fully face him and threw his arms around the bloke's neck. "Tom!"

A dark chuckle caressed his ear as arms wrapped around him. Harry stilled when the man's scent filled his nose. It still wasn't Tom's voice nor were those Tom's arms and it wasn't Tom's chest he was feeling against this own. Harry pulled away and wrinkled his nose. He did not want to touch a stranger.

"You don't look yourself."

Tom ran a thumb over Harry's jaw. "Of course not. I'm polyjuiced. Come here," he ordered, trying to draw Harry's face towards his for a kiss. "I missed your mouth."

Harry pulled away from that hand and glared. "I don't want to touch a disguise, Tom. And I don't want to be labeled an adulterer either."

Finally, the first time all bloody night, the bloke-Tom- frowned and looked exceptionally angry. "What do you expect me to do, brat? This lasts for another half hour at the most."

Harry shrugged. "I'm not kissing a stranger."

Tom hissed under his breath and Harry beamed such a smile. Tom didn't get a chance to try and persuade Harry further because he was suddenly accosted by Draco. "I'm sure I spoke in clear deliberate sentences for even the lowest of low to be able to understand," the blond drawled, glaring coldly at the polyjuiced Dark Lord, his wand raised to Tom's face. "If you do not remove yourself from his presence, I will be forced to-"

"It's Tom."

The blond blinked at Harry, his wand falling a bit. "What?"

"He's Tom polyjuiced," Harry said lowly and then laughed when Draco paled dramatically. "What did you do? Threaten him with death?"

Draco's eyes were wide in horror. "I didn't mean it!"

"Several times and yes you did," Tom answered cheerfully. "You may go now, Draco."

Draco nodded and quickly disappeared. Tom stood and beckoned Harry out of the booth. When Harry was out, Tom sat down again and scooted until he was sitting right against the wall, the railing of the second floor high above his head. He was shrouded in shadows which was what he preferred. Harry slid back in and around to sit an inch away. He wondered if the bloke Tom currently looked like was still alive. That was another reason why he wouldn't touch Tom. He didn't want to snog a man that might actually be dead.

The half hour was long and torturous for Harry. He wanted to touch his husband and greet him properly and Tom was obviously eager to do the same though he was respecting Harry's wishes and they sat there and talked about nothing of consequence. Towards the end of the half hour, a shadow fell over their table. Harry looked up to find Zabini standing there, smirking at him. Harry groaned, already knowing this wasn't going to turn out well.

"I wonder if your fiancé knows you're here, Potter. With him. Do you think he'd liked to be told?"

"Zabini, you really aren't that stupid, are you?"

"Perhaps it's the alcohol," Tom suggested lazily.

"Always going on about how better you are, when actually you're nothing more than a slut. Tell me, are you passed around to all the Death Eaters? Is that why you're welcome at Malfoy manor? Maybe both you and Draco, since it's apparent Draco will lower himself into letting anyone touch him," Zabini went on with a disdainful sneer thrown over his shoulder where the blond was even now dancing with the twins.

"You called him a slut?"

"Zabini, go away. I know you're angry Draco won't speak to you, but you really need to go away and think about what you're saying."

"Always preaching, Potter. But look at you, cheating where anyone can see you. Yeah, I called him a slut, so what?"

Tom leaned forward, his wand suddenly lying upon the table under his hand. "Harry is *my* slut, Zabini!"

"Oi!"

"He also happens to be my husband. And you have just made a very grave mistake."

"You called me a slut!" Harry laughed, ignoring Zabini who simply gaped at them.

Tom smirked. "You're very slutty in bed, Harry. All I have to do is give you a look and you spread your legs wide!"

"If I do it's because I was already lying on the bed with my legs open, too tired to actually close them after you've finished with me. And then you're always up for another round. Besides, I thought you liked that," Harry murmured, leaning closer and not even caring Zabini was standing there with a disgusted look on his face. Tom's voice was changing and his hair was darkening.

"Oh, I do. That's why I can call you my slut. But," and now Tom was back to staring at Zabini, "anyone else who does is destined for very bad things."

"The potion is wearing off," Harry murmured, a smile tugging at his lips, "and I prefer being called your little minx."

Tom grinned and sat back, trying to let the shadows wash over him as he felt the effects of the potion wearing off. Harry shifted to block Tom's face from most of the club. Tom grabbed his wand to hold it under the table. He closed his eyes and waved a nonverbal spell so that his eyes would remain hazel. He didn't much care if people noticed his other features had changed, because at the moment he was also casting a glamour that would make him appear as he always did out in public. And wearing the clothes he had come to *Meracus* in made him look younger than the glamour, which was good as it allowed him to blend. Here was a place he didn't want to stand out in.

"You look nothing like the bloke Potter was hanging onto in the *Prophet*," Zabini sneered.

Harry twisted around in surprise. "Are you still here?" He had seriously forgotten about Zabini's presence. Harry only had eyes for his husband and had been entirely involved in thinking about how slutty he could be when he and Tom went home.

"Married or not... it makes sense now. Associating with the purebloods. Seeing Theodore. You're not just a slut, you're also a gold digger."

"It's not really any of your business, Zabini!" shouted Harry. How much alcohol had the bastard imbibed to make him speak in such a way? Zabini must have been keeping this down for a while. "How dare you suggest I was only with Theo for money?! I have my own money, thanks very much!"

"And now mine as well," Tom murmured seductively, trailing a finger along Harry's neck. And then he said, all playfulness aside, "I'm going to kill him."

He said this as a promise, pulling away from Harry to look at the wizard standing over their table. He leaned forward so that Zabini could see that he did in fact look like the man Harry had been showing off in the *Prophet*.

"Zabini, just leave!" Harry did not want Tom killing the idiot in the middle of a club.

Zabini sneered, not deigning to accept the fact he'd been wrong about the bloke Potter had been chatting up, even though the truth was sitting there staring right at him. "We'll see what the *Prophet* has to say about you tomorrow, Potter."

As the wizard walked away, Tom lifted his wand and whispered a spell. Harry knew better than to stop Tom, as he would not be stopped. Harry could argue for years and not move the Dark Lord. But at least whatever Tom had done, it didn't cause Zabini to fall dead on the spot.

"Let's go home," he murmured.

Tom lowered his hand and stowed his wand away. "Not quite yet."

"Stupid Zabini."

"Forget about Zabini. He's gone," Tom murmured, placing his hand at Harry's nape and drawing him closer. Harry flung his arms around Tom and held on tightly this time, burying his face in Tom's neck, inhaling his scent and relishing in the arms the encircled him. He was just about to let Tom take his lips when something occurred to him and he pulled back with suspicion.

"What are you doing here, anyway? Did you come here to spy on me?"

Tom smirked. "Aren't you happy to see me?"

Harry frowned. "You didn't answer my question. Don't try to change the subject. This isn't exactly your kind of scene."

Tom looked away from him, running his eyes over the crowds. "True. I don't like it here. And I don't think I like how comfortable you and Draco seem to be on the dance floor. There was groping-"

"It was only mild and stop changing the subject!"

"-though I do like how you dismiss want-to-be suitors."

"So you did come to spy on me! You don't trust me? You tried to pick me up! To see if I would cheat! "

"No, I knew you wouldn't. Your dismissals were amusing. As was your annoyance." Tom turned back to him, leaning forward to brush Harry's lips with his own. "I trust you more than I should... I came because you weren't home when I got there. So I came in search of you."

Harry's stomach fluttered happily. "You came because you couldn't wait to see me?"

"Suppose you can look at it that way."

"I will look at it that way."

Tom threaded his hand into Harry's hair while the other ran along the inside of Harry's thigh. "If it makes you happy, Harry."

"D'ya know what would make me feel even better?"

"I can guess."

"Yeah, let's go home now," Harry purred against his mouth. "Please," he begged in order to seal the deal. Tom couldn't resist his begging and needless to say, the two vacated the club soon after. Though when they tried to leave in secret, Tom was annoyed to find they had a blond and two copperheads following them once outside. His annoyance upped a notch when the four younger wizards became playful and rowdy- as youth tended to do- when the clean air outside seemed to heighten their inebriation and Harry momentarily forgot he wanted to be taken home and shagged into the mattress or the closest convenient vertical surface.

Tom allowed it for a while and accompanied them, secretly pleased to be able to keep an eye on Harry himself instead of sending someone else. But when the twins and Draco suggested going to another club, Tom put his foot down and dragged Harry home. Not that the little minx put up much of a fight.

Sitting at the desk within his study, Lucius slapped the morning's issue of the *Prophet* down on the polished gleaming surface, a tight frown on his face. "Tripe!" Once the elf appeared, Lucius instructed it to find Draco and let his son know he was wanted immediately within his study.

"Right away, Master," the elf spoke as he bowed before popping away. Lucius' gaze returned to the third page of the paper where Draco was seen to be entangled with two copperheads. Harry was standing a foot away laughing at the flailing blond as he was fondly assaulted. The Dark Lord stood back in apparent self made shadows, with his arm loosely slung across his new husband's shoulders. Even in the shadow the Dark Lord had cast upon himself, Lucius could see Voldemort rolling his eyes at the four young wizards he was in company with.

Draco was an imbecile, he decided. Lucius wasn't angry about his association with the Weasley twins- he had given the two permission to pursue his son after all. But Draco was trying to keep his relationship with the twins a secret from Narcissa. Did his son think his mother never picked up the paper? The scenes in these pictures looked less than platonic. It was time to deal with Narcissa and Draco.

"Draco," he greeted levelly when his son strode in. "Sit."

Draco eyed him as he went to sit in front of the desk. His gaze half curious and half wary because there was nothing in Lucius' expression to give away the elder blond's mood.

"Father, you wanted to see me."

Lucius studied his son a moment before speaking. "By the time I was your age, I was already married to Narcissa. Engaged to her at the end of our seventh year."

Draco's eyes widened fractionally, realizing this was the moment he'd been dreading for a while now. It was the discussion every pureblood child had with their parents. Sometimes it wasn't dreaded if said pureblood had found a suitable partner on their own before the head of the family made a deal. But Draco had done no such thing. As much as he cared for the twins, he didn't think his father would approve of them in that fashion.

Draco's mind was a whirlwind and even though there was so much he wanted to say, so much he wanted to rebel against, he wouldn't. All he could do was nod to let his father know he was listening. Let him know the Malfoy name still meant a great deal to him.

Lucius didn't show it, but he was pleased with his son. Knowing that no matter what Draco felt, he would do what was best for the family. "You've been given more time than most to do what you want, Draco. But the time has come."

Draco remained stone faced at the start, but he lifted a fist and placed it over his aching heart, his mind most certainly on the twins. They may have been accepted here, no longer thought as blood traitors and also involved with Lucius in business, but he didn't think his father would think them good enough to join the Malfoy family ranks in any way. But... Draco wanted them. And he was a Malfoy. Malfoys always got what they wanted, right? "Father," he whispered.

"It is tradition for witches and wizards to marry young, as you know."

"Yes, Father."

Lucius slanted his head a bit, studying his son further. Draco was taught very well how to hide his deepest emotions and he was doing it well now. But since he'd been the one to teach his son these things, Lucius could see the pain this conversation was posing on his son. He hadn't known until this very moment how attached Draco was to the twins. "I've already decided on your future, Draco," he spoke flatly.

"W-who?" Draco croaked.

"I was approached some time ago for a union and I have recently decided the match is more than acceptable. The contracts have been drawn up."

"Who?" Draco said more firmly, already thinking about ways in which to scare whoever it was off without tarnishing the Malfoy name and making it seem he wasn't at fault should this arranged marriage fall through. Because it would! He wanted the fiends! The twins would be good for the Malfoy family. He only needed to stall long enough to make his father see this.

Lucius placed a hand on the *Prophet* and pushed it towards his son. Draco took it up and stared at the picture.

"Is this a joke, Father?" he asked weakly. "If so, it's not very funny."

"I don't think it's funny you've been parading about with them, causing scandals wherever you go. You should probably make it official. For the family's sake," he added, a smile tugging at his lips. Draco's mouth was wide open in shock. "Suppose that feud has gone on long enough... with certain Weasleys."

"Are you... are you really going to let me have my fiends?"

"It's what you want, isn't it?" Draco quickly nodded and Lucius smirked. "Malfoys always get what they want, son. And Merlin knows with you, it's a good thing there are two of them."

Draco was staring at his father, alternating between restraining from glaring from being insulted at the insinuation and trying not to let the bewilderment on his face to show. He suspected he wasn't doing a good job of the latter.

"Feel lucky that I am not my father and your twins are purebloods. Now, on to the other issue," Lucius began, waiting for Draco to nod. "Your mother."

Draco paled. "You're going to do it, right? Please say you're going to tell her," he murmured, squeezing the paper against his chest. "I can't do it, Father. I can't!"

Lucius sniffed and tried to keep the horror from his face. "I do not see why I should tell her."

"B-but... you're the one who wants to make this public and official," he whined.

"You're the one making it public," Lucius sneered, pointing to the paper. "You think Narcy will not see that and make conclusions."

"Do we have to tell her?" the tone of Draco's whining was rising in the wake of his horror at such an idea. "She'll kill them!"

Lucius dropped his elbows on the desk and began to massage his temples. He hissed under his breath when someone knocked on the door. "Go see who that is," he instructed his son. "But do not leave. We are not finished."

Draco nodded and obediently went to open the door and then stepped aside for Severus to come in. Severus eyed his godson and he passed him. Draco looked both elated and horrified. "Lucius, what have you done to him now?"

"He's been given good news and bad news."

"I suppose the bad news is the fact he'll be spending the rest of his life with two wild Weasleys."

Draco stood back away from his father and godfather and thought about that statement. It wasn't awful at all. They made him feel special. Loved. And there were two of them, so of course he was proud and smug about that. "It's brilliant," he breathed, smiling dopily. And it really was. More so because of the fact he hadn't slept with Fred and George yet, so he was quite sure of his feelings for them and vice versa.

Lucius and Severs looked at him with slight shock at the soft expressions on his face. Hardly had they ever seen that look. Seeing that look, Lucius' expression softened as well, but only for a heartbeat. "Narcissa must be told."

Severus had been reaching out to brush his fingers along the underside of Lucius' wrist, only to drop his hand and turn on his heel. "Good luck with that," he said, trying to make a mad dash for freedom. But Draco had already shut the door and was standing in front of it to block his exit. "Draco, if you know what's good for you then you will remove yourself this instant."

"Uncle Sev..."

"This has nothing to do with me."

Draco's eyes widened to look woeful. "She'll want to kill them."

Severus gritted his teeth and refused to allow Draco's pleading eyes to sway him. He turned away to look at his lover and cursed. Lucius had the bloody nerve to have the same pleading look on his face. These two were utterly hopeless when it came to Narcissa. "Suppose," he started grudgingly, "we can make a plan before giving her the news. And by plan, I mean quick and easy escape routes."

"Guests will be arriving in two days," Tom told the young wizard lounging in his office. Harry turned to him. "You are to behave yourself."

"Why are they coming here? Why not Drake's place?"

Tom narrowed his eyes. "Because that is what I have decided."

Harry's brow furrowed and he went back to staring at the ceiling. "Fine."

"You are to make sure your friends behave as well."

"You say that as if we're constantly getting in trouble." Tom lifted an annoyed brow. Harry grinned when he saw that. "So who's coming? Should I stay out of the way?"

"There's no need for that. As to who is coming, I'll let that be a surprise... I would appreciate it if you forwent wearing muggle clothes while they're here though."

"K. I can do that... with minimal complaining." Harry popped off his miniature couch and walked to the desk, sensing Tom really was busy this time and the work was driving Tom to one of his moods. "I need to go and make those pies for Narcissa now," he said, bending over for a kiss that Tom absentmindedly returned. "I'm also meeting with Remus tonight."

"When and where?"

"Same place as last time. Eight this evening... the full moon was a few days ago. The letter I received from him yesterday was odd."

Tom made a noncommittal sound and lowered his gaze, his hair falling like a curtain to shield his eyes.

"You're not... hurting him, are you? I know you sent Fenrir to him."

"If I were, it would be none of your business," Tom snapped.

Harry reared back from the desk as if slapped. Tom's fingers curled tightly around the quill, mentally sighing and raising his head just in time to watch his young husband stalk out, slamming the door behind him in his wake.

That had been unintentional. Things were still moving too slow. Declared by the reports under his hand. He hadn't meant to take his frustration out on Harry, but... Hogwarts was the problem. The plan they'd come up with would work, but he was certain there would be too many casualties for his current tastes and that would hinder the Ministry take over which was to take place very soon after Hogwarts. Waiting until Hogwarts was let out for the summer was not possible. They needed the castle to be full. They needed prisoners. Live prisoners.

Tom leaned forward, bracing his elbows onto the desk and swept the hair away from his face. A meeting with Lucius and Severus was in order. But first, he needed to go and wipe off the hurt that had flashed across Harry's lovely face.

Harry was of course back in the kitchen, furiously stirring batter in a huge bowl while simultaneously cursing his moody husband. "I'll shove this spoon up his arse if he's been hurting Moony!" he proclaimed, brandishing said cake battered covered spoon like a sword. Harry would have gone on with making more threats he couldn't possible follow through on when he heard a soft thumping sound behind him.

Swiftly turning around, he found Bunnymort hopping towards him. Harry scowled to hide the instant melting of his frustrations. "Low," he muttered, turning back to his mixture. "Very low, Tom."

I'm groveling here, Harry, Tom thought in disgust. *It's the best I can do.*

Harry went on because he couldn't hear Tom's thoughts, "I bet you hate this, huh?" the brunet barked out a bitter laugh. "It's your own fucking fault for snapping at me like that for no reason! Don't think you can come in here as the CUTEST FUCKING ANIMAL EVER," he slammed his palms down against the marble countertop, "and expect me to forgive just like that, you wanker!"

He spun around to glare at said cute animal who was now at his toes and staring fixedly up at him. Just like all those months ago when he'd first come upon the bunny at the muggle park. They stared at each other for long moments before Harry gave a sigh and sank down to his knees to grab the bunny by the scruff of his neck in order to bring Bunnymort to face level, smirking when his scar tingled. "You aren't, are you? Hurting Remus?" the bunny wiggled his nose and there was a decided glare. "Good. Because if you were, there would be no more kink room. Swear on Merlin, Tom."

Now those eyes looked panicked. Harry didn't laugh, but he wanted to. Tom loved that room. Harry rose to his feet and carried Bunnymort over to the island table and placed him on the stool before using a scourgify to rid himself of bunny fur. After that he returned to his baking, keeping up a running commentary to the furry companion who seemed to want to stay as a black bunny for the moment.

When Draco strode in some time later, the blond raised a brow when he found Harry sitting on a stool with a bunny in his lap and feeding himself and the bunny cubes of fudge. Draco sat opposite of the brunet and watched the bunny while Harry raised a brow in greeting, but said nothing as the blond was looking somber.

Without taking his gaze away from the bunny, Draco said, "Father told me it was time to get married. An arranged marriage. He's already had the contracts drawn up."

Harry's hand fell limply to the island table, his eyes going wide. The bunny hopped out of his lap and onto the table to finish eating the fudge still clutched within his fingers. Harry leaned forward and dragged the bunny back to his lap, never taking his eyes off Drake. He couldn't ignore the sharp pain in his finger however, and quickly shoved a cube of fudge under Bunnymort's nose before the prat decided to eat his finger instead.

"Harry... why've you got a bunny in your lap? Where did it come from?"

"It's Bunnymort and never mind him. What do you mean your father has arranged a marriage for you?"

Draco didn't answer right away; he was instead staring at the bunny. Harry had spoken of Bunnymort before. But always as a nickname for the Dark Lord. Draco didn't know why Harry had come up with such a name for his Lord... until now. "Is that... that can't be... The Dark Lord?" he whispered, half afraid it was actually the darkest wizard alive.

Harry blinked and looked at the bunny in his lap. He grinned. He had only ever told Hermione about Tom's Animagus form. Bunnymort ignored the half nibbled on fudge and lifted his eyes to the blond across the island table. A steady glare upon the pale pointed aristocratic face.

Draco's lips parted in surprise. He shivered and then released a snort. Quickly pale hands rose to cover his mouth before an actual laugh escaped him.

Harry snickered. "Before you forget your self-preservation skills, let's please get back to this arranged marriage."

"My father..." Draco began slowly, having a very hard time from looking away from the evil bunny's gaze but finally managing it and was able to meet Harry's green gaze with a smile. "My father has decided the twins are suitable."

A grin split Harry's face. "Does that mean he wants you to marry them?"

Draco heaved a long suffering sigh. "Apparently Hell has frozen over. Yes. And you can be sure part of the reason is to keep the fiends firmly in his pocket. He finds them extremely

useful."

"Suppose it's a good thing the twins like your father as well, otherwise they wouldn't put up with that."

Drake grinned. "Course not! They're their own wizards," he proclaimed proudly. His gaze inevitably dropped back down to the bunny and another snort escaped him. "Err... when is he going to be back to normal?" Draco waved to the bunny.

"He can understand you, Drake. It may not be a good idea to talk about him as if he's not here..."

"Err, right. It's just... I have an idea about Hogwarts-"

Harry hissed when Bunnymort suddenly hopped from his lap, claws digging into his thighs as he did so in speedy fashion. The two young wizards watched the bunny hop away until he disappeared into the hallway. Draco was really very close to breaking down into laughter when his name was suddenly called. Tom's voice was low and deadly and the smile as well as the blood drained away from the Draco's face.

"Better hurry," Harry whispered. "He's been in a right mood today."

Draco did as suggested and hurried off his stool and out of the kitchen while Harry got up to return to making his cakes. "Hogwarts," he mumbled. "They're going to attack Hogwarts."

Draco was put under the cruciatus curse the moment he stepped into the Dark Lord's office and it lasted half a minute. "Just so we are clear, Draco," the Dark Lord hissed, "that was for mentioning our plans in front of Harry. I thought you knew better by now."

"S-sorry, my Lord," Draco panted from where he'd dropped to his knees on the floor. "It won't happen again."

"Get off your knees," Tom said as he turned his back to the blond in order to sit behind his desk, also giving Draco time to compose himself. "What about Hogwarts?"

Draco drew in a large calming breath before spitting out the plan, and by the end of it the Dark Lord didn't look as if he were going to dish out another Crucio. Draco took that as a good sign.

"It's far less complicated than what we planned but I thought they were neutral," Tom finally replied.

"They are but this way no one needs to die, my Lord. None of the students anyway."

"Indeed." Tom sat back, eyes on Draco but the blond knew the Dark Lord was looking through him. "Very well. Prepare and be ready for it."

Draco gave a small bow. "As you wish, my Lord."

"And Draco," the Dark Lord called out as he was heading for the door, "not a word to anyone about what you saw in the kitchen."

Draco nodded and left, and then he waited until he was almost back in the kitchen before he snickered under his breath. He wasn't entirely upset about having been punished. He had been told not to speak of such things in front of Harry. He had known better. And it wasn't as if he'd been put under that curse for long. Anyone else in the ranks would have been put under for way longer than that. Draco thought of it as a perk for being Harry's best mate.

Chapter Thirteen

The Black Bunny

Chapter Thirteen

Remus was already in his flat when Harry arrived. The werewolf was rapidly pacing back and forth from the living room to the kitchen. He didn't notice Harry's presence at first since Harry walked in the muggle way, through the front door. After softly shutting it, Harry leaned back against the door to study Remus.

There was something different about him. Harry couldn't tell exactly what, beyond the fact Remus was excited about something. Whether that something was good or bad remained to be seen. Remus' face gave away nothing. Remus looked scruffier than normal, but that could have been because the full moon had been only days ago, but he also looked well rested and that was not normal after a full moon.

Before Harry could say anything, Remus stopped in his tracks, his nose flaring as his head swiveled around to the door. Harry grinned and gave a little wave. "Surprised it took you that long to catch my scent."

"I've been distracted."

"I can tell. Do you want me to make tea?"

"I've already done so," Remus replied, waving a hand towards the stove where there was a kettle covered by a tea cozy. "Only a few minutes ago."

"You alright, Remus?" Harry asked, ignoring the tea for now to sit down on the couch.

"I feel alright, despite everything."

Harry nodded and waited for Remus to continue.

Remus moved to sit beside him before going on. "Fenrir took the Wolfsbane potion away from me. The owl arrived with an empty vial and a note from him... He tracked me to where I usually go for transformations. He brought his pack with him. Perhaps I should be grateful of the disturbance. His presence distracted me from the transformation. It wasn't as bad as it usually would be without the potion."

Harry sat back and listened. Determined not to interrupt. Remus sounded more bewildered than anything.

"Fenrir forced me out of the cabin to where his pack waited... it was the first time I'd ever been introduced to a werewolf pack. They didn't attack me," he said, slightly awed. "Though some were obviously defensive at my presence. Two were expressing hostility because

Fenrir... Fenrir was protecting me. He made it plain to the others I was not to be touched. I think the others of his pack were jealous."

"What happened then?"

"We went hunting," he replied in a whisper, again with the bewilderment and awe. "Or at least they did and I went along for the ride."

"Hunt what?"

"No humans," Remus replied at Harry's worried tone. "Mainly the forest wildlife. Deer and rabbits. Things like that." Harry couldn't help but gulp slightly at the rabbit bit, thinking about Tom. "We ran half the night. We played too. Moony was exalted. He likes pack."

Harry snickered. "You liked it to."

Remus looked annoyed. "It was Fenrir," he mumbled. "Moony let him dominate me. That was infuriating. Fenrir is a bastard."

"Actually, he's not so-" snapping his mouth shut, Harry shot from his seat to flee into the kitchen. "Think I will have some tea."

Remus stood slowly, eyeing him. "What were you about to say, Harry?"

"Hmm? Oh, nothing," Harry murmured, pulling out a mug. "Do you want some tea?"

"Yes, thanks. You were about to say Fenrir's not so... what?"

Harry bit his lip, cursing his loose tongue. What would Remus think if he knew Harry often saw the elder werewolf at Malfoy Manor? "I was just... Moony. He's not human. He must enjoy having an alpha around..." Harry winced. To his own ears that cover up sounded really lame and insulting. "Fenrir's not such a bastard to Moony. That's what I meant to say."

Harry smiled and turned to hand Remus a cuppa. Remus was eyeing him suspiciously, but Harry pretended not to notice.

"How Gray are you Harry?"

"Very. I do things to make me happy. I do things that are to my benefit. Like... I got married!" he exclaimed, brandishing his ring in Remus' contemplative face.

Remus took a hasty step back. "Already?" he didn't sound pleased at all and Harry's smile slipped.

"Yeah, we kind of eloped. Sort of."

Remus was a mix between angry and unsure now. "I want to meet him, Harry."

Harry took a deep breath. He knew what the werewolf was thinking and he could kind of see Remus' point. "Remus, I promise he's not controlling or anything. He's not making me do

anything I don't want to do."

"I'd still feel more comfortable if I could talk to him."

Remus was only concerned so Harry didn't feel the need to get annoyed as he might of with someone else for saying something like that. Molly Weasley for example. Had she said it, Harry would have lost it. And he would love to let Remus meet his husband, in fact he wished they could meet. Harry wished Remus could meet and see the real Tom. The Tom he had fallen in love with, but he knew that was not possible and he told Remus this. Of course this did nothing to dispel Remus' worries and suspicions.

"He saved my life, Remus. I would have died without him. He saved my life and he's kept me safe and happy and firmly out of the war. You'll meet him... one day. Just not now. It's not possible."

"Why?" Remus asked lowly, replacing his mug on the counter. "Why isn't it possible now?"

Harry chewed on his bottom lip. "He's very busy."

"What's his name, Harry?"

"Remus, please. Can't we drop this and talk about something else?" Harry brightened then, thinking about a splendid subject change. "Drake and the twins are going to get married!"

Remus shook his head, a small smile on his face. "I will drop it this time but be sure, Harry, we will talk about this again."

"I know, Remus."

Remus nodded before turning to go and sit back onto the couch in the living room. "So tell me about Malfoy and the twins."

Draco swept a hand through his hair as he stood at the bottom of a wooden stair case, staring up at the door on the landing. The stairs were pressed against the side of WWW building. He stood there, staring and trying to suppress nerves and wondering if this was such a good idea. He was trying, for reasons known but never spoken of, to keep the three of them celibate for a while. He looked down at himself again, eyeing the pair of jeans he'd borrowed from Harry, or more specifically, Harry had forced on him. They were a bit loose, except around the arse area, and riding low on his hips. Neither he nor the twins were used to holding out for so long when it came to sex and the clothes he was wearing now certainly wasn't going to help their powers of slipping control.

Lucius had suggested Draco go and tell the fiends himself about the finality of the union and gave Draco the contracts to have the twins sign. Draco took a deep breath and then climbed the stairs; his heart beats gaining speed with each step until he was standing in front of the door. Draco swore his heart was about to beat right out of his chest and his stomach was already in his throat. Imagine. Being this worked up over a couple of Weasleys. A year back

he would have cursed someone to death for even suggesting such a thing. This was Harry's fault! As usual.

The blond took a moment to swallow thickly, run a hand over his hair, and then knock. Fred opened the door. Fred who wore a tight white t-shirt and baggy pajama bottoms barely hanging onto his hips. Draco knew it was Fred because of the necklace with the green inverted triangle hanging over the collar of the t-shirt. Draco's eyes lingered on the t-shirt, or specifically the chest the shirt was stretched over, as well as the patches of skin he could see at Fred's hip bones.

"Draco."

Fred's husky voice drew his attention back to the redhead's face. Fred was eyeing him in much the same manner he had been doing and Draco felt like preening. "May I come in?"

Fred stepped aside. "If you didn't I think I might cry."

Draco flashed a grin and stepped inside, trying not to shiver as he did so. The heat in Fred's eyes was intense, and they gazed at him with a seriousness that had Draco thinking he wasn't leaving the flat until morning... if he gave in. Which he wouldn't. He was halfway sure of that.

"I came to talk to you," he murmured as he stepped in. He wasn't surprised when after the door was shut, Fred pressed up behind him, wrapping a tight arm around his chest and waist. Though he did gasp in surprise when a wet hot tongue caressed the side of his neck.

"Have you any idea how sexy you look right now? Wearing these muggle jeans... such a tease, Draco. Decided to give in, then?"

Draco's eyes had just drifted shut when a quiet voice asked, "what the hell do you think you're doing, bro?" not three inches away from his mouth.

The blond forced his eyes open. George stood before him wearing an identical set of pajama bottoms, though he had no shirt on and his hair was wet, dripping beads of water onto his shoulders and down his neck. His eyes were sweeping up and down Draco's body. The blond felt Fred's lips curl into a grin against his neck.

"I was just-"

George reached out to rip the hand away that had been travelling beneath Draco's shirt. "You can't start the seduction without me, wanker!"

Draco had a feeling George used the words 'The Seduction' with capital letters. As if they had the whole process completely planned out and written in permanent ink. That made him blush madly. He knew the kinds of things they planned out in detail on parchment.

"I'm sorry. But just look at him... couldn't help it."

"Yeah, I'm looking..."

Draco drew in a breath. He was quickly losing control. "Um... I came to talk to you," he whispered, reaching out and laying a flat palm against George's chest. He couldn't help it. It was the first time he'd seen either twin without a shirt on and it was a very nice chest. He liked what he was seeing and feeling. Not too buff, just the right amount of muscle, completely lickable... "When was the last time you two spoke to my father?"

"Do you think it's possible for me to think coherently when you're touching me, hot stuff?" George asked.

Draco smirked, pushing back against the cock pressing against his arse while moving his hand, fingers lightly skimming over a raised nipple. The twins sucked in breath at once. "Try," he hissed. George squeezed his eyes closed, clearly trying to think.

"It's been days," Fred finally said. "Why?"

"Father has revealed that I am to get married for the family name. He's already decided on the union."

George's eyes popped open and he looked behind Draco to his brother in a panic. "Wha-"

"No," Fred growled and hugged him tightly. "No way. He said we could have you. He gave us his word on your family name. He swore!"

"As if I were a pet," Draco said, sounding tetchy but inwardly very pleased by their reactions. He pulled away from Fred and sank a hand into his back pocket and withdrew a tiny envelope and then moved away completely to go sit down on one of the couches. The twins converged together and started hissing to each other. No doubt making plans to storm Malfoy Manor and demand his father change his mind. They would do it too. Draco smiled broadly from the thought as he gingerly sat down on the ugly seat, making a note to tell them they would have to move. There was no way he was living there.

Draco set the shrunken envelope upon the coffee table and used his wand to restore it to its proper size. "Fiends, come sit down."

They looked decidedly enraged as they each took a post beside him. "What've you got?" George murmured. "If your father thinks he's going to get us to do another job for him..."

"He can go to hell!" Fred snapped. "Don't care how much he's promising to pay this time!"

Draco's lips curled into a smirk as he unsealed the envelope and pulled out several manila colored documents, laying them upon the brown envelope, before crossing his arms over his chest leaning back. The twins studied him for a moment, looking at his unconcerned expression, looking at each other, and then lurched forward to look at the documents.

"I just have to say," he began levelly after their eyes widened on the marriage contracts and they started rummaging around for a quill as if their lives depended on it, "how dare you go to my father for a union! No one said anything to me about it."

"You needed a bit more persuasion, Draco love," Fred muttered right before he raced out of the living room to the bedroom.

George was murmuring to himself, standing in the kitchen, rummaging in the drawers for a quill. "We were going to tell you—found one!"

When they were once again sitting beside him, Draco bit his lip when George paused before signing his name. He and Fred exchanged a level serious look and then George dropped the quill on the documents without signing.

"W-what?" Draco croaked and felt the first stirrings of panic. Maybe they weren't as serious as they'd been saying. Maybe this had all been a game. Maybe all they had wanted was to shag him and then laugh afterwards as they walked away, never to be seen again. This was exactly why Draco was holding back in regards to shagging.

Before he could fully hyperventilate and run away, as he was seriously planning to do, George threw an arm around his shoulders and leaned in to press his lips against the pale man's throat. Fred grabbed his chin and forced Draco to look at him, pressing their lips together. It was a reassuring brush of lips, soft and warm and soothing.

"Is this what you want?" Fred asked, whispering against Draco's lips when he pulled back slightly.

"Oh, now you want my opinion?"

"Well... we just want to know if you need more persuasion. We don't want you to feel trapped."

Draco huffed and stood. "You did trap me! You stalked me and you sent me horrible yet delicious letters and did small yet simply wonderful things... just sign it already! If I wasn't pleased, I would never have come here! And before you sign, you should be prepared to move. I will never live here. We have to live between the manor and somewhere else," he commanded. "Somewhere less... plebeian."

The twins laughed as George picked up the quill again as Fred pulled Draco back down to sit. "Your haughtiness is so cute, Draco."

"I mean it!"

"Yes we know," Fred snickered as George signed his name and then passed the quill to him.

"I'm serious!" Draco whined. "You'll have to work your arses off! I will not be married to paupers!"

"We know this too... Draco, did you think we chose you in the spur of the moment? We know you as well as you know us. Stop worrying. We'll take splendid care of your spoiled whiney self."

Fred grabbed him around the middle and dropped down, pulling Draco's body over him, while George climbed over the suddenly complacent blond. "It's signed. You're definitely

ours now."

Draco allowed George to snog the life out of him while Fred's tongue continued to stroke fire along his neck while his hands were everywhere they could go.

"Have you ever had a threesome, Draco?" Fred whispered.

"...no."

"Is that why you're holding out? Are you scared of us?"

"I'm not scared! Just... Just nervous, I suppose. And there's also one other reason. My mother."

George jerked back as if just speaking of her would conjure Narcissa Malfoy into the room. Draco snickered at his terrified expression. "She's scary," Fred whispered against his neck.

"Yes. And she needs to be told before I let you two have your wicked way with me," Draco replied with a smirk. George was shaking his head back and forth rapidly.

"You're still stalling," Fred murmured and somehow wrestled Draco around until their stomachs were pressed together. "But that's okay," he murmured before lifting up to catch Draco's pouty bottom lip between his teeth. "We still get to keep you. It's all good. In the end your mother will adore us as well."

Draco moaned into his mouth, thinking of course it was all good. He had a skillful tongue in his mouth, a very large hot cock pressing against his, and four hands were now running over his arse in a reverent fashion. There may be no shagging yet, but no one said they couldn't snog for hours on end. His worries over his mother took second place to this. He had two lovers who spent most of their time making sure he knew how devoted they were to him and how loved he was. Annoying pureblood tendencies and all.

"Remus is demanding to meet you."

Tom lifted his head from his pillow where he lounged on the bed with his arms up and hands linked behind his head. He gazed down at the naked boy draped comfortably over him. Tom raised a brow when Harry's striking green eyes opened to look at him. It was early morning and Harry had yet to wake fully, so his eyes were droopy and sleep glazed. He looked adorable.

"Not you exactly, obviously," Harry went on. "If he knew it was you, he wouldn't want to see you and probably never want to see me again either," he ended in a whisper, laying his head back on Tom's chest. Tom pulled a hand from behind his head to run it through Harry's hair. "Why did you send Fenrir to him? Why're you trying to get Remus on your side? It can't be because you think he'll be useful in your plans. Or that he'd make much of an impact."

"You're right. He's alienated himself away from the rest of the werewolf population. There's not much I need from him beyond another voice in favor."

"Then why?"

Tom frowned and stared up at the mirror Harry had decided to add to the kink room above the bed. He really didn't want to confess to this. He was aware he was becoming too much of a sap when it came to his husband. His minions were going to start laughing at him and then he would need to start killing perfectly good henchmen. "If he willingly joins my side, it's unlikely he'll turn away from you... I suppose if you want, I can meet him with the glamour."

Harry frowned at the idea. Tom smiled at that, knowing Harry was constantly annoyed of having to show off a glamoured husband in public. It astounded him that Harry really did want to show that he was married to the Dark Lord. Harry didn't show it in any way, but Tom knew he liked the power his every position afforded him. Being neutral, being married to the Dark Lord, being free and powerful and wealthy. Harry loved it all and was proud of all that.

"Did you know Remus had never run with a werewolf pack before the last full moon? Fenrir showed up at his hiding place with other werewolves and persuaded him to join. I think Moony really liked it. Did you send Fenrir that last time? Did you make him take away the Wolfsbane?"

"No. I told him to pressure a little more. I was unaware of how he planned to do so."

They lapsed into another contented silence and Tom marveled at how he really did feel content with lying here in bed with Harry, doing absolutely nothing. He marveled at how wonderful he felt to have Harry's hand's caressing along his sides in leisurely patterns. Tom's gaze returned to the mirror, watching the muscles on Harry's back moving as the young wizard finally moved to slide down his body. Tom watched as Harry's arse lifted slightly while a tongue slid over and into his naval, chest brushing over Tom's frequently interested cock. In moments Harry was stripping away his control once more and Tom was thinking it would be an improvement if they added mirrors to the walls lining the bed as well.

Just as Tom felt a release was imminent, Harry pulled away with an obscene slurp and a 'pop', grinning outrageously. And then he began crawling off the bed. "Where do you think you're going?" Tom hissed, trying valiantly to keep the need from his voice and not staring pitifully at his painful erection that jumped for Harry's attention as it always did.

"Remember those essays I begged you to make Snape stop giving me and you refused? That's where I'm going. There's an essay due later today. Must work on it," Harry announced cheerfully as he slipped off the bed and grabbed for one of the robes hanging off the bedposts.

Tom stared dumbly at him for a second, thinking Harry was only playing with him. Surely Harry wouldn't be so cruel. He was supposed to be the only cruel one in this relationship. "You wouldn't dare..."

Harry's grin widened as he belted his robe. "It's a brutal essay, love," he said and just when Tom didn't think anything could get worse, Harry opened his mouth to sing. "It's a world of laughter, a world of tears. It's a world of hope, a world of fear..." and opened the door.

"There's so much that we share, that its time we're aware-"

Tom snarled violently, twisted around to grab his wand from under his pillow and pointed it at his husband. He hissed out a curse that hit the wizard in the backside just before the door shut behind him. Harry didn't notice the spell and he wouldn't, not right away anyway and when he did notice, Tom was going to make sure there was an audience.

"That's your plan?" Draco exclaimed, staring back and forth between his father and Severus. "You want to get mother drunk before telling her. And then what? Are we supposed to hope for the best?"

The two nodded and Draco groaned, burying his head in his hands. The twins stood behind him, hands on his shoulders, patting him in comfort.

"Why don't we just tell her Draco's been knocked up?" Fred suggested.

"Yeah!" George exclaimed, getting into it, "and we can say Draco knocked one of us up as well. Then she wouldn't have a choice but to accept... even though Draco doesn't really top, but she doesn't need to know that."

Lucius looked slightly ill. Severus stared blankly at them. Draco turned to them slowly. "That's actually... a brilliant idea!"

"What's a brilliant idea?"

Fred and George quickly snatched their hands away from Draco's shoulders and the five wizards tensed as Narcissa entered the library with Harry and the Dark Lord behind her.

"A dinner party," Severus smoothly interjected; mentally shaking his head at the others' scared expressions. "A private, non formal dinner party."

"What is the occasion?"

"Draco's promotion to the Inner Circle," Tom provided. He wasn't sure if Narcissa would believe that, as usually when someone was initiated, there was no party. Usually there was some torture to insure unyielding allegiance. Add to the fact that Draco hadn't actually reached the Inner Circle yet.

"Oh, lovely!" Narcissa smiled and pinched Draco's cheek. "I am so proud of you, darling."

The twins snickered when Draco whined about her pinching his cheek; until she looked at them and pinched harder, causing Draco to flinch. She eyed the twins strangely a moment before looking Draco in the eye. "My darling innocent baby boy," she ended fondly.

"Father," Draco whined softly trying to shift away from his mother, but not trying too hard as he wanted to keep his cheek connected with the rest of his face.

"Narcissa, would you like a drink?" Lucius inquired, taking her hand and easing her away. Draco, rubbing his sore cheek, hurried to the other side of the room with the twins and Harry to talk about whatever they usually talked about. Tom thought he heard Quidditch and sex mentioned. Did they ever talk about anything else?

After a few minutes, Tom leaned against the mantle and discreetly pointed his wand at Harry, whispering, "*evigilo*." Activating the dormant spell.

Harry gasped and shuddered violently for a moment and then all went back to normal. Tom frowned. The transformation should have been immediate. Harry stood there, frowning and staring at his hands, wondering what had just happened. He looked around the room in confusion before going back to talking to Draco and the twins.

Tom made himself relax and watched his young husband's every move. A laugh nearly escaped him when Harry suddenly paused in his speaking to lick the back of his hand and then lift it to the top of his head to slick his wet hand back over his hair. Draco gaped at him while the twins looked sort of concerned in an amused way. But Harry continued to talk as if nothing had happened. And then he did it again without missing a beat. Like it was the most natural thing in the world.

"Err... Harry?"

"You alright, mate?" the twins inquired carefully.

"Course. Why wouldn't I be?"

Draco frowned. "You licked yourself. Twice. Just now."

"No I didn't. Why would I lick myself?"

"You did, Harry. You licked the back of your hand and then pressed it against your hair... like a cat washing its fur."

Harry frowned with annoyance. "Very funny, guys. Cut it out." He then did it again.

Draco pointed at him. Harry paused mid swipe at Draco's gesture and then very slowly lowered his hand from his hair, looking very perplexed. Tom had to look at the ground as a grin flashed across his face without permission. Lucius, Severus, and Narcissa, having been watching all of this, turned to look at him. Tom quickly slid a stoic expression onto his face.

"Erm," Harry whispered, scratching his head, "that was weird." He then pulled his hand away quickly, staring at his fingers. "That's weird too. I have nails." They weren't very long or anything, but he usually bit his nails until there was usually nothing left. But now he had very nice nails that seemed to be kind of sharp. But he... he hadn't bitten his nails in a while, had he? Harry couldn't remember, actually. So he shrugged it off.

"Why is that weird?" Lucius wanted to know.

"I, uh...don't have nails. I bite them."

"Disgusting habit," Tom drawled.

Harry shrugged again. They'd had that conversation one too many times in his opinion. It was a habit he would probably never break. "Can't help it... Anyway," he turned back to his friends, laughing in a strained way, "what were we talking about?"

It was silent for a moment. All anyone did was stare at Harry. But when nothing else strange happened, the four boys went back to talking. Draco and the twins started to relax, only to quickly return to being very concerned when Harry spoke again. They were concerned because after every few words he spoke, a *meow* was thrown in the mix. Everyone went back to gawking. Still Harry didn't seem to notice what he was doing.

George dropped a hand on his shoulder. "Harry, are you taking the piss? If so, bravo."

"No! *Meow*! I swear the new team is *meow* good. They're definitely going to *meow* some headway in the league next season."

Draco drew in a breath, exchanged looks with his boyfriends, and then took Harry's elbow. "Let's sit down, shall we?"

By this time, Severus had figured out what was going on and smirked at the Dark Lord. Tom was having a hard time keeping the mirth from his eyes. This was too good! Better than expected! The boys moved over to sit down and as soon as Harry's arse hit the couch, he whined and shot back up again, craning his neck to stare at his backside in disbelief.

"Harry?" Draco asked carefully. "What's..."

Harry squeezed his eyes closed and hissed as if in pain. He began to shift his weight back and forth on his feet. After a moment his eyes popped wide open and he ran away to the back of the room, disappearing behind bookshelves. The room was utterly quiet until they heard the sound of ripping fabric and then, "...WHAT THE FUCK? *MEOW!*"

Tom dropped his face into his hands, unable to contain his laughter any more. Draco and the twins stared at him for a moment before rushing away to find Harry.

"Blimey, Harry!"

"Is that a tail?"

"I have a fucking tail! Oh, Merlin, it won't stop growing! Stop! STOP! *MEOW!*"

They heard Draco gasp and the twins snicker. "Look at your ears! They're fading!"

"There's something growing out of your hair, mate..."

"Your hair's getting longer!"

"Shaggier," Draco corrected and Harry screamed in terror. It was all very hysterical in Tom's opinion.

Narcissa turned to him. "My Lord... did you do this?"

Tom smiled gleefully. He was delighted. Harry was *meowing*! "It's not working the way it was supposed to. Though I must say this is better... a bit of payback, Narcissa."

"Tom! Tom, something's wrong with me!" Harry cried. The panic in his voice had Tom moving to find him, though he was still amused. He would not feel guilty. The little minx deserved this.

By the time Tom and the others found him, there were two things growing out of Harry's hair which had indeed grown shaggier and it now framed his face like a small black mane. His ears were completely gone... at least his human ears. The 'something' growing from Harry's hair happened to be two triangular black ears. Cat ears. Harry didn't seem to notice those though. His entire attention was on the wiggling object in his hand. A long sleek black tail. Tom moved forward, took Harry by the shoulders and turned him so that he was looking at Harry's backside. The tail had grown right out of his tail bone.

"*Meow!*" Harry hissed, jerking away from Tom when the Dark Lord leaned over to touch the base of his tail. Tom leaned against the nearest bookcase, threw back his head and laughed. "Stop laughing! Do something, pervert!"

"Why should I? This is what you get for misbehaving," Tom stated when he managed to stop laughing.

Harry's lips parted in shock. Draco leaned forward for a better look. Harry had two little sharp feline teeth. Not very long, but they were there.

"You did this to *meow*?" he asked in a small voice, his eyes gone wide and sorrowful, like an unhappy kitten. Hands wringing around the tail that now hung limply in his hand.

Tom pressed his lips together in a thin line. He refused to be moved. Harry had this coming. He really did. "You deserve it. You left me in an unacceptable state."

Those big green eyes began to water and the cat ears drooped to the sides. Tom mentally cursed. Even he couldn't remain unaffected by that! "It's not permanent," he muttered. His only answer was another whimpered meow; tiny and heartbreaking.

"Oh you poor thing!" Narcissa exclaimed, pushing by the group of wizards to grasp Harry's shoulders and pulled him into her arms, pressing his face into the crook of her neck. "For shame!" she boldly snapped at Tom before guiding Harry away, reaching up to pet his cat ears. "How about some creme? Would you like that?"

The wizards behind heard Harry mumble a "yeah," and then they watched those cat ears perk up and Harry answered with a bit more spirit, "*meow*, that sounds really really good! Crème!"

"Your tail is lovely, Harry."

"Thanks!"

And then they left the room, leaving Tom, Lucius, Severus, the twins, and Draco to stare at each other. Lucius broke the silence with a snort. The twins looked as if they wanted to laugh, but to do so would mean betraying Harry in some way. That's how they looked to Tom anyway. Draco stood there biting his lip. Severus had a pleased expression on his face. He looked extremely amused. Tom felt like a bastard.

"He was supposed to turn into a real cat," he said.

One of the twins couldn't stand it any longer. He laughed and burst out with, "this was way better! Brilliant! Can you give me the spell, sir?"

Draco and the other twin smacked him upside the head.

The spell hadn't worked as it was supposed to. Harry was still human but with certain cat characteristics. His maturity seemed to decline a little as well, but not a lot. Just enough that he seemed incredibly young. Kitten-like in a young man's body. Tom rather liked the outcome. In small doses. Harry reacted like a cat when his emotions were high; he growled and hissed and meowed and purred at times too. Or so Tom had been told by Narcissa. Harry only hissed when Tom tried to get near him throughout the day. He hissed and growled and ran away. Like a baby.

That could have been because Tom's spell wasn't so temporary. It wasn't permanent, but since the spell hadn't worked like it was supposed to, Tom wasn't sure when the spell would wear off. He could probably find a spell to immediately turn Harry back to normal but he was thinking even if he made the spell dormant, it wouldn't completely leave Harry. This was another down side to his temper. He hadn't really thought about what he was doing when he shot that spell at Harry. Only that he knew it wouldn't hurt his husband and only teach him a lesson, whatever that lesson was.

But he sort of liked this outcome which is probably why he wasn't racing to find a counter spell. It was something probably very simple too. Something even Granger would be able to find. Tom knew better to let this out around Harry, unless his young husband admitted he liked being half a cat at times. And again, Tom had a feeling Harry did enjoy the enchantment. Harry was very child-like anyway, and being half a cat gave him more excuses to act like one outright without worrying about consequences.

Harry had finally returned to their home and was currently draped over a leather bench in his private study, laid out under the window where the sun shone through to smother his back like a blanket. He laid there in blissful contentment under the sun. His tail moving lazily back and forth against the carpet beneath the bench as his mind napped. He had been hiding away in his study since leaving Malfoy Manor and refused to even contemplate talking or seeing Tom. All the doors had been sealed and there was no way for Tom to get through until Harry wanted him to. Or at least that's what he thought until the fire in the fireplace roared green and Tom stepped out. Harry hissed in annoyance. He'd forgotten his fireplace was connected to the castle's Floo network.

"Harry."

Those ears flattened against Harry's shaggy hair. "You made *meow* a cat," Harry hissed. "I haven't even been married to you for two weeks and you made me a cat."

"Not exactly a cat," Tom murmured as he moved closer and sat at the end of the bench.

"I 'meow' and love to drink crème from a bowl, for fucks sake!"

Tom smirked and reached down to grasp that tail, sliding it through his fingers. Harry stilled and then shivered as Tom continued to stroke. He watched as Harry's fingers clenched around the end of the bench and his backside rose slightly. "I have crème. Though it will not be from a bowl."

Harry slowly turned to look at him, his eyes half lidded. Tom dropped the tail and leaned over to scratch Harry behind an ear. Harry slapped his hand away. "Don't do that!" But Tom did do it again, scratching and stroking the ear and scratching again until Harry's eyelids began to droop and he basically melted over the bench. He started purring and suddenly Tom was driven to see how much pleasure he could give to his transformed husband in this state. To see how much pleasure he could gain from giving Harry pleasure.

Tom dropped to his knees beside the bench, continued to scratch Harry's- dare he say adorable ears- and returned half his attention to that tail that lay half limp half twitching whenever Tom hit a nice spot. He stroked the tail from base to tip and Harry moaned in delight, arching his back at the motion.

"Have you a cat fetish, Tom?" Harry asked; his tone low and laced with a rumbled purr that had Tom smiling in an unrestrained manner.

"Cats are evil little creatures," he responded.

Harry laughed. "That means yes."

"No, I don't like cats. However, I do adore my little minx."

Blinding pleasure sparked those emerald eyes. "You know that came from Manx, and Manx's don't really have tails. They have stubs for tails. Did you know that?"

"Yes, but the term minx also has a definition. The word is defined as a pert, flirtatious, or impudent young person. In other words: you. Now turn over," Tom commanded.

Harry didn't seem to mind the command. He followed it without complaint. First lifting by his arms and stretching out in a languid fashion, just like a cat; lifting that pert arse as he stretched his arms out and his nails kneading into the leather of the bench. Tom ignored the nail marks in favor of staring at Harry's arse which was very near his face and close enough to bite. But Harry was through with his stretching and easily flipped over onto his back.

Harry remained still and complacent as Tom unbuttoned his shirt, watching him with drowsy green eyes and his patented lopsided grin. When he pulled Harry up in order to slide the shirt off his shoulders, Tom covered that half cocked smile with his lips and relished in the feel of Harry's arm circling his neck. This all meant Harry wasn't angry with him anymore. Tom really despised it when Harry was irked with him.

Tom's hands paused in their roaming of Harry's back when he felt something brush over the front of his pants and since Harry's arms were around his neck, he took notice and pulled back. Harry was grinning now and Tom looked down to find Harry's tail caressing him. Apparently Harry had learned how to control the tail. Tom wasn't really surprised that he found it a turn on instead of being disgusted by it.

Harry's arms shifted and his hands ran over his broad shoulders and then down his chest in order to press Tom's robe off his shoulders with an eager scoot closer, pink tongue peeking out at the corner of his mouth as he concentrated. Tom groaned and tapped Harry on the thigh with his wand and his husband was left there naked as the day he was born. Harry didn't seem to mind. He scooted even closer until he was settled quite nicely on Tom's thighs, a little purred meow passing his lips before Tom commenced with devouring him for long minutes on end.

After a time, Harry wriggled off Tom's lap with an impatient meow and slid back until he could lower onto the bench, pressing his stomach against the leather and keeping his torso lifted by his elbows. Harry's tail swung gaily back and forth, his ears danced, and that pink tongue was back in the corner, peeking out of his swollen delicious lips. His striking green eyes were transfixed on Tom's crotch. "Crème?" he asked eagerly without raising his eyes. Tom wasn't even being touched at the moment and he was seized with such heat he thought he might combust.

"I will definitely use this spell on you again in the future," he breathed as his fingers dropped to his pants and worked on the clasp, cursing because his fingers really weren't steady. Harry purred and his hands were suddenly on Tom's thighs, little sharp nails lightly digging into the fabric and into his flesh, kneading softly. "Do not bite me with your feline teeth, Harry," he ordered when his arousal was free.

Harry finally looked at his face and smirked. A smirk that had nothing to do with being half a cat and was all Harry. Devious and brilliant and teasing. And then his attention was elsewhere. Tom sucked in a breath when Harry started and bit back a moan when Harry began to lick up and down at his own leisure. Tom wasn't sure, but he was almost certain Harry's tongue felt rougher than usual and that along with Harry's skill with his tongue had him trembling and thinking he may not last long enough to be able to flip Harry around and fuck his husband's tight arse right off the bench. But then again Harry wanted crème, so he supposed he could look forward to them being locked in the study for quite some time.

It didn't even occur to him until later that their guests would be arriving the next day and Harry would probably still be a cat and would be seen as one when they arrived. Tom had no intention of hiding his husband away... why were his plans concerning Harry always backfiring on him?

Hermione Portkeyed home, sighing when she arrived, pleased to know her parents were safely tucked away from the Order and the Ministry's clutches. What she wanted now was a long relaxing bath before she went to see Voldemort to ask what her next assignment would be, and hoping it had something to do where she would need another body guard. One in particular whom she hadn't been able to speak to since he'd asked her out.

"Harry! Come down! Be a good boy and come down!" a voice called out from down the hall. Hermione's brows furrowed. That had sounded like Draco.

"I may be kind of a cat *meow*, but that doesn't make *meow* stupid, Drake! Don't talk to me as if I were five!"

"Then get your arse down, Potter! We need to get ready for the Veela! You can't be seen running around in muggle jeans and an old t-shirt if the Veela should come across you. It's a miracle they even agreed to come here as it is! You need to make a good impression! Come down!"

"Meow! It's fun up here! My balance is so much better with this tail! You should try it!"

Hermione cocked her head as she approached the open hall leading to the stairs. *Cat? Tail? Veela? What on earth is going on?* And what was up with the meowing? Was Harry drunk, maybe?

Hermione stepped out of the corridor and into the massive hall, finding Draco, George, and Fred standing a little off center staring up at the huge chandelier lighting the hall. Hermione paused and her gaze traveled up. She gasped when she saw Harry squatted inside the top of the chandelier. Hands on the edge with his chin dropped on his knuckles, grinning down at his friends.

"Harry!"

"Hermione! You're back! I missed you!"

And then she saw a tail pop up and start waving around behind him. After that she noticed the ears and was kind of speechless. She had no time to comment on that as footsteps from the staircase were heard. Long purposeful strides. Harry's ears twitched and a mischievous grin spread across his face as he ducked into the chandelier until she couldn't see him at all except the shadow he made against the crystal. Hermione made her way over to Malfoy and the twins just as Voldemort appeared at the top of the stairs, glaring at them as he made his way down.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

All of them pointed to the chandelier. Even Hermione, as she knew without doubt that he sought Harry. The Dark Lord stopped in his tracks, his eyes swiveling to the slightly swaying crystal chandelier. Hermione watched as a soft amused smile crossed the Dark Lord's face before he wiped it clean.

"Harry, show yourself."

Hermione frowned when Harry didn't answer, wondering why and above all, wondering why her friend seemed to be a humanoid cat.

"Harry, the Veela will be here in an hour. You are to stop playing and prepare. You can continue to play after they arrive and we have greeted them properly. But you must be dressed." His answer to that was a long drawn out hiss. Strangely, Voldemort found this funny and he smirked. "I have crème."

Harry's head popped up instantly. "Your crème?" he asked, licking his lips. From where she was standing, Hermione saw the Dark Lord's eyes darken. It was plainly desire and Hermione

thought she'd heard all she would want to hear at this point. So she turned to the three beside her.

"What is going on?" she whispered. "Why is Harry a cat? And why is everyone talking to him as if he were a child?"

"He's not really a cat..." Draco started, glaring when the twins laughed. "He only has certain characteristics of one. And he might have digressed a few years personality wise."

"He's as spastic as a kitten like this," one of the twins put in.

"But why is he like this?"

"The Dark Lord cast a spell," Fred murmured. "It's only supposed to be temporary, but for some reason the Dark Lord and Harry seem to have forgotten about that. Despite what he says, I think Harry likes being this way. The Dark Lord likes it too. Harry says the Dark Lord has a soft spot for cute furry little animals."

Draco glared. "Also concerning Harry's current mentality, it didn't help that you two set loose two dozen fake mice around the place," he snapped. "Every time I manage to get Harry to settle down another one of those blasted mice appears, racing across the ground and then he's gone, racing after it."

"Harry, now!"

The three turned to find Voldemort looking less amused and Harry ducked back into the chandelier. Low growling meows preceded the Dark Lord's commands. One of the twins snickered. "Harry's still pretending he's mad at being turned into a cat."

"I think it's definitely only an act," Draco said.

"Miss Granger. Perhaps you can get him down and appropriately attired." It was a command dressed as a suggestion. Voldemort spun on his heels and disappeared back up the stairs.

Hermione quickly ran up the stairs until she was nearly eye level with the chandelier. "Harry, how'd you get up there?"

Harry popped up again and grinned. "I jumped! From the railing where you are. Just look, Hermione! He gave *meow* a tail!"

"Harry, you really need to come down and dress. You need to dress appropriately and be able to stand beside your husband when the time comes. Don't you want to show your support to him? I mean... its Veela!"

"*Meow.*"

Hermione backed up when Harry shifted, leaning over the edge of the chandelier. She saw the boys below pointing their wands at the light fixture. Probably to keep it steady and make sure Harry didn't tumble to his death. Harry deftly leapt from the chandelier over to the railing of

the stairs, landing on his feet in front of her. Hermione studied him with wide eyes and watched as her friend licked the back of his hand and brought it up to wash one of his ears.

"Harry, you just-"

"I *meow*! Can't help it!"

"At least you don't have whiskers... how did he manage to get the Veela to agree to come here?"

"That was his last mission," Harry replied. "Apparently he impressed them. Somehow. They'll *meow* decide if they *meow* to offer allegiance after tonight. Allegiance or promise to *meow* out of the fight altogether."

"How do you know that?" Hermione asked, trying not to show how amused she was at the random meowing.

"He tells *meow* little things," Harry murmured and then licked his hand again. "It makes him think better *meow*... *when* he can talk out loud to someone who's listening." Harry smiled brilliantly, "and I'm the only one he feels comfortable enough with to talk to in that way. Well... me and Nagini. Speaking of, she promised to play with *meow*," he murmured and then quickly looked up at the landing and his ears perked. "Mouse!" he cried, and then was gone.

"Harry!"

Draco turned to his boyfriends, glaring at them, but they were too busy holding onto each other and laughing.

The Veela arrived by an untraceable Portkey provided by Tom within the large Entrance Hall to ensure the Veela would not be able to divulge the castle's location to anyone else. Tom managed to get Harry settled down enough to dress and then stand with him and greet the Veela with the promise that he didn't have to stick around once the initial greetings took place.

The Veela already knew about Harry. Somehow they had caught on to rumors about the Dark Lord being married, and after taking a vow of secrecy, had been told the truth of the matter. Tom concluded it would only do him good rather than harm if they knew the truth about who he was married to. Harry had known Tom was going to tell and use his marriage to the Boy-Who-Lived as an advantage. Harry had told Tom he didn't really mind.

"Lord Riddle... may I inquire as to why your husband seems to be half feline?" the lady Veela asked. Her name was Iseut, a strange but pretty name, and she smiled a soft smile at Harry, who returned the smile full force. "I'm perfectly aware Harry Potter was not born this way."

Harry giggled from where he was snuggled against his husband's side. "She called you Lord Riddle. *Meow*," he snickered before licking his hand. "Does that make *meow* Lord Riddle

too?"

"Yes," Tom answered Harry as he quickly snatched the hand out of the air just before Harry would have slicked it over his ear.

Mentally he rolled his eyes. This was his fault so he couldn't very well blame Harry for acting out of turn. It wasn't Harry's fault he was still under the spell. Fortunately the two Veela ambassadors didn't seem the least bit insulted. Seems they were charmed by his husband's antics. It wasn't surprising. If Harry could charm the vampires by being himself, then he could charm anyone being this way. "Truthfully... Harry played a prank on me and I returned the favor. He should return to normal soon. Hopefully."

Harry's smile turned into pure mischief. "But I thought you liked me like this," he purred, lifting his tail to caress Tom's crotch right in front of their visitors. Iseut raised a hand and laughed softly behind it. The male Veela, Diandre, simply smirked, giving Harry a nod of approval.

Tom gave Harry a look. Harry ignored it of course. "Can you tell *meow* why you've come here?" he asked the Veela instead. They were very pretty. Both had striking white blond hair. Lighter than Draco's. Their faces seemed ageless, locked in time, but their eyes were turbulent storms of sea green and arctic blue and very expressive. Looks can be deceiving. He'd learned that over the years.

"Harry," he was warned, but again he ignored it and stared at the Veela expectantly.

"I'm only curious, Tom. They've come alone, *meow*... and I wondered why. Aren't you afraid?"

"Your husband extended a hand of peace when he visited our nation," Diandre answered.

Harry cocked his head, looking at Tom. "Which is basically a peace treaty between myself and the Veela until the talks are finished. I would not attack them here. That would cause complications I'm not prepared to take on and they know this."

"And we came here, because like you," Iseut ended, still smiling at Harry, "we are curious. Your husband is not the same as he once was."

"No, of course not! If he were, I wouldn't have married him."

Both Veela nodded. "We also wished to talk outside of our nation. Where he ruled. In order to see. We've had dealings of sort with Lord Riddle over the years. Our Seers thought we should come here."

One black ear flickered with uncertainty and Harry was suddenly peering at them suspiciously. It was completely obvious when he grew very serious, no longer playful. Hostile was the correct term. And to Tom's utter shock, Harry stepped around to stand in front of him like a shield. "Aren't you Light beings? What are you doing here?" he demanded. The suspicion and warning was clear in his low voice. Both of his ears were pinned against his head, the hair on his tail was standing on end, puffed out since he was threatened. His

wand was suddenly in hand and Tom could feel him gathering his power as if preparing for a battle. "I will not let you hurt my Tom!"

My partner. My little minx, he thought with proud fondness as he laid a firm hand on Harry's shoulder.

"We do not wish to allow the wizards war into our nation," Diandre answered.

"Then why the blazing *meow* are you here?"

Tom increased the pressure of his hand. "We can talk about this later."

"*Meow!* They could *meow* here to try and hurt you! I won't let them!"

"Harry, calm down and put away your wand."

"Your husband's hand is stretched far out, far beyond Britain," Iseut began. Her smile still in place. Tom thought she was just as enchanted by Harry's protectiveness as he was. "Even on the Continent his hand stretches far. Should we choose to help, he has promised to stay away from our nation. That is why we are here. To decide if we are to help. To give assistance if he should need it. We are not exactly Light. We do what is best for our people and Veela do enjoy politics of every kind. We're also aware of what Lord Riddle wants in regards to magical creatures and beings. Did you know young Veela are kidnapped and sold as sex slaves, Harry? It is a travesty that happens every day."

Harry deflated slightly as his eyes grew very round in dismay. "No," he whispered, "I didn't know that."

"Your husband swears to help stop this horror."

Harry turned and graced Tom with one of those illegal smiles. The Veela did not miss this, nor did they miss the Dark Lord's reaction to it. They didn't miss the genuine affection and love passing between the two before Harry and Tom turned back to them.

"Oh... well that's good then. Can I go play *meow*?" Harry directed to his husband.

Tom nodded and then gritted his teeth when Harry spun around without a backward glance at the Veela to race away. Tom looked to the ambassadors, feeling slightly as if he should apologize for Harry's lack of manners, but he would do no such thing as he refused to ever apologize to anyone aside from Harry. However, again, the Veela didn't seem to mind Harry's rude departure.

"Sorry!" Harry cried from somewhere behind him. Tom turned to find his husband hurrying back to them, and was relieved Harry at least wasn't running this time. "I'm sorry, that was rude, wasn't it?" he smiled and held his hand out to Iseut, "it was a pleasure to meet you."

She smiled back and gave him her hand. Harry's smile grew and he kissed the back of her hand. She really liked that. When he dropped her hand, he turned to Diandre who, Tom noted with a great deal of irritation, already had his hand out. Never mind that the Ambassadors were mates. Tom was preparing a hex in case Harry or Diandre tried to kiss each other's

hands, but that didn't happen. They firmly shook, Harry again bid them a proper farewell, turned and planted a chaste kiss on Tom before he could stop it, and then took off again, shouting excitedly, "mouse!"

Tom pinched the bridge of his nose and refused to turn around and look. Though he did swear he was going to find Fred and George Weasley when this meeting was over with and hang them in the dungeons, perhaps fire off a few painful curses as well. "Shall we?" he asked the Veela between clenched teeth, turning and gesturing them into the formal parlor off the entrance hall.

"He's not what I expected, Lord Riddle," the female murmured as she and her mate followed him inside. Usually anyone who addressed him in such a way would immediately be struck down, but the Veela had always called him Lord Riddle and he couldn't do anything about that. Not at the moment. Not when he wanted their cooperation without turning it into a bloodbath.

Tom smiled without humor. "What did you expect?" he asked this already knowing the answer.

"When we learned you were married to Harry Potter, naturally we expected the boy to be under an enchantment. You've spent many years trying to kill him."

"Did you come here to *save* him?"

"No," Iseut murmured, taking a seat upon the blood red duvet Tom motioned her to. "But we would have found a way around the Oath you made us take. We would have found a way to help him. But now... it seems we feared needlessly."

"Was this the only reason why you've come here?" Tom hissed.

"We are also here for the reasons explained to your husband, Lord Riddle. Shall we discuss it now?"

Remus stumbled into his little flat, shaking and haggard, trying to ignore the pain in his right side, left leg- which he had to limp on- and his arm, all of which he feared was damaged so badly he'd need a healer. He dragged himself to the chair in the kitchen and gingerly sat down, only to curse lowly and tense when someone knocked on his door. Remus sat there still and tense, unsure of what to do. He was pretty much useless at this point. Had one of the Order followed him back here? That couldn't be it. He'd been very careful when going home and no one knew it had been him as he was currently polyjuiced... another knock. This one louder.

Remus lifted his wand, knuckles turning stark white, making the bruises and bloodied cuts stand out in stark contrast. When someone called his name through the door, he unconsciously released the breath he was holding as well as the death grip from the wand, though he didn't release it completely. It was still danger. Remus climbed from the chair and slowly limped to the door.

Fenrir flashed a toothy grin when the door was opened to him, only for it to slip away once he took a good look at Remus. Hostility entered his eyes as his nostrils flared.

"It's me," Remus said, his voice raw from yelling out spells and curses for what seemed like hours. "I'm only polyjuiced."

Fenrir sniffed again and the hostility disappeared for the most part, though he still looked angry. "Yes and you're injured," he hissed. The elder werewolf grabbed Remus' good arm and barged into the apartment, dragging the relatively amiable younger werewolf with him. Remus snarled inwardly. Moony was bloody happy to see Fenrir. *Traitor*, he thought almost petulantly.

"At least you had the courtesy to knock on the door first before coming in," he mumbled and it wasn't until he'd been tossed onto the worn and battered couch did Remus realize Fenrir had not come alone this time.

"*Expelliarmus!* Stay seated!" Fenrir barked when Remus started to try and scramble off the couch, ignoring his limp arm and injured leg. Despite having his wand snatched, Remus ignored him and continued to try and escape the low couch as he watched the tall wizard with the gleaming red eyes come in and shut the door behind him.

Fenrir growled and trapped the younger werewolf against the couch by wrapping his hand around Remus' throat and pushing him back. "Easy, cub," Fenrir murmured. He lifted his arm back and Voldemort took Remus' wand into his hand. Remus bared his teeth, his eyes flashing betrayal. Just when he thought he could blend with his wolf, when he could find some modicum of happiness with Moony... it all turned out to be a lie.

Voldemort left the hood of his cloak on for the moment and studied the werewolf glaring balefully, not at him, but at Fenrir. Oh, the betrayed look was succulent. The Dark Lord would be sure not to pass that on to Harry, but still... whatever Fenrir had been doing, it seemed to have been a great success if Lupin were now looking betrayed.

He noted Lupin didn't look himself tonight, nor was he completely healthy. Currently he looked to be the twins' age, with dark brown hair and pained blue eyes; tall and lanky and spitting mad but too tired and injured to do much of anything, especially without his wand. He had cuts and scratches and blood splattered all over him.

"Why are you injured?" Voldemort finally questioned.

The wolf's gaze finally returned to him, but he gritted his teeth and refused to say anything.

"Come now, Remus. Do not invite death," Fenrir whispered. "The Dark Lord asked you a question."

Remus bared his straight teeth. "Take your hands off me."

"You've been in a battle," Voldemort guessed, once again drawing Remus' attention. "Against who? There were no Death Eater raids tonight."

"You would know," Remus spat. When Voldemort did nothing but incline his head, Remus went still in shock. He'd never come into contact with Voldemort before but he'd heard stories and knew anyone who back talked was immediately tortured for it. "The Order," he finally whispered.

A particularly gleeful expression appeared on Fenrir's face, while Voldemort took two steps closer. "You fight the Order now, Lupin?"

"When necessary and not for your sake—why are you here?"

"I've come here to make someone happy."

"Yourself, no doubt," Remus growled and ignored the sudden pressure bearing down on his throat.

Fenrir bared his teeth, leaning until his lips were beside his ear. "You really are a feisty cub, aren't you? Behave, Remus."

"Werewolf," Voldemort called. "Werewolf, look at me. Fenrir, release him." When he had Remus' complete attention and Fenrir had stepped away from his cub, Voldemort dropped the hood of his cloak. "Are you watching, Lupin?"

Remus shook away the surprise at seeing Voldemort looking as he did and narrowed his eyes. "What does this have to do making someone happy? Do I look happy to you? Am I supposed to be happy to see you looking human now?"

Voldemort closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Harry," he muttered, as if reminding himself of something.

"What did you just say?" Remus shouted, bolting to his feet with strength he, Fenrir, nor Voldemort had thought he could possess at the moment. "What have you done to him? What have you done to Harry?"

"Contain him or I will," Voldemort hissed to Fenrir. The elder werewolf shoved Remus in the chest, and because of his injuries, Remus fell easily back onto the couch. "Do I look familiar to you, Lupin?" the Dark Lord went on, raising his wand to his face, erecting the glamour he usually wore when out in public with Harry. "Is this face familiar?"

Remus watched and held his breath when the wizard started to look familiar. When he started to look like Harry's fiancé-now husband. "No."

"Yes. Now pay attention, Lupin. This is the face Harry prefers," Voldemort went on and erased the glammers so that he was once again looking as he was meant to. Red eyes included.

"This... is a joke."

Voldemort found it amusing when Lupin turned to Fenrir for explanations. For the elder werewolf to tell him it was a joke. Fenrir told him it wasn't and nothing else was said for a few minutes as that was when the Polyjuice potion began to fade.

"I don't recall you being this pale," Fenrir said, studying Lupin's face.

"That's what shock and loss of blood does to a person," Remus snapped back. "Bloody Moody, he-" he pressed his lips together and looked away.

Voldemort returned the hood of his cloak up. "We'll return to Malfoy Manor. Bring him. He needs to be healed and Harry will want to see him."

Remus had been silenced and Fenrir had him firmly in hand, making sure the younger werewolf couldn't move out of the shadows from where Voldemort had them hidden within a shallow alcove. So all Remus could do was stand there and watch the four down the hall silently and with wide eyes; all he could do was watch and listen.

"Shouldn't you be in there?" Harry asked Draco and the twins, gesturing to the double doors they all stood in front of.

The twins quickly shook their heads. While Draco said, "Severus thought he and Father should speak to her first, loosen her up with alcohol... and if that doesn't work, then we'll go for the pregnancy thing."

"I really don't think that's the best way to go," Hermione put in. "Why don't you three be honest with her. She's a pureblood. Won't she see that you need to marry in order to carry on the name? Eventually-"

"Granger, shut up," Draco muttered as he pressed his ear against the door. "You don't know my mother."

"She is a bit scary," Harry agreed as he went to join Draco, pressing his ear against the door also.

Remus stood frozen watching the twins lean over Draco to press their ears to the door as well. Hermione laughed softly and then giggled when Harry grabbed her hand and yanked her forward to press her ear against the door also. They were all smiling. Well except for Malfoy, he had an apprehensive look on his face. Both twins had a hand on his tense shoulders, squeezing gently. Harry and Hermione were whispering and laughing together... until Draco turned and kicked Harry's shin and sent a scathing look at Hermione, one in which she ignored.

Voldemort turned to Fenrir. "Keep him quiet and still."

Fenrir nodded, though he didn't tighten his hold on Remus. Both werewolves watched him leave the small alcove. Remus slumped tiredly against Fenrir and continued to watch. Really, his head was blank. What was he supposed to think? That Harry had willingly married Voldemort? That he had joined turned Dark... but Remus really didn't believe that. Harry swore he wasn't Dark. The twins had sworn and whatever else was going on, Remus knew they wouldn't have lied about that to him. They wouldn't have said anything if that were the case, but the fact that they had specifically said Harry was still neutral... Remus' thoughts stilled when Harry finally noticed Voldemort approaching.

Harry's face lit up like Christmas and he pulled away from the door and met the Dark Lord halfway. Remus studied his face carefully. Nothing about him screamed a potion or being under an enchantment. Remus knew Harry well enough to be able to spot the signs. Harry grabbed Voldemort's hand and pulled him to the wall opposite the double doors the others were pressed against.

"Tom, can't you just..." he waved his hands around in between them, "order Narcissa to stop being so psycho about Draco's innocence?"

"I don't feel the need to get involved in this nonsense. Eventually Narcissa will have to see she can't halt Draco's growing up. And Granger is correct. Draco is a pure blood and will need to be married. If Severus and Lucius are smart, they will point this out. She was married right out of Hogwarts. She cannot go against family tradition." Harry frowned and opened his mouth to say something. Voldemort shook his head. "I will, however, promise no lasting harm will come to your twins. Does this please you?"

Harry's returning smile was answer enough and without prompting, he embraced Voldemort. Remus watched Harry's fingers slide into the Dark Lord's brown hair and tug their lips together, seemingly not caring at all that they weren't alone. Remus couldn't help but snort when Voldemort tried to pull away after a few moments and Harry wouldn't let him. It was just so like Harry, especially because he was a very affectionate young man. And Voldemort didn't seem to mind at all. Remus thought he would die of shock when Harry pulled back a little bit only to rub his cheek against Voldemort's, and again the Dark Lord didn't seem to mind. The tilt of the Dark wizard's lips even indicated a smile. Remus was finding it very hard to breathe.

Fenrir dipped his head until his lips were against Remus' ear. "He married the Dark Lord willingly, cub. Can't you see it?"

He could, but he couldn't say it as he was still silenced. Though he tried opening his mouth to tell Fenrir his vision was becoming blurry and the alcove they were in had suddenly gone very cold. He couldn't voice that either. But he didn't have to. Fenrir got a clue when he collapsed. The only reason why he didn't hit the floor was because Fenrir already had a hold of him.

"Remus?" the elder werewolf lowered to his knees, spreading Remus out. "Cub?"

Remus didn't even have the energy to silently snarl at continuously being addressed as a cub. He was not Fenrir's bloody cub! Fenrir bent over him, eyes traveling across his body, catching sight of the injuries he had. But the werewolf already knew about those. Remus had managed to stop the bleeding with those; however, he hadn't mentioned the wound on his side. Not that it was Fenrir's business.

The elder werewolf growled. "You're still bleeding! My Lord," he called, despite the very good chance he would be tortured for bringing attention into the alcove. The Weasleys, Malfoy, Granger and young Riddle were looking over now. Voldemort drew his wand, hissing his displeasure.

"He's collapsed, my Lord," Fenrir hastened to say. "He's bleeding profusely from his side. He needs help immediately."

Harry narrowed his eyes and stepped away from Tom towards the alcove. "Who's bleeding? Who's over there, Tom?"

"First," Tom said, grabbing Harry's hand and drawing him closer to the alcove, "Fenrir and I were not the ones to do him harm. Understand, Harry? And secondly, I was tired of hearing your complaints about him not being able to meet me. So I've brought him here. I'll expect your thanks when I've had him healed."

Harry quickly caught on since there was only one person whom he wanted to meet Tom who hadn't already. He pulled away and raced the rest of the way to the alcove, gasping upon seeing Remus on the floor, scratched up and bloody. A large blood spot spreading out on the side of his shirt. Harry fell to his knees beside Remus and grabbed the werewolf's hand. "Remus!"

Tom turned and looked at Draco. "I need Severus and your mother. She has the appropriate healing abilities and potions will be required."

Draco nodded and pounded on the doors. Hermione and the twins were already rushing over and dropped to their knees beside Harry. "How did this happen?" Harry demanded.

"He says he was fighting the Order," Tom murmured as he discreetly ended the Silencio spell. "We found him like this in his disgusting little flat."

"Back away, please," Narcissa cut in as she and Severus approached. The four Gryffindors at her feet didn't seem to want to obey her.

"Do as she says," Tom ordered, bending down to gently grasp Harry's elbow to make him stand. "You do want him healed, correct?"

Harry nodded weakly. Hermione and twins quickly backed away to give Severus and Narcissa room. Severus waved his wand and Remus' body rose into the air and hovered along behind Narcissa and Severus as they moved away towards the stairs. Tom ordered Hermione, Draco, and the twins to remain behind as he slid an arm around Harry's tense shoulders and began to lead his husband after his werewolf.

"What about him?" Harry asked, pointing into the alcove where Fenrir was leaning against the cold wall with his arms folded across his chest. He looked unconcerned about everything and was staring at the small pool of blood there with something like fascination. Harry shivered.

"Fenrir, you are dismissed."

The werewolf jolted and then frowned. "Yes, my Lord." He gave a semblance of a bow and strode out of the alcove and down the hallway towards the doors where he could Apparate outside of the wards.

"Bloody werewolves," Tom muttered as they climbed the stairs. "They're so hard to control at times. Disrespectful every chance they can get... your friend was very disrespectful, Harry. He dared to talk back to me. He yelled at me even."

Harry laughed... until he remembered what was happening, and then he settled on being angry and worried. Tom released him when they found the room being used for Remus and leaned against the wall while Harry started pacing. Tom studied him, wondering when the spell had faded away. Harry was back to his normal self now. No cat ears or tail, no meowing or hissing. He was about to ask about that, but Harry finally exploded.

"I don't understand why you did this! He'll hate me now!" Harry ranted as he paced back and forth in front of the door. "I was going to tell him one day! I was going to ease him into it! Not... Not like you did! Not like this!"

"Feed him some of your fudge. It'll be alright."

Harry spun around to gape at the man lounging against the opposite wall. "I can't believe you just said that!"

"You said he liked chocolate and if anyone's chocolate will make him feel better, it would be yours." Harry snarled unpleasantly at the placating compliment. "When did the spell end? I was disappointed to find you'd gone back to normal."

Harry pierced him with a look; much of the expression was insecurity. "You... liked me better as a five year old cat?"

Tom mentally rolled his eyes. "I should say not. You would drive me mad in a week."

"Then why are you disappointed?"

Tom didn't want to say that it was because Harry was twice as cuddly and clingy when he was cat like. Harry had practically forgotten about everything beyond the fact of playing with Tom whenever he could get away with it. Tom had even canceled some meetings in order to be with his husband. But he wasn't about to spew such Hufflepuff nonsense out loud. He had a reputation to maintain after all. "Did I marry a cat?"

"No."

"Then of course I do not prefer you as a five year old cat... it was only amusing. And I liked your reactions when I caressed your tail."

Harry blushed and spun away to stare at the door Remus was behind. "Perverved wanker," he muttered. Tom smirked at his back.

Chapter Fourteen

The Black Bunny

Chapter Fourteen

Remus awoke somewhere unfamiliar but the scents of the people around him were familiar. Four scents that he'd grown accustomed to over the years. Harry, Hermione, George, and Fred. He awoke to the sound of Hermione's soothing voice trying to calm Harry as he quietly ranted against his husband's actions.

"Harry please..."

"Hermione, no!" Harry hissed. "This was the worst possible way Remus could have found out! He'll..." his voice broke off and Remus heard him pull in a shaky breath. "He'll hate me. He w-won't understand."

"If I can understand, I don't see why Remus can't... eventually."

"He's spent most of his life fighting Tom! You haven't. Remus isn't neutral, Mione."

"He didn't throw a fit when he found out we were going to marry Draco," one of the twins pointed out.

"That's completely different! Draco is not the bloody Dark Lord!"

"Voldemort saved your life, Harry. That's got to count for something..."

"This is fucked! This is completely fucked! I'll never see him again! I'll..."

Harry's panic had Remus finally opening his eyes. "Harry, I would never hate you. You need to calm down and explain to me how this happened."

The four sitting beside the bed seemed frozen, hardly daring to move. All their eyes were wide open, staring at him. After a moment, Hermione caught the twins' eyes and soon the three were up and leaving the room to give Harry and Remus privacy. Harry cleared his throat awkwardly, reached over to the bedside table and picked something up. He then shoved a bowl under Remus' nose. "Err... fudge?"

Tentatively, Remus reached for a piece. He took a bite and his brows rose. "It's good." He laughed and it was as strained as Harry's smile. "Why don't you start at the beginning, Harry," he suggested after another minute of awkward silence.

Harry folded his hands in his lap and began. He started at the very beginning when he'd been cursed during the Slytherin massacre. He told Remus how Tom had sought him out in muggle London a few months later, though he didn't say anything about Tom's Animagus form. He explained how the Dark Lord saved his life and then opened up his home to him; of how they had quickly moved on from enemies, to acquaintances, to friends, and then lovers. Harry told

Remus how his life was now, how happy he was. Told him about his new lucrative business with Draco. And he tried to put it into words how very much in love with Tom Riddle he was and how he was loved in return.

He spoke for a long time and not once did Remus interrupt him, but the werewolf was hanging on to his every word, he was listening. By the time Harry was finished, nearly two hours had come and gone and the bowl of fudge was empty. They sat there in silence for more minutes than Harry could stand before Remus finally spoke.

"It's no surprise you were able to forgive him. You've always had a forgiving soul, Harry."

"If that's true, I wouldn't have left the war," Harry responded flatly. "I have no intention of returning to the war."

"We won't talk about the war right now, Harry."

Harry nodded, finally looked Remus in the eye. "I swear I planned to tell you eventually and I kept complaining to Tom that I wanted you to meet him..." Harry smiled sheepishly. "Guess he was fed up with the complaining. Tom can only take so much of my nagging. I do it all the time."

Remus actually laughed at the thought of Harry nagging Voldemort. "Do you really?"

Harry grinned and nodded vigorously. "One of my life missions is to drive Tom crazy whenever possible! It's how I make him pay. It's great fun, Remus."

Remus stared at Harry, at the boy whom he thought of as a godson. He saw the absolute happiness in Harry's eyes when he spoke about the Dark Lord and he had heard the deep emotions in his voice as he relayed the story of how he came to be married to Voldemort. This wasn't a trick. It wasn't a joke.

"Remus... are we alright?"

The door opened before Remus could answer. Voldemort strode in. Harry stood and kept his eyes locked on Remus. He looked determined. It was a look Remus knew said no matter his decision Harry would never turn his back on his husband. And the Dark Lord... Voldemort walked in with a warning in his eyes. His gaze was narrowed on Remus. There was a lot in the eyes that were no longer gleaming red but instead a dark hazel. Protectiveness was an overwhelming emotion he caught within the Dark wizard's eyes. A warning too. A warning that said if Remus should turn his back on Harry, he wouldn't live an hour beyond that.

Harry turned away from the bed and met his husband at the door. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm welcome in the Malfoy home anytime," Tom answered with a drawl.

Harry crossed his arms. "That's not what I mean."

"You stayed the night here. I don't see why you had to stay the night. Your werewolf would have been perfectly fine here without you..."

Remus' eyes widened at hearing the jealousy in his tone. He didn't think Voldemort realized he could hear him. Harry turned back to Remus and said he'd be back before dragging the older wizard out into the hall. It was a few minutes before Harry returned. He came back in without Voldemort. Harry looked decidedly tussled in an I-was-just-snogged-within-an-inch-of-my-life way. Remus had been a teacher long enough to recognize passing students who looked like they'd been holed up in an alcove somewhere with their partners.

Harry had the dopest grin on his face until he caught Remus eyeing him incredulously. "What?" he snapped defensively.

Remus smiled. "Did he really snog you out in the hall? Did the Dark Lord Voldemort actually partake in snogging out in a hall where anyone could come upon you two?"

Harry's bright blush was answer enough. And then he laughed over his embarrassment. "Tom was pissed I didn't come home last night. He was jealous and thought a reclaiming was in order."

"Yes, I did hear the jealousy in his voice... Tell me what it's like being married to him."

Harry looked up at the ceiling, shifting in place as he thought about it. Remus didn't want to think about why Harry could be shifting in that particular way. "Life's not dull, that's for sure. Just a couple of days ago he turned me into a cat! A bloody cat, Remus! I was meowing and chasing mice all over the place! The worst part... I was still mostly human, but with cat ears and a tail! But I guess I kind of deserved it... a little bit.

"Hmm, what else... Also, I'm being tutored by Severus a few days every week. Soon Tom says he wants to teach me things. Not really the Dark Arts, Remus, so don't look at me like that. I've also asked Tom and Narcissa to give me etiquette lessons whenever they can. I'm not ashamed of Tom," he told Remus firmly, "and I want to be able to stand with him when he steps out in public. I don't want to embarrass him."

Remus nodded and understood that. Harry was fiercely loyal and supportive of his loved ones. "Is it true? Is he seeking equal rights for magical beings?"

Harry grinned. "Yeah! And guess who he's got on the job for it? Only the most determined witch in the world, Miss Hermione Granger. She loves her new job, Moony! And it really has nothing to do with the war... well, not her part anyway. Tom's given her a great opportunity. He hasn't marked her and he doesn't treat her like his slave..."

"Okay, Harry. Sit down," Remus murmured and struggled to sit up. Harry helped him into a sitting position before sitting himself. Remus studied his arm, nodding in relief that it was healed. His leg was only sore now and his side felt perfectly fine. "Who healed me?"

"Narcissa and Severus... Severus thinks you're nice. That was the exact word he used. Nice. Can you believe it? Mrs. Malfoy is really nice as well, once she gets to know you and thaws out... except for certain things. She goes psychotic over the thought of Draco losing his innocence. By the way, when Narcissa comes back to check on you, whatever you do never mention Drake and the twins in the same sentence. Do not under any circumstances mention his engagement with them. Alright?"

Remus nodded and remained silent a moment and they watched each other. As the seconds moved on, Harry began chewing on his bottom lip in worry. "You really are the same, aren't you, Harry?"

"Yeah."

"If he were the same, you wouldn't have married him," Remus said with absolute certainty. A small strained smile crossed Harry's features.

"Well... he's only a little different, Remus. He's only really soft with me, the twins, Hermione, and Draco... and only them because of me. He's still sadistically determined—let me explain, Remus," he hurried on before Remus could interrupt. "Tom told me once that at the Ministry of Magic, when he invaded my mind, that was a changing point for him. He says somehow I started to heal him, ground him in a way. He says going into my mind kind of knocked the insanity out of him. He says I was his salvation," Harry said with a bright smile.

"And I don't like to brag, but I may have had a hand in him ceasing the stupid muggle and muggle born hunts... like that got him anywhere," the young wizard ended with an eye roll.

"Harry, this is all very strange and shocking, but I'm... I will not turn my back on you for this. It amazes me that Voldemort went and courted you properly. And it explains your reluctance to give me his name or let us meet. Do you swear he doesn't mistreat you?"

"Swear it, Remus. If I've annoyed him too much or he gets angry, he usually leaves and takes out his frustrations on his minions. I don't give a shite about them. It keeps them in line. Keeps them from doing horrible things. Sometimes they deserve the punishments.

"I'm sure you heard about Havershire," Harry paused and waited. Remus nodded with a ferocious frown. "Yeah, well the Dark Lord was pissed when they attacked that village. He came home covered in blood from a torturing session with the Death Eaters because they went off and did that without his knowledge. He doesn't want that sort of thing happening anymore, Remus. I swear. In that regard, he has changed. And really, things were never as they appeared."

"Yes, I've learned that," Remus replied softly. "But—"

"Okay," Harry conceded, since they were being truthful, "he has gotten me a few times with a Crucio—they're very tame though!—and he did Crucio the twins a few days ago for letting loose lots of fake mice in our castle. They should have known better! He's still the same and that is his home. He's still the Dark Lord... But that's as far as he goes with us and it's only ever seconds and then he doses me with affection... sometimes he smothers me," he paused and laughed. Remus was flummoxed. "The twins... Tom gave them a really rare spell book for their products as way of apology, so now they're trying to figure out other ways to annoy him and get him to torture them so he'll give them other things. Tom's brilliant! Honestly I think it would be weird if Tom didn't try and curse me once in a while. It's how we are."

Remus groaned and rubbed his eyes. Clearly Harry was well and truly in love and Voldemort could do no wrong in his eyes. "That last bit there, Harry... that didn't make this any better."

"You wanted the truth about him and us!"

"True." And because this seemed the best time, Remus went on to tell Harry what he found out from Fenrir about his lycanthropy.

"You know... that makes a lot of sense now. Tom told me Fenrir finds all these orphans that have been turned by rogue werewolves. Young kids whose parents turn the children out because they've become werewolves. He finds them on the streets and puts them in packs. Of course they join the Dark Lord. But they're never really mistreated. They get a home, plenty of food and clothes. They're educated and not left to feel as if no one wants them... Told you he wasn't so bad. He's kind of charming when he wants to be, Remus."

Remus snarled when Moony internally agreed. "I need to go," the werewolf muttered, pushing back the covers.

"You can't go! You were hurt really badly, Remus!"

"I don't feel any worse than I usually would after a full moon," the werewolf responded as he slipped out of bed and stood on shaky legs. "Besides, Bill will be looking for me... Merlin, I don't even know if he made it back to his safe house after... last night was brutal. We barely made it. It was a bloody miracle actually."

Harry watched him look around for his clothes. "Tom said you fought the Order. You and Bill?"

Remus leaned back against the edge of the bed and tipped his face up to stare at the gilded ceiling. "It's bad, Harry. The Order and the bloody Ministry are trying to arrest innocent people. The Patils last night. Even Augusta Longbottom. Dean Thomas and his family... Muggles, Harry! Bill, Charlie, and I have been going around warning people. Last night we didn't have Charlie with us *and* we were almost too late to warn... Bill and I attacked before the Order could attack those people. We give warning to the families and then attack the arresters. You'll see... lots of families are going to start disappearing. They may blame Vol... your husband."

Harry sneered. "Of course they will. Not that that's going to do them any good... Look, stay here. Rest. I'll go and find Bill."

Remus pushed off the bed, shaking his head. "Absolutely not, Harry. I don't want you involved in this and I have a feeling you don't want to be involved either. I'm actually glad about that."

"I may not want to be involved, but if Bill needs help..."

"I'll find him," Remus said again. "Where are my clothes?"

Harry studied Remus, noting the man's firm expression and knew he wouldn't win this one. "Severus brought you some clothes... but Remus, you're still hurt."

"Like I said before, it's nothing I can't handle."

On the ground floor of Malfoy Manor, within one of the studies, Tom faced three young wizards, studying them shrewdly. "Are you ready?" he asked them. "Today is the last Hogsmeade trip of the year. Your plan will only work if you are able to capture three students and enter the castle that way, without suspicion."

"Yes, my Lord. We're ready," Draco answered, while the twins nodded.

"And you two are sure?" he asked the twins.

They nodded again. "We'll be saving lives like this. It'll be over quickly if we do it this way."

"I want you two gone before myself and the Death Eater force step onto the grounds. Is this understood?"

"Yes, sir."

Draco turned to them, crossing his arms over his chest. "I get your sister," he reminded lowly, nearly hissing out the words. And they nodded again because the three of them had already talked about this and Draco had promised not to kill Ginny after he did whatever he planned to do to her. Frankly they believed their youngest sibling needed to learn a very good life's lesson, and she needed to learn you never crossed a Malfoy. She would probably try again if Draco didn't teach her.

"Very good," Tom said. "We'll attack tomorrow morning. I'm assuming you have everything prepared as I've given you enough warning beforehand."

"Yep. Everything is at the store. We'll pop over there first and then into Hogsmeade to pick off three unsuspecting students."

The Dark Lord turned and pulled something off the nearest chair before he pulled something from the inside of his robes. He turned and handed the items over to one of the copperheads. "I trust you know what to do with these."

"Um..." the copperhead with a silver stud in his ear cleared his throat, staring at the old and blank parchment with recollection and wariness while his brother caressed the silvery material in his hands. "No disrespect, sir, but can we ask where you got this?"

Tom turned narrowed eyes onto Draco. "Harry is aware Hogwarts will be attacked. He's aware Draco will have something to do with it and thought Draco could use his map and cloak to keep himself safe. So no, I did not steal from my husband."

"Alright then!" the twins chirped, and stowed the Marauder's Map away with grins, passing the cloak over to the blond.

"Fine. Leave now. And do not fail or you will face consequences. As I've said, you've had plenty of time to prepare."

Draco bowed lowly with a murmured, "yes, my Lord," before turning to leave. The twins hurried after him, in no way wanting to be left alone with the Dark Lord. Despite them being

Harry's friends, they knew if they screwed this up, it would be their heads they had better hand over in the end. This was a big attack and the rest of Voldemort's plans relied on conquering Hogwarts.

"We'll go see my father before leaving," Draco murmured as they walked down the hall.

Lucius was in the parlor with Severus and Narcissa and was in the silent process of trying to find some way to start the conversation he knew had to come sooner or later when the three walked in. Draco in front with the two following only a foot behind. Lucius noticed his wife was once again eyeing the two wizards standing like guards behind their son.

"Father, we're leaving for Hogsmeade."

Lucius nodded and stood. "Do not fail, son."

"Of course not, father. I'm with two Gryffindors. They seem to have a lot of dumb luck."

"It's true!" the two behind him chimed in.

"Draco," his father warned.

"I know, Father. I know how serious this is."

"We won't fail, Mr. Malfoy," the twins stated firmly, glancing at the back of Draco's head before returning their gazes to Lucius. By their looks, Lucius understood they would make sure nothing bad happened to Draco, which meant they would do everything in their power to make sure the mission was a success, whatever the cost.

The moment the three young wizards were gone and the door shut behind them, Narcissa turned to Lucius. The blond man tensed. "Lucius," she began levelly, and Lucius glanced at Severus from the corner of his eye, "I know you have business dealings with those two, but I think you should restrict their time associating with our son."

"Whatever for, Narcissa? I was under the impression you liked them. You said they were very nice and clever."

"I do not like the way they watch Draco."

"How do they watch him?" Severus inquired as he took the cushion next to his lover.

Narcissa smiled and it was so very cold. "They look at him the same way you have always looked at Lucius."

If he hadn't been so wary about Narcissa's smile or the fact that she saw more than Draco and the twins realized, he would have preened. Of course Severus watched him. Severus could never keep his eyes to himself whenever he was in the room. But now was not the time to think of such things. Now was the time to set Narcissa straight, because really... this complex of hers was driving everyone absolutely crazy.

Lucius cleared his throat and made sure his wand was still in the holster around his forearm. This was liable to turn nasty. "Narcissa, our son is no longer a little boy. He's a grown wizard now and I dare say a very good looking one. He will and has gained those types of looks..." he trailed off as Narcissa's features hardened like ice and realized that was not the way to go. He didn't even need to turn and look to know Severus was rolling his eyes. "What I'm trying to say is..." he wanted to say something to calm her down before he told her exactly what was going on, but he couldn't seem to think of anything under the glacial look his wife was sending him. She was very good at that. "Severus, I need a drink."

Severus sighed and stood; muttering, "coward," under his breath as he went to the liquor cabinet. "Narcissa," he started as he poured the three of them strong drinks, "Draco is not a little boy and you need to stop deluding yourself."

"Excuse me?" she whispered lowly.

"Draco is nearly nineteen. Well beyond the age you and Lucius were married. Passed the age most pureblooded children are married. You can't keep him under your wing forever. Draco will want a partner. He'll want to start a family of his own."

Severus said all this while his back was to the room and the room fell into an eerie silence. He hoped Lucius would do the right thing and protect his back should Narcissa decide to send a nasty curse his way.

"He's correct, Narcii."

"There's plenty of time for that yet," Narcissa said lightly as Severus turned. She had taken a seat and seemed to be in a cloud of denial. Severus handed her a drink, went back to grab his and Lucius' and sat down. He really didn't want to be here any longer and thought to get it over and done with. The sooner Narcissa was told, the sooner she would get over it.

"Narcissa," he began, only to be interrupted by Lucius.

His lover blurted out with, "Draco is with child!"

Severus closed his eyes and groaned just as the sound of glass shattering ripped through the air. He turned to his lover with an incredulous glare. Of all the things Lucius could have gone with, he chose that one? "Really? Really, Lucius, you went there?"

Lucius didn't reply. Instead he sat there watching his wife, who seemed frozen in time. Her fingers curved around as if she were still holding the glass that now lay shattered at her feet.

After what seemed like ages, Narcissa moved. She slowly stood and vanished the mess with the wand that had suddenly appeared in her hand. Both wizards' tensed as they had not seen her pull that wand. "I think you're lying. For whatever reason, I think you are lying, Lucius. My baby would have told me."

Lucius stood also and drew up to his full height. "Yes, he is your baby, Narcii, and will always be, but Draco is also a man now and you must come to terms with it. Narcissa... Draco is very much in..." he paused to swallow thickly before going on. "Well he's..."

"He's in love!" Severus spat out, knowing Lucius was choking on the words. "He's in love and you're making it hard for him to be truly happy."

"Nonsense, Severus! He would have told me!"

"He would not, Narcissa! Not when his telling you would mean the death of his lovers!"

"Lovers?" she hissed and the two wizards flinched. "I knew it!"

"Narcissa, if they look at Draco the same way Severus looks at me..." he motioned between himself and his lover. "We're devoted to each other. Wouldn't you like that for our son?"

Severus nodded even though this conversation was making him uneasy. He never liked discussing with any one the strength of his devotion to his lover. It wasn't anyone's business. And it was also a weakness should anyone know about it. "And they've been nothing but perfect gentlemen with Draco." *In public*, he thought to himself. Well, mostly in public.

"They saved him from the kidnappers," Lucius added. "You must have seen them, Narcissa. Fred and George never rested for even a moment until they rescued our son."

"How could you condone this?" she asked with a trembling voice. A voice that had Lucius taking a step back and over until Severus was partially standing in front of him.

Though he did raise his chin and spoke steadily. "I am the head of this household, Narcissa, and I will decide what is best-"

"You do not want to go down that road right now," Severus hissed from the corner of his mouth. "Narcissa," he said to the witch, whom he now noticed had her wand up and pointed at them, "those two wizards worship the ground your son walks on. They would do anything for him. Even a simpleton can see that."

"Are you calling me a simpleton, Severus Snape?" she asked, her words slashing across the room like a whip.

Outside of the room, two ears were pressed firmly against the door. Harry was snickering. "This is getting good."

"In a horrifying way," Hermione replied with wide eyes. "It's a good thing the twins are not here at the moment-"

"Narcissa, please! Put down your wand!"

"How can you talk about marrying our son off!" the witch inside shrieked. "He's an innocent baby!"

"Draco hasn't been innocent since he was fourteen!" Lucius shouted in a voice that the two outside knew was his fed up voice. "He is not a baby and I'm quite sure he enjoys sex whenever he can manage to get away from you!"

"Lucius!" shouted Severus just before a plethora of things inside simultaneously exploded, making Harry and Hermione quickly back away from the door and run away.

"Maybe I should get Tom," Harry said. "He might not be too pleased to lose his Lieutenants."

"You should probably go and check on Lucius and Severus. I think Narcissa might have killed them just now," Harry said the moment he entered his husband's office.

Tom looked up and studied him. "It didn't go well then."

"Definitely not," Harry answered. Then he rolled his eyes. "Lucius actually tried to use the pregnancy ploy. She saw right through it. Doesn't believe it at all," he said as he sank into one of the seats in front of the desk. "Lucius yelled out about how Draco has been having sex since he was fourteen... after that it sounded like everything but the walls in there exploded. So yeah, you might need to win this war without those two."

Tom remained silent and watched his husband. After a time, he narrowed his eyes. "What of your werewolf?"

Harry frowned. "Remus. His name is Remus."

"Your werewolf," he prodded.

"He's gone off to search for a friend. He probably felt really uncomfortable and unsafe at Malfoy Manor. Can't say I blame him. He promised to contact me soon... did you give Drake my map and cloak?"

"Yes."

Harry breathed a sigh of relief. "I just... I'm trying to stay out of this, but-" he broke off with a pained grimace. "Course, giving him that stuff is a huge advantage, right? I'm helping..."

"Believe me when I say you are saving lives, Harry. We all are. And you're not so much helping my cause as you are helping a friend."

Harry's head rolled to the side and he gave a lopsided grin. "I do believe you. I know you want me to be proud of the world we will have in the future."

"Don't let that get out. I can't have my minions knowing I'm catering to you."

"Hardly," Harry responded with a laugh, though the laugh dimmed when Tom stood and went to the wardrobe in the corner to pull out his Dark Lord robes; reminding Harry of what was to come in the next few days.

It was worse not knowing *exactly* what was going to happen once Tom had Hogwarts. Harry didn't want to ask. But he could guess what Tom's next move would be, since prisoners were required. Tom was going to prey on the weakness of the world. This had Harry smirking. Both from the thought of what he knew was going to occur after Hogwarts- Tom was a genius- and from the emotions he could feel from their link.

Harry closed his eyes a moment, taking time to feel Tom's magic- heavy sadistic desire and excitement- licking at him. It was overwhelmingly dark and deliciously clouded his senses. It was addicting and toxic. Harry was glad Tom liked him the way he was because if his husband tried courting him to the Dark side, Harry didn't think he'd have the strength to resist.

When he opened his eyes, Tom was standing near him with his black robes thrown over his forearm. His eyes were back to gleaming crimson and staring fixedly, almost hungrily on his young husband's face. "It would be almost too easy," he purred, as if sensing Harry's thoughts.

Harry pretended not to hear him, made damn sure Tom couldn't see how that voice or those words affected him and stood with a sigh. "Suppose you want me out of your hair. You'll be busy and I need to fill orders."

"I'll be out for the rest of the day, yes, but I'll return this evening. Tomorrow, however..."

Harry nodded that he understood. And then he winced and rubbed his forehead. "Bloody hell, Tom. I can feel how excited you are."

Tom's red eyes seemed to grow brighter. "I *will* wake you when I return home tonight."

Harry enjoyed the rapid beating of his heart and the way his face flushed in anticipation. He cocked a grin. "Will you be rough with me?" he made sure his tone was begging.

Tom groaned and turned away from him. "Go on, you little brat."

Harry snickered as he turned to leave. "I'm not little."

"I've always wanted to shag on Snape's desk."

Draco and Fred turned to stare at George. The three were currently ensconced in a broom closet very near the Great Hall. The first part of their plan had gone off without a hitch. They'd abducted three fifth year boys the day before and had locked them away in the Shrieking Shack. Once there, the Hogwarts students were bound and gagged and a part of their hair had been taken. Draco and the twins had then used Polyjuice to take up their identities and returned to the school with the rest of the student body.

Once there, they'd gone to the Room of Requirement to wait until those in the castle were asleep.

"It's Slughorn's desk now," Draco reminded George as he checked the time once again. They had another ten minutes to wait. Hopefully everything would go well. If not... Draco cringed. He didn't want to think about that.

George frowned. "Thanks, Draco love. You've ruined the fantasy."

The blond smirked.

Fred shifted behind Draco. "Actually this right here is one of my fantasies."

"Why is it you always like to press from behind?" Draco whispered, feeling his face blushing and other parts of his anatomy taking notice of the man behind him.

George maneuvered to press against his front. "Simple, love. Fred can't wait to slide his cock inside you and I can't wait to drop to my knees in front of you. I'll lift you up for him, spread you wide and let him fuck you while I'm sucking you off. Or... maybe you'd like me to rim you first. How's that sound, Draco? I can't wait to shove my tongue inside you."

Draco collapsed against Fred, his eyes rolling to the back from just the thought of how that would feel... Actually that sounded fan-bloody-tastic, especially when George talked in that deep low breathy voice. Draco was finally all for it, but unfortunately they had a mission to complete. "That sounds—can we," Draco pulled in a shuddering gasp before licking his lips. "When it's all over, can we come back here and you can say that again and then... I will agree to whatever you say, yeah?"

"Oh, Merlin, yes!" Fred whispered harshly into his ear.

"I should go now though," Draco murmured, pleased at their expressions as he forced himself to pull away, quickly donning the Invisibility Cloak.

"You're a delicious tease," George hissed as Fred raised the map with not so steady hands in order to look and make sure Draco would be safe to step out without anyone seeing the door opening.

"*And* you're good to go," Fred went on, seeing the coast was clear on the map.

Only a few minutes later, Draco stood just inside the Great Hall, eyes narrowed and scouring the room. He was incredibly pleased to see most of the teaching staff in attendance and drinking from their goblets and eating their food as if nothing was wrong. From their slightly tired yet completely unconcerned faces, Draco determined they were suspicious in no way and had no idea the kitchen had been invaded last night. It had been difficult to bypass the house elves, but since they'd gone in at such an ungodly hour, there hadn't been too many of the creatures around and he and Fred had been very good at distracting the remaining elves while George went about poisoning the food and drink and any and all plates he could get his hands on.

Draco carefully crossed his arms over his chest as his gaze moved away from the High table to that of the Gryffindor table. His eyes swiftly passed the crimson and gold idiots to one in particular who was doing nothing more than picking at her food. She sat on the side that conveniently faced the doors, which gave Draco a very good look at her face, and astonishingly the Weaslette bitch still had bruising along her jaw and eyes. Just what kind of spell had Granger used? Surely it would have faded by now.

The blond looked away from the ugly redhead, at the same time wondering how the gorgeous fiends could ever be related to her. He noticed several drooping heads in the Hall, most notably at the Head table. It was happening so slowly that no one really noticed. No one

would really notice until their eyes slid shut and remained that way. And by that time, the lethargy would be too heavy for them to even pick up their wands.

He also noticed the three they'd abducted the day before didn't seem to be missed, but this was probably due to the fact that while Polyjuiced, he and the twins had begged sickness and told anyone who'd tried talking to them that they'd be going to the Madam Pomfrey. She was someone who would need to be taken care of soon, before she could alert the Ministry. As well as Pince and Filch, but he had never seen them come into breakfast late, which meant they weren't going to arrive at all. They would be no problem for the Death Eaters.

Draco waited a few more minutes, his eyes returning to the Head table, for that was where the danger to their plans lies. McGonagall looked to be trying to fight it but the others were already dozing. Draco drew his wand and began to quickly walk down between two House tables. It was lucky the half giant wasn't there as well. Rubeus Hagrid would have been hard to poison with this potion. It would have taken more than one dose. The half giant was most likely about the lawns or in his cottage. He would also be taken care of by the Death Eaters once the Dark Lord stripped away the wards. Draco wasn't going to concern himself with anyone who wasn't in the Great Hall.

He lifted his wand and pointed it at the Headmistress. "*Stupefy*," he breathed. She slumped in her seat without further ado. Draco then repeated the spell on the rest of the lethargic staff, just in case. Turning on his heels, he went about studying the student body once more. The Hall was quiet now as most were already asleep. Heads in hands, plates, on the table. There were a few who seemed to have ingested less of the potion and were looking around bleary eyed. But they'd ingested just enough to keep them docile and unresponsive. Confused. Ironically, Ginny Weasley seemed better off than most of her peers and she was peering around with widening eyes. Most likely because she didn't seem to have an appetite.

"*Incarcerous*!" Draco shouted. She gasped as thick ropes bound around her. Making her unable to move and look behind to see who had shouted.

There was a stir about the room at his shout, but it was hushed. If Draco weren't so intent on Weasley he would have found the lack of noise in the full Great Hall disturbing. But at the moment all his attention was on the twisting redhead. Draco dropped the hood of Harry's cloak before reaching out to grab a fist full of her horrid hair and yanking back until her face was tipped to the ceiling and she was looking at him upside down.

Her eyes widened upon seeing him; a mix of horror and anger crossing her features and Draco felt like crowing. But he wouldn't because now was not the time for it.

"Malfoy," she slurred. He had a feeling she would have screeched if she could.

"Promised, didn't I?" he drawled, pointing his wand at her face while keeping a firm grip on her hair. "Promised to give back all I was given. Did you think I was bluffing?"

The girl's face paled and he smirked gleefully before hitting her with the same spell she'd hit him with to force his mouth open and to remain that way. Draco set his wand on the table in front of her, as if to taunt her with it since she couldn't reach for it. He then grabbed her full

goblet of pumpkin juice and promptly drowned her mouth with the liquid. She tried to spit it out, but he only picked up the jug next and started to pour that in her mouth.

"Don't forget to swallow. Can't have you dying... yet. I'm not through with you."

Once he was certain enough liquid had gone down, he threw her head away from him, rubbing his hand on his slacks and retaking his wand. He laughed a cruel laugh. "You look ridiculous, sitting there droopy eyed with your mouth wide open, pumpkin juice all over your robes... Think I'll leave you like that for the rest of Death Eaters to see you when they get here. It'll give everyone a laugh."

Her eyes widened in horror once again, but he didn't see it as he'd spun on his heel and strode towards the doors. It was time for the next part of their plans.

Draco watched from behind the gate, enraptured as the Dark Lord glided forth from the darkness, his Death Eaters separating to allow him through. Draco stood tall and proud, a smirk on his lips as the Dark Lord and his followers began to dismantle the strong wards blocking their entrance. It took only fifteen minutes and soon the Dark Lord was blasting the gate open.

As soon as they were through, Draco moved to stand beside his father, who had followed closely behind the Dark Lord, along with Severus and Aunt Bella. Everyone was covered in their Death Eater robes and masks but he knew who the three were following his Lord. It was always Severus, his father, and Bellatrix Lestrange who were allowed to follow so closely behind. Lucius pressed a proud hand on his shoulder the moment he came near and Severus passed over Draco's robes and mask. The young blond quickly and eagerly donned the apparel. But paused when he noticed his father had a bandage against his neck and Severus was missing an eyebrow.

"Wha-" he began, only to be cut off.

"Report," the Dark Lord hissed, turning to him.

Draco quickly knelt, dipping his head, enjoying the feeling of the mask over his face. "My Lord, the Great Hall was mostly full. They are all asleep. A few students may be around..."

"Easily taken care of," Voldemort replied.

"Yes, my Lord. Also, Madam Pince, Pomfrey, Filch, and that half giant are not in the Great Hall. I checked Hagrid's hut... he's not in there."

Severus stepped forward, his eyes scouring the grounds. "He's probably in the forest."

Voldemort turned to stare back up at the school. "Some of you spread out and look for him. If you can avoid killing him, do so. He may be of some use. The rest of you... we have a school to secure. Come, Draco."

Draco, Severus and a load of Death Eaters followed after their lord, while the other half of their forces (including his father) who had not gone searching for Hagrid remained behind to reconstruct the wards to their specifications. His father was a master of wards.

"Have they left, Draco?" the Dark Lord questioned as they approached the heavy double doors of Hogwarts.

"Who, my Lord?"

"Your silent accomplices."

"Yes."

"Very good."

Voldemort glided up the steps and pushed open the doors himself, while those behind him had their wands at the ready. The Entrance Hall was empty. Voldemort entered and went straight to the Great Hall. Bellatrix and a few others separated, intent on searching through the school, taking care of stragglers and the others Draco had mentioned. The Dark Lord stopped before the Great Hall doors and immediately pushed them open. He took two steps inside and stopped, crimson eyes soaking in the scene greedily. Finally he tipped his head back and laughed. It was gleeful and deranged and sent goose bumps up and down Draco's spine.

"Draco."

The blond hurried to his Master's side, apprehensive. Had he done something wrong? "My Lord?"

A hand dropped onto his shoulder. "Very good. Very good indeed, Draco."

Breathing a sigh of relief, Draco smirked.

Voldemort pulled his hand away and turned to his minions. "Chain them all."

Ginevra Weasley was one of the last to awake from the potion's effects. Heavily, she pulled her face off the table. The first thing she saw was Draco Malfoy standing on the other side of the table, leaning against the wall and smirking at her. His eyes held a malicious light. At the moment he didn't look like a pathetic cowardly boy always calling for his father. He looked taller and more self assured, colder. How could her brothers want someone who could look so cold? It was inconceivable.

Unfortunately, she didn't know her brothers all that well. She didn't know they enjoyed every aspect of Draco, even the aspect that made him a Death Eater. Unfortunately for her, Draco Malfoy was not afraid to embrace the Darkness of his master. Especially not when everything was turning out just perfect for him and those he was associated with. She would soon learn he was not someone to mess with. Her brothers had warned her, after all.

Ginny scowled, ignoring the rest of the Hall. Ignoring the students sitting all around her, chained and forced into silence. "What do you think you're going to do, Malfoy?" she spat, her voice carrying across the Hall. "You're nothing but a spineless bastard!"

"Perhaps," Draco drawled as he pushed off the wall and approached the table, ignoring the rest of the students as she seemed to be doing, "you should take a look around. That way first," he indicated the direction of the Head table.

Ginny narrowed her eyes but did as he suggested. Fear slammed into her when she saw nothing but Death Eaters sitting at the table. And sitting in the Headmistress' chair, Voldemort. Whipping her head around, she finally noticed all of her peers were chained together. Shackled tightly. Some were crying but it was silent. Her gaze went back to Malfoy.

His smirk grew. "My Lord has granted me a gift for making all this possible." Actually the Dark Lord had promised many things to him. A rise in Death Eater ranks for one. But Draco was more inclined to want to play with his first gift. Ginevra Weasley.

"You won't do anything, Malfoy! All you're good for is hiding behind your father's back!"

Draco raised his wand to her face and said in a very controlled and clipped voice, "*Crucio*."

From the head table, several people perked and turned to them as Ginny cried out. Voldemort's ever present smirk grew while Lucius grinned maliciously. Bellatrix hopped in her seat, clapping her hands delightedly as the redhead shrieked and writhed in pain in her seat. The students around watched in fear and horror.

"Well, well... I did not think he had it in him," Voldemort murmured.

"Truthfully, my Lord," Lucius said, "neither did I."

"I wonder..." Voldemort turned his thoughts inward and continued to watch. Draco loved that girl's brothers, and yet he had enough hate for their sister to be able to do that to her. Which means she must have personally done something to the young Malfoy in order to fuel his desire to torture her in such a way. Voldemort was suddenly drawn back to the conversation he'd had with Harry after they'd found Draco and took care of the kidnappers. From the conversation, Voldemort deduced the kidnappers must have been Weasleys. And now... Ginevra Weasley must have been one of them.

The look on Draco's face was pleasing, and as much as he was enjoying the show, having the youngest offspring of Arthur Weasley going insane at the moment was not part of the plans. "That is enough, Draco."

Draco immediately pulled off the curse. "Sorry, my Lord. Got a bit... excited."

Bellatrix acted as if that were the most wonderful thing she'd ever heard her baby nephew say. She went back to clapping and laughing hysterically.

"It is understandable," Voldemort said, eyeing the witch as she slumped forward, shaking uncontrollably and whimpering. "But you may continue to play with her. Just remember to

control yourself... for the time being."

Draco nodded and turned back to Ginny. "I will get you back for every broken bone, bruise, and lost tooth you gave me. Every hex and curse... everything."

"How can you do this to me?" she rasped. "What about my bro-"

"*Silencio*," he hissed. "They have nothing to do with this. Weaslette, they told me they warned you of my coming revenge. It's your own fault you did not listen to them. I won't kill you. But by the time I'm done with you, you'll wish you were dead," he muttered menacingly.

Draco moved then, walking purposely down the table and then around it until he was standing behind her. He slashed his wand through the air and the chains connecting her to the students beside her broke.

Again, he grabbed her by the hair and pulled her off the bench. She could do nothing but struggle half heartedly against his hold and the chains surrounding her body until she fell to the ground. She was still weak from the Unforgivable and barely moved as he began to drag her along the floor towards the door by her hair.

Voldemort almost wanted to get up and follow them. To watch young Malfoy take out his revenge. This was a side of Draco neither he nor the others had ever seen. He had hidden his feelings well from everyone in regards to his kidnapping. He seemed more mature as well and Voldemort wondered if some of that had to do with his lovers. After that thought the Dark Lord almost snorted. Fred and George Weasley, mature? Then again, they could be very serious when the occasion called for it. If not, Lucius would never have agreed to do business with them, nor would he have agreed to a marriage contract. They had to have qualities that would make the Malfoy Family proud.

Beside him, Lucius was thrumming with pride while Severus rolled his eyes. "Was it necessary to drag her out by her hair?" the Potions Master grumbled.

"Yes," Voldemort said, knowing this was all about Draco's kidnapping. "Another way to humiliate her." No doubt to get back at the way he was probably humiliated during his kidnapping. "Now then," he began to tap a long finger against the wooden table, surveying their prisoners. No one was looking in their direction. Not one of the little brats dared. He found himself thinking that if Harry were still a student, he probably would have been the only one bold enough to meet eyes with him. That's what made Harry worthy. "Do we alert the Ministry ourselves, or do we wait until they come here..."

"My Lord... I thought we would-"

"Yes, we will storm the Ministry, but I want them to know about this first. It will make them hesitate when fighting back. Wouldn't it, Lucius?"

It was a rhetorical question, but Lucius answered anyway. "Yes, my Lord."

Voldemort nodded and smiled grimly. "Contact Charleston and Lustre. Have them deliver the message and memory immediately."

"Will you stop it? I'm trying to read!"

Harry sighed and tried to stop his agitated knee from continuously bouncing up and down. He stared, almost unseeing across the table at Hermione, who as usual had her head in a book. How could she read at a time like this?

They were sitting in the breakfast room and Harry couldn't seem to sit still long enough to eat even one bite. "My scar," he murmured. "The link..."

Hermione pulled her nose out of the book, looking worried. "Does it hurt?"

Harry blushed and shook his head. "It's intoxicating, Mione," he whispered. "Bloody evil git is doing it on purpose."

Hermione laughed under her breath. Harry narrowed his eyes. It wasn't really funny at all. It had him all jittery and flushed and *craving* his husband. Harry spent another moment glaring at her before looking behind Hermione at the Aurors standing in the corner. He didn't know why Tom had ordered the two to be there, but they didn't bother him and he knew Hermione didn't mind Charleston being there either, even if the two Aurors were just standing there watching and softly talking. Probably about the raids.

Harry grinned. He didn't want to be the only one uncomfortable. "Hey, Hermione?"

"Hmm?" she murmured distractedly, already back to her reading.

"When are we going lingerie shopping again?" he asked in a voice that was probably too loud. But it did the trick and snagged Charleston's undivided attention. The man pulled away from the Auror conversation mid-sentence. "Are you wearing the new set now? The black and red lacy set? You look luscious in that. As a gay man, I say you look luscious," he raised his eyes to the Auror and smirked, "imagine what a straight man might say."

Charleston was practically frothing at the mouth. Hermione tended to wear very tame work suites and robes to work. Nothing flashy about it. A lot of men usually salivated when they knew the woman had something racy underneath the drab. He'd been right in thinking Andrew Charleston was one of those men.

Hermione's mouth had dropped wide open during his little inquiry and her face looked to be in danger of exploding with all the blood rushing up there. But catching sight of Harry's smirk, her eyes quickly narrowed. Harry shifted in his seat. This was going to be good. Hermione wasn't going to run away, she was going to join in. Awesome.

"Actually, Harry, I'm wearing the lace and fishnet chemise right now. It's a weekday. You know how I like to wear my chemises on weekdays."

"I do, indeed." Harry smiled widely. "The jade green one with the black leather?"

"Yes, that's the one," she answered back with a smirk before returning to her book. Harry wanted to applaud her.

Charleston was drooling and he looked kind of stunned, hypnotized. Lustre was laughing under his breath and had to dig his elbow into his partner's side. Harry wondered how long Charleston had been interested in Hermione. At the manor when the Auror had asked her out, Charleston had implied he'd been postponing asking her. As if he'd been watching her for a while at the Ministry or something. Harry mentally applauded his friend. She'd really caught the eye of a gorgeous competent man.

Harry wanted to draw the man closer in order to get to know him better, but suddenly he was hit with a vision. Harry hissed and closed his eyes, pressing his palm over his forehead. "I'm fine," he croaked before Hermione could panic. "He's just... showing me something." What Tom was showing him was of Draco cursing Ginny Weasley. "He's really very pleased with Draco."

Harry felt hands on his back, rubbing in circling soothing motions, but he didn't open his eyes. Instead he watched the youngest Weasley succumb to Draco's wand, and wondered at himself when he couldn't drudge up even an ounce of pity. "Good Merlin! He's dragging her out of the hall by her hair!" he exclaimed minutes later. After that the vision ended and Harry sat back, gasping.

"Who's dragging who, mate?"

Harry's eyes snapped open. He found the twins sitting next to him. Hermione was behind him. She'd been the one with the soothing hand on his back. "Err... Draco was dragging Ginny out of the Hall by her hair," he answered truthfully. Should he tell them about the Crucio?

They noticed the pensive look on his face. Fred grabbed a sugar bun off his plate and nibbled on it before replacing it. "Draco told us what he was going to do to her."

"Everything? Because, um... because our thoughts about him being too timid to torture was way off. He seems to be able to pull the Crucio off exceedingly well."

George's lips thinned. "It's better than using Sectumsempra. I'm sure Draco wouldn't have been as useless at it as thankfully Ginny and Ron were. But if he knew they tried to use that on him..."

"You're seriously alright with it?" Hermione questioned as she moved around back to her seat. She was more curious than anything.

The twins nodded. "Draco already told us what he was going to do to her. She'll live in the end. We couldn't stop Draco even if we wanted to and Ginny deserves a lesson. Maybe she'll grow up."

"Master Harry! Mr. Malfoy be here!"

Harry looked over at the house elf standing beside his chair and nodded. "Show him up, thanks."

Lucius appeared soon after. He greeted those at the table before immediately ordering the Aurors to the Ministry. He pulled out a vial and a rolled up parchment. "Be discreet when you hand this over. Our Lord doesn't want your cover blown quite yet," the blond aristocrat told the two. Charleston and Lustre nodded and left. Charleston catching Hermione's eye as he left, winking at her.

Lucius turned to the twins and cleared his throat. "Do not visit the manor until I say otherwise," he intoned gravely. "Narcissa... has gone into shock. I rather think she will kill anyone who visits at the moment. Stay as far away from her as possible. Keep your eyes open, she may hunt for you."

"Sucks to be you two," Harry snickered as Lucius turned on his heel and left without another word.

Once he was out of the room, Hermione's blazing eyes landing on Harry. "You cretin!"

"What? You handled that brilliantly, Mione! You should have seen his face! He wanted to *eat* you!"

That didn't calm her down at all.

"I really don't know what to do, Remus. I don't..."

Remus looked up from his ale to study his table companion. Bill was slouched down, staring into his own cup with a pensive expression. Several hours ago, Wizarding Britain had been informed Hogwarts had been overtaken by the Dark Lord and the students and some teachers taken hostage. Several hours ago, the Ministry had been notified of this and had been given an ultimatum. Submit or be responsible for the deaths of an entire school of children; for the deaths of their future. Voldemort had also attacked the Ministry of Magic with far more forces than the Ministry had known he had, easily taking over, and all the Ministry could do was retreat and regroup somewhere else. But Voldemort wanted the entire nation to submit and he would hold the school hostage until such time as those like the Order gave up.

"I want," Remus began slowly and quietly because they were in the three Broomsticks, even though it was deserted. "I want equal rights for those like me. That will never happen under today's government... he will not kill those children, Bill."

"How do you know that? How do you know my little sister isn't dead right now?"

Remus wanted to say because of Harry. But he knew that wasn't it. Harry had made it plain his husband was still the Dark Lord. Still a dictator who would do anything to achieve his goals. "He'd be more likely to want to kill the parents should no one agree with his terms, and then go on to brainwash the students. It would be easy once their parents are gone, especially with the younger ones.

"Every night we've been fighting the Order, Bill," he whispered. "I'm tired of it. I found some happiness. I want to keep it. If that means... if that means turning my back on the current Ministry, then so be it. He doesn't want to kill every muggle and muggleborn. He wants to

isolate us away from them. If he's going to try and make it where I can walk down the street without people running away or spitting at me, where I can get a proper job and live like a normal citizen..."

"What are you saying?"

"I'm saying... I'm joining the werewolves. I'm joining Fenrir. I'm joining *that* cause."

Bill narrowed his eyes, though he didn't look angry. "You've been talking about him a lot... you do realize what joining him means."

"Yes. I'm aware, Bill. And no I have not been talking about that bastard a lot!"

Bill raised a brow at the vehement denial. "You have. Ever since that day you came to find me at the safe house."

The door to the Three Broomsticks opened before Remus could deny once again and it drew their attention. There was nobody else in the place beyond Madam Rosmerta as most everyone was afraid to leave their homes, which was one reason why they'd chosen such a place for the meeting. Remus growled lowly under his breath when a tall figure stepped in wrapped in black robes, swinging a white mask around his finger.

"How does he always find me?" he snapped before he pulled his eyes away from the approaching werewolf to Bill. "Will you join me?"

Bill sighed and scrubbed his hands over his face. "At this point, I'd rather join Fred and George and be neutral. I don't want to fight for and against the Order anymore, but I can't side with *him* without knowing... Who knows what he's going to do in the future? He may burn the world to the ground. I can't be a part of that, Remus."

"Remus," purred the Death Eater when he stopped in front of their table.

Remus bared his straight teeth. "You have some nerve walking around dressed like that."

"Yes, thank you. I will sit," Fenrir responded, taking the seat next to him.

"Anyone sees us with him, we're traitors," Bill murmured, mostly to himself. But Rosmerta was nowhere to be seen. She probably saw Fenrir approaching the door and disappeared quickly like a smart witch would.

Fenrir ignored Bill. "Have you decided?"

Remus lifted his eyes to Fenrir and nodded. "I have."

Fenrir turned in his seat, angling himself closer to Remus. Bill raised an eyebrow. Remus was entirely too attentive to the elder werewolf's presence. But it was the same with Greyback. Bill might as well have been invisible. Remus' eyes had dilated upon Greyback's arrival and his nose was constantly flaring, the same with the Death Eater.

"Please," Fenrir purred, leaning closer to Remus, "don't keep me in suspense, cub."

"You will stop calling me cub," Remus growled, rearing his head back.

"Remus!" the Death Eater barked. "Answer me!"

"I will join," Remus answered, unconsciously bowing his head.

Fenrir stood them, grabbing his arm and jerking Remus to his feet. "Wonderful, cub. We'll have fun together."

Bill's mouth parted in surprise when Remus' cheeks darkened. It was weird seeing the elder wizard acting in such a way because he didn't think these reactions had anything to do with anger, and Greyback's eyes expressed he was more excited and relieved about Remus' decision than he was outwardly letting on. Bill wondered if Remus could see that. Maybe not, as the younger werewolf was currently avoiding all eye contact with Greyback.

"Remus, seriously?" he asked in shock, talking about the attraction. Though apparently the both of them didn't realize what it was.

"He's made his decision," Greyback said to Bill. "And you? Will you continue to fight for the losing side?"

"At the moment, I refuse to fight for either side."

"You're torn then, hmm? Very good. Both of you follow me. You will not be harmed... if you do as I say and follow closely."

With that said, he dropped Remus' arm and walked towards the door. Remus scowled. He didn't want to follow after Fenrir like a... like a cub!

Without turning around, Fenrir chuckled under his breath. "Remus, do not be petulant at a time like this. You are a grown wizard, aren't you?"

"You're a monumental bastard!" he hissed at the dark wizard's back.

"At times, yes, that is true."

Remus seethed beside Bill and only moved when the younger wizard nudged him towards the door. "Remus, wow," Bill murmured quietly as they started moving towards the door. Remus looked at him in question. "Honestly, you don't realize... never mind."

The two followed Fenrir through the deserted village and soon they were passing through the Hogwarts wards, Fenrir having to hold onto their arms to get them passed.

"Why are we here?" Bill asked.

"All in good time," Fenrir answered.

Remus looked back over his shoulder, eyes moving back and forth. "And why aren't there any Aurors around? Surely they would have posted people here. I was actually very shocked when there wasn't a station in Hogsmeade."

"They are... a bit short handed, Remus. And busy elsewhere." He laughed then. A deep long chuckle. "You have no idea the number of forces the Dark Lord possesses. *He's* everywhere."

Nothing else was said until they were brought into the school, until they were brought in front of the Great Hall doors. It was then that Fenrir tuned to pierce Remus with a hard look that was soon offset by the werewolf's soft pleading tone. "Remus, I beg of you to remain calm and respectful. Do not talk back. There will be no leniency as there was last time." Remus blinked rapidly. In too much of a shock to actually say anything. "You as well," he said to Bill, who gave a sort of jerky nod. "Wands. The both of you," he said, holding his hands out for their wands.

"No," both protested strongly.

A voice spoke from behind just as someone shoved wands into their backs. "Do as he says and you will not be harmed."

"Severus?"

The Potions Master moved to where both Bill and Remus could see him, though the wands at their backs did not pull away. Remus sighed and pulled out his wand. But instead of handing it over to Fenrir, he passed it on to Severus. Bill did the same. Severus smirked at Fenrir, who bared his fangs in rage at the impudent cub in front of him. Once their wands were handed over, the wands at their backs disappeared. Bill and Remus looked over their shoulders to find five masked Death Eaters standing there, smirking at them.

"Let them in now, Fenrir."

Fenrir didn't move for a moment, instead chose to stare at Remus, who lifted his chin in defiance. "We'll see," Fenrir whispered roughly before turning and pushing open the doors.

"My sister?" Bill hissed to Severus.

"She's fine," Severus replied flatly and waved them inside.

Both Bill and Remus sucked in breaths as they were pushed inside. The House tables were full. But instead of students, it was Death Eaters sitting and enjoying a feast. The entire Hall went quiet upon their entrance. All eyes going to them. Most of the Death Eaters were masked. All except for the wizards and witch sitting at the high table. Voldemort of course was sitting in the center and he straightened slightly upon their entrance.

As Fenrir led them closer to the table, Remus had the unbelievable thought of wondering if this was what Harry's life was going to be like. Would he have to sit home alone all the time, waiting for his husband to come home? Would he have to spend his days and nights alone while his husband was off being a bastard dictator? What kind of marriage was that going to be? Did Harry's husband even care he was home alone, waiting for him? Pining away for Voldemort because he was completely in love with him and would do anything for the bastard he married.

Remus snorted quietly to himself. Now was not the time to start worrying about Harry. Now was the time to worry about himself and take a look at those he was approaching. The only one who had any kind of expression on his face as they neared the table was Draco Malfoy, who sat unmasked beside his father, and Voldemort himself, though his face was obscured by his hood. Young Malfoy looked apprehensive to see them. As if he didn't want to see them there. As if he'd rather see them anywhere but there.

"Mr. Lupin. Mr. Weasley," Voldemort greeted, he sounded both amused and pleased. "From your lack of wounds, I would suspect you came here of your own violation."

Remus looked at Fenrir. "Something like that," he hissed. Fenrir's lips twisted into a silent snarl. Remus ignored him and turned back to Voldemort, lifting his chin. "I have decided to join."

A murmur spread throughout the hall and Voldemort stood. "And you, Mr. Weasley?"

Bill clenched his fists. This was bloody scary. There were black cloaks and white masks all around him and a pair of blood red eyes piercing him with a look. It was more scary because no one looked like they were about to harm him, and yet he knew everyone within the Hall was capable of murder. "I..." he paused and cleared his throat. "I don't know. I don't want to fight anymore."

"He doesn't know enough," Remus went on and ignored the sharp look Fenrir shot him. "He needs more information."

Voldemort said nothing at first, but he moved around the table until he was standing in front of them. "Kneel before me."

Neither moved. Draco bit his lip and scooted forward in his seat as the tension grew within the Hall. "Father," he began in a whisper.

"Silence, Draco."

"But, Father, my fiends-" a sharp look from his father quieted him down.

"I will not ask again," Voldemort hissed and turned to Remus with a pointed look. "I do have somewhere else to be."

Remus felt the wizard was trying to convey some message to him that he didn't want the rest of the Death Eaters sitting at the House tables to know. Certainly the unmasked Death Eaters knew as they were smirking, and in Bellatrix Lestrange's case, snickering and cackling. Remus slowly sank to his knees, thinking Harry wouldn't have to pine away for his husband after all.

"You as well, Mr. Weasley."

Remus pressed a hand against Bill's calf. The wizard balled his fists and sank down next to Remus. Voldemort attacked Remus' mind first. A sharp cry of pain issued from his mouth before he could stop it, but after that he clinched his teeth together as his memories, as his

mind was literally raped. It wasn't such a surprise though. He couldn't expect to join without this happening.

By the time the Dark Lord pulled back, Remus' nose was bleeding and his face was slick with sweat. He bowed his head and tried pulling in gulps of air. He accepted the napkin Fenrir shoved in front of his face with silent thanks. Beside him, Bill jerked with a cry and Remus knew he was getting the same treatment. Remus felt sad. Bill didn't want to join and yet he was being subjected to this. And Voldemort was pulling some very important information from both their minds.

It's done now though, Remus thought when Bill slumped against him and Voldemort stepped back, tapping his wand against his smirking lips. Remus saw his face now, though it was still shadowed. His eyes gleamed, though the werewolf could see Voldemort was off in his own thoughts.

Surprisingly, Voldemort was wearing his wedding ring. Remus hadn't really consciously thought about it, but he was pretty sure the Dark Lord wouldn't go around sporting a wedding ring unless he was taking the marriage seriously and wanted everyone to know it. Remus internally rolled his eyes. Now wasn't the best of times to be thinking about Harry and his marriage. But faced with it... it was hard to move on from. Especially considering whom Harry was married too. Remus supposed he was still in shock about the whole thing and this was why he couldn't seem to concentrate on anything else.

"You will be Marked, Remus Lupin," Voldemort said, drawing him away from his unimportant thoughts. Well, not important right now. Remus realized Bill was holding his breath. No doubt because Voldemort had not said what would happen to him now that the Dark wizard had the information he could have verbally given him. Since Bill didn't want to join right now, Voldemort wouldn't have any reason not to kill him.

"Bare your arm," Voldemort instructed Remus.

Remus sucked in a long shallow breath and pulled up his sleeve before lifting his arm, knowing it was too late to back out now. He could safely say he felt trapped, but he had no one to blame but himself for this. He and Bill had every chance to get by Fenrir. There were two of them and one of Fenrir and they'd still had their wands at the time. Then again, he had been thinking about this for a while. Ever since Fenrir had first come to him. He had made the choice.

The pain of the curse to his forearm lasted longer than the incantation. In fact it was so bad, Remus bit through his bottom lip and couldn't contain a pained whimper. It wasn't long before Voldemort pulled his wand away from his arm- though it felt like hours after- but as soon as he did, the Dark Lord pointed it at Fenrir.

"*Crucio*." The elder werewolf dropped to his knees, hunched over and twitching under the curse; his lips tightly closed to contain a scream. Voldemort shook his head. "Do not bare your fangs at me, Fenrir. He's mine now. You must remember that."

Remus watched Fenrir with wide eyes, wondering what had just happened. Did Fenrir get mad at the Dark Lord for causing him pain? *Don't be ridiculous*, he chastised himself with a

shake of his head. Fenrir enjoyed seeing others in pain. Especially in a submissive state.

Voldemort ended the curse after a minute and sneered down at his minion. "Have I made myself clear, Fenrir?"

"Yes, my Lord," Fenrir replied through gritted teeth.

Voldemort turned away from both werewolves to stare at Bill and he went back to tapping his wand against his curled lips. "Despite your surname, you are not useless," he stated, starting to circle the eldest Weasley child and ignoring the chortles spreading throughout the hall at his statement. "But what should I do with you?" he asked silkily.

Bellatrix started bouncing around in her seat, waving her hand. "Oh! Oh, my Lord! Pick me! Pick me! Let me play with him, please, my Lord!"

Remus opened his mouth to say something, only Fenrir dug his fingertips into his arm. Remus only heeded the warning due to the trembling of the elder werewolf's grip. Voldemort came back to stand once again in front of Bill and let his wand fall to his side. Bill swallowed thickly, knowing the Dark wizard had come to a decision. He hoped to Merlin it wasn't Bellatrix Lestrange.

"Draco."

The blond immediately stood. "My Lord?"

Voldemort turned slightly to meet the young blond's gaze. "You have pleased me at every turn today, Draco. So I will let you decide. How much time should I give Mr. Weasley to decide if he wants to join or remain an enemy?"

Draco's gaze went back and forth between his Lord and his fiends' brother. "A week-" the Dark Lord's crimson eyes narrowed dangerously. "Four... two! Two days, my Lord."

Voldemort turned back to Bill and smirked. "Yes. Two days is sufficient." Behind him, Draco quietly sighed in relief and sank back into his chair. "You have two days, Mr. Weasley. Two days to collect information and decide. Do not hide. We will find you."

Bill wanted to say something, but he didn't dare. Voldemort must have seen his look though and approached. "Stand," he was ordered. Bill immediately climbed from his knees and suddenly found himself nearly chest to chest with Voldemort. Bill's eyes widened. He had a clear view of the Dark Lord's face. Voldemort had a face! A human face!

"Yes?" Voldemort hissed. "You wanted to say something? Go on. I'll humor you."

"I wanted to know... about my sister. Can I see her?"

Voldemort began laughing and turned away from him. "Lucius, Draco. Take him to see his sister. Afterwards, escort him from the Hogwarts property. We'll be meeting in two days, Mr. Weasley."

Bill was led out of the Hall by the Malfoys and taken very deep into the dungeons. Bill remained silent the entire way, though he wondered at the looks Draco Malfoy kept shooting him. They were skeptic looks. Skeptical, wary, yet hopeful and Bill wondered about that. He wondered why neither Malfoys were taunting him or sending him looks of loathing. It could be because of his twin brothers involvement with little Malfoy, but that would explain only Draco's glances and not Lucius Malfoy's almost pleasant behavior.

Soon the Malfoys decreased their strides and slowed to a stop outside of a closed door. "Show him in, Draco," Lucius told his son with a smirk. Draco nodded, opened the door, and precedes Bill into the room, closely followed by Lucius.

The dungeon room was small, obviously having been unused for many years, and held only one occupant. One unconscious and bloody occupant who was chained to the wall, spread eagle in her school uniform. Bill gasped and hurried forward, only slightly surprised the two Death Eaters allowed him to get close to her. He hadn't his wand so there was no way he could get Ginny out of those chains or out of the castle for that matter. "What happened to her? Snape said she was fine!"

Draco smirked. "She is. Weaslette's just sleeping."

"Let her down!"

Draco's face clouded and his eyes frosted over. "No. Not until tomorrow. She's getting everything I got. She did that to me. I'm repaying."

"I don't understand," Bill whispered as he ghosted fingers over her face. He may not like the person she was becoming, but she was still his baby sister.

Draco narrowed his eyes. "Your brother... Charlie. He didn't tell you?" the man shook his head. "She and your youngest brother kidnapped me and spent quite some time beating me nearly to death, hexing and cursing. And then they left me for two days and nights alone and cold in a room with no windows and no light. I feel no remorse for seeking revenge."

"You did this?" Bill hissed.

"I HAD A RIGHT!" Draco shouted. "I nearly died! And all according to her ridiculous plan. Just to get Harry back into the bloody Order's clutches. She deserved it. I deserved it! I warned her she should have killed me. I warned her I would get her back..."

Bill's fingers slipped from his sister's pale, bruised, and broken face with a sigh and he hung his head. As a pureblood he could understand Malfoy's rights.

Lucius cocked a brow. "She will live, Weasley. She is being constantly monitored. She's lucky myself and my wife, especially my wife, has not sought revenge, or your siblings would already be dead."

Bill could do nothing but nod in understanding.

Draco turned with a sniff. "Like I said, she'll be let down tomorrow and possibly healed... a little." With that, the lithe blond turned and left Ginny's prison without a backward glance.

Chapter Fifteen

The Black Bunny

Chapter Fifteen

"Leaving already?" Harry groggily asked from under the comforter just as Tom left the wardrobe fully dressed. "It's not even light out yet."

"How could you possibly know that with your head still under the covers?" Tom asked in amusement.

"I can *feel* it's an ungodly hour in the morning," was the dry reply. "By the way, my arse is in pain. Have a fucked up day."

Tom snorted. "Not a very nice thing to say. I didn't hear one complaint last night."

Harry gave a disgusted groan and pushed the covers off him before sitting up. "Might as well get up too. Have some work to do."

"No, Harry. Go back to sleep," Tom replied, striding to the bed, leaning over his husband to brush his lips over the lightning bolt scar, enjoying the shiver that caused. "There's no need for you to be up this early."

"But why do *you* need to go so early? Once again I must remind you you have an army of minions waiting to do whatever you say at the drop of a hat."

Harry enjoyed the malicious grin spreading across his husband's face. "Someone must wake the brats up and I know they would be most honored if I were the one to do it."

Harry smirked. "Keep them tired and terrified... less chance of rebellion."

Tom was pleased Harry hadn't needed an explanation. "Yes. Exactly."

"You're a very mean Dark Lord," Harry whispered just as his arms sprang up and wrapped around Tom's neck, dragging the older man down on top of him, back onto the bed. "Mmm, perfect."

Tom was momentarily distracted by the legs wrapping firmly around his waist, the hands in his hair and the lips insistently nipping his. *Brats*, he thought. *What brats?* "You are far too distracting."

"You like this distraction."

"I'm trying to take over Wizarding Britain, Harry. At the moment, you're not helping."

"Yeah, I am," Harry murmured, pressing lips against the man's throat. "It's my job to keep you stress free and happy. We both know, Tom, that when you're stressed and angry, you

always fuck up your plans. You always lose."

"Insolence," Tom hissed. "Bold brat."

"It's true," Harry sang in his ear. He then sighed and Tom felt arms wrap tightly around his back. "Love you."

"I know," the Dark Lord murmured, pressing a kiss against Harry's temple, smiling softly. When he pulled back, Harry was biting his lip and Tom knew he wanted to say something but was apprehensive about doing so.

"Speak," he commanded softly.

A faint grin crossed Harry's face at his tone. "Can I come with you today? I would like to accompany you," he added more firmly. "Just to see and be seen by your side."

Tom sat back and studied his young lover. Several things running through his mind even as he answered. "Yes," he answered, thinking how odd it felt to know someone was proud of him. Even if Harry was neutral, he was still proud of his husband for being victorious. It was odd, but not unwelcome.

Harry gasped happily and sat up but before he could rush off to get ready, Tom held up a hand. "There are stipulations and if you cannot follow them, then you will stay here."

Harry nodded that he understood. He was pretty sure he knew what those stipulations were.

"First, you'll be dressed as a Death Eater... partly. You will wear the mask I give you at all times, unless we are alone or with company who already know of your identity." When Harry nodded, he went on. "You are not to interfere with my orders at this time. If you feel the need to argue with me- and I know you can't help yourself- you will wait until we are alone." Again, Harry nodded. "Third, I *will* punish anyone who talks back to me, so prepare for that and do not stand in the way."

"Yes, Tom. You'll be Lord Bunnymort. I know," he promised with a cheeky grin.

Tom's returning sneer didn't hold any venom in it. He was rather excited to finally be able to bring his husband along. Even if Harry would simply be on the sidelines at the moment.

"Lastly, if you are not with me and decide to go off, then you will have Draco with you at all times... and this includes the Ministry. You are not to go off on your own. Not until this is all done. Do you understand me?" After Harry's nod, Tom climbed off him and pulled Harry out of the bed. "That goes for whenever you go to Diagon Alley. You cannot be out on your own. At this point, even the ordinary citizens may try to abduct you in their desperation. You will always have a guard with you."

Harry had no problem with all these orders. It was for his safety as well as Tom's and he would not brush the orders away this time. "I'll just hurry and go get showered," he said and ran off to the bathroom.

Draco sighed and stared morosely at the top of his canopied bed which was located in one of the unused suites his Lord had given him, his father, and Severus for their use while stationed at Hogwarts. He missed the fiends. They didn't get to spend enough time together... Draco scowled. He hadn't had much sleep the night before and he was awake now and according to his tempus, the sun hadn't risen yet. He was sure if he was cuddled between the twins he would have slept like a baby and would still be asleep. Draco groaned and rolled onto his side, tutting at himself for thinking such sappy thoughts. But... this was his mother's fault. He was never able to see Fred and George as much as the three of them would like, only because his mother was everywhere. And now... now she knew. Now it would be worse. What would she do?

The door opened just as his eyes slipped closed, trying to get at least another hour of rest. "Draco."

Draco turned onto his back and watched his father approach the bed. He must have looked horrible for his father raised a concerned brow and he was probably surprised that Draco was already awake. "What is it, Father?" he asked before the elder blond could comment on his state.

"The Dark Lord has returned. He wishes to see you before we wake the prisoners." Before Draco could respond or sit up, Lucius sat on the edge of the bed, staring at him. The softness of his expression unnerved Draco. "She'll come around, son. They make you happy and they please me... As soon as your mother sees how you really feel about them and knows them better... They can be just as evil and conniving as any of the best Slytherins when the circumstances call for it."

This odd statement had Draco sitting up. "What do you mean?"

Lucius smirked and stood. "Get ready. He's allowed you enough time to shower and dress. But hurry. You know how impatient our Lord can be."

Twenty minutes later, Draco was showered, dressed, and knocking on the door to what used to be McGonagall's office. As soon as he was given permission, Draco took a deep breath and went in, eyes immediately lighting on the figure sitting behind the desk. Movement off to the side had him halting mid stride. The figure was dressed in lavish- obviously expensive- dark blue robes. He'd been looking at the spaces where the old Headmaster and Headmistress' portraits used to hang. All the portraits save one had been pulled down and stored somewhere. What snagged most of Draco's attention was the mask on the figure's face when he turned as soon as Draco strode into the room.

It was a Death Eater's mask and yet not. Instead of white like the mask he was now wearing, the stranger's mask was gold. Just below the edge of the mask, Draco watched the figure's lips curve into a smirk and amusement shone in the eyes that Draco could see. Those eyes were sort of familiar, as was that jaw, and hair, and...

"Hey, Drake."

Behind his own mask, Draco's eyes widened in surprise. "What are you doing here?" he asked as he approached Harry, completely forgetting about the Dark Lord's presence for the

moment. Harry's smirk turned into an amused grin.

"Just visiting. An outside observer, you could say, for the time being. I'm curious."

"Cool..." the blond leaned forward to peer at Harry's eyes. "You're not wearing your glasses," he observed.

"Tom transfigured them in with the formation of the mask so the eye holes are actually my glasses."

"Wicked... you didn't happen to speak to my fiends yesterday or today, have you?"

Harry snickered. "It's barely today," he reminded his friend. "But I did see them yesterday. They miss you terribly," he cooed, then laughed when Draco ducked his head to hide the obvious blush and the pleasure in his eyes from hearing that.

An annoyed throat clearing drew both young wizards' attention back to the desk. "Draco, come and greet me properly," Voldemort snapped, sending an annoyed look to his husband. Harry shot a grin back at him.

Draco hurried over and dropped to one knee, bowing his head. "Forgive me, my Lord. Um, good morning?"

Harry snickered and then quickly went back to studying the empty spaces upon the wall where the portraits used to be. Only one portrait remained in the office but currently it was covered. Most of the other portraits within the school had been covered as well and had spells cast on them to keep them from hearing things. Tom had discarded most of the trinkets and gadgets McGonagall had as well the things she'd kept that belonged to Dumbledore, but Harry was sure Tom didn't destroyed them and just stored them away for a time when he was bored and wanted to study them. There were several books of McGonagall's that he'd kept up on the shelves, Harry noticed with a grin. If nothing Tom was scholarly, and the books looked interesting.

He turned back to Tom-Voldemort now- as the Dark Lord was in the process of explaining why Harry was here and why he was wearing what he was. Draco was back on his feet, listening to his Lord intently.

"Harry is not a Death Eater, he is still neutral and his identity must be kept secret for the time being. I'm thinking all my neutrals will wear different colored masks, one color, but not white or gold..." Voldemort trailed off in thought.

Harry smiled fondly. He loved his husband's mind and he even loved the fact that even now, Voldemort was trying to find some way to lay claim on Hermione and the twins. Tom already held claim over him by the ring on his hand, so the mask didn't really make Harry feel as if his husband were trying to control him in that way.

"His identity must remain unknown to everyone," Voldemort went on, "with the exception of the Inner Circle as they are already aware of Harry. Therefore you will not use his name when out of this office. You may call him Belial if the need for name calling arises."

Harry raised an annoyed brow at that. He could feel the smirk thrown at him from under the dark cloak. Not only is Belial a *Christian* demon, but the name meant wicked and was also associated with sex, lust, and gluttony. "Ha ha, bloody bastard. I don't need to look it up to know what Belial means," Harry hissed. Again, he could *feel* the smirk.

After that, the three left the office. Harry dropped back to talk with Draco for the moment and the blond immediately started whining about liking Harry's mask more than his own. "It's so pretty."

"Yes, it is rather fetching," Harry agreed, running a finger over his gold colored cheek. Then he glanced from the corner of his eye. "I saw what you did to Ginevra. I was surprised, Drake."

Since he didn't sound disappointed in Draco or even bothered, just impressed, the blond didn't become defensive. He only shrugged. But the smile he wore was very smug and deeply sated. "I'm not quite finished with her yet. She'll be let down later today. But before that I'm going to leave her a little parting gift."

Harry made a noncommittal sound, though he was interested in being there to watch Draco. Once again he found he had no pity whatsoever for Ginny Weasley. They remained silent the rest of the way to the dungeons. Partly that had to do with the fact Voldemort had reached back and grabbed his arm to make Harry walk by his side instead of behind him.

"By my side. Always," the Dark Lord murmured.

Harry flushed brightly with pleasure beneath his mask and looked over his shoulder at Draco. The blond was smirking, amused by the flush he could see on Harry's neck.

"Pull up your hood," he was instructed as they neared the Great Hall doors as well as the stairs leading down to the dungeons. Already they could hear several voices; Death Eaters loitering around the Great Hall. "That hair and those eyes are terribly revealing."

I'm going to pretend all of that and not just half was a compliment, Harry hissed as he brought the dark blue hood up over his hair.

Your hair is rather untamable in the mornings.

Harry wished he had a clever comeback, but unfortunately Tom always looked completely shaggable in the mornings. Voldemort's next statement soothed his annoyance.

The untamable version is actually more appealing than your semi-tame version.

Harry snorted, eyeing the dozen or so Death Eaters. "Semi-tame," he whispered as they neared the Great Hall where no less than a dozen Death Eaters loitered. "Your compliments suck."

Voldemort inclined his head and Harry knew that was for stopping from speaking in Parseltongue in front of his minions. Voldemort's companion would have been easily

recognizable then as everyone knew only Harry Potter and the Dark Lord could speak the language of snakes.

Harry turned from him to study his husband's minions; all were watching them walk by towards the dungeon stairs. Harry met all of their gazes head on, smirking as they eyed his mask and robes. He could practically hear the questions boiling over as to his identity. If they were clever and observant, they would have discovered at least part of who he was. They would have seen the clue. Tom had made him keep his wedding ring on.

Not surprisingly, all talking stopped as they went by, and it didn't pick up until they descended the stairs into the dungeons. "That was fun!" Harry laughed. "Did you see their faces? I almost wanted to stop and snog you to see how they would react!"

Voldemort paused and raised his fingers up to disappear within the shadows of his hood. Harry grinned, knowing his husband was pinching the bridge of his nose. "Do I need to remind you of the stipulations?"

"No, Master," Harry purred, his smile widening. Draco had the good sense to keep his snickering down to a minimum.

Voldemort made a hissing sound and grabbed Harry's arm to get him moving again and even though his grip was firm, it was more of a caress than anything. They went on and turned a corner. Up ahead Bellatrix awaited them, bouncing on her toes with a gleeful psychotic expression on her face.

"Bella," Voldemort began, his tone a dangerous purr. Her gleeful smile dimmed a bit. "You haven't been in, have you? I specifically gave you instructions not to *play* with the students."

"My Lord, I would never disobey you. I've been impatiently waiting though," she responded, bowing in a surprisingly graceful manner. When she straightened, she turned to Harry. "Oh, don't you look pretty in that mask, my little lord."

"I'm not-" he was about to say he wasn't a lord... or at least wasn't setting out to be another dark lord, but then he realized she was talking about him being Lord Riddle and that was alright. "Thanks, Bella."

"Open all the doors quietly, Bella, and leave them wide open. You two go in with Bellatrix," Voldemort murmured as he moved to the opposite side of the corridor where there was another door. Bellatrix immediately did as she was told, waving her wand and silently opened the doors. She crept inside the first room with Draco. Harry eyed Voldemort's back a moment before doing the same, wondering what his husband was up to.

Students lined the walls, sitting cross legged on the dirty cold floor, shackled and chained to the wall. In this room, he recognized most as 7th years; students who had been a year below him. There were students from every house mixed together here. Most were asleep or looking to be sleeping. Slumped forward with their eyes closed; some pressed against their neighbor, probably for warmth and some kind of comfort. Very few were awake; their bleary eyes blinking at the three masked figures in fear as they stopped to stand in the center of the room.

No one dared breathe a word with them standing in the room, especially not with Bellatrix there, twirling her wand in her hand and peering around at them with wide eyes and a crazed grin. Only seconds passed and Harry congratulated himself from not jumping and screaming in surprise when the corridor outside was suddenly filled with horrible screams; loud pained wails that could come from nothing but torture. The students all jerked completely awake, some screamed as he had nearly done, some even started crying. Harry didn't blame them. The screams were horrible and rang in his ears, causing his skin crawl and making him want to cover his ears with his palms.

Glancing beside him, he saw Draco's eyes narrowed as he studied the prisoners. Harry was willing to bet the screams bothered him or his ears at least, but also the blond was enjoying the fear swirling around the room. The fear and panic. Next to the blond, Bellatrix was swaying slightly on her feet, eyes closed with a blissful smile on her face. Harry snorted, though it wasn't heard over the screams of torture. Knowing Bellatrix, the sounds they were hearing was probably music to her ears.

He and Draco paced down the corridor, eyeing the occupants of each room. Harry maintained a neutral expression but Draco was giddy with amusement. Every face they passed was horror struck. After hearing those screams, screams going on for nearly an hour, it was no wonder.

"That's one hell of an alarm clock," Harry murmured.

The only student who hadn't looked completely horrified had been Luna Lovegood. Harry couldn't help but stop outside of that room and stare in at her. She'd lifted her face and stared right back at him. If he didn't know better, Harry would swear she knew who he was by the way she was staring at him. But then he brushed it off and moved on. Luna had always made him feel like she saw too much in people, and yet never spoke of her knowledge. After leaving her though, for the first time in a long while he felt some amount of guilt.

"It was brilliant!" Draco exclaimed as they moved down the corridor. "Our Lord is brilliant!"

Harry had to agree. And the best part, those screams had been fabricated. No prisoners had been harmed in the making of the alarm clock. Harry had the insane urge to cackle madly.

"Think it's breakfast time," Draco muttered when his stomach growled. Harry agreed. Neither of them had eaten yet, since they'd both woke before dawn and had been too busy to actually sit for food.

Harry was prepared to pass the Great Hall to go to the kitchens as he didn't think the house elves would serve breakfast to them, but Drake grabbed his arm and pulled into the Hall. "Don't be ridiculous," the blond said as they travelled inside, ignored Death Eaters sitting in sporadic places and headed to the Head table where Severus and Lucius were already seated and sipping tea. "Of course the house elves will serve us."

As soon as they made it to the table, Severus and Lucius who were sitting directly beside the Head chair stood from their seats and moved down two places, making a point to the Death Eaters sitting below at the House tables. Harry sat beside the Headmaster's chair and

immediately a plate of food appeared before him. He and Draco had only begun to tuck in when a commotion outside the Hall drew their attentions.

"What's going on?" Harry asked as a Death Eater ran in and straight for Lucius.

"We've caught intruders," the Death Eater reported. "They were trying to bypass the wards by sneaking in through an underground passageway from Hogsmeade."

"Have you alerted the Dark Lord?"

"...no."

"Don't you think you should do that?" Severus hissed as he and Lucius stood.

Harry looked up from buttering his toast, an almost bored look in his eyes. "He'll be up in the Headmaster's office. Whom did you catch?"

He was looked at with suspicion and was not answered. Harry narrowed his eyes. Even though he wasn't a Death Eater and was really only a visitor, this Death Eater had to know Harry was still over him if the Dark Lord walked with him by his side. As his equal. Were all of Tom's lower ranking minions slow?

"Answer him," drawled Severus.

"We're not sure. Didn't get a good look at 'em. Two, anyway. Identical. Tall, reddish copper hair. They were taken down easily enough right outside the wards. Bodies are being dragged into the castle now."

Draco went stiff beside Harry during the Death Eater's description of the intruders and the strawberry he'd been bringing to his mouth dropped into his lap. "Bodies?" he croaked hoarsely.

"Are they dead?" Harry asked as he stood on trembling legs, his voice shaking against his will. Both from fear and rage. He placed a hand on Draco's trembling shoulder. "Have you killed them?"

"I'm only relaying a message," the wizard answered as he turned to leave. "Don't know if they were killed."

"Severus, his memory needs to be wiped if it is them," Lucius said to his lover, motioning to the departing Death Eater. Severus nodded and after a quick look at Draco, strode after the fellow. Lucius turned back to Draco and Harry. Both who looked positively stricken.

"Draco," his father murmured softly and yet firmly, "you two remain here."

Draco didn't say anything as his father quickly departed after Severus, shutting the Hall doors as he went. He didn't even move. His hand was still halfway poised to his mouth. Harry was in a similar state and couldn't seem to bend his legs in order to sit back down. They were not dead. He refused to believe it. He still refused to believe it when he heard Bellatrix' insane laughter behind the closed doors and felt Voldemort prowl by. Even from where he stood,

Harry could feel his husband's rage. He wondered exactly where the rage was locked on and if it could be because the twins were... no, he refused to believe it.

"Draco," he finally whispered, dropping heavily into his seat and grabbing the ice cold hand and bringing it down below the table, squeezing painfully. This got a reaction out of his friend. Draco turned, looked at him with wide scared eyes and blinked. "Draco, they're okay."

The blond nodded. He could not believe that wasn't true. However, "if they are alive, the Dark Lord is going to flay them."

Harry nodded. Unfortunately that was true.

Draco rushed into the room and barely heard his father shut the door behind him as he did so. All he could see were the twins kneeling on the floor, looking tired and twitching. He dropped to his knees between them and wrapped his arms around their necks, jerking them against him. Immediately he was cocooned by arms and heat and faces pressed against his neck. Draco then twisted his face to press his lips first against Fred's and then George's. They were wearing their different colored earrings again.

"Idiots!" he shouted once he'd pulled back enough to shout in their faces. "Bloody imbeciles! You could have been killed! What were you thinking?"

"We wanted to see you, Draco," one whispered and the both of them were looking at him earnestly, gazes running over his features. Draco melted just a little before he remembered he was furious with them.

"The Dark Lord told you not to come here!"

"Yeah, which was why he spent the last hour lecturing and throwing curses at us. But we weren't going to let anyone see us. We know he wants our identities to be secret. Only his wards are very good."

"Of course!" Draco snapped, pulling back and studying their faces, his hands slipping into their hair and tugging painfully, making them wince. "Of course, you nitwits! He's the Dark Lord! And Father helped with the wards. Only those with a Dark Mark can get through and even then we're alerted to that."

"We're lucky two of the Death Eaters who came after us stunned us before the others could do anything else."

Draco snarled and yanked their hair again before wrapping them into another squeezing hug.

"Draco, you're shaking."

"That's you," he whispered against George's neck.

The door soon opened again, admitting three wizards. Draco reluctantly pulled away though when he tried to stand, Fred grabbed him around the middle and pulled the blond into his lap. George grabbed onto his hand. The both of them refused to let him go.

The Dark Lord, Severus, and Harry were standing inside. Harry grabbed his mask and perched it on top of his head as soon as the door was closed behind him. He was glaring at the twins. No doubt he wanted to chastise them for putting their lives on the line as well. Severus came forward and handed the twins a potion with a sneer on his face.

Voldemort glided forward and watched the two take the muscle relaxer potions to offset the side effects of the Crucio. "Since you two..." Voldemort's hands closed into fists at his sides, "blasted, interfering, stubborn, IDIOTIC THORNS IN MY SIDES-"

Harry softly coughed, rubbing his throbbing scar, and the Dark Lord trailed off and visibly took a deep breath. "Since you two seem to be so inclined to join the festivities, I've decided to put you to task." He waved his wand, ignoring the flinches from Fred and George. A moment later, two sets of black cloaks and silver masks appeared folded on the ground in front of them. "We'll be going to the Ministry soon. You are to be Harry's guard until I say otherwise. You as well, Draco."

Harry frowned. That sounded like a crap job.

"Bodyguards! For our sweet Harry and Draco? Awesome!" the two exclaimed and immediately reached for the cloaks and masks.

Harry rolled his eyes, even as a small smile crossed his face. Typical.

"The reason," Voldemort went on in a barely audible whisper, obviously still furious to the point of violence, "I wanted you *gone* from here was so that your identities were not known to the lower ranking Death Eaters. You can serve me better that way.

"You two are very lucky it was Fenrir and Lupin who found you first. And Bellatrix's quick thinking into disguising you under a distortion spell to keep the other Death Eaters from identifying you fully. The others who had seen you needed to be Obliviated."

"Sir," George murmured as he stood, pulling Draco to his feet as well, "we really had nowhere else to go. We can't go back to our place anymore. The Ministry and Order are watching it."

"You could have gone to my home," Voldemort hissed. "There was a reason why I gave you those rings!"

"We did, sir! But Draco wasn't there..." George trailed off, knowing that was the best way to go if he wanted to anger the Dark Lord more. He didn't feel like being put under the Crucio again. Voldemort hadn't been playing around this time.

The Dark Lord hissed at them before spinning around and departing, taking Severus with him. Harry murmured that he'd be back and raced after his husband. He didn't seem very pleased at the moment. Draco had a pretty good idea of why that was. Harry probably hadn't known before this that Lupin had been Marked.

Once the door was closed, Fred and George grabbed the cloaks and put them on before eyeing the masks.

"Father said you two were cunning," Draco hissed. "Obviously he doesn't know what he was talking about!"

"Why are you so upset?"

Draco gaped at George. "I thought you were dead! They said they brought you down and were dragging your *bodies* into the fucking castle!"

"We're sorry, Draco. We just... our need to see you overrode our good senses."

"Stop trying to get me to melt!" the blond whined. "I want to stay mad at you!"

"Did you miss us?"

Draco dropped his head and nodded.

"And aren't you glad we're here now?"

The corner of Draco's mouth lifted. He nodded again. The twins flashed him grins. Fred spun away, studying his mask, laughing under his breath. "This is so cool. I've always wanted to try one of these on! You know, just to get a feel for the other side. And it's silver. Better!"

"It probably means neutral but only the Inner Circle will know that," Draco told him as he helped Fred put on his mask and then pulled his down over his face.

"Bet I'd look hot wearing nothing but this mask! What do you think, Draco love?"

Draco frowned at Fred. He hadn't entirely forgiven them.

"Sorry we worried you, love," George murmured, running a finger across the blond's jaw. "Won't happen again."

Draco sneered at the absolute lie and George grinned; his bright blue eye dropping to Draco's mouth.

Still angry and yet so relieved that they were alive, Draco fisted his hands into George's robes and slammed him up against the wall, enjoying the surprise shining in the eyes behind the mask. He could have lost them. Some of the Death Eaters love to kill first without ever thinking asking questions is necessary. An intruder was an enemy, that was all there was to it to some of them.

Draco growled with that thought and slammed his mouth over George's, immediately seeking entrance, pushing his tongue past George's lips. He grabbed a hand full of copper hair as he slid his body against George, pressing heavily against him and thrusting a thigh between his fiancé's thighs as his tongue devoured one of his freckle faced bastards who'd given him the scare of a life time.

George moaned and immediately spread his legs further, inviting Draco closer, gasping when he felt Draco's arousal pressing and sliding against his. Letting the blond vixen dominate him was a glorious experience. He hadn't thought Draco had it in him, but obviously he was

mistaken. As he wrapped a tight arm around the blond's waist to drag him even closer, he was determined to turn Draco into a top, at least for him. He couldn't wait to feel Draco pounding into him. Would he be as rough as Fred? Merlin, he hoped so.

Draco broke away, and it was minutes later when that happened, he was panting and his fingers were still curled tightly into George's robes as if he would never let go. George leaned back against the stone wall, looking dazed and pleased.

"That was the hottest thing I've ever seen," Fred whispered hoarsely from a few feet away, his dark hungry eyes going back and forth between George and Draco. George smirked at his brother and licked his lips.

"Who's that?"

Voldemort looked to find Harry pointing at the only remaining portrait, covered and moved to the side of the office. He smirked. "Who do you think it is?"

Harry raised a brow. "Why'd you leave him here? Plan on rubbing his nose in it?"

"Don't know... I was thinking about it," Voldemort responded, staring at the white covering a moment before diverting his gaze.

"You respected Dumbledore, didn't you?"

"I didn't like him, loathed him perhaps, but yes, I also respected him."

The office descended into silence as Harry studied the man looking through the parchments upon the desk. "Why didn't you tell me you Marked Remus?"

Voldemort didn't look at him. "You didn't ask."

"But-"

"It was his choice, Harry. Speak to him about it. And I might as well tell you since you're bound to hear it from somewhere... Bill Weasley was here with your werewolf when I Marked him. They both came here voluntarily. I've given Mr. Weasley an ultimatum. Two days to figure out which side to join before I go after him."

Voldemort's clipped voice did not bother Harry. He knew his husband was still angry at the twins, still furious more like. Harry wasn't really all that upset about Remus. After all, he'd known Tom was trying to lure him over to the Dark by way of Fenrir. It was just a surprise to hear he'd actually done it.

And Bill... Harry didn't know what to think about Bill, except that the eldest Weasley sibling and Remus had grown closer over the last few months. Bill, Remus, and Charlie... and all of them were no longer pigeons of the Order or the Ministry. Bill's decision didn't really bother Harry, though he was curious to know what the curse breaker would choose. But whatever he chose, Harry knew it wouldn't lead to his death by Voldemort's hand as his husband already promised not to kill any of the Weasleys.

"I do not understand how the minds of Gryffindors work," the Dark Lord suddenly hissed, tugging Harry out of his thoughts. Voldemort was now behind his desk, staring out of the window. "What did they think was going to happen?"

Harry tried hard to keep the grin off his face. "They weren't planning to get caught. Nor were they planning on causing trouble for you so they figured their presence wouldn't be noticed once they snuck into the castle... but I agree. They should have known they wouldn't be able to get passed your wards without anyone being alerted."

"They've forced my hand by doing this," the Dark Lord muttered, turning away from the window and rounding his desk to lean against the front; crossing arms over his chest and watching Harry walk around the office inspecting things.

"Not in any major way, though. What they've done hasn't in any way disrupted your plans, Voldemort, and now you have them exactly where you want them. There's no need to keep trying to pretend with me that you're not pleased with the outcome. I will stay out of it." Harry turned away from the bookshelf he was inspecting to find his husband pinning him with a look. "I'm not stupid," he felt he needed to remind the dark wizard.

"Most would not have seen..." Voldemort went on.

"Yes, well... I'm not most, am I?"

"No, you're not."

His pleased tone had Harry blushing as it always did. Tom often spoke and said things to Harry with a tone of being very pleased with him beneath the words. It always made Harry feel as if he were the most special person on Earth. It made him feel like Tom would never take him for granted.

"And it's not as if I don't know you. I know you as well as you know me and concerning the twins, they're probably right where they wanted to be concerning you as well, so this is all a win win."

"Except they disobeyed direct orders," Voldemort snapped, which is where his continued anger really lay.

Harry grinned. "You know better by now. They tend to do that... when are we going to the Ministry?"

"As soon as Draco has finished with his prisoner," the Dark Lord answered, watching his husband closely. He wasn't disappointed. He was never disappointed in Harry's curiosity.

"I want to go see that."

"You best go find him then. And Harry," Voldemort hurried to say before Harry left, "I'm holding you personally responsible for the twins."

Harry pulled the mask off his face and balked at his husband. "It's not my fault they came here! I don't want that responsibility! I'll end up getting into trouble!"

"Then I suggest you keep them in line." Harry snapped an obscenity him. Voldemort raised an amused brow. "Your mask, Belial," he drawled as Harry wrenched the door open. Harry slid the mask down over his face with another hissed obscenity and stormed out of the office, Voldemort's dark chuckles following in his wake.

How I love that boy, Voldemort hissed fondly as he returned to the papers at his desk.

"You look splendid, Weaslette," Draco murmured as he ran the tip of his wand across her swollen cheek. The witch flinched back at this, but there wasn't much room to flinch away with and she groaned when her head hit the stone wall; both Harry and Draco could hear there was mostly fear than pain in the weak sound leaving her throat. "I'm going to let you down in a moment, but I wanted to chat with you first. Do you remember our little discussion about looks when you had me tied to that chair? We talked about shallowness. About you leaving me permanently disfigured. I told you your brothers were not as shallow as you and you concurred... probably the only thing we have ever and will ever agree upon. Do you remember that?"

"G-go to Hell, Malfoy," she hissed. "Death Eater scum."

"I remember it quite well," Draco went on as if she hadn't spoken. "Since we're so shallow, I'm sure you will understand and appreciate my parting gift."

The blond stepped back and turned slightly to the man standing in the shadows, grinning. Harry couldn't help but smirk back at Draco's giddiness, and no, he still felt nothing about what was happening to Ginny Weasley. Her eyes moved away from Draco to look at him and he stepped out of the shadows enough so that she could see him, though since his hood was still up and his mask on, she didn't know who he was.

Draco's gleeful smile dissolved as he turned back to a prisoner. "I've had this in mind since that little conversation in that empty cottage," he drawled, sinking a hand into his robes to pull out a dagger. Ginny whimpered. "Don't worry, Weaslette. I told you I wasn't going to kill you. My fiends would feel bad. They wouldn't hate me, but they would feel a bit of remorse over the fact you were dead and in turn, I would feel bad. That must burn terribly to know they wouldn't hate me even if I killed you. How does it really feel, Weaslette? Please, I want to know."

"Do you honestly think they wouldn't hate you for killing me?" she murmured brokenly.

Draco flashed a grin. "Maybe if you weren't such a bitch they might feel more. Honestly, they can't choose who they are related to but if they could.... Well you just think about that while I finish my artwork. Hold still," he commanded as he lifted both the dagger and his wand to her face.

Harry stepped forward, insanely curious. Draco was extremely vindictive and imaginative and Harry was eager to see what he would do. Draco pressed the tip of the dagger at the center of her left cheekbone and cut in. Harry winced when Ginny shrieked in pain as her flesh was pierced. Draco didn't seem to mind getting a face full of scream as he went about murmuring an incantation that had his wand glowing a dark sickly yellow. As Draco

continued with the slow incision, the spell shot from his wand and hit the knife, engulfing the dagger with the same light.

Draco cut deeply as he angled the dagger down from her cheek bone and then along her jaw. Ginny's screams filled the stale air in the small dungeon room and Harry winced against the grating sound, but he never pulled his eyes away as Draco traced a bloodied sliced-open path along Ginny's jaw to the center of her chin. There he finally withdrew the dagger and the cut glowed the same color as the spell and Harry realized it was a cursed wound. Draco confirmed that seconds later when he stood back to study his work.

The blond Death Eater nodded. "Never heal, Weasley. That will never fully heal. The wound will fester for a few days—stop crying and listen! Did I cry when you and your barbarian brother hit and tortured me over and over again? NO, I DIDN'T! The least you could do is shut the fuck up and listen!" he shouted over her screaming wails. "It will fester for a few days," he went on, even when she didn't stop. "It will swell and only then, once it's begun to swell, will it start to semi heal. And the scar will be swelled. People will see it from miles away!" he laughed and swished his wand, breaking the shackles holding her up against the wall.

Ginny Weasley dropped to the ground and lay on her stomach, continuing to cry. Harry stared at her. There was more to it than what Draco had explained. Harry didn't believe for an instant the blond's punishment was simply a scar. There was most definitely something else. Knowing Drake, it was something also emotional.

"Up, Weaslette! Get up! Must get you to Madam Pomfrey. Not that she can do anything for your face. No worries on that front."

Surprising Draco she did get up on shaky legs and ran at him, only to stumble and fall back onto her knees a foot away from him. Draco scowled. "Were you actually trying to attack me?" he kicked her in the face for that before she could answer. He turned to Harry. "You have no idea how long I've wanted to do that."

"She'll need to be levitated," Harry reminded, lowering his voice into a deep rumble as he turned to open the door. Draco nodded and followed him out where he came face to face with two silver masks, both with identical blue eyes beneath. Draco shifted so that was blocking the doorway and hopefully, their view of the girl lying on the floor inside. Though he cringed because they could all hear her crying.

"You were supposed to stay in the Great Hall with Father," he muttered before looking down the corridor, frowning when the twins bypassed him and walked into the room. Draco looked to Harry, who only shrugged. Harry turned and watched the twins with narrowed eyes. They had better not let Ginny know who they were beneath the masks. Tom would be furious- psychotically so- with them and then he'd most likely kill Ginny. The Dark Lord would be enraged; the thought of using a memory charm probably wouldn't even cross his mind until after he cast the worst Unforgiveable.

But the twins didn't speak to her; didn't do anything really. They only stood in the doorway and stared in. Draco remained standing with his back to the door, gazing at the wall in front of him. Harry watched Ginny lift her head to look at the two figures for a second before

dropping her face back to the ground. Her eyes were unfocused and Harry knew she hadn't really comprehended what she was seeing. She was only concerned with the pain she was feeling.

Turning back to Draco, his best mate looked frightened for a second but then when he heard the twins moving, Draco wiped that look off his face. His eyes turned cold and unconcerned; simply a mask to cover his insecurities. The twins began hissing to each other under their breaths. Harry could hardly hear what they were saying over Ginny's crying, which meant she probably couldn't hear them either.

"*Stupefy*," one twin suddenly snapped, and Ginny's crying cut off. Draco spun around in surprise. The twins were now standing over their sister's body, arguing.

"I don't want to do it! You do it!"

"No way! She deserved this! I don't want to take her."

"Well someone's got to take her!"

"She's not our responsibility, bro! I refuse to help her! She hurt our Draco!"

"I know that! You're the one who said one of us should take her to the infirmary!"

Harry turned away from them to grin at Draco. The blond had lost the cold defensive look and now looked completely shocked.

"I refuse to help her!"

"Me too!"

The twins crossed their arms and glared at each other. Harry rolled his eyes. "Come out. We'll lock the door and have Madam Pomfrey come here."

The twins looked at him, blinking rapidly. "Good plan!" they exclaimed before racing out of the room as fast as they could.

"You're... you're not even a little upset about what I did to her?"

"Draco, she and Ron nearly killed you," Fred murmured, wrapping an arm around Draco.

"No way are we upset. In fact, we're still pissed about your kidnapping. That's always going to hang over her head. We told her we loved you and she nearly killed you."

"Besides, we knew you were an evil vindictive git. How can you not be with Lucius Malfoy as your father?" George responded, throwing an arm around Harry's shoulders.

"If we look upset it's because maybe we feel a little guilty for feeling like this..."

"But that will fade quickly. She chose her path, we've chosen ours, and in that, we don't feel guilty at all. We're enjoying ourselves... and you," Fred purred into the blond's ear, grinning smugly when that cute blush covered the parts of Draco's face that he could see. Fred

snickered and bent his head, pressing light kissing along Draco's jaw; he was always enchanted by Draco's blushes and at the moment, still thoroughly turned on from watching the blond completely dominate George against the wall earlier. It truly had been the hottest thing he'd ever seen.

Footsteps from down the way drew their attention (Harry and George) and found Severus and Lucius striding towards them behind the Dark Lord. Harry turned back to the Fred and Draco, clearing his throat, but those two had quickly moved on from nuzzling to snogging. George chuckled and buried his face against Harry's shoulder to quiet his laughter.

Harry poked Draco in the ribs. "Your father is coming... along with Voldemort and Snape."

The three elder wizards completely ignored the younger wizards when they reached them and entered the room, leaving the door wide open. Lucius waved his wand and Ginny's body rolled over until she was on her back. Taking in her battered appearance, the Dark wizards turned back to the four standing in the corridor.

Lucius looked pleased. He had every right as the bitch had *tried* torturing and killing his son. Severus looked surprised. Voldemort... Harry rolled his eyes. He could feel the glee. The Dark Lord turned away and gracefully squatted beside the witch, studying the long cut down her face. "Draco," he purred, "I really didn't think you had this in you."

"She *laughed* about disfiguring me, my Lord," the young blond replied. "I have no doubt she would have done it too if she had had the time. Unfortunately for her, I have the time.... Is it too late to make her fall in love with Filch?"

Fred shuddered. "Eww, love. That's... no."

"There's something else that's not obvious," Voldemort whispered, tapping his wand against his smirking lips. "Explain why you chose this."

Harry frowned, wondering why his husband was demanding an explanation now of all times with the twins present. Was he trying for discord in the relationship, or was he truly curious and needed to know that very instant? It was Fred who got Draco moving, pressing against him and pushing him back into the room. Harry was surprised when George did the same to him, pressing him forward without removing his arm away from his shoulders.

When they were all in the room standing over Ginny, the blond bit his lip and Harry didn't need to be telepathic to understand what he was thinking.

"Go on, Draco. We won't be mad," Fred whispered.

"Swear," George agreed.

"Obviously it's a scar that will never fade, my Lord..." The Dark Lord nodded and waited for more. Draco straightened and smirked down at Ginny cruelly. "It can be glamoured though."

"Wouldn't that defeat the purpose, Draco?" his father asked lowly, seemingly not pleased by this.

"It would, except for the curse in the scar... the glamour will fade whenever she's excited. Excited about anything and no matter what she does the glamour will never stay unless that excitement is nonexistent. Dates, job interviews, meeting boys, arguments," he smiled cruelly, "whenever she's particularly pleased with herself, extremely upset, or even highly nervous... anything that causes delight and excitement will dispel a glamour. She'll hate that scar. She'll hate the fact she'll need a glamour. She won't want to go out in public without one and she'll hate the fact that a glamour will not work whenever she needs it the most. Every time she sees me, she'll be reminded of her mistake. One little scar will make her life dismal. The glamour is in no way a reprieve."

"It just makes it worse," Harry muttered, impressed. "You're going to make her loathe herself."

Draco nodded. "If she's as shallow as I think she is... maybe this will teach her a lesson. And the reminder..." he trailed off, grinning with satisfaction of his revenge.

"Never mess with Draco Malfoy," the twins purred; eyes bright and delighted. "We told her!"

Voldemort stood, his red eyes passing from Draco over to Harry, who shifted imperceptibly. Bloody bastard was doing it again. And being in the same room, with his husband dressed as he was, all Dark and dominating, and *sexy*...

Tone it down!

No.

Harry scowled and turned around to march out of the room, leaning against the wall beside the door and listening in, trying to steady his rapidly beating heart and ignore the seductive aura his husband washed over him at all times.

"Draco," the Dark Lord began, "tomorrow Bill Weasley is supposed to have come to a decision. Join us or remain an enemy. What do you think I should do about him? I will allow you to come to the decision and I will not coerce you this time."

Harry raised a brow and smirked. Tom was really, really, *really* very pleased with Draco.

"My Lord.... Could he be like his brothers? A silver mask?"

Voldemort chuckled darkly, sending goose bumps all over Harry's body. "You do realize the silver mask means neutral, and yet not. It is still my mask your lovers are wearing."

The Dark Lord must have been looking at the twins as one of them answered instead of Draco. "Yes, sir. We realized that the moment you conjured them."

"And yet you donned the items without complaint, without hesitation," was Severus inquiring input.

"We have several reasons..."

"You do not act completely like Gryffindors."

"We like to think we have a bit of every House in us... we aren't Marked. We're not Death Eaters. But should our services be needed... we're leaning towards one side, but no one needs to know. And we're still not complete servants, are we."

"Mercenaries, that's what we are."

"You two are very clever," Voldemort murmured.

"Of course, sir. Otherwise you wouldn't put up with us," one twin said smugly. "Um... you are going to pay us for this, right? The whole Hogwarts takeover? We used an extensive amount of our potions, you know, and should be properly compensated."

Harry barked out a laugh before covering his mouth with his hand to quickly cut it off. He then had to go back in. He wanted to see the older wizards' faces. He quickly returned to George's side where the twin immediately threw a friendly arm around his shoulders again, and Harry wasn't disappointed by the looks of disbelief on Severus and Lucius' faces. He wasn't really surprised that his husband looked amused, if a little annoyed as well. Harry knew, deep down, Voldemort liked the twins.

Without answering them, Voldemort turned to Severus. "I will leave you in charge of the school while we are away."

Snape nodded. "Yes, my Lord."

"Have the medi-witch come in and take care of the worst. She cannot have her wand. Whatever healing she can do, it must be done by potions or nothing at all."

"Yes, my Lord."

Voldemort then turned to Lucius. "Find Bella and have her meet us in my office. We'll wait for you there."

Lucius bowed and left with his lover. They heard Severus mutter, "your future sons-in-laws are morons. They don't believe in danger."

Voldemort turned back to the twins. "I had thought to repay you but after the stunt you pulled this morning... I think more torture is in order."

The twins had the gall to pout at him. Voldemort moved towards them, stepping over Ginny's body as if she were nothing but a lifeless log. George flinched when the Dark Lord lifted a hand and wrapped it tightly around the limb that was still around Harry's shoulders. It was clear Voldemort was squeezing terribly hard because George cringed and bit his lip.

"S-sorry," he stuttered. "Won't do it again." *In your presence*, Harry knew was what the redhead was thinking. He grinned. The narrowing of his husband's eyes told him Voldemort probably understood this as well. But he let it go as well as George's wrist. George immediately stepped back while Voldemort pressed his arm against Harry's back to lead him from the room. Harry tipped his head back against Voldemort's shoulder, looking up into the shadowed hood and grinned.

As they moved through the corridors, Harry heard Draco whisper, "the Slytherin Common Room contains a hidden dancing pole."

Harry's grin turned into a smirk when Voldemort's eyes blazed.

"This isn't the right way," Fred whispered hoarsely.

George seconded that. "Slytherin is back the other way! Sir, can we-"

"Finish that inquiry and I may kill you after all."

Harry looked over his shoulder to meet Drake's grinning eyes. The twins' eyes were a bit dazed by the visions no doubt running through their heads at the moment.

Soon Harry was standing in the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic along with his husband, Lucius, Bellatrix, and his guard of three: Draco, Fred, and George.

"Thanks for saving our identities, Auntie Bella," Fred was saying. If Harry had been drinking something, no doubt he would have choked on it. And if not then he would have done so when Bellatrix smiled psychotically and embraced the twins before pulling back to pat their cheeks.

Lucius went off as soon as they were there, no doubt to take care of unknown business. Harry walked along with his husband, taking everything in. Not a lot was going on. The Ministry seemed deserted except for the sporadic number of Death Eaters they came across in every department.

Halfway through, Lucius returned and gave a more detailed verbal report of what had been going on within the Ministry since the takeover. Projects in which they had been ordered to start, people who had been captured during the raid and interrogated. Harry listened with only one ear but the rest of his attention was internal; he was trying to decipher exactly how his husband would end up running this government without problems. He had no doubt Voldemort would succeed. There was no one to stop him now. His husband's foot was lodged firmly in the door and the occupants of the "house" had all run away.

Harry was aware of the looks he was receiving, as well as the twins, but he largely ignored it. He and the Dark Lord weren't touching but they walked close enough to where every so often he could press the back of his fingers against his husband's when he wanted contact, which was often. Voldemort didn't want to show how close they were just yet and had not wrapped his arm around Harry's or placed the arm around his back as he usually did whenever they were together, but he allowed the finger brushing and instigated it at some points, because he enjoyed the contact as well. But their obvious public affection for each other would come later when everyone was used to seeing them together and understood, before they knew the truth, that Harry was someone who was not temporary.

Since this was a brief walkthrough, there wasn't much to learn or see. There was extensive damage to the place, but not all departments and the damage could and would probably be

repaired when there was time. Harry figured Voldemort was spending most of his time and resources scouring Britain for those who had escaped the Ministry and the rest of the raids.

Soon Voldemort announced it was time for him to return home. Harry didn't complain for many reasons; the first was knowing what the Dark Lord intended to do now. Interrogate prisoners himself. Harry didn't want nor did he need to see that. Secondly, he really did have some baking to do and he had about a dozen orders needing to be sent out. Third, the Dark Lord ordered Drake and the twins to return home with him. And lastly, he realized Hermione was at home by herself, though he knew she probably hadn't noticed. Hermione spent all her time in Tom's library whenever she could get away with it.

Harry Portkeyed straight into his bedroom, whereas Draco and the twins' Portkeys would transport them into the Entrance Hall. Originally, Harry's dagger necklace always transported him to Tom's office, but his husband had changed the location soon after they were married, which was fortunate as Harry wanted to change clothes before going into the kitchen and he wouldn't have to walk all the way up from Tom's office in order to do so.

When he'd changed into muggle jeans and a t-shirt and descended through the manor, Harry heard nothing and saw no one, so he shrugged and headed straight for the kitchen.

"Oi! That's for customers!" he shouted at two partners of the threesome who hovered over a previously sealed tray of strawberry swirled fudge. They'd discarded their outer robes and masks already and were stuffing their faces with his fudge.

"Who's more important, Harry? Us or customers?"

"Draco makes a good point," the twin beside him said, nodding.

Harry took a second to notice the other twin was standing a little away from them against the counter. His arms were crossed over his chest, he was staring at Draco, and he had a serious look upon his face. The expression was unusually serious in an intense sort of way. It kind of scared Harry so he looked away.

"Since this was all your idea in the first place, Draco," Harry snapped back and levitated the half eaten tray away from the gluttons. "The customers!"

"Well where's your personal stash then, Pot Head? The stash you keep for yourself and our Lord? I know you keep a stash for him. He always comes to meetings now with a bowl of your fudge and hogs it all!"

Harry smiled brightly as he put another freshening seal over the tray. "Yes, I have a stash. It's..." he trailed off when the quiet twin suddenly walked out of the kitchen without a word or glance to anyone.

Draco called out Fred's name, but the copperhead didn't return.

Harry turned back to the other two. "What's wrong with him? And how do you always know which one is which?"

"I have many talents, Potter," Draco muttered as he pulled away from George to follow after Fred.

Harry waited until he couldn't hear footsteps anymore before turning to George, "what's that all about? Fred looked upset... no, he looked... I don't know. Is he jealous or something?"

George laughed and waved that away. "No. We know how to share and we're both aware Draco loves us equally."

"So then what was with that expression on his face? Why'd he just walk away?" Harry asked as he pulled out a bowl full of fudge cubes and set it out. George came over and dropped an elbow on the counter, tapping his finger against his smiling lips.

Finally his eyes brightened with comprehension. "Draco... earlier he slammed me against the wall. Completely dominated me—it was brilliant, Harry!—and Fred was as turned on as I was just from watching. He's been really horny for Draco all day. He tends to draw back when that happens so as not to attack the prey since he probably wouldn't be able to stop..." George trailed off as his blue eyes widened comically and he hastily scrambled away from the counter and out of the kitchen.

The last thing Harry heard was George yelling, "he's going to start the seduction without me!"

Far from feeling abandoned, Harry laughed under his breath as he realized what was going on, and wished Draco good luck. The twins could be intense when they wanted to be; he knew that, even if he'd never really experienced that with them. Not intimately. That probably had to do with the fact that when he and the twins were messing around, the three of them knew it wasn't anything serious and wouldn't go on all that long. So it had all been lighthearted and fun. They hadn't wanted to form a bond deeper than being the best of friends with benefits.

As Harry crossed to the stove, he wondered why that was and how the three of them seemed to have known then that they really weren't meant to be... Harry laughed to himself and shrugged. It didn't really matter now anyway.

"Fred?"

The twin said nothing and simply entwined their fingers, pulling Draco up the stairs with him, looking this way and that, as if searching for something specific. "Fred, are you angry?"

Finally, a grin lit Fred's face; it was wicked, holding a lot of delicious danger. "Course not, Draco. No, not angry. Tense, though. Very tense."

"Where are you going?"

"We're going," he corrected firmly. There was this look in his eyes that made Draco swallow thickly. Fred's eyes were darker now too. He looked sexy like this. Sexy and determined, though Draco had no idea what he was determined about.

"You're scaring me a little," Draco whispered.

This stopped Fred when he about to open a door down the wing they'd turned into. He pulled until Draco was in front of him. He then maneuvered them until Draco was pressed against the door. "Really?"

"Well... I guess not. I'm not afraid of you, but you're acting... strange," he whispered, staring up at him. The wolfish grin Fred sent him in return set Draco's body on fire.

"The Seduction starts now, hot stuff."

Draco pulled in a breath. It was no longer fear and anxiety that filled him. It was excitement. "You say that with capital letters, don't you?" he asked, grinning to cover the nerves. "There's really no need for that anymore. I'm not running away now, am I?"

Fred laughed and nodded before dipping his head to capture Draco in a heated kiss. It lasted long minutes before they finally separated, but that was only because they could hear someone running towards them.

"Fred, you bastard!" George huffed as he finally reached them, bending over and placing his hands on his knees to train and regain his breath. He'd sprinted through the castle to catch up to them. "Trying to start without me! Again!"

"I've been waiting for you," Fred murmured against Draco's lips. "Knew you'd follow. Draco was unwise to follow me, weren't you, love? And George would have known what was on my mind."

A lump caught in Draco's throat. This Fred... this Fred had him trembling. Both from pleasure and shock. Though he had already learned Fred was the more dominate twin- many twins were like that, one dominate and the other submissive- but still this assertive Fred came as a little surprise. Full of dark sexual tension; it was enthralling. His arse was going to get a work over today. Dragging his eyes away from Fred's, he looked to George, who had straightened and was prowling towards them, grinning. Wickedly, but also in amusement.

"Fred really has no control when he gets this way," George replied to the widening of Draco's eyes. "Ready to give in?"

Draco nodded rapidly. Yes. Gods, yes he was! George pressed into his side and grasped the knob of the door they were pressed against and twisted. They braced themselves as the door opened.

"Perfectly convenient," George purred as they were shown a guest bedchamber of black marble with green, gold, and silver colors splashed around, and a nice big four poster bed center of the room. As soon as they stepped in and George shut the door behind him, Draco was swamped by a tsunami of nerves. He walked towards the bed, thinking the only thing to get rid of those nerves was to fill his mind with something else, which meant getting this started as soon as possible.

The moment one of the twins was within reaching distance, Draco grabbed him- George, as he had a silver stud in his ear- and flipped him over onto his back before crawling over the prone body and pressing their lips together. George immediately and impatiently began to unbutton his dress shirt, while Draco felt Fred press from behind, trailing a hot wet tongue along the nape of his neck while his deft fingers worked the clasp of his trousers. George was rutting up against him, seeking heat and friction and Draco moaned against the feel of it, the desperate need to get closer.

It wasn't at all how he imagined it to be, having two lovers at the same time. He'd thought it might be awkward at first. Awkward for him at least; especially. But he'd been wrong. He hadn't felt anything of the sort; not when he was being undressed by the twins and he was undressing anyone he could get his hands on, which happened to be George since he was beneath him. Someone had whispered spells into the air, which all of them felt the effects of the different spells, and then their skin was bare and sliding against each other and hands began caressing flesh and there wasn't room for awkwardness then. Everything was heat and emotion and a single thought. *Finally*.

Fred leaned over his back, passing his tongue wherever he could and in between licks, whispering very dirty things into Draco's ear with George doing the same. Draco whimpered as he continued to stroke George's torso, his thighs, his long hot cock. He loved the dirty talk, just as much as they loved to hear naughty things dripping passed his lips.

Draco gasped into George's mouth when he felt slick fingers pressing between his arse cheeks and squirmed as they burrowed deeper. Draco looked over his shoulder at Fred, whose gaze was intent on his arse. "I've never seen a more perfect arse," Fred whispered huskily.

"He wants to fuck you," George whispered hoarsely in his ear. Draco shivered uncontrollable. From George's voice and from the fingers that had found his entrance and prodded lightly. "He can't wait to sink into you, over and over again. Pound into your delicious arse until you're screaming a release. He will, Draco. He'll fuck you so hard that you'll go blind and he won't come until you do."

Draco moaned deeply when George wrapped a hand around both their leaking cocks just as Fred slipped a finger inside him. "Let me fuck you, George," he begged with a gasp, thrusting into George's hand.

He must have said something supremely surprising because the finger inside him stilled and George's eyes flew wide open. "Blondie, you can fuck me all you want! You really want to?"

"Maybe just this once..."

George laughed. "If I have my way, It'll be as much as possible."

Draco's eyes darkened further, if that were even possible and then all at once there were two fingers pressing inside him, fondling and searching and a mouth nipping at his arse, and George's legs fell wider apart and he looked triumphant.

There was a bit of maneuvering done, but soon George's legs were thrown over Draco's shoulders, and Fred was behind him, pressing against him, leaving a trail of kisses all over

his back. Draco bit his lip as he pressed into George and laughed breathlessly at the very eager expression on the wizard beneath him.

While Fred pushed in slowly, Draco thrust into George quickly, hoping the pleasurable sensations of entering George would distract him from the pain of Fred's fucking huge cock breaching him. He lay over George, forehead planted on his collarbone and breathed through his nose, listening to the rattling breaths the man beneath him and over him were taking. George lifted a hand, passing his fingers through Draco's damp hair. Draco's fingers dug deeply into his shoulders as Fred continued to penetrate him.

"Merlin, Fred! You're... too much!"

"Why thank you, Draco love. Take deep breaths."

Draco growled and ignored the patting of his head until George said, "you're not exactly slim either."

His head popped up, looking worried. "Did I hurt you?"

"No, but I'd appreciate it if you would move those fantastic hips of yours, lovely."

"Oh right," Draco said, and then giggled. He abruptly cut off the sound in mortification, ducking his head back to George's shoulder, ignoring the vibrating against his chest and back, telling him the twins were laughing at his giggling. Draco grit his teeth and pulled out of George, gasping as that helped Fred along... it felt so weird, but utterly fantastic, to have a cock up his arse and his own cock inside someone at the same time. Why had he never done this before?

Their movements were by no means smooth. In that it was awkward, for a little bit, until the three of them found a rhythm. A wonderful, awesome, fucking *brilliant* rhythm. Draco swore they would have to do it every day. Every day, every hour, every bloody minute if they could manage such a thing. It astounded him at how right he felt at the moment to be squeezed between them. Then again, it had never felt wrong before, so he didn't know why he'd doubted the intimate part. He supposed it was just nerves. Speaking of nerves...

Draco cried out as Fred rammed against his sweet-spot. Fred hissed and began to pound against it, and with every thrust from behind, Draco was helped along to push deeper inside George, who lay back, arched with his head back, neck exposed to him with his lips parted in ecstasy. Draco squeezed his eyes closed, wanting to concentrate on what he was feeling, but also wanted to search and strike that same tight bundle of nerves within George. It was hard to concentrate, and his orgasm was building quickly in the pit of his stomach.

It was as if Fred could read his mind. Fred dropped his forehead against his back, panting harshly against his flushed skin and his strokes slowed. The slower pace allowed Draco to catch his breath and concentrate on George for a moment. He bent his head to George's chest, tonguing one of the puckered flushed nubs before biting softly, and the reaction he got to that was wonderful. George's back arched further, a curse tore passed his lips, and the legs on Draco's shoulders constricted around his neck.

Draco continued to trail a line of fire across George's chest while he grasped George's arms for anchor and hitched his hips for a different angle before thrusting in blindly. Gods, it felt so good, being surrounded by the tight heat- though he much preferred the fullness he felt with Fred's cock shoved up his arse and the hands gripping his hips possessively. But he was enjoying George all the same as well. Especially when George whimpered and his eyes closed in bliss with each stroke of Draco's cock against his prostate.

"Fuck, Draco. Harder!"

Draco complied, helped along by Fred's renewed fast pace. He released one arm and brought it between them to find George's cock and gripped it possessively, running his palm over the head and gathering up the pre-cum before stroking it up and down in time with his thrusts. George didn't last long after that, and Draco watched his face, enthralled, as George screamed out his name and came all over his hand and stomach.

Draco grinned triumphantly when the glazed blue eyes opened and fixated on his face, but that grin was soon wiped away when Fred moved over him, clamping his teeth into Draco's shoulder and reinstated that quick brutal pace, going back to finding those nerves that offered instant bliss. Draco's face dropped limply as he was assaulted from behind, only to feel a hand on his chin seconds later, lifting up his head so that George could see his face.

"I want to watch you," he whispered hoarsely and he didn't seem to mind the fact Draco was still inside him, pulsing and so very close to release.

The only response Draco could give was a sharp cry as his body went stiff as he was rocked by an explosive orgasm. Spots of bright light danced in front of his open eyes, his fingertips digging painfully into George's arms, vaguely aware of the wide-eyed spellbound look he was being given by George.

"Fuck! Fuck! Fuck, Draco!" shouted Fred and Draco felt him pulsing inside of him, releasing his seed inside his arse.

Draco collapsed over George while Fred pulled out and fell limply to his side, just barely managing to scoot over to throw an arm over Draco's back, nuzzling his nose against Draco's slick flushed neck.

George managed to turn his face and press swollen lips against Draco's equally swollen lips. "You were fantastic, love."

Draco's response was a garbled pant.

"We'll take that as a compliment," Fred murmured beside them. "Next time there will be more foreplay," he promised, smiling when Draco managed to shift and throw an arm over him so that he was touching both his fiends before all three of them passed out for a much needed nap.

Chapter Sixteen

The Black Bunny

Chapter Sixteen

After Harry finished making his orders and sending the ones he needed to send out, he went in search of Hermione and was correct in thinking he'd find her in the library.

"I have an idea," he stated once he'd dropped into a seat across from her. "You may or may not like it."

Hermione smiled in bemusement. "Knowing you, I probably won't like it." She laughed when Harry frowned. "Oh, alright then. Tell me this fantastic idea."

Harry perked up and grinned. "I didn't say it was fantastic, but here it goes..." and he went on to tell her. Hermione listened without interruption while he laid down his plan. After he was finished, Hermione sat there staring at the table, no doubt nit picking at everything he said. Harry sat back and began to drum his fingers, waiting for her verdict. After a few more minutes, she raised her eyes from the table and nodded.

"Yes, that's good. I'll join you. It's not as if we're joining the Dark Lord. We merely have our own annoyances to deal with. If it coincides with the Dark's plans, then well," here she smiled and shrugged, "it's just a coincidence. It has nothing to do with the war at all." Harry grinned, nodding with that train of thought. "We need to speak to the twins about this. Do you know where they are?" she went on to ask.

"Those two," he shook his head in amusement. "They actually tried sneaking into Hogwarts to see Draco this morning. They were caught of course and were lucky enough not to have been killed."

Hermione winced. "I imagine Lord Voldemort was furious."

"Yes, he was. Cursed them for over an hour," Harry then snorted. "They said he also lectured them like a professor. They thought that part was funny... until the painful cursing resumed."

"Where are they now? Still at Hogwarts?"

"No. So after the torture/lecture session, Tom gave them black robes and silver masks. And then the assignment to guard me whenever I leave here. So then we went to the Ministry for a while and after that came back here with Draco."

Hermione raised a brow; Harry was becoming particularly giddy with each word he spoke. "And?"

"And now, or rather some time ago, the twins and Draco disappeared upstairs somewhere, to do something, together," he ended with a wag of his eyebrows. Hermione laughed and threw

her quill at him.

"Wait, so all this means..."

"Yes! They're probably having awesome kinky threesome sex right now!"

Hermione laughed. "No, you idiot! That means *you* were at Hogwarts and the Ministry today!"

Harry smiled. "Asked Tom if I could go with him this morning and he said yes. He even made me a golden mask to wear so I wouldn't be taken for a Death Eater... by the way; he's probably going to make you a silver mask, which means-"

"Neutral with a side of controlled by the Dark Lord. Yes, I figured that."

"I saw Luna earlier," Harry blurted before they could go further into the discussion about the silver masks.

After his declaration, the two watched each other. Both with flickering eyes. Even though Hermione didn't understand Luna at times and sometimes was annoyed by the Ravenclaw, they were still something like friends. Harry and Luna had been really good friends while he was still attending Hogwarts. And he felt bad for leaving her in the dungeons.

"I was standing in the doorway and she stared at me like she knew who I was under the mask."

"Did she say anything?"

"No. Just watched me. She looked okay. All of them did. A lot scared, but that's how Tom wants them." He went on to tell her the experience from first going to Hogwarts and then the Ministry. Hermione smirked when Harry described what Draco had done to Ginny, muttering about how the bint deserved it. She also loved the alarm clock and giggled about it for several minutes.

"You find that funny..." Harry responded, a bit surprised by her amusement. "One would think our humor is going Dark."

Hermione sobered and pinned her friend in place with a look. She picked up her book and showed him the title. A very dark book. "Harry, I hate to say it but we can't be in this castle for as long as we have and not pick up on the aura. We can't hang around the Dark Lord and not be pulled in, if a little bit."

Harry shrugged. He knew it. Already felt it. Some things he didn't care about any more. Ginny for instance. Her torture hadn't bothered him in the slightest. And the twins, though it probably hurt loads, they weren't crying over the fact the Dark Lord had tortured them when he was in a rage. "I am married to the Darkest wizard alive," he returned with a grin. "And loving it! He may not have said, but I know Tom was very pleased with me for asking to be able to accompany him today."

"Good for you," she replied with a frown before reopening her book.

"Oh don't be mad at me just because your hunky Auror/Death Eater needs to retain his cover and can't be seen out in public with you."

Harry ran away after that as Hermione was very accurate with her wand aim. And after seeing the book she was currently studying, running away seemed like the wise thing to do.

The moment she heard the library door slam shut in Harry's escape, Hermione laughed and stood, tucking the books she wanted to study some more under her arm. She was in no way upset. She knew Andrew had to remain undercover which meant no dates. Especially now when Voldemort was in the first stages of victory. Andy was too busy along with the rest of the Death Eaters. He and Lustre more than the others as those two were going back and forth being Aurors and Inner Circle Death Eaters.

She left the library and proceeded to climb the three levels to her room. Once stepping onto the third floor landing, she made a sharp left into the wing her room was located; the room happening to be one of the first doors off the landing. Thinking over what she wanted to accomplish today, Hermione decided she would go find Harry again in a few minutes once she dropped the books off. They could both use some exercise. Perhaps dueling if they were actually going to follow through with his idea. They hadn't been in a proper battle in over a year and it would be disastrous to go out and perform rusty.

With that thought, she nodded firmly and opened her door to her bedroom. She took five steps in and promptly screamed; dropping her books in surprise when her eyes landed on her lovely black marble four poster bed.

Three heads popped up off the pillows, looking around in tired bewilderment.

"What the HELL?" she shouted.

"Oh," one of the twins mumbled, dropping his head back to the pillow and snuggling closer to the blond. "Just Hermione."

"Hey, Mione," the other slurred before burrowing his nose into Draco's neck. Or at least tried. But Draco scampered away from them and dove for the covers, ripping them off the bed and around himself, staring wide eyed at the witch.

Hermione took a deep breath and then smirked. "I'm sorry for lying, Draco. Your arse isn't skinny and nonexistent. It's very fine."

The twins snickered while Draco's eyes remained wide before he caught himself. "What are you doing here, Granger? Get out!"

"This is my room! What are you three doing here? Did you have sex on my lovely bed?" she snapped back.

Fred sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Why yes we did, Hermione. It was brilliant."

George murmured an agreement as he too sat up, neither twin concerned with being nude in front of her. "Draco fucked me good."

Hermione's eyes went back to the blond, laughing at the high blush before she bent down to pick up the books. "I'll have to ask the Dark Lord for another room. There's no way I can sleep in that bed now and not think of you three."

"That's a compliment, right?" Fred asked with a grin.

"Cover up!" Draco demanded. Instead of listening to his demand, Fred pounced on Draco; pushing the blond onto his back and snogging the life out of him. Draco laughed between kisses and seemed to forget about the witch shaking her head at them. Hermione admitted the twins had fine arses as well.

She snickered as she went back to the door. "You three get dressed. We're going to have a little meeting in a minute. Harry's come up with something fun for us to do."

"Yeah," George answered with an absent minded wave as he lazily watched his brother and Draco, "we'll be there soon."

"I've been thinking," Harry began from where he sat in a two-seater within one of the smaller more private parlors. It was cozier than the rest too; with a blazing fire set before the seat and two tables at each side of the sofa. The room was lit by the fire and the plethora of candelabra's set about the place. The parlor was meant to feel intimate.

"Perish the thought," was the reply from Tom, who sat next to him. He quickly moved his legs to keep from being kicked. Nagini, who was curled up on the floor between their feet, only barely managed to duck Harry's foot.

"Anyway," Harry went on with a glare at the smirking Dark wizard beside him, "I was thinking about the twins' predicament. Their homes being watched. If I were say, a Dark Lord, and I wanted to round up all the thorns in my side, I would start with the places I know these people would be at. Those watching Fred and George's place and Hermione's flat... probably Grimmauld Place as well. I would set a trap for the watchers." Harry shrugged and went back to his book, a smirk tugging on his lips. "That's what I would do anyway if I were a Dark Lord.... But of course I'm not a Dark Lord and I'm not involved... it's just an observation and I'm sure the current Dark Lord had already thought about that, yeah?"

Tom's silence meant he hadn't thought about it yet. But Harry was sure he would have done eventually, because his husband was very clever. Harry chanced a peek at the man next to him and found Tom grinning at him.

Harry flashed a smile. "Only, you didn't hear any of that from me," he whispered in a conspiring manner, turning the page of an ancient spell book solely for those who were Parselmouths.

It was a very interesting book of spells and curses and ancient rituals written by Salazar Slytherin himself; most of it would be considered Dark by those who were blinded by black and white, but Harry merely saw it as power and more knowledge and wasn't troubled at all by the dark aura surrounding the ancient tome. Besides, Tom had gifted him with this book and anything Tom gave him was very much cherished.

In fact, Harry was actually itching to try out some of the spells he'd learned from the book. He felt he was becoming a bit lazy, magic wise. His abilities and reflexes needed to be trained. He, Hermione, Draco, and the twins had taken to dueling a few hours every day when Draco was able to visit from the school and that had done some good, but nothing got the blood pumping like a real duel. Nothing brought out the best of a wizard's abilities like a real battle.

Harry frowned and closed the book, raising his eyes to stare at the fire, wondering how he was going to convince Tom of the next part of this plan. It was just as Hermione said. They had some thorns in their own sides; he and his friends had every right to get in on this. Harry knew they would- in the case of he, Hermione, and the twins- enjoy taking care of this problem. For personal reasons and for personal grievances done to him and people he cared about. It didn't have anything to do with his husband's ambitions; it all had to do with his own revenge for the Slytherins and Theo and for the innocents being terrorized. Nodding with these thoughts, Harry finally shifted and turned to face Tom fully, who had yet to stop watching him.

"No," Tom said immediately.

Rather than being deterred and annoyed that he hadn't even been able to ask yet, Harry smiled slyly. Tom shifted uncomfortably at his expression. When Harry smiled like that it was never a good sign. Harry raised the book he'd been reading, his sly smile morphing into a devious smirk. "What did you give me this book for, then? Surely it wasn't just for reading. I need practice, Tom. And I can have vendettas of my own, being neutral. The only cause I'm thinking of is my own... I will, of course, wear my gold mask. I'm rather fond of it."

Tom tipped his head back and pinched the bridge of his nose. That meant Harry had won. Harry internally squealed- in a manly way, of course- and scooted over until he was pressed against his husband's side. Along with feeling Tom's frustration through the link, Harry also felt his husband's fear for him.

Harry reached up and brushed the dark brown fringe away from his husband's face, saying softly, "I'm perfectly capable of keeping myself safe." And in fact, Harry was thinking more along the lines of being there also to protect his husband if the need arose as he knew Tom would want to be there.

Tom closed his eyes. "Harry, if I lost you..."

"You won't!" Harry snapped, suddenly annoyed. "Do you think I can't protect myself? Do you think I'm so weak to not be able to take care of a few pigeons?" he demanded. "If we're together, nothing can touch us and you know it! You can't keep me locked away forever!"

"I haven't been keeping you locked away," Tom said softly, rubbing a thumb over Harry's scar, trying to soothe his delightful temper away.

"But I haven't been in any battles recently and I need to practice, keep myself trained," Harry went on more calmly. "There will eventually be assassination attempts on the both of us when we make ourselves public."

"Anyone who dares try will die instantly!"

Harry finally smiled and nodded before dropping his head to rest on Tom's shoulder. "Besides, this will work better if I'm the bait. The Aurors and Order who are watching Hermione's house and Grimmauld will be called back into Diagon Alley if I suddenly appear to visit the twins. That's more people for you to capture and/or kill. Whatever you decide to do with them."

"How long have you been thinking about this?"

"... a few days."

"If we're lucky, Shacklebolt, Moody, and that blasted Scrimgeour will be there. We'll discover the Secret Keeper to the Order Headquarters."

"So you'll let me come?" Harry inquired, leaning over to take up his glass of wine upon the table beside their little seat.

"You're so determined about this, I'd have to magically tie you to the bed to keep you from following," Tom muttered.

Harry made a noise of agreement as he drank the lovely Elvin wine. "Oh, and Hermione wants to come too. And the twins have a few friends who want the silver masks as well. Actually, there are a lot of people who would rather be neutral... I wonder if there's a way I could manipulate them to still be neutral but also do what I say, and in turn do what you say? You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

Tom groaned and once again his head dropped back. And up went the hand with the fingers to the bridge of his husband's very handsome aristocratic nose. Harry really loved it when Tom did that. It was such a human gesture.

"Don't worry! It'll be fun. What could go wrong?"

"You've just doomed this entire operation," Tom replied seriously. "Saying those words..."

Harry laughed in delight. "Who knew? The Dark Lord is superstitious!" Tom's lips quirked. Harry grinned impishly. "So I'm assuming some of your minions have said the same thing on numerous occasions when you faced off with me in the past. Is that why you could never beat me?"

"Bold brat," Tom growled, leaning over to press a soft lingering kiss to his husband's delectable lips to quiet the laughter. After a time he pulled away from his dazed husband to lean forward, placing elbows onto his knees as he gazed into the fire before them. Harry went back to his book, knowing his husband was busy in thought and would speak his mind when those thoughts were in order.

"I've made a decision," Tom announced after a short silence.

Harry looked up from his book as Tom relined back once more. "And?"

"And you, Harry Riddle, will have charge of any silvers we have."

Harry straightened. "Yes, my own faction! Wicked," he breathed, rubbing his hands together.

"Hmm," Tom said, smiling at Harry's excitement. He had to admit to being excited to see what his young husband would do with his own little army. "I'll have to assign enforcers to you."

Harry quieted and looked at Tom in suspicion. "What sort of enforcers? How many?"

Tom did nothing but grin and Harry rolled his eyes. "By the way," Tom said after a few moments of silence, "there's a student at the school who continues to be bold, asking to speak to the wizard with the golden mask. She's very persistent."

Harry didn't respond until he'd downed the rest of his drink. "Have you spoken to her personally?"

"No. But I've been told about her and I did look in on whoever had the nerve to continuously ask for you."

"A 7th year, right? Long blonde hair, huge gray eyes, eyebrows that make her seem constantly surprised?"

"Yes."

Tom watched Harry set his book aside and stand, staring at the fire. His hands clenching into fists. "She hasn't been... tortured for her inquiries, has she?"

"No. Mostly she's ignored. Though... she did boldly stare at me when no one else has had the nerve."

Harry smiled a little. "It wasn't out of disrespect, Tom. With Luna, it is curiosity for all things." He then nodded and relaxed his hands. "Will you take me to the school now? I don't think she'll tell anyone, but I'm almost certain she knows who I am."

It took a bit of time for Harry to convince Tom not to kill the Ravenclaw, but soon they were both changed, Harry masked, and arrived at the school. Tom waited by the door, smirking at all the cringing children from under his hood as he allowed Harry to personally go in and collect the girl.

Harry approached the sleeping Ravenclaw, the only prisoner there that looked completely at ease and peaceful in her sleep. Harry couldn't help but smile. It was so Luna. He squatted and touched her shoulder, drawing her awake.

Her dazed eyes cleared quickly. "Hello," she greeted softly. "I knew you'd come eventually."

Harry inclined his head and stood back up, looking at the others. No one seemed to be bothered that a masked wizard was bothering her. Then again Luna had never really been popular. In fact she'd been ridiculed on a daily basis due to her... odd behavior. Would these

students even shout out if Harry took the violent approach and dragged her out by her hair? By the looks on their faces, probably not. This had him seething. Luna was one of the sweetest girls he'd ever known and she did not belong here with the rest of these arseholes.

Now... now he was glad he'd come for her. And after, no matter what Tom said, he would not have her chained up again. He was almost certain she knew who he was and she'd kept it secret. Not only that, but there was nothing but curiosity in her gaze when she looked at him. There was no judgment. No derision or disgust. An open mind that was Luna Lovegood.

Withdrawing his wand, Harry quickly released her from her bonds. He then smiled and extended a hand to help her up. Luna's smile grew as she took his hand and allowed him to help her up. Harry nodded his head again and turned, leading her out of the room. Voldemort led the way to his office, and all three were silent until Harry shut the door behind them.

Harry turned to the Ravenclaw. "You've been asking to see me," he prompted neutrally, his tone flat and low just in case she didn't know him.

Luna smiled and clasped her hands behind her back. "Of course, Harry. I wanted to say hello. It's been a long time since we've last spoken, you know."

Harry finally smiled back and raised his mask to perch on his head. "I knew you recognized me."

"I'd hoped you didn't forget about me."

"Well I did see you the other day, but I... wasn't sure. You see where I am now?"

The Ravenclaw nodded, her eyes going to the Dark wizard sitting behind the desk, watching like a hawk and hearing every word. Luna's smile grew. "Course! You're married to Voldemort. How is that, by the way? It's not weird?"

The Dark Lord hissed as he stood. **She knows too much.**

Harry stepped in front of her, and said calmly, **Luna is the most honest person I've ever come across. Ask her a question and she will tell you the truth. She may be a neutral if I ask. I don't want you to harm her. She's been really true for me. I'm ashamed to have forgotten about her.**

I do not like the fact she stares at me without fear.

Luna isn't afraid of anything. I doubt she would fear even if she were staring her death in the face. Don't take it personally.

She looks...odd.

Yes, that's Luna Lovegood. Look... I will not allow her to be put back with the rest of the prisoners. She doesn't belong there. I want her to be comfortable. I don't want her hurt. That means no spearing her with pain when you rifle through her head. She will not cause trouble for you.

And you're sure about this?

Absolutely sure.

The Dark Lord looked away from his husband to the girl, who had moved away during their hissed discussion to inspect the room. As if she'd been given permission! "Lovegood," he hissed. Her attention returned to him, her gaze hovering somewhere over his left shoulder. "Come, sit."

The moment she was sitting with Harry beside her the Dark Lord pulled off his hood. Luna gasped and for once looked genuinely surprised. She then turned to Harry and actually leered. The expression wasn't really surprising to Harry, because he knew Luna well and the Ravenclaw wasn't anywhere near the innocent she looked to be when it came to sex. In fact when he'd still been in school the two of them had had some of the raunchiest discussions ever.

"It mustn't be weird at all! You've done well, Harry!" she practically squealed over Tom's good looks. "And all that power... you must melt every time!"

The Dark Lord's mouth dropped open while Harry burst into a fit of laughter. She could have been speaking about something else, the joining of magic perhaps, but Harry was certain she was speaking about the intimacy between them. She was right too! Harry stifled his laughter and wiped the tears of mirth away. The look on Tom's face was priceless. He looked like he didn't know whether to be enraged or embarrassed. Ah, Tom was cute sometimes.

"Well I do kind of melt like butter into the mattress. He's-"

"Do not finish that," Tom said through gritted teeth.

"What?" he widened his eyes innocently upon his husband. "You don't want me to boast about your utter brilliance in bed? Every man likes an ego boost and you most certainly deserve it!" Harry turned back to Luna. "The wizard deserves some kind of medal, Luna. Honestly, no one does it like him-"

"Harry."

Harry turned back to his husband with an innocent smile to go with the big green innocent look in his eyes. "Yes?"

"Ask," Tom hissed, gesturing to the giggling Ravenclaw beside him.

"Right..." Harry cleared his throat, trying desperately to keep the laughter down. "Luna... I'm recruiting members. My faction is neutral and I-"

"Of course I'll join you," Luna cut in, giving him a smile. "That is why I continued to ask for you. You're brilliant, Harry and anything you do will be brilliant. Why wouldn't I want to be a part of that?"

Harry blushed and dropped his eyes to the table. Tom cocked his head to the side, unusually pleased with the girl's show of loyalty and confidence in his husband's abilities.

"Besides," the girl breathed, her gaze travelling around lazily and dazed, "there's no fun being on the losing side."

Finally Tom inwardly nodded. He stood and lifted his hood back into place. **You two stay here until I return.**

The Dark Lord stopped beside him and gripped Harry's chin, tipping his face up. **No more sex talk.**

You are brilliant.

Of course I am, Harry, but that's truly beside the point.

Harry smiled broadly and nodded. Voldemort glanced at the Ravenclaw but her eyes were back to wandering over the office, so he released Harry's chin to lightly caress his neck, smirking when Harry shivered and then blushed when he heard Luna snigger beside him. She wasn't even looking at them, and yet she was giggling.

Tom hadn't even been gone a minute before the two of them were back to talking about the sexual prowess of one Dark Lord Voldemort. Half an hour passed before Voldemort returned with Draco and Severus. Both who looked surprised to see Luna sitting beside an unmasked Harry. The both of them chatting up a storm. Harry stood when he noticed his husband's return with the other two, and wondered what the Dark Lord had decided concerning Luna.

"Loony," Draco greeted amiably, surprising Harry with his tone.

"Hullo, Draco. Thank you for slipping me those chocolate frogs every night. Nice to see you again, Professor."

Severus turned to his Lord and raised a brow, while Voldemort was staring at Draco. The blond took a step back, averting his gaze and clearing his throat. Probably hoping he wasn't going to be punished now. Harry couldn't wait to get the blond alone. He hadn't ever known Draco and Luna were any type of friends.

Voldemort finally sighed and let the hood of his robes fall back. "Harry has begged for Lovegood's release-

"I did not beg. I asked nicely."

"As I recall," Tom went on with a glare, "you didn't ask at all."

"But you just said I begged!"

"Silence!" Tom hissed.

Harry looked at him curiously, a smirk playing about his lips. "Has that ever actually worked for you? Concerning me anyway?" he laughed and dodged Tom when the Dark Lord tried to grab him in a choke hold.

Severus and Draco pretended not to notice that slip, as it was definitely not Dark Lord behavior; but it was Harry and Tom behavior.

"So what did you decide about Luna?" Harry finally asked, taking a stance behind Severus.

"She'll remain in the castle, but she will not be a prisoner with the rest. Severus has already had a room prepared. No one is to know whom you are, Lovegood. If you've been given permission to leave your room, then you must wear a mask."

Severus looked surprised. Obviously Tom had not told him whom the room would be for. Draco's face was probably purposely passive while Luna simply smiled and nodded at Tom, agreeing to everything he said. Harry threw him a wide smile.

"You'll be quite safe here, Luna, as long as you wear that mask out. Right, Tom?"

Tom frowned, but nodded.

"Thank you, Lord Voldemort," she replied with a slight bow, "I will follow your rules."

This appeased Tom somewhat and he inclined his head before turning back to Severus and Draco. "Take Lovegood to her room now."

"Yes, my Lord," the two Death Eaters returned with a bow.

Harry hugged Luna before she went and promised to see her soon.

"She's the last one," Tom intoned darkly when they were alone. "No more begging for the students' freedom."

"I didn't beg!"

Tom smirked as he drew up his hood. "Mask," he told his husband. Harry pulled down his mask, wondering what his husband was about now. He watched as the Dark Lord pointed his wand to the portrait and vanished the covering. Harry held his breath when Dumbledore came into view. The old wizard was sitting in a chair, head tipped back with his eyes closed. He looked to be sleeping.

The Dark Lord handled his wand in a complicated movement and said firmly, "*enervate stasis*."

The spell hit the portrait, encasing it in a dark blue glow. Voldemort looked to his side where his young husband stood beside him and smirked. Harry rolled his eyes and waited.

"Dumbledore. It's time to wake up," Voldemort called.

In no time the old wizard's twinkling eyes were blinking open. Harry shifted on the spot. He wasn't sure what to feel at the moment. He wasn't the least bit guilty for being here with Tom or for his husband's victory. But for many years Harry had looked up to the wizard now staring down at them, his twinkling eyes now dulled somewhat. And he had mourned when Dumbledore died; he mourned the mistakes Dumbledore made as well, knowing the wizard

hadn't meant any harm, but had done everything he did because of what he believed in. He had such a strong belief in the Greater Good that he hadn't seen anything beyond that. The Greater Good had taken up most of his life. Harry mourned that as well.

Sensing his pensive thoughts, Voldemort wrapped an arm around Harry's waist and tugged him against his side. Probably also doing it to make a silent statement to the watching Dumbledore.

"You've lost, old man."

"I see that I have. But for how long, I wonder. There is always Harry. Have you killed the boy, Tom?"

Used to having Harry call him Tom, the Dark Lord wasn't as enraged by that greeting as he once might have been. Voldemort pressed a hand against Harry's hip, sending his own message.

Harry lifted his green eyes to the portrait. "Hello, Headmaster."

Dumbledore rose from his seat and knelt down as if he were at the portraits barrier. "And who might you be?" he asked.

Harry looked at his lover and got an imperceptible nod. He took a deep breath and took off his mask. He smiled and gave a little wave.

"As you can see," Voldemort went on, enjoying the widening of Dumbledore's eyes. "I haven't killed him nor do I plan to." He then turned to Harry. "Do you plan to kill me, love?"

"I took a vow to love and cherish you forever, so my answer would have to be... Nope. Sorry, Dumbledore."

"You've gone Dark, Harry," the old wizard murmured. His voice wavering. Harry straightened up and glared at the disappointment he saw swimming in Dumbledore's eyes.

"Why is that the first thing everyone always assumes? Some people don't even know I'm in any way associated with Tom and still they assume I've gone Dark. For your information I went neutral, Dumbledore. I am neutral. Gray. Silver. The portion between Light and Dark, black and white. It's much more comfortable in the gray than anywhere else. I went neutral long before I became involved with Tom."

Harry paused to take a long breath, revving up. He didn't notice Tom's growing amusement as his tirade continued. "You want to know something else, Dumbledore? Your bloody Order nearly killed me! Voldemort was the one who saved my life! The Order wiped out three quarters of Slytherin House! Kids, Dumbledore! Kids! Voldemort's only taken the students here prisoner! And now the Order and Ministry are doing far more damage than the Dark Lord has in many months. Arresting innocents and the like!

"And as for our relationship," he went on, motioning between himself and his husband, "it's a fairly normal one, if a bit speedy at first. And it didn't even have anything to do with the war,

really." Harry grinned once again. "He even courted me properly too! He gave me gifts and we went out on dates! In public! And I seduced him with fudge and cakes. It's been brilliant!"

Dumbledore looked gobsmacked and turned to the Dark Lord. "Did you really, Tom?" he asked faintly.

Voldemort twitched under his robes. Why the bleeding hell was Dumbledore smiling like that? He was supposed to be frowning, or better yet, crying because his precious Light side was losing horribly. "As a matter of fact, I did. I won his hand the proper way and he is now Harry Riddle." *Eat that, Dumbledore.*

Harry went on to smile goofily and nod. "Don't feel too bad, Dumbledore. Tom's not insane anymore and he's not burning the world down around our ears, if that makes you feel better."

"Who cares if he feels better?" Tom asked as he discarded his hood and turned to glare at his young husband.

"Well I kind of do... a little."

"He treated you like a tool!"

"Not as much as the others!"

"Yes he did! Only you didn't notice because he was better at his manipulations, brat!"

"Don't call me a brat in front of Dumbledore, Bunnymort!"

Tom's red eyes flared. "You-" he cut off and took a long deep breath.

Harry smiled brightly and turned back to the stunned portrait. "So how are things in the Land of Portraits, Dumbledore?"

"What happened to you, Tom?" the old Headmaster inquired, the damn twinkling back in his eyes as his gaze roamed over the new and improved Tom Riddle.

"He fell in lo-"

Tom sneered as he slapped a hand over the little minx's mouth. "In what way, old man?"

"You look healthy... in all ways."

"I have never felt this vibrant in my life," Tom answered truthfully. "I never even felt this young and clear when I attended this school."

"No, I don't imagine you did," Dumbledore replied sadly, the twinkling dimming a bit. "Coming from where you did, you already had very old eyes. Your spirit had already been through so much."

"Yes, thank you, Dumbledore," Tom hissed in rage. "No more of that drive!"

Harry gave his husband a concerned look, before turning back to Dumbledore. "Severus helped him get his old body back, minus some... a lot of years."

Dumbledore smiled fondly at Harry. "You two do make a handsome couple."

"Thanks!"

Tom hissed and spun away from the portrait. Trust Harry! Trust Harry to make it hard to rub Dumbledore's nose in his victory. And the old bastard... bringing up his past! A past Tom wanted more than anything to forget. He turned back around and pointed his wand at the portrait, bellowing out a spell. In moments, Dumbledore had slumped to the side, his eyes slipping closed in sleep and another white sheet appeared to cover the picture.

Harry's breath caught in his throat as he felt the rage and turmoil through the link. "Tom?" he whispered weakly, rubbing at his throbbing scar.

"Go home, Harry."

"But..." Harry moved slowly, extending a hand to lay it on his husband's arm. "What's wrong?"

Tom wrenched his arm away and turned his back on his husband. "Go home now!" he shouted.

Harry flinched back and bowed his head. "I'm sorry," he whispered before clutching at his dagger necklace and activating it.

Upon returning home and entering the bedroom, Tom found Harry burrowed under all the covers or at least he assumed the lump in the middle of the nest of sheets and blankets was Harry. He clenched his fists and looked at the ground, closing his crimson eyes. He'd hurt Harry terribly. He hadn't needed the link to know that. And it wasn't Harry's fault that even now, being dead, Dumbledore could always make him seethe. Could always remind him of his childhood.

Tom paused before walking in, pulling in deep breaths until he was relaxed and calm enough to unclench his fists. Once beside the bed he undressed and crawled in, peeling back the covers until Harry was exposed to him. Harry's eyes were closed but Tom knew he was only feigning sleep. He ran a hand down his lover's side, watching eyelids flicker from the contact. Tom turned his young lover over onto his back before spreading out over him and pressing their lips together, coaxing Harry's mouth open with persistent sucking. The little minx shifted under him; legs falling open as his tongue darted out to meet his. Arms rose to wrap around Tom's back.

Even as he fell into Harry's open embrace, Tom was conflicted. Despite his behavior, Harry was willing to instantly forgive him. Easily able to embrace and allow his embrace. Harry was giving himself over again without a word. This... angered Tom. It made him furious. Not exactly at Harry, but... the brat's personality. If he'd been anyone else, if he had been his old self and was abusive, Harry would take it and think it was deserved as long as he thought he

was still loved. Tom mentally snarled at the nameless faceless other men who could have had Harry. Men who could have used that to their advantage and hurt his Harry. But then, all that wasn't exactly true. Harry had to completely trust someone to be this way with them. He had Harry's complete trust and he basically threw it back in his face.

"Why did you apologize to me in that office, brat?" he asked softly when Harry finally opened his darkened eyes. "You had no reason to apologize."

Harry buried his face against Tom's neck and tried desperately to keep from crying. Because of their link, he'd felt how horrible Tom was feeling about himself when they'd been in the Headmaster's office. Tom didn't want him around to help with his emotions and it hurt that Tom didn't trust him enough. It made Harry feel helpless and inadequate. He didn't feel like saying this as he was sure Tom would figure it out in time. So instead of answering, Harry tightened his arms around his husband and valiantly tried to push those feelings away; instead choosing to concentrate on the large hands caressing his back. He loved Tom's hands.

"I wish for you to answer me," Tom ordered, feeling the brat's eyelashes brushing rapidly against his throat. Harry answered by pressing his lips against Tom's throat. Usually the attempt at distraction would work, but not now. Not when Tom knew he was in the wrong and he'd hurt his young husband. "Don't make me go to the extreme to find out what I want to know," he threatened lowly.

Harry just clung tighter. Tom realized he had no right to demand answers from him when he had purposely sent Harry home so that he wouldn't have to answer the questions Harry wanted answered.

Tom sighed and dropped onto his back, tucking Harry against his side and keeping his little minx tight within his arms. "Go to sleep, Harry."

The following morning Harry was once again awake when Tom rose to get ready before the sun rose. But this time he remained quiet and pretended to be asleep, burrowing back under the covers when the shower turned off. He lay in his cocoon, listening to Tom ready for the day, smiling slightly at thinking of all the things Tom did before heading out for 'work'. He held his breath when he heard Tom come back from the wardrobe. He didn't know how he knew, but he could sense that Tom was standing at the end of the bed, staring at the mound that was his sleeping body.

And then he heard Tom hissing quietly to the snake laying at the end of the bed. **Watch over him today, pet.**

Of course I will, Master.

When the door closed softly behind his husband, Harry finally closed his eyes and felt the mattress shifting as Nagini uncoiled and then slithered up to him. Moments later she had slithered under the covers with him, her eyes gleaming at him even in the darkness.

Young master, you should go back to sleep. You'll feel better when you've had proper rest. You didn't sleep very much last night.

How could you know that?

Your body heat, young master.

Harry sighed and ran his hand over the top of her head. **I wish you'd call me Harry.**

I like calling you young master.

He smiled at that. **I had a nightmare last night and wasn't able to get back to sleep.**

You should have told Master. He would have stayed with you today.

No I don't think so. I'm... I'm going back to sleep now, Nagini.

Alright, young master. Sleep well.

Harry wasn't sure if he would actually be able to go back to sleep but he must have, for the next thing he knew he was being softly shaken and a low soothing voice was coaxing him awake.

"Tom?" he sat up right into Tom's arms. The Dark Lord was peering down at him worriedly. He looked pained. "Tom, what is it? Thought you were at work? Has something happened?"

"You had a nightmare." The question was a statement that had Harry looking over to glare at Nagini. She was curled up next to him, staring unblinkingly.

"Aren't you supposed to be out doing evil things?" he asked through gritted teeth.

Tom frowned. "You've repeatedly told me I have an army of minions to do my bidding. Answer me."

Harry sighed and dropped onto his back, staring up at the ceiling. "Yeah, I had a nightmare. So what?"

"This has to do with what happened last night," he said with a confidence that had Harry scowling. "Harry..."

Several silent minutes went by. With Harry lying on his back, frowning at the ceiling and Tom sitting over him, staring down at him. Finally Harry blew out a breath as his fingers curled into the sheets as he prepared to take a dive. "Why do you love me, Tom?"

Tom was speechless for a moment; the question having come out of nowhere, he thought. Then he grimaced. "It's too early for this. Haven't had my tea yet, Harry. I do not talk about feelings before tea."

"I've seen you watch me sometimes," Harry went on softly as if he hadn't heard any of that. "I've seen you studying me like I'm an experiment, a puzzle. Are you going to grow tired of me?"

Tom wondered where in hell all this had come from. Harry was usually a very confident man. But now that Tom was focused, he could see his husband looked pained; his eyes brimming with fear, his voice was wavering as he continued to avoid eye contact.

"I don't understand," Harry went on before he could say anything. "I'm too soft. Too emotional... how can someone like you love me? I don't have anything to offer you."

Tom pulled back in astonishment and bewilderment. "Nothing to offer..." his voice was incredulous but Harry clearly didn't notice the tone.

Harry was pale and shaking now, his fingers clutching the sheets tightly with white knuckled fists. Something was wrong here. Tom narrowed his eyes and leaned closer. "Does this have to do with what happened last night?" he asked again. "Or does this have to do with the war? With what I've been doing? Are you regretting-"

"No!" Harry nearly growled, frustrated. "I want to be here with you. I will never regret being with you."

Tom pulled Harry up into a sitting position, holding the young wizard close to his chest. Only a little tension left him when Harry's arms wrapped around his neck. Tom ran a thumb along Harry's jaw. "What brought this on?" he asked softly.

Harry dropped his head against his shoulder. "The nightmare."

"What was the nightmare about?"

"About us. You were... well you were the ruler of the entire world," he murmured. He was able to laugh a little when Tom made a pleased sound. "And I was... just in the background. I had no uses. For you or anyone else. I was a piece of furniture and people whispered in my ear about how it was only a matter of time before you got rid of me. They kept saying someone like you needed better; someone you could trust. They said I was only good enough to be your whore. That's all I'm good for-"

Having heard more than enough, especially when Harry's voice was drowning with unshed tears, Tom yanked his head back by his hair and sealed their mouths together to douse the disgusting nonsense until Harry was lax against him again and seemed to have no more words.

When he pulled away, Tom glared fiercely. "Now that the war has turned in my favor you really expect me to toss you aside, stupid child?"

"It's just... I'm dependent on you, Tom," he whispered. "I really am. This last week I couldn't concentrate at all until you came home or we were together..."

"That was mostly my fault. I was sending on purpose."

Harry frowned and shook his head. "It's not just that. You don't have to purposely do anything."

Tom cupped his face. "Harry, that dependency is mutual. I assure you."

"But you being you, you'll start to hate it. Resenting-

"I know myself, Harry. If I don't resent it now, I never will. I went after you, didn't I? I was the instigator of this relationship. I knew what I was getting into. I wasn't sure at the time that I would fall in love with you but I knew I would always need you with me. Suppose falling in love was a bonus..." Tom grimaced and turned away. "Where's my tea?" he bellowed at no one in particular.

A house elf immediately appeared with a tray of breakfast for two. Tom turned back to Harry. "It was only a nightmare. Only a nightmare. Besides," Tom went on with a decidedly evil glint in his eye. One in which had Harry's heart racing and blood buzzing pleasantly, "you are too powerful for me to just cast you aside. Far too powerful, clever, and beautiful. I meant what I said, Harry. You'll be beside me always... now," he hurried on, clearing his throat, "who was this whisperer who called my little minx a whore?"

A slow relieved smile crossed Harry's face. When Tom spoke to him with the obvious love and affection in his voice, Harry couldn't help but be relieved and he suddenly felt very silly for doubting the workings of their relationship. "It was just a dream, Tom."

Tom's eyes narrowed. "Who?"

"Well... for one, there was Zabini-

"Zabini," Tom growled, sliding away with an ugly expression on his face.

"Weren't you supposed to kill him? What was that spell you put on him?"

"I'd forgotten all about that little whelp!"

"You have been busy," Harry responded in a soothing voice, trying to placate his seething husband. "Are you going to tell me about the spell you cursed him with at *Meracus*?" Tom hissed as he strode for the door, muttering under his breath. "Tom?"

The Dark Lord paused in the doorway to turn and look at him. "I turned him into a whore. By this time, he's probably been fucked by all of Britain and happy to have been done so. The spell would have had him asking for it from anyone and everyone. Both genders... maybe even creatures such as goblins."

"Tom, that's... evil. Sick," Harry whispered, slightly pleased and horrified to be so.

Tom smirked at hearing his tone. "I'll return sometime later today. I won't be out late. Get some more rest," he ordered.

When he was gone, Harry fell back against the pillow, smiling slightly when Nagini moved to return to his place against his side. As he caressed her scales, Harry murmured to himself, "I feel sorry for Zabini but he never should have angered the Dark Lord. As a Slytherin he should have known better than to speak his mind like that in front of a stranger."

A few hours later within Hogwarts, Draco lay over Fred's lap, lightly dozing while Fred's fingers were pleasantly carding through his hair. George and also Luna lay on the rug in front of their couch studying an advanced spell book and readying for the raid that would take place in two days. Luna had been invited by Draco so she wouldn't have to be stuck in her own room alone.

Suddenly Draco sat upright and clutched his wrist, hissing under his breath. He quickly stood and hopped over George.

"Draco?"

"The Dark Lord calls. I'll be back," he said as he reached for the door. When it was opened he was surprised to find his father on the other side in the process of lifting a fist to knock.

"Father?"

"Only the Inner Circle has been called," Lucius said as he lowered his hand, looking over Draco's shoulder to see the twins and Luna inside watching curiously. "I've come to warn you so that you can prepare to see something you may not like, son. I don't want your feelings on the matter to be advertised to the rest of the Inner Circle."

"I understand."

Lucius nodded and again looked over Draco's shoulder. "The Dark Lord has said you two may come as well, should you wish. As long as your masks are in place. Most of the Inner Circle know about you two, but he still wants the hoods and masks worn. It's not mandatory for you to come, however."

The twins jumped up. "We'll come!"

"May I come, Mr. Malfoy?"

All four wizards turned to gaze at Luna, who stood smiling serenely with her hands folded in front of her.

"Someone is about to die, Miss Lovegood. Are you sure you want to see?"

Draco frowned. Why had his father come to prepare him over a death? It's not as if he had never seen the Dark Lord torture and kill someone before.

"Yes, I would still like to come."

"Very well."

Luna nodded and walked across the sitting room to grab her mask off the table. She slipped it on as well as the hood of her cloak just as the twins were doing.

"Father," Draco started as they followed after the elder blond, "who is it?"

"Someone once very close to you. Someone who insulted both the Dark Lord and Belial at one point not too long ago."

"Zabini," Draco murmured, instantly recalling Harry describing what had happened with Blaise at *Meracus* when the Dark Lord appeared polyjuiced. Harry had already warned Draco that the Dark Lord planned to kill Blaise and Draco had gotten over the fact very quickly. Zabini called Harry a slut right in front of his husband.

"Yes, that's right," Lucius murmured, looking closely at his son's profile.

Draco shrugged. "I'm actually surprised he isn't dead yet."

Lucius didn't lead them into the Great Hall like Draco thought he would. Instead they travelled down to the dungeons, well away from where the students were being held and into a larger room where all of the Inner Circle could congregated with more room to spare. Zabini was already inside with most of the called Death Eaters already around him in a circle. Zabini had been forced onto his knees and was staring up at the wizard standing directly in front of him with wide terrified eyes. The Dark Lord's face was not covered by the usual hood he wore.

Draco wrinkled his nose as he and his father took their positions beside Severus, with the twins and Luna squeezing in next to them. Zabini looked a disgrace. He looked like he hadn't slept in a year; his hair was in disarray, as were his clothes. His usually fine robes were rumpled and dirty and Draco spotted dirt under his fingernails. It was a disgusting display.

"By now you realize the kind of monumental mistake you have made, Zabini," the Dark Lord hissed. "I did promise to kill you and unfortunately for you the day has come."

"I-I d-didn't know that was you," Zabini rasped.

"It doesn't matter. You will die now. Not only did you insult Draco, the son of one of my most important and trusted followers, but you also insulted my husband. I am not known for forgiveness, Zabini."

"What did he say about our Draco?" George hissed quietly from beside Draco.

Zabini whimpered when the Dark Lord raised his wand. His eyes darting away and to those of the circle he could see, eyes landing on Draco after a moment. Draco sneered and lifted his chin.

"I thought Slytherins were loyal," he spat at Draco. "You're going to sit there and watch me die with your nose stuck in the air. All for a Gryffindor you've been friends with for less than a year?"

"You were never a true friend, Zabini," drawled Draco. "Harry would die for me. He nearly died for Theo. Would you have done the same? No, you wouldn't. Ever," he answered his own question. "Don't try to plead to me again. I'll ignore you."

"Draco!"

The blond did not answer.

"Am I really to die just for speaking the truth? Potter is a slut! You too!"

Draco shook his head, utterly sick for ever having been friends with someone as stupid as Zabini. Just after this thought, someone shouted out a curse. Surprisingly it wasn't the Dark Lord who cast the cutting hex that sliced Zabini's chest wide open. It had been one of the twins. Both of them broke rank from the circle and pounced on Zabini and looked to be trying to kill him with their fists only. They hadn't known exactly why Zabini was here until that very moment and they of course took exception to their Harry and Draco being referred to as sluts. Looking over, Draco was unsurprised to find the Dark Lord smirking; apparently not bothered by the fact Fred and George were going to kill Zabini with their hands and feet.

The others of the Inner Circle looked just as amused as the Dark Lord and even Loony was smiling... but he conceded. That witch was always smiling. Aunt Bella was hopping up and down, clapping her hands and cackling madly over the shouts of rage pouring from Draco's fiancés' lips.

The Dark Lord chuckled darkly and turned to Lucius and Severus. "Seems I won't need to waste the energy to send an Avada his way. I had begun to suspect the twins leaned more to the Dark than Harry."

Lucius smirked and Severus drawled, "perhaps we should Imperio all of our enemies to insult Harry and Draco. We wouldn't need to kill anyone ever again. The idiots would do it for us."

The twins continued to beat on Zabini and looked in no way tired of doing so, shouting out as they did so. For a time at the beginning, Tom considered whether or not he should send the visions of these proceedings to Harry through their link. He'd already been sending his emotions, which would no doubt leave his lovely Harry lusty and wanton by the time he returned. In the end, he decided to send the visions for Harry probably expected that as well. Now he wondered how his husband was reacting to two of his very best friends killing a wizard with their bare hands.

By the time it was finished, Voldemort did not cast the killing curse. He allowed Blaise Zabini to lie on the ground and bleed with those of the Inner Circle standing around him, socializing, talking pleasantly amongst each other as if there wasn't a dying wizard below their feet. Zabini died from blood loss and a punctured lung; dying from injuries only inflicted by the Weasley twins, who didn't seem all that pained at having caused a death.

Just as soon as he knew Zabini was no more, Lord Voldemort left, eager to return home. He strode into his quarters and straight across the sitting room to the bedchamber. He threw the door open and the moment he stepped inside, the body on the bed writhed and let out a shuddering gasp in reaction to the Dark Lord's magic lashing out to play with his. It was twice as potent now that they were in the same room.

Harry was already flushed, slick with sweat and want; one hand curling into the silk sheets, while the other... the Dark Lord sucked in a delighted breath. The other hand was between his husbands legs. Harry was fingering himself, stretching and using what looked like his own cum to wet himself if the glistening white substance on his stomach was anything to go by.

"Tom," he moaned. "You... you bas-bastard, what did you do to me? Ah, gods! Hands, Tom! I need your hands on me!"

Said bastard moved straight to the bed to stand at the end, eyeing the naked flesh spread out for him, red eyes narrowed in appreciation. Voldemort hissed and Harry anticipated the pounce. The pounce from a powerful dark wizard drenched in black robes with excited gleaming eyes. Voldemort's hands were rough against his flesh; delightfully rough and calloused, lips claimed his in a brutal kiss. At once his hand was slapped away and a hard cock was thrust roughly into him; all within seconds. All before Harry could even comprehend what was happening.

Voldemort dropped his forehead against Harry's collar bone with a pleased hiss as he thrust in as far as he could go and then pulling out and doing it over and over again.

"Is this some sort of Dark magic?" Harry gasped, arching his back as invitation for more.

Voldemort grinned menacingly before biting Harry's neck. "No, little minx. This is us. Our magic. Together. You could probably do the same to me if you tried."

Harry might have responded, but before he could get a chance, his husband pulled out and roughly turned him over, jerking him up onto his hands and knees before he slammed back into Harry's tight heat without another second passing. The pace was brutal. The Dark Lord tore into Harry as if he'd been thinking about doing it all day, which he probably had. Harry's head hung low, mouth open in a silent scream that seemed to go on forever as he was thoroughly fucked into the headboard.

Two figures stumbled out of the Leaky Cauldron and into Diagon Alley around ten in the evening. Two wizards finely dressed and both obviously having consumed one too many pints or bottles of wine. The shorter of the two clung tightly to the taller wizard, laughing delightedly at whatever the taller of the two had just whispered in his ear while the wizard's hand travelled down to cup his shorter companion's arse.

There were eyes all over the Alley, but only one pair was stationed as a watch out for the Leaky portal and those eyes were directed on the two who didn't seem to notice the subdued atmosphere Diagon Alley had fallen under since the Dark Lord had taken Hogwarts and the Ministry. These two wizards were completely into each other. The watcher studied the couple with narrowed eyes as the taller pressed the shorter against the nearest flat surface, which happened to be the door to a closed shop.

"We'll be late," the one pressed against the door said, laughing as he raised his hands to push his fingers into the taller man's hair.

"Plenty of time yet," the other murmured, his voice deep and silky, nearly too low for the watcher to hear. The shorter man gasped in delight as the words were whispered into his ear and a thigh was forced between his legs.

The watcher was just about ready to dismiss the two for what they were; an inebriated couple who were too drunk to realize it wasn't at all that safe to be out this late and during these precarious times. But since this was the most boring job he'd ever been given, the watcher continued to study them as he'd rather watch a couple of drunk horny wizards than do nothing but stare at an empty street.

"You're drunk," giggled the shorter wizard.

"You as well, Harry," the other purred against his lover's neck.

The watcher, Dedalus Diggle, straightened in the shadows under the disillusionment charm, his eyes narrowed at hearing the name. He couldn't possibly be lucky enough to have caught Harry Potter. Not only the Chosen One, but his spouse, as that wizard was wanted by the Order and Scrimgeour as well. Diggle figured they wanted Potter's new spouse as a way to control Potter. Diggle shrugged. Whatever worked. These were hard desperate times.

Diggle looked up and down the street, but couldn't see any of his fellow watchers. He wanted a closer look before he put up a signal. It wouldn't do to be mistaken. Creeping along the shadows, he managed to cross the street without being sighted. But the couple was so into each other, they probably wouldn't have noticed a dragon if it suddenly landed right next to them.

"What do you plan to do?" the shorter wizard asked, his words slurred, the one the other had called Harry. "Plan to fuck me here against the door?"

Diggle huffed to himself. He couldn't see either of their faces.

"The thought has merit," the bigger man whispered.

"All my thoughts have merit."

His partner gave a derisive snort and then a very negative retort to that. The shorter one hissed something unintelligible and pushed his partner back before walking around him to proceed down the road. The other caught up, stopping the younger- Diggle figured the shorter was younger as his voice sounded like he was younger- where the light spilled down from a lit lamp.

"All your thoughts have merit," the taller purred and Diggle thought he was only agreeing so that he could get his hands back on his partner's arse again. It worked.

Diggle held his breath. The two were bathed in light now and he would be able to see their faces... just as soon as they stopped sucking face.

When the taller man pulled away, he lifted his partner's chin with his finger. Diggle let out a breath as Harry Potter's face was lit by the light, his eyes and smile dazed. He needed to alert the others!

Harry closed his eyes and breathed in Tom's scent. He smelt brilliant; all spice and musky and heavenly. "We've been spotted," he whispered into his lover's mouth.

"We were spotted minutes ago, little minx. He's only now just made you," Tom smirked and pulled away, saying in a louder voice, "don't want to be late. Let's go."

"Do I need to keep acting like I'm drunk?" Harry whispered.

"No. We'll want to hurry to the twins' flat before someone decides it would be easier to stun us here and now before calling back up. I want to be inside the flat before the show starts."

Tom and Harry soon arrived outside of the twins' door and knocked, knowing full well only Draco and Hermione was inside, and yet no one would open the door. The flat was supposed to look empty to the outside world.

Harry huffed and loudly proclaimed, "they said they'd be here! Fuck this, let's go in and wait for them!" and with that, he brandished his wand and unlocked the door, pulling his husband inside with him.

"Thank Merlin!" Hermione exclaimed the moment the door was shut and Harry had lit the flat. "I was afraid they would have tried to attack you two before you got here."

"Afraid for me, Hermione? How nice," Tom smirked at her, chuckling when she blushed.

Harry swatted his arm. "Stop teasing her."

"I was being serious. A muggleborn was worried for the Dark Lord. Makes me feel warm and fuzzy inside," Tom deadpanned.

Harry fell down laughing at his words. "You must have had... loads of tea!" he gasped between bouts of giggles. Tom cracked a smile.

"Did he just make a joke?" Hermione hissed to Draco in bewilderment. Harry laughed louder while Draco settled on snickering.

Tom walked over and with an eye roll, helped Harry to his feet. "You two return home, get dressed and meet with the others," Tom instructed after he pressed his wand against Draco's Dark Mark to alert the others that it was time to gather. "And remember, be nice to your enforcers, Harry, Hermione," he warned with a strict look at the both of them, but mostly at Harry as he knew Hermione would be nothing but polite if maybe too enthusiastic to work with the enforcers. "Don't be long."

"Course we won't be long," Harry answered, going to stand beside Hermione and fingering his dagger necklace and wrapping an arm around his friend's waist. "Can't let you have all the fun."

Harry and Hermione travelled back to their home and quickly donned their robes and masks, Hermione giggling while she put her cloak and mask on.

"Why are you in such a good mood?" he asked curiously.

"Honestly Harry, you aren't the only one going stir crazy here. There's only so much exercise one can get from reading. And the practice duels are all well and good, but I'm ready for some of the real thing."

"Yeah, that and you're the only one in this huge castle who isn't having sex. Must be so frustrating," he replied ducking out of the way of her swinging fist.

"You should be nice to me," she murmured as she grabbed his arm, preparing the location in her mind, "seeing as the Dark Lord gave me order over your enforcers."

"You're not in charge of them! You're just the liaison! In the end they take my orders. I give the orders to you and you give it to them!"

"Ever played the muggle game 'telephone', Harry? Sometimes words get mixed up, left out, changed by the time it reaches the intended persons' ear."

Harry smirked and prepared for Hermione's side along Apparition. "You're a little bit evil."

A minute later, they appeared within a wide field where they were to meet the enforcers and the rest of their neutrals. Harry immediately spotted his neutrals and gaped at the amount of other silvers separated from them. "He said a handful of enforcers. A handful! This doesn't look like a handful!"

In fact what Tom considered a handful of enforcers actually turned out to be twenty. Twenty vampires whom the lord of the vampires recruited after Tom requested them. The vampires, as he quickly learned, were natives of Britain and most of them had volunteered for this, which pleased Harry. He and Hermione spent only a few minutes going around, making sure to smile and shake all of their hands, and making it plain they were happy for the vampires' company and help. The two planned to get to know the vampires better, but it would have to wait until after this little ambush was finished.

As they prepared to head to Hogsmeade, Harry reminded everyone that from then on, they were to assume their aliases. They had been told to pick fake names days ago, as no one was to address anyone by their birth names while wearing their masks.

"In a moment, we will be joined by another group of wizards and witches. You will know them as allies by the silver masks they wear," Lucius Malfoy told the large number of Death Eaters before him where they were all standing within the Three Broomsticks.

"Masks? Are they Death Eaters?" someone called out. "Is that one with the gold mask a Death Eater?"

"They are not Death Eaters nor are they completely Dark, but they are allies. And the one with the Gold is their leader. This is all our Lord wishes us to know at this time. You will not attack the silver masks. And should one of you even so much as think about doing the Gold harm... The Dark Lord will see to you personally and your body will never be found." After this announcement, Lucius had to raise a hand to quiet the group down. "One more thing. You will not under any circumstances seek to uncover the gold and silver masks' identities. Our Lord wants their identities to remain secret."

Lucius had no doubt there would be more questions about Belial and the neutrals, but fortunately it was then he heard a number of pops outside in the street. He led the Death Eaters out and marched straight to Belial where they shook hands.

"Lucius," greeted Belial, his voice pitched low. The calm of his voice was offset by the excitement in his eyes. Lucius smirked.

"Belial," he said in return greeting, amusement in his tone. Green eyes rolled before turning to study the Death Eaters and his group. The white and silver masks were studying each other carefully. Belial had brought with him Hermione (Penth, which was short for Penthesilea), the twins (Fred was Agni and George was Rudra), Luna (who'd chosen the name Nevan), and Bill (Dante). Harry thought it amusing all the Weasleys had chosen Demon names of some sort.

There were other silvers who were not on this little expedition. The twins had recruited Lee Jordan and Oliver Wood and Hermione had been able to recruit the Patil twins. Those two had not appreciated it one bit that their entire family had been targeted by the Order. However those last four were not in on this raid because Harry didn't know of their skills and he didn't want to be responsible for them in case they didn't have what it took to fight against the Order. Not now.

"The Mark burns," Lucius murmured. "Time to go."

"Right. After you and your lot."

"How very brave, sending us first," Lucius murmured with a feigned sneer, knowing full well the moment Belial was in Diagon Alley, he would bypass everyone until he was back beside his husband.

Belial grinned. "We don't have to be here, Lucius. We're here because we *want* to be. Isn't that right?" he asked his group. He was answered with a load of agreement. He turned back to Lucius. "You, on the other hand, have been ordered."

The silvers at his back grinned, and most of them, when they grinned, displayed fangs. Lucius quirked a brow. "Vampires?"

Belial smirked while the Death Eaters behind Lucius shifted uncomfortably.

The Silvers appeared inside the Leaky Cauldron, which was all but deserted, save for Tom the bartender, who was cowered down behind the bar. Belial leaned over the bar and easily blocked the disarming spell the shaking wizard threw at him.

"No worries, Tom. Your property will not be harmed and neither will you as long as you stay within the Cauldron. Understand?"

Tom rapidly nodded. Belial flashed a malicious grin before spinning around and striding straight through the tavern and quickly tapping out the pattern that would open the wall. The moment they stepped out into the Alley, the group could hear sounds of battle going on further down the road and figured Lucius' group had engaged with those of the resistance. Harry sincerely hoped all of the Order had been called for this.

Belial paused and turned back to his group. "Look, we're not really here to kill people. Only incapacitate. Does everyone understand?" There was a round of agreement. "Right, and my three redheaded demons? You take care of your family if they're here."

"We know what to do, Belial," the eldest Weasley sibling answered.

"Great! Let's go! And remember... this isn't for the Dark or the Light. This is for us so try to have fun!"

The four directly behind him; Penth, the twins, and Nevan snickered at that, while the vampires grinned widely. Dante sighed and shook his head, though a smile played around his lips.

Moments later, the Silvers were slinking through the shadows towards the twins shop, towards the sounds of battle. The vampires seeming to disappear completely amidst the darkened areas. Belial was willing to bet some of them were already on location, they could move so fast. A vampire's speed was an awesome thing. Too bad a person had to become living death in order to gain the strengths vampires had.

"Belial, look out!"

A hand landed on his head and pushed him down just as a streak of red light passed over his head. The twin who rescued him let out a whoosh of relieved breath just as Belial looked up sharply to where the curse had come from. He grinned when he spotted and recognized the attacker. An Auror stood about ten feet away, smirking at them.

Belial stood and pretended to dust off lent. "Penth?"

Penthesilea stepped forth, smirking. "Oh yes. He's mine. Do you want to play with me, Auror *Andy*?" recognition entered the Auror's eyes and his grin grew wider.

"What did he think he was doing?" Fred- Agni- hissed, glaring at Charleston as they rushed passed and the Auror and Penth were circling each other before the witch shot a curse her crush's way. Andrew ducked and sent a curse right back, though it was obviously aimed yards away from where Penth stood.

Belial snickered. "He has to keep up pretenses. Besides, it was only a stupefy he sent my way."

Soon they came upon the main fighting party, a large group of Death Eaters fighting a group of wizards and witches nearly the same size. *Has Shackbolt, Moody, and Scrimgeour ordered every one of their remaining forces here just to capture me? Foolish*, Belial thought with a shake of his head.

Scrimgeour. He was someone else Belial couldn't stand. Before Harry left the war and practically disappeared, Rufus Scrimgeour had been one of the most aggravating persons in his life. Begging him to endorse the Ministry, trying to put a good light on the government that was having no luck with Voldemort. And when he refused, Scrimgeour got ugly. Not only that, but the Order wasn't the only faction to start harassing innocent people. Scrimgeour

had promised people positive results in regards to the war when he'd been appointed Minister and when he didn't get immediate success against the Dark, the Minister had started arresting innocent people to make it look like he was doing something useful. It was no wonder the Order went barmy without Dumbledore around.

When they arrived and Belial noticed his husband was alright on his own, battling five wizards without breaking a sweat, Belial hung out in the shadows, eyes travelling over the battle, looking for one specific person. Finally he found him, trying to sneak up on Voldemort. Trying to sneak up and do harm to his husband. Belial narrowed his eyes, fingering his wand; rifling through his mind for the perfect spell. He figured it was about time he gave his husband a gift that wasn't considered baked goods. When he'd thought of what he wanted to do, Belial acted.

Voldemort smirked as he simultaneously shot down three of his current attackers, killing two at the same time and knocking out the third. And even as he did that, the Dark Lord felt the Minister's presence creeping up from behind him. Voldemort had to admit, that even though Scrimgeour was a very sore pain in his arse, the wizard was far more competent than the previous Ministers. At least Scrimgeour wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty.

The Dark Lord slashed his wand through the air, killing the third downed wizard, hissing out another curse that surrounded the last two in a murky blue smoke, suffocating them in seconds before spinning around to face the Minister. Only Scrimgeour didn't seem to be ready for him. The minister was deathly pale, standing still as a statue, arm raised and wand pointed at him. However he wasn't moving. Seemed frozen.

"Here you are, Lord Voldemort. A present," Belial purred, stepping out from behind the Minister whose bodily veins began to turn blue with what looked to be poison.

Voldemort raised his wand and instantly hissed out the curse that would end the Minister's life. He then had to stop from kissing his husband right here in front of ally and foe. But it was hard, especially since Belial was standing there, smirking down at the Minister's body.

"You took my fun away," he said instead. "I was looking forward to battling him. He had the potential to be a great duel. These others are sorry excuses for witches and wizards."

"That's a bit harsh," Belial responded, twirling his wand over his fingers as his gaze passed over the dwindling crowd. Many of the enemy had been captured, taken to their knees. Others had run away when they realized more Death Eaters arrived with back up of some kind- including vampires- and Harry Potter was nowhere to be found.

"Belial! Come on, let's go catch some!" someone called out. Draco. Belial grinned and looked up at his husband, who nodded. The fighters would have to run some ways away before they could Apparate as Voldemort had raised an anti-Apparition ward around the place the moment he knew Belial and his group had come in.

"You sure? I need to protect you if you need it."

Voldemort sneered and shoved him away. "Dark Lord," he reminded. "No protection needed."

Belial laughed and raced after his best mate, sensing he had two Silvers on his tail. But then he was suddenly cut off from Drake when a wizard appeared right in front of him, a spell of sickly green color already leaving his wand. Belial's breath stuttered in his chest as he dropped, praying to all the gods in the sky the two behind him jumped out of the way even as he screamed at them to do so while sending a wandless hex at the opposing wizards' legs and unfortunately missing in his panic.

There were several shouts behind him, two from the twins- which had Harry breathing in relief that they hadn't been hit by Moody's Killing curse- and another. A deep guttural outraged shout from his husband, who apparently had seen what had just happened and how close he had become to almost losing his life. Belial pushed it all away as he stood, eyeing the old wizard who faced off with him. Neither moved to make another shot but they were both ready. Moody grimaced in a way that was supposed to be an anticipatory smile. Belial smirked. This wizard's blood would be on his hands by the time they were done.

"Go on," he told his twin demons. "Go help Malfoy. Moody's mine," he growled.

"Belial," one twin hissed. "We can't do that. The Dark Lord told us-"

"Do it! Go!" Belial pushed the closest one away. "*Expelliarmus!*" he shouted when one of Moody's eyes turned to the passing twins, obviously ready to curse one of them. Moody's wand shot into his hand and Belial instantly broke it in half, throwing it over his shoulder.

Moody's entire attention returned back to him immediately and he already had another wand in hand.

"Another wand? How clever," Belial sneered, even though he'd already known Moody had more than one wand on him at all times. And then he felt a presence at his back and Moody's eyes narrowed into slits. "Leave him to me, Voldemort."

"He shot the Killing Curse at you," the Dark Lord hissed, a possessive hand placed on his hip.

"Yeah? He's not the only one. I'm no stranger to ducking AK's am I, Voldie? Don't worry. This one's going down. By me. Please step back. Your lovely presence is distracting."

"Voldie?" the Dark Lord hissed in his ear. Belial grinned. The hand on his hip squeezed pleasantly before dropping away and the Darkest of auras backed away from him.

"I know your voice..." Moody growled. "But I can't place it. Who are you to be so close to the Dark Lord?"

"Why? Jealous?" Belial laughed. "It's not really important at the moment. *Defodio!*"

"*Protego!*" Moody bellowed and quickly followed with, "*diffindo!*"

Belial twisted away from the cutting curse, brow raised. "That's a bit Dark for the likes of you, isn't it?"

"You're one to talk! Have you any idea what *defodio* does to a body, boy?"

Belial ignored that and sneered. "Oh, but wait, Moody. You like to slaughter children, so it would probably seem like second nature. Should I start calling you a Death Eater?"

Enraged, Moody bellowed out another curse. One in which Harry easily defended against, laughing that he'd been able to get under the surly old Auror's skin. His laughter cut off however when Moody shot diffindo again and actually caught him before he could duck away.

Harry snarled in outrage, aiming and crying out, "*duro! Exosso!*"

Moody dodged the first curse, which would have turned his legs to stone, but Belial had anticipated that and how Moody would move away, and caught him with the second curse, vanishing all the bones in his wand arm and Moody's wand dropped from his limp fingers.

Belial hissed out a breath, pressing his palm against his arm, feeling the blood pouring between his fingers. "You move fast, Moody. For an old thing... dodge this!" he'd quickly straightened from his pained slouch, surprising the old Auror, and hissed out a curse, one he'd learned within the Parsel tome.

"Potter!" moody yelled, suddenly comprehending his opponent was a Parselmouth. Moody's surprise gave Belial pleasant chills as he finished the spell. Quickly waving his wand around, drenching himself in a cold blue light that quickly changed into orange. He dodged around Moody to stand behind, pointing his wand to the side of the building, at a side door that was made of wood and bellowing out another curse while at the same time releasing the spell that surrounded him. Belial ducked as his spell and the door exploded out towards the old wizard, the wood morphing into large shards. Spears of wood merged with the fire and shot at and into Moody before the old bastard to counteract. But Belial wasn't finished. He quickly backed up and shouted, "*expulso*," at the walls that exploded out upon Moody, burying him under rubble that would not douse the unnatural flames.

Belial released a relieved breath when he heard Moody's shouts of pain and rage, smirking when those shrieks cut off as the fire ate away at him. "That's for all the innocents you killed; all the children," he spat at the smoking rubble, once again moving to cover the gaping wound on his arm, hissing as the pressure he applied shot spikes of pain up and down his arm.

"He took down Moody," someone said from a few feet away. An awed murmur ran through the ranks of Death Eaters. Harry smiled grimly.

"He also surprised and incapacitated Scrimgeour, giving our Lord time to kill the Minister. How many wizards do you know have been able to sneak upon Rufus Scrimgeour?"

Harry turned to find Lucius smirking at him after that announcement. He glared at the blond man. "Did anyone get Kingsley?"

"He did not come," Voldemort murmured as he approached him, eyes sweeping over his body, looking for any more wounds beside the obvious one on his arm.

"Suppose that was smart of them. I mean, if they had all come then there was a chance they would all be wiped out at one time and place, even if they hadn't planned on it being a trap."

"You've impressed them, little minx," Voldemort whispered when they were nearly chest to chest. "Do you want to show yourself?"

Belial shifted, looking beyond his husband to the hushed group of Death Eaters and then pulled his gaze back to meet gleaming red. "No. Being Belial is fun!"

Chapter Seventeen

The Black Bunny

Chapter Seventeen

Belial stepped back from the Dark Lord and just as Voldemort was about to demand he return his lovely arse back to the castle to be healed, Draco and the twins arrived. Rushing back with worried looks and dragging with them half a dozen unconscious prisoners being levitated behind.

"Here you are, sir," Agni huffed as he and his brother dropped the prisoners off at the Dark Lord's feet. "More fun for you!"

The twins then spun around and threw their arms around Belial, clutching at him tightly, apparently having been as scared as Voldemort had when they saw that Killing curse heading straight for Harry's chest. After a moment of hesitation Draco joined in, his face guilt flushed.

"Oi! Get off," Belial laughed and tried shoving them away with his good arm. "I'm fine! Still breathing. See?"

"You three! Off now!" Penth shrieked as she finally caught up to what was going on and pushed through the crowd with the help of three vampires leading her, pushing Death Eaters out of her way. "GET OFF HIM!"

Belial pulled in a deep relieved breath when Agni, Rudra, and Draco immediately did as she said, because frankly Hermione under any name could be frightening when she used that voice. But then he was being strangled again when she threw her arms around his neck, squeezing the life out of him.

"Merlin!" she breathed, "Merlin! They were all talking about how Moody had come close to bringing the one in the Gold down with the Killing Curse."

"A little help here," Belial choked.

"He's injured, Penthesilea," Voldemort announced. That did the trick. Penth jumped back as if burned, her eyes travelling over him until they landed on the arm he was clutching, her breath sucking in upon seeing the blood still dribbling past his white knuckled fingers.

"You need to be healed now!" she shouted at him. "What are you still doing here? Let's go!"

Belial grinned at her and then turned to the Dark Lord. "We better go then. Can't let myself bleed to death, eh?" he asked with a grin.

"I do not find it so amusing," Voldemort murmured lowly.

"Right, well..." he looked at the Dark Lord expectantly as his Silvers came to stand in a group behind him.

Voldemort's red eyes narrowed when Belial said nothing else and yet remained where he was, staring at him. "Is there something you need, Belial?" he questioned through clenched teeth, wanting nothing more than to get Harry to a bloody healer as the blood flow didn't seem to be stopping. But Belial was just standing there, draining blood, happy as you please. Like a right idiot.

"Aren't you going to thank us?" Belial asked with a lopsided grin. "We helped out extraordinarily and we deserve thanks. If we do not get thanks," he stepped forward until their chests were touching and he whispered, "I may not show appreciation for everything you do any more. You'd hate that, wouldn't you, *Lord Voldemort*? We should receive thanks."

Two Silvers directly at his back snickered and nodded while Penth tisked and shook her head. Belial could hear Voldemort grinding his teeth. The Death Eaters surrounding them- at least the ones who didn't know Belial's actual identity- stood silently, wondering what curse their Lord was about to send the Gold's way.

"Lucius," Voldemort hissed. "Thank the Silvers."

Belial snickered quietly. Of course Voldemort wouldn't sink so low as to thank anyone for any kind of help. Not personally anyway. And he knew the Dark Lord was only complying- even if indirectly- because this whole thing had been Belial's idea and now Voldemort didn't have Moody or Scrimgeour to worry about anymore.

Lucius stepped up to stand beside his Lord. "We thank you for your assistance," he said to Belial and the other Silvers, bowing his head like a true gentleman.

Belial smiled broadly and lifted his uninjured arm to give Voldemort's shoulder a friendly pat that was rough enough to budge the Dark Lord from his position, knocking him into his blond lieutenant. "No need for thanks! We're glad to be of assistance. And we might be happy to help again... maybe." Belial winked at the Dark Lord and then Apparated away. His group following seconds after along with Draco.

"The impudence!" Voldemort hissed under his breath.

Lucius turned away slightly so that his Lord would not see the amused smirk on his face. Bellatrix wasn't so silent with her amusement and she cackled away. She was really starting to adore Harry Riddle. Oh if only she had the nerve to tease the Dark Lord in such ways.

Belial and his small band of human neutrals returned to the castle along with Draco, as that had been the laid out plan before the raid had begun and the vampires had dispersed once the others returned to the castle. Once there, Draco and a few lower Death Eaters who remained behind at Hogwarts helped the Silvers pass the wards. After which, Belial had immediately gone to the suite of rooms belonging to the Headmaster; the rooms Voldemort would use whenever he needed to stay overnight at the school. Draco quickly sought out Severus, and the two had returned with Madam Pomfrey as well as Voldemort. After many threats, the Dark Lord instructed the school matron to help Severus heal the deep gash on Belial's arm.

"Will you stop nagging," Belial hissed lowly at the black cloaked wizard hovering over a trembling Madam Pomfrey's shoulder. He suspected Voldemort even had his wand poking into Pomfrey's back. "Help me get my shirt off."

When the twins shot forward to do it, the Dark Lord glared at them and moved around the witch to do so himself, causing Belial to smirk. He was especially amused by the relief and bemusement crossing Madam Pomfrey's face as Voldemort bent over the bed to help him carefully remove the outer robes and his t-shirt in order to display his wound to her. Pomfrey noticed with no small amount of shock the gentleness in Voldemort's actions as he tried his best not to jostle the one called Belial's arm. And when Belial's arm was fully bare to her, the Dark Lord was back to pointing his wand—at her face.

"Quit it, Voldemort! She can't possibly work to the best of her abilities if your wand is pointed in her face!"

Madam Pomfrey frowned to herself. She knew that voice.

Voldemort slowly lowered his wand. "If she so much as thinks about using that wand for anything other than healing..." he hissed threateningly.

"This isn't a battle field," Pomfrey whispered shakily. "I will do what my life's purpose is. You came to me for healing. That is what I intend to do."

Severus agreed, knowing Madam Pomfrey well. "She'll do her job without prejudice."

"See?" Belial smiled at the Dark Lord. "Calm down and let her work."

Pomfrey leaned over Belial after taking a deep breath, casting a narrowed look at Severus and a wary look at the Dark Lord who stood beside the bed. Penth, Nevan, Drake, Dante, and the twins were also in the room, standing back against the wall and watching the proceedings. Watching with rising amusement as the Dark Lord fussed over Belial like a mother hen. The twins thought it hilarious.

"Now then, let's see... Severus, if you please," she murmured, grasping Belial's left forearm to raise his arm a bit and pointing her wand at the long deep gash as Severus poured a purple smoking potion into it. Belial hissed out a breath at the slow slight movement, but mostly it was because of the wound-cleansing potion Snape poured on with a fucking smirk on his face.

"Woman," Voldemort growled threateningly.

"It was Severus' potion," Belial hissed. "Can't you just stand there quietly for a moment?"

Pomfrey sucked in a breath, looking between Belial and Voldemort; amazed the Dark Lord wasn't torturing the bold soul on the bed. But no torture followed the snapped statement and Pomfrey cleared her mind of everything except healing the nasty gash on the young man's arm. It was easy to tell he was a young man. Both from his voice and the firmness of the skin beneath her fingers.

After she cast the spell and watched it carefully to make sure it was mending the young man's torn flesh, Pomfrey was suddenly more aware of the skin beneath her fingers. Belial tensed as her fingers moved over the inside of his forearm, as her eyes darted down to the small scar her fingers had discovered. Poppy's eyes widened upon seeing that scar and her eyes flew to the eyes peering at her from under his gold mask. Now, after seeing that healed burned flesh, she could identify the resigned green eyes staring back at her. Any hope for the Light she had harbored was suddenly dashed. Those eyes, however, were silently pleading for her to remain silent. She didn't know why but Poppy followed the silent order.

"You should be fine now," she murmured, pulling her hand and wand away from him. He nodded at her before looking away. "Severus will give you a blood-replenishing potion and you'll be in top form after that."

"Thank you, Madam Pomfrey," Belial softly murmured.

The Dark Lord straightened. "Severus, return her."

"Yes, my Lord," Severus replied, bowing and then taking Madam Pomfrey by the arm.

Belial's gaze moved across the room to Penth as Madam Pomfrey stiffly walked out of the room with Severus. Belial nodded to Penth and she nodded back before hurrying after. Moments later, they heard Penth cry out, "*Obliviate!*"

Belial slumped back against the pillow, grabbing his mask and perching it atop his head. The others did the same. "She figured out who I was."

Tom didn't speak until after he handed over the blood potion Severus had left on the bedside table. "How?"

Harry swallowed the potion with a grimace and then looked to his now healed arm; holding out his forearm, he caressed a barely there scar on the inside. "She treated this at the beginning of my fourth year. The scar would have been worse had I not come to her once I got to school that year."

"Where did you say you acquired that again?"

Harry smiled wryly at his husband. "I never told you where I got it, Tom."

Tom scowled at having been caught. He had his suspicions, but now he wanted solid confirmation. "Now would be a good time to do so." Here he didn't miss the look passing between Harry and the twins.

"Bill, did you take care of your parents?"

"Yeah. Soon as I saw them, they were bound and Portkeyed away."

"Good."

"Excuse me," Voldemort hissed. "I want to know where you acquired that particular scar, Harry."

"I'm starved!" Harry suddenly cried. "Who's hungry?"

Fred raised a hand. "I am!"

"Me too!"

"I'm not!" Hermione exclaimed, coming over to hop up onto Harry's bed and everyone pointedly ignored the annoyed Dark Lord. "I want to know how you brought down Moody! A lot of the Death Eaters were talking about how you constructed a wall of fire around yourself and then shot it at Moody, while at the same time following through with two more spells! How'd you do that, Harry?"

"And Scrimgeour," Draco prompted. "How'd you get Scrimgeour?"

Harry frowned. "Tom did that."

Tom decided to forgive them this once for ignoring his questions. "Only because he was incapacitated by whatever it was you did." **The Snake Strike?** he inquired of the only spell he could think of from the book he'd given Harry that fit the outcome description.

Harry grinned, nodding. "Brilliant bit of magic, that!"

Tom's eyes narrowed on his face, clearly impressed and very pleased... in a horny kind of way. Harry cleared his throat and looked back at his friends.

"And what about Moody?" Draco demanded eagerly.

Harry frowned. "I hadn't gone there tonight to kill someone, but he had it coming. He shot that spell at me before he really even knew who he was shooting at." He then turned pensive. "Hope our vampire friends didn't get insulted when I drove burning stakes through Moody. Hope they didn't see that as a message of some sort."

Tom laughed lowly. "Only you would worry about something like that and I assure you, if they caught any kind of message, it would have been the fact that you do have the easy ability to kill them should they think of backstabbing you... Now all of you leave," he demanded coldly.

As soon as they were alone, Tom approached to stand beside the bed. Harry grinned at him. "Going to have your wicked way with me now?"

"No."

Harry pouted. "And why not?"

Tom pulled up the nearest chair and dropped down into it. He leaned forward, pressing his elbows against his knees, staring out across the room. Harry sat up, swinging his legs around until he was facing Tom. "It really wasn't that bad."

"That spell was a breath away from striking you," Tom hissed, lifting his eyes to Harry's emerald orbs. "A breath!"

"But it didn't hit me. Dodged it, didn't I? Quick reflexes, you know. From years of Quidditch," he said, grinning at the fond memories of playing against cheating Slytherins, "and dodging Death Eaters almost my entire life. Besides, I made Moody pay for it."

"You did, yes," Tom murmured, pleasure swarming across their link.

Harry smiled and slid off the bed to perch himself firmly in his husband's lap. Twisting until his legs hung over the side of Tom's thighs so that he could cross them while he wrapped arms around his husband's neck, pulling Tom's hood off and away from his face. "The Snake Strike—Genius! It gave me a thrill," he whispered as lips pressed against his neck.

"And from what I saw of the effects," Tom murmured against his neck, "perfectly executed."

As were the other spells Harry had thrown at Moody. The bodily circle of fire for instance had been particularly breathtaking, as was the speed with which Harry had cast each and every one of those difficult spells whilst injured. Clearly, his husband was gifted. But of course he'd already known that as he trained the brat as much as he could. It was just different watching Harry use darker more powerful spells, and against someone other than himself. Against someone of Moody's caliber also. "Did you enjoy yourself?"

Harry pulled back so that they were eye to eye. "Did it look as if I enjoyed it?"

Tom flashed a heart stopping grin. "As a matter of fact, yes."

"That was so much fun. I think I want to start joining in on Death Eater meetings. And I can sit on your lap just like this because that would be the best seat in the house, and smile winningly at all your minions as they wonder why you haven't cursed the disrespectful Gold to death yet."

"If you do that then we might as well announce our relationship to all the Death Eaters. You have proven your worth tonight, even if you hadn't meant to." Harry made a sound of agreement as he rubbed their cheeks together. Harry wasn't really concerned with anything except feeling Tom's stubble caressing his face. "After your performance tonight... yes, I think it's time you made an appearance at an official meeting. Though we'll continue to keep your identity secret. And no joining in on Death Eater activities."

"Wicked. Didn't think I would have the patience to last longer."

Tom rolled his eyes. "And they say I have no patience."

"You don't."

"You had best behave, Harry."

Harry grinned and dropped his head onto Tom's shoulder. "Can I make a grand entrance? The looks on everyone's faces would be brilliant!"

"Did you hear me? Do you ever listen to me?" Tom asked in exasperation. "I want you to behave."

Harry didn't answer in the way he wanted. Though that wasn't really a surprise. Harry jumped off his lap with a laugh and turned to face him. There was mischief in those eyes. "I have something for you!"

Tom sighed and stood. "Well? Give it here then."

Harry's smile turned down a bit, and his gaze started to dart back and forth as if he were thinking, looking for a solution to something. "Err... it's at home. Are we going home?"

"I had intended for us to remain here tonight." Harry pulled a pout and Tom rolled his eyes. "I can fix the wards to allow one of our house elves through."

"Perfect! You go do that and I'm going to bathe."

Well after that announcement, Tom didn't look too keen on leaving. Only he did when Harry kept nagging him about it.

Harry had a quick shower and went back into the bedroom to rummage through Tom's wardrobe, looking for something to wear. He was surprised Tom hadn't returned yet but he figured his husband had probably run into a problem on the way or back from tweaking the wards.

He found a pair of black silk pajama bottoms, put those on and then covered himself with Tom's night robe before leaving the bedroom, wand clutched in hand. With a purposeful stride, Harry descended the steps down from the tower and into the Headmaster's office from a side door that was hidden into the wall beside the desk.

Once inside the office Harry pulled up a chair and set it a few feet back, facing Dumbledore's portrait. He walked forward and manually pulled off the white sheet covering the former Headmaster's frame before going back to sit down. Scrunching up his brows, Harry thought back to the spell Tom had used to animate the portrait. Once he had the incantation and the wand movements firmly in mind, he raised his wand and mimicked the intricate movements Tom had done, calling out, "*enervate stasis!*"

It took him a few tries before he got it perfectly right.

"Harry, my boy!" Dumbledore greeted jovially, making Harry smile brightly. "How are you this fine..."

"It's very late at night, Headmaster."

"Is it? Well then, how are you this fine evening?"

"Fairly good."

"And Tom?"

"He's good. Off now messing with the wards... Dumbledore, I wanted to ask you a question. I've actually been wondering about this for a long time."

Dumbledore sat forward in his chair, realizing Harry had something heavy on his mind. "You know you can come to me about anything. Even after all that's happened."

Harry bit his lip, a lump suddenly in his throat. "You- you aren't disgusted with me? For being with Tom?"

Dumbledore smiled gently at him. "Harry you should know by now there is hardly anything in the world that could disgust me. You must have had your reasons and after watching you with Tom, I can see you follow him with your heart. And that, Harry my boy, makes all the difference."

Harry laughed weakly. "You always did say love was the key."

"I like to think love can conquer all," Dumbledore replied, a bit sadly. His eyes looking off as if looking into the past.

"Dumbledore, I wanted to know...if you had still been alive, would you have condoned the Slytherin attack?"

"Whatever do you mean, Harry?"

"Surely McGonagall told you about the Slytherin massacre, Dumbledore," a low rich voice answered from across the room. Harry looked over his shoulder towards the door, while Dumbledore's eyes lifted from Harry to where the Dark Lord stood poised upon the threshold. The old wizard's eyes lost some of the twinkle as he returned his gaze back to Harry.

"Yes. Yes, she did tell me about that. Horrible. Now that did disgust me, Tom," he replied, his sharp gaze returning to Tom just as the dark wizard came to stand behind his sitting husband.

Harry pulled in a sharp breath. It looked like Dumbledore thought Tom and the Death Eaters were to blame. "It wasn't him, Headmaster. It wasn't a Death Eater attack. Surely you can piece together all the facts."

"I wasn't given all that much information. Minerva was so distraught at the time that she could only give me an abridged version, sobbing out the words. She hasn't spoken of it since."

"I wonder if she knew," Harry murmured to himself while Tom glared up at the portrait.

"It should have been obvious, old man. Only Slytherins were targeted. I would never order such an attack," Tom hissed. "When have I or my Death Eaters ever targeted students?" Dumbledore looked pointedly at Harry. "A special case and you know it," he muttered, a hand dropping upon Harry's shoulder.

"No student from any other house was hurt," Harry explained softly. "The Order. It was the Order—and Moody. The Order played like Death Eaters and killed those kids, Dumbledore. I was dating a Slytherin at the time. Theodore Nott. And I was befriending other Slytherins. By that time I was already leaning towards neutral. After you died, I was basically a prisoner

wherever I went. The Order didn't like I was seeing a Slytherin. Didn't like I was trying to live my life the way I wanted, even just a little bit. I would have happily done what they wanted of me if only they'd have given me a little freedom. If they would treat me like a person instead of nothing but a tool... They killed Theodore right in front of me, attacked the Slytherins in broad daylight during a Hogsmeade weekend. Suppose I was the reason the Order attacked the Slytherins."

"Harry, stop that nonsense," Tom said harshly, his hand squeezing his young husband's slumped shoulder. "You are not to blame."

"Tom is correct," Dumbledore agreed. "And I never, in all my years, would have ever agreed to such an attack on mere children! I cannot fathom..." Dumbledore looked indescribably sad, shaking his head mournfully. "I never knew about your association with Mr. Nott. Had I, I would have given you my blessings. Such an acquaintance could have been good for school unity."

That brought a smile to Harry's face while Tom groaned, muttering, "not this again." Apparently Dumbledore had been campaigning for school unity even back in Tom's time.

Harry lifted his eyes from the floor and flashed a smile. "You'll be happy to know Draco is my best mate now and he's willingly marrying the Weasley twins."

The shock coloring Dumbledore's face made him laugh and even Tom snorted in amusement.

"Willingly, you say?"

"Yeah. Shocking, isn't it? Though it probably helps that the twins have changed their hair color a bit. Which was shocking also, that they would change just for Drake, but hey," Harry tipped his head back to look up into Tom's face. "Love changes us all."

Tom scowled at Harry, sneered at Dumbledore, and then quickly departed to disappear through the doorway leading up to the tower rooms.

Harry was still snickering when Dumbledore cut through his amusement, saying, "you've done a fine job, my boy."

"Err... what? What do you mean? I've basically joined the enemy... or at least, your enemy."

Dumbledore's eyes seemed to brighten and twinkle even more. He didn't explain himself, instead he yawned and told Harry he'd better get to bed as he leaned back into his chair, closing those damnable twinkling eyes. Though there was still a sadness to the smile on his lips that Harry thought was for the knowledge of what the Order had been up to.

"Right," Harry mumbled, standing. "Good night, Headmaster."

"Pleasant dreams, Harry."

Harry left the Headmaster's office, bewildered and yet content, satisfied knowing Dumbledore wouldn't and hadn't condoned such a thing as the Slytherin massacre.

When he entered the bedroom, Tom was in the process of undressing. Harry expected to get a lecture about talking to Dumbledore without permission, but Tom didn't even bring it up at all.

Tom paused in his undressing and glared at Harry as the young raven sat on the edge of the bed, eyeing Tom's fingers and waiting a little impatiently to be shone his husband's toned chest. "Voldie?"

Harry's grin was lopsided again and totally unconcerned. "What does it matter? He's dead. At least it wasn't Bunnymort. That almost slipped out."

Tom sighed in resignation, knowing he was never going to get away from Harry's teasing at the worst of times.

"Did you fix the wards?" Harry asked.

"Yes, you may call one of our House elves now."

Harry grinned and grabbed Tom's arm and began dragging him out of the bedroom. "You're probably tired but I want to show you this first."

Tom allowed himself to be led out into the sitting room just beyond the bedroom and was too busy eyeing his husband's body to complain about being pulled away from the bed. Harry was dressed only in black silk pajama bottoms that barely managed to hang on to his hip bones. With heat he realized those pants were his.

Harry led him over to a table and called for Tally. "Bring Master's victory cake," he instructed the moment she appeared. Tally bowed and instantly vanished again.

A minute later, Tom was staring down at the table where the house elf had returned and placed Harry's chocolate cake. Words were scrawled upon the top of the cake with white icing. The message read: *Congratulations! You did something right!* Tom lifted his eyes from the cake to meet the smirking visage of his husband.

"One day-"

Harry grinned. "No you won't."

"I should," he growled.

Harry laughed and dropped his elbows to the table. "You should thank me for making you this fantastic cake. You've finally won something."

Tom's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Won you, did I not?"

"I was more charmed than won, Tom."

"Same thing."

Harry hummed and dragged his finger along the base of the chocolate cake, gathering the whipped chocolate fudge crème and lifting it to his mouth, well aware Tom's eyes were fixated on his parted lips as they wrapped around his finger. "Mmm, it's very good."

He rounded the table to stand in front of Tom and immediately plastered himself against his husband, relishing in Tom's hard thighs and chest pressing against his. And Tom's very hard cock pressing against his lower stomach. Harry reached over to catch more icing onto his fingers before pressing them against Tom's lips.

"I want a villa," he breathed as Tom sucked in the digits, a moan traveling around his fingers. "On... on the beach somewhere. Where I can lay out nude and soak up the sun. Where we can go for proper holidays, *a proper honeymoon*, and no one will find us... it has to have a state of the art kitchen as well."

"Of course," Tom replied after releasing Harry's finger from his mouth.

"Is that a yes?" Harry asked as his fingers traveled down to caress the bulge pressing against the front of Tom's trousers.

"The villa? Yes. Find it and I will buy it for you."

"How very accommodating of you," Harry murmured, raising his hand and touching the buttons on Tom's shirt. The buttons that had yet to be undone all the way. That had to be immediately rectified.

Tom leaned into Harry, stretching a hand out behind his husband for more icing before bringing it back to coat Harry's lips. When Harry's tongue peaked out to lick it away, Tom grabbed his chin in a firm hold. "Not for you."

Harry's breath caught in his throat as Tom's free hand slid against his back, long fingers caressing his skin as he leaned forward to lick the frosting off his top lip, while his shifted and pressed a thigh in between Harry's legs, rubbing against his young husband's erection.

"I was very impressed tonight with you and your lot," Tom said once Harry's lips had been ravished; the icing having been licked and sucked off, leaving Harry's lips swollen, red, and wet.

"We did pose..." Harry trailed off as Tom's tongue started lavishing his neck with undivided attention. He tipped his head back, pressing into Tom as hands slipped below the waist band of his pants. "Um... what were we talking bout? Oh yeah! We posed a huge distraction against the enemy, especially my vampires—oh, Merlin—giving *you and your lot* an easier time of disarming the enemy—Tom, I can't concentrate when you're touching me like that!"

"Then don't concentrate," Tom murmured huskily against Harry's mouth as he walked his young husband back into their bedroom, back towards the bed. "You can resume thinking later."

"Where are you going, cub?"

Remus rolled his eyes as he paused on his way down the corridor. "Seems like you're stalking me."

Fenrir smirked. "Perhaps. I did ask you a question just now."

"What do you want?"

"I wish to speak with you. So now that I've answered your question, will you answer mine?"

"If you must know..."

"Yes," Fenrir prodded with a slow smile and coming to stand beside the younger werewolf, noticing Remus' nostrils flaring at his proximity.

"I was told the Gold is here and was injured. I want to go see him before I return home." With that said, Remus turned and continued on down the corridor. He didn't get far ahead before Fenrir grabbed his arm, halting his way. Remus openly snarled at him and Fenrir's grip turned painful.

"Sometimes you try my patience, cub," Fenrir growled.

"Only sometimes? Must be losing my touch!" Remus snapped back.

They stood there for silent moments, staring at each other until finally Fenrir chuckled and lightened the force of his grip, though he still kept Remus' arm under hand. "I do like you, Remus. Haven't a clue why." Remus blinked rapidly and then turned his face away. Fenrir caught the light flushing of his cheeks and his grin turned roguish. "First, my stubborn cub, you cannot visit Belial now. And second, I have need to speak with you in private."

Remus turned back to him, a frown on his face. Fenrir noticed Remus looked younger now. In better health than when he'd visited him that first time in his disgraceful flat. Unconsciously he leaned forward. The cub's scent seemed even healthier and it was a *very* pleasant scent.

"Why can't I see him? He was hurt," Remus said softly, eyes widening at Fenrir's close proximity.

"He's in the Headmaster suit, Remus. And he's with our Lord. It's been clear to those who know about *them*, that after any type of battle or torture session, there's only one thing on our Lord's mind after such things. I'm very certain they would both feel none too kindly about an interruption at this moment in time."

"Oh."

"So now that you know, you will follow me."

"Ask nicely," Remus said, wrenching his arm completely free. "I am not your dog to just follow at your command. You forget you are not my master."

Remus suddenly found himself thrown against the hard stone wall with a snarling Alpha in his face. He wasn't as angry by the brutal move as he should have been; probably because he'd half expected it. But he was surprised that he felt a sort of excitement at having pissed off Fenrir so much that he'd dropped the charming facade.

Okay, not exactly true. He hated to admit it, but he knew the charming bit wasn't false, but sometimes that part about Fenrir annoyed him. Remus was used to thinking about Greyback as nothing more than a mindless monster and now having Fenrir being charming and handsome all the time disconcerted him. Remus continuously floundered in the elder werewolf's presence and he didn't like it one bit. He didn't but Moony (blast him!) seemed to eat it up.

"What do you want from me, Fenrir?" he whispered hoarsely. "There's no need to keep at me. I've joined. There's no reason we have to ever speak to one another again. Your mission is complete."

"The mission, the one the Dark Lord gave me is complete, yes. But not my personal mission. Not the mission I gave myself the moment I left your flat that first time. I do not plan to leave you alone. Best get used to it."

"Why? Why can't you leave me be?"

The hand that was pressing against his chest, the one hand keeping him against the wall, pulled back slightly, letting Remus breathe easier. "I told you," Fenrir murmured. "You need a pack, Remus. You cannot deny it after having been with mine. Had I known you'd never been introduced—you were so small, a child. Had I known your parents hadn't... they should have made sure you integrated. I gave them specific instructions!"

"Why?" Remus sneered. "Would it have made a bloody difference?"

"You know it would. It always does, for werewolves. After the last full moon you can no longer deny. Tell me you aren't looking forward to the next full moon with my pack, cub. Tell me and I will leave you be."

Remus slumped against the wall, staring at the hand loosely clutching his robes. "I wish you would leave me alone."

"I'm not going to," Fenrir remarked and backed away from him. "Will you follow me now?"

Since he couldn't see Harry at the moment, Remus decided he would. But only because he had nothing better to do.

Fenrir took him to Hogsmeade. To the Three Broomsticks. Remus was flabbergasted to see it was full of Death Eaters. Rosmerta was doing wonderful business. She was a bit harried looking, but as Remus sat at the table in silence with Fenrir and they nursed a glass of Firewhiskey in silence, he observed the tavern and noticed not one Death Eater gave her trouble. His bemusement must have shone on his face, for Fenrir chuckled.

"We're not uncivilized, Remus."

"Yeah, sure. Now that you've all gotten your way."

"You must remember. Our way is now your way. It's the better way. The Dark Lord's reign will make the lives of *our* kind better."

"You needn't continue to try and win me. I've already got the Mark on my arm."

Fenrir frowned at that, but said no more on it. They lapsed into another silence, one in which enabled Remus to hear the other muted conversations around them. The talk of the taverns was the ambush that had taken place earlier. The ambush he hadn't been ordered to go on. And most of the talk had to do with the Gold wizard, his silver allies, and how they had contributed to the fight. After a few more minutes, his eyes grew wide as he continued to listen until finally his dumbstruck gaze swiveled back to Fenrir, who was sitting there smirking at him.

"He took Moody down? And Scrimgeour?"

"It all depends upon what you mean by 'took down' when speaking of the late Minister." Remus only continued to gape at him. "The Gold incapacitated the Minister and handed him over to the Dark Lord to be killed. It was a lovely touching scene," the werewolf explained with a smirk. "Belial utilized some type of magic I've never seen before... I expect it was Parsel magic and he easily snuck up behind the Minister without Scrimgeour knowing—though I suppose Scrimgeour had been too focused on getting near our Lord to notice he wasn't the only one sneaking about in that alley. Do you want to hear more, Remus?"

Remus found himself nodding eagerly despite his shock. "Y-yes."

Fenrir flashed a smile. "Very well, where was I? Oh yes... so Belial sneaks upon the late Minister just as Scrimgeour dares to raise his wand against our Lord. You've already seen how devoted Belial is to our Lord, so you can imagine the rage that invoked within the Gold. I was lucky enough to have been relatively nearby to see and feel the astounding surge of magic engulfing the Gold as he raised his wand to Scrimgeour's back. What do you suppose came out the tip of Belial's wand, Remus?"

Remus rolled his eyes. He was quickly learning Fenrir had a flare for the dramatic. "A spell, obviously."

"Really, cub. Sometimes you are no fun."

"I'm not here for your amusement."

"Keep telling yourself that. So then I watched and was astounded when instead of a simple stream of light it was instead a great burst of light that left his wand and morphed into a shape, quite like a Patronus, but something more deadly."

Remus unconsciously leaned towards the elder werewolf, completely entranced by the tale. "What form was it?"

"A hooded cobra. Glowing eerie silver and gold, fangs bared. Venom dripped from the fangs. It struck the late Minister's back before Scrimgeour could react to the Dark magic swirling around."

"So..." Remus went on to figure, "Belial's spell acted just like a poisonous snake bite."

Fenrir nodded. "Yes. I could even see Scrimgeour's veins turning a nasty death color and could smell the death on him. Helpless for our Master. And Moody," Fenrir shrugged, "the old man tried to kill Belial. Nearly succeeded with a surprise Killing curse. It was kill or be killed with that duel and luckily, or rather expertly, Belial won."

Remus didn't know how to respond to what he'd heard. But he knew Harry had had a bone to pick with Moody ever since the Slytherin massacres so he wasn't half as shocked to learn how Moody had died and by whom. Remus sighed and downed the rest of his drink. Seems he'd missed an interesting battle.

"You didn't bring me here to gossip about the raid tonight, Fenrir," he said after a few moments when he became tired of Fenrir's unwavering stare. "What did you really want to speak to me about?"

Fenrir dropped his eyes to his glass, fingering the rim. It was not a nervous gesture. The werewolf was simply taking his time in formulating an answer. He'd already had a reason, Remus knew, so the younger werewolf wondered why Fenrir was taking his time trying to find the right way of saying what he wanted to say when he'd never had any consideration with what he said to Remus before.

Finally Fenrir raised his eyes; they were slightly narrowed and burning with indignation. "The conditions in which you live are unacceptable, Remus."

Remus was seconds away from snarling and vacating his seat in a dramatic manner. Something about Fenrir always managed to unleash his tightly buried temper. But he made himself remain calm by counting to thirty, and during that time he remembered snippets of conversations that had him realizing the elder werewolf wasn't trying to be insulting or trying to be a bastard. He remembered what he'd learned of the real Fenrir over the last month or so and suddenly recalled what Harry had told him that one time at Malfoy manor about what Fenrir was really about.

"Tom told me Fenrir finds all these orphans that have been turned by rogue werewolves. Young kids whose parents turn them out because they've become werewolves. He finds them on the streets and puts them in packs. Of course they join the Dark Lord, but they're never really mistreated. They get a home, plenty of food and clothes. They're educated and not left to feel as if no one wants them..."

Remus raised his eyes, staring at Fenrir, thinking about what the elder werewolf had said earlier in the castle to reinstate what Harry had told him. *"Had I known you'd never been introduced—you were so small, a child! Had I known your parents hadn't... they should have made sure you integrated. I gave specific instructions!"*

Remus felt a soft smile curving his lips. "That's the way things are for me, Fenrir. Always. There's nothing I can do about it right now."

A noise, like a growl, came from Fenrir's chest. Though the sound wasn't directed towards Remus. "Surely you can stay with your cub?"

"No," Remus replied firmly. "For one, his husband would most likely never allow it. Two, I would never be comfortable there. And lastly, I refuse to be a charity case. Thank you, but no thank you." He did have the money Sirius had left him, but Remus had decided he would never use it. Somehow it felt wrong, and he knew Sirius figured he would never use it even when he discovered it was there. Perhaps he could donate the money to young werewolf children in need.

"Fortunately for you, Remus, I have a very fine solution. You will lodge with me and I'll buy you new clothes as well. I hate the rags you wear. You need better."

Remus stared blankly back at Fenrir, having the urge to scream. "Did you not hear a word I said?" he finally murmured. "I said no thank you. I will not be a charity case. And why did you even mention Harry when you'd plan to insist I stay with you this whole time?"

Fenrir sighed as he stood, looking down at the indignant cub. "Are we going to have a battle about this? I'm fully prepared to wrestle you into submission, cub."

"If I lodge with you then I'll never be rid of you."

Fenrir flashed a grin and nodded.

"It will cause discord with the members of your pack," Remus tried again. "They were jealous of me enough the first time we met."

"The jealousy will end next time when I stop protecting you like an injured cub. When you prove yourself. Are you up for that, Remus?"

Remus may have always been a solitary werewolf, but he knew what was expected in packs and how the hierarchy went. He knew there were battles amongst the others of the pack for dominance while the Alpha looked on. He wondered if Fenrir expected him to be beaten by the others wolves just because he hadn't had a pack before. He would enjoy proving Fenrir wrong in that case. He may not be able to beat Fenrir in wolf battle, but he was pretty sure if any of the others challenged him, it wouldn't be impossible to beat them. Looking up, he grinned at the elder werewolf. "Perfectly fine."

"Splendid. Now back to what we were talking about before you tried changing the subject."

Knowing Fenrir wasn't going to drop it, Remus stood and thought he could at least stall. "Give me some time to think about it."

Instead of objections to that idea, Fenrir smiled a particularly twisted smile. "Very well. You return *home* and get some rest and think upon it."

Remus was very wary about the not so hidden amusement in Fenrir's voice. "Y-yes, alright. Good night, Fenrir."

"I'll see you very soon, cub," Fenrir told him as he walked away.

The moment he stepped into his small flat, Remus understood why Fenrir had sounded so amused. As he looked around the destroyed flat, at the broken splintered kitchen table, the shredded and de-stuffed couch, broken windows and the bed that seemed to have been broken down to mere dust particles, he thought he should be furious and disgusted with the elder werewolf for doing this, but Remus could only laugh. He could only stand in the center of what was left of his sitting room and laugh outrageously.

"Hmm, not the reaction I was anticipating," Fenrir said from behind, "but still gratifying."

"You... You're still a bastard!" Remus laughed out. "And when I calm down, I may try and kill you."

"No need to threaten. I saved all your personal items."

Thinking of his mother's journals, which were really the only things of value he owned beside his wand, Remus rounded on the Alpha. "Where are they? My mother's journals?"

Fenrir smirked. "I've taken the liberty of moving them to my home. Your new habitation."

"I hate you."

Tom sat straight up in bed; wide eyes darting down to the young man snuggled firmly against him, held there by his own arm. It suddenly occurred to him- and he didn't know why he hadn't thought of it before- but several times in the last two weeks, they'd made love and on a couple of those occasions, he'd completely forgotten about the contraceptive spells. Those were the times where his magic and Harry's lashed out, almost desperate to mingle and that was... troubling. If he'd forgotten the spells and their magic was so strong at those times, conception would be....

Tom pulled in a deep breath. He would not panic. Dark Lord's do not panic. So instead of panicking, Tom glared at his sleeping husband, convinced this had been part of Harry's plan all along. Making him so worked up that he would forget the spells; like that one time when he found Harry spread out on the bed, already slick and stretched and instantly ensnaring all of Tom's senses.

"You devious little minx!" Tom snapped. Harry sighed softly in his sleep, murmuring and turning more so that his chest was pressed completely against Tom's side. "With your bloody big green eyes," Tom continued to mutter quietly, "unruly hair, addicting aura, intoxicating scent... children."

He shuddered at the thought, and as gently as possible, extricated himself from Harry's arms and out of the bed. Throwing on a robe, Tom found himself leaving the bedchamber, descending the steps and was suddenly standing beneath Dumbledore's portrait.

"Wake up, old man," Tom muttered loudly, scowling at himself.

It took a few moments, but finally Dumbledore was awake and blinking owlishly down at him. "Tom?"

The Dark Lord took a deep breath. "Tell me I'm not fit to be a parent, Dumbledore," he ordered.

"You are not fit to be a parent," the old wizard parroted. Tom glared. Dumbledore appeared amused and sounded as if he hadn't meant that whole heartedly.

"You should really mean it," Tom hissed. "You don't want my progeny running around the world."

"Perhaps at one time I would have meant it, Tom. But now that you're under Harry's allure..."

"I am not! No such thing!"

Dumbledore remained silent a moment, studying the sullen Dark Lord as the younger wizard dropped down into the chair that was still placed in front of the portrait. "What have you done with the students here, Tom?"

The Dark Lord raised his gaze. "They're in groups within dungeon rooms."

"All of them?"

Tom nodded. "All except Lovegood. Harry wanted her set free. She's joined Harry's faction."

Dumbledore looked interested. "Harry's faction?"

"They're called the Silvers. A neutral group. From what Harry and Hermione have said, their main focus and goals are simply to be a nuisance to all sides. Mischief makers."

Dumbledore's eyes widened. "Did you just... Hermione, you said? Surely not Hermione Granger. The muggleborn? You know her enough to call her by her first name?"

Tom cleared his throat, fidgeting again. "I may have taken a liking to her... she's working for me, helping one of my campaigns. Rights for all magical creatures and beings. She's also Second-in-Command of the Silvers and currently living with Harry and me. She's a very bright and clever witch."

"Amazing, Tom."

"It's Harry's fault," he grumbled.

"And what of the staff? Minerva?"

"Still alive and also being kept here in the school."

"And the students?"

"Haven't killed any of them and I don't plan to. They are more useful alive."

"Have you been treating them well?"

Tom smirked. "I keep them tired and fearful... though they do get regular meals and such. Exercise once a day..." Tom dropped his eyes to the floor. "I'm no longer a monster."

He said it in such a mournful tone that Dumbledore laughed. Tom scowled. Why was he corresponding with Dumbledore again? Civilly? Why would he go to Dumbledore with this?

"What brought this parenting thing up, Tom?"

"Harry wants to have my children. He's been plotting... ever since I let on I wasn't comfortable with the idea."

"Hmm, yes. Once he gets an idea into his head, he never lets it go."

Tom's lips quirked into a smile. "This I know well."

"He's obviously good for you."

Tom looked up at the portrait. Dumbledore was amazed yet again at how youthful Tom looked now. He could once again see the young prodigy he'd once taught all those years ago before Tom had completely lost himself to his Dark Lord persona.

"My goals haven't changed, old man."

"No, I don't imagine they have. Once *you* get an idea into your head, *you* never let it go."

Tom snorted, but his lips once again turned upward. After a moment he shuddered. "Children are... messy, annoying little nuisances. I don't see how you could have spent most of your life teaching them."

"It's different when they are your own, Tom. And when I taught, I felt all the students were my own. Even you."

"I must have been a horrible disappointment," Tom replied derisively.

"Despite the horrible things you did, you were a splendid pupil, an extraordinary mind."

"And continue to be... Harry thinks I'm brilliant," he announced with no small amount of pride.

Once again, Dumbledore pinned him with a look. This one shrewd. This look could always make Tom uncomfortable. "Do you really love him, Tom? You aren't playing a game?"

"Does it look or sound like a game, Dumbledore?" he snapped back. "Do you think I'd actually publicly court him, even disguised, if it were only a game? I would not be here talking with you about this, if it were only a ruse." Tom sighed, running a hand through his disheveled brown hair. "I've wanted Harry since he was fourteen."

"My goodness, Tom! Had I known that..."

Tom rolled his eyes. "Yes, yes... your manipulations would run rampant. You would have trapped me some way."

"I don't know exactly what I would have done... why are you here talking to me?"

"Truthfully... because Harry respects you. I, grudgingly, respect you, and Harry values your opinions. Haven't a clue why," he added, just to be a prat. "And I assumed you would tell me never to reproduce and then I could tell Harry and he'd leave me alone about it."

"I'm afraid I cannot tell you that."

"Dumbledore, if you think having children is going to suddenly make me rethink dabbling in the Dark Arts, you are sadly mistaken."

"No, I don't think that. But you have Harry to help raise them. This means they would grow well rounded. Any offspring you two have will probably end up being powerful and more brilliant than even you. Wouldn't you think that's worth it?"

Tom narrowed his eyes. "What were you and Harry talking about before I stepped in on you two earlier this evening? Did he tell you to convince me?"

"No. We spoke of other things."

"Such as?"

"Love. And I let Harry know he could come to me for anything at anytime, no matter where his loyalties now lie."

"Firmly with me."

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes."

"I... I appreciate that, Dumbledore. For Harry."

Tom heard his name called and his gaze moved over to the open doorway leading up to the tower. Harry appeared, rubbing his eyes and yawning. He looked like he was barely awake, but at least he'd put on the pajama bottoms before coming down. Tom stood and met him, wrapping arms around his young husband to ward off the chill of the office.

"What are you doing?" Harry murmured sleepily against Tom's warm shoulder. "Not in bed."

"You're such a child," Tom whispered fondly. "Missing your teddy bear?" Harry nodded, smiling against his shoulder. "If you must know, I was talking with Dumbledore?"

Harry's head popped off his shoulder. "About what?"

"...things of no consequence. Just talking."

Green eyes widened. "Like... like a normal, civil conversation?"

Tom sighed and dropped his forehead onto the crown of Harry's head. He didn't want to admit he had been seeking advice, from Dumbledore of all people.

"Why yes, Harry! We were speaking quite civilly!" Dumbledore piped in. "Tom's quite the conversationalist when he isn't in the mind to kill."

Harry beamed up into his husband's face. "He is, isn't he?"

"Alright, that's enough," Tom murmured as he turned Harry and pressed him back towards the tower stairs. "Back to bed with you."

Harry paused on the threshold and turned to face him. "Kiss," he demanded of the Dark Lord.

Tom braced his arms against the doorway and leaned in; pressing his lips firmly against Harry's upturned ones. Having not a care that Dumbledore was awake, since the portrait ran parallel with the doorway and he couldn't possibly see them at that angle. Vaguely he realized Dumbledore was right. He had fallen and was firmly under Harry's allure. Bloody cheeky brat that he was.

Two days later, Harry was back at home with Hermione and the twins. They were lazing about at the moment. At least Harry and Hermione were, but the twins spent the time crying out their sorrows to understanding ears.

"Mate, its total bollocks! Auntie Bella says Mrs. Malfoy will never get over this thing," Fred mourned from where he was draped lazily across the divan in the parlor within the Dark Lord's castle. George made a mournful sort of hum, agreeing and despairing with his brother. Harry and Hermione sent them pitying looks.

"And Draco... our lovely Draco is hurting because he's afraid to go face his mother and he fears Mrs. Malfoy is going to have us assassinated."

"Not going to happen. Tom promised me you wouldn't die," Harry told them. When they looked at him in surprise, he shrugged. "He wants to keep me happy, which means you must stay alive, and also, he actually likes you three," he said, motioning to the twins and Hermione, "but you won't ever get him to admit that in a million years, so if I were you, I wouldn't try."

"He shows his affections during bouts of Crucios," George laughed. "I'm starting to get used to them now."

Harry raised a brow. Crucios were curses you just couldn't get used to no matter how many times you've been put under. Unless, "he must be taming them for you, like he does with me... that definitely means he likes you."

Hermione looked at them all, smiling smugly. "He's never put me under the Crucio."

"And that saddens us," said Fred with a pout. "It really does, Hermione. Just means you're too well behaved."

"Such a shame," George agreed. "You had such potential."

"Personally I think she only needs to get that hunky Auror to shag her brains out," was Harry's input. "Then she wouldn't be so uptight."

"Agreed," the twins chirped.

As the three wizards smirked devilishly at each other, Hermione's mouth was gaping while her face flushed a bright angry red. The three wizards were anticipating the explosion.

"I bet," Harry went on, seemingly ignoring his best friend's rising temper, "Auror *Andy* was fantasizing on the kind of lingerie you were wearing when you dueled the other night. That's probably why that farce duel didn't last very long and you were easily able to incapacitate him. Perhaps I should have Tom invite him over for dinner. He was planning on hosting a formal dinner here anyway for those of the Inner Circle; to express his pleasure with them. Once here, maybe *Andy* might have too much to drink or someone might slip something into his drink," here Harry smirked at the twins, "and Tom would invite him to stay here overnight because it wouldn't be right to send him off when he's in no condition to travel. And then... who knows what could happen."

Hermione's face couldn't get any redder by that point. And at the same time she opened her mouth to blast them with a verbal tirade, Tally popped in. She was the house elf he'd recruited to help with his and Draco's business. Tally was responsible with collecting all the orders and payments as they came in via owl and separating urgent orders from the orders that Harry could take his time on. Since she was bringing a letter to him now, he prepared himself for having to leave his friends to go and work on an order.

"Thank you, Tally," he said to the elf as he took the parchment.

"Anything for our young Master," the house elf replied. Harry barely refrained from groaning aloud. Tally was another Dobby in the making. And he hadn't even done anything to deserve it. It wasn't as if his coming had actually curbed Tom's need to kill the creatures at random when he went on a tantrum for whatever reason. Then again, Harry had forbidden Tom from killing Tally, as she was becoming invaluable.

When the elf had gone and Harry had read over the order, he quickly stood before Hermione could get back on track, and announced, "Narcissa needs a chocolate crème pie. For tonight. Better get on it.... She wants me to hand deliver it." It was also probably a trap of some sort. Harry was aware if it hadn't been for him, Draco would have never gotten together with the twins. They wouldn't have had any reason to socialize. Still, he thought this was a great opportunity. "Maybe I can talk to her about your engagement with Draco... See you later."

Draco arrived later in the day, along with his father, the Dark Lord, and Severus. Immediately the twins perked up upon seeing their blond. "Where's Harry?" Draco asked before the Dark Lord could.

"Your mother ordered a pie this morning and requested it to be hand delivered today. He also said something about talking to her about our engagement."

Draco stopped mid stride on his way to where they sat, and the older wizards did the same. Lucius' eyes widened and swiveled around to the Dark Lord. Draco raced out of the room while Voldemort Apparated from the spot. Lucius followed after his son, his gait just barely a walk.

"What's going on?" Fred asked, standing up.

Snape shook his head and sneered at them. "You three are absolute idiots to have let him go there. If it weren't for Harry, would you two have pursued Draco? Isn't that how you three met? Because of Harry? The moment Narcissa sees him this is what is going to run through her mind. Her reaction to seeing him face to face right now will probably be worse than if you two were to go and try to talk to her."

Hermione and the twins paled. They all tried to leave as well, but Severus stopped them. "You can't help him now. The Dark Lord will take care of it."

"But this is our fault!" George exclaimed.

Severus sneered. "Yes, it is. And his too. He should have known better."

Tom used the tracking charm to Apparate straight into Malfoy Manor, though it didn't take him to Harry's exact location which was a drawback. Lucius had too many wards around the ancient manor which interfered with the tracking charm.

"Where is your Mistress?" Tom asked when a House elf immediately appeared in front of him.

"I-In her rooms, Lord Master."

Tom swept passed the creature and took the stairs three at a time, his wand gripped tightly in his hand. Narcissa must know that if she dared to attack Harry, her life was forfeit. She must know that. She wouldn't dare hurt the only person he loved and trusted completely. He sincerely hoped her complex wasn't that mentally destroying.

Swiftly Tom made his way up and through the manor, coming to a stop right outside Narcissa's private sitting room. The door was ajar and he could hear the witch speaking. "And when Draco was seven..." Tom took it as a good sign that she was speaking normally and in a calm manner.

He leaned in to peer around the door frame, immediately spotting Narcissa sitting upon a cushioned chair, two wands held tightly in her lap. She was looking straight ahead at the sofa opposite of her, where Harry sat. Narcissa's gaze was solely on him with a deranged sort of intensity as she continued to speak softly. Tom breathed a mental sigh of relief. Harry didn't look injured. However he did seem to be sitting far too rigidly. Completely stiff.

The Dark Lord moved to the other side of the door where he could see Harry's face more clearly, raising a finger to tell Lucius and Draco not to approach further. Harry looked fine, save for the tired and wary look in his green eyes. Narcissa had him in a full body bind, he realized moments later. She'd bound him and made him sit there while she went on and on about Draco's childhood.

Tom narrowed his eyes and moved in. "And what do you plan to do to him once you've finished retelling Draco's life story, Narcissa?" he asked, walking into the room, keeping one eye on her wand and the other on Harry. "It's time to release him now."

"My Lord," Narcissa spoke softly, gripping her wand and raising it, though she dare not point it at him, "he's corrupted my child and I will not stand for it."

"Now is not the time to lose your mind, Narcissa. I will not hesitate to kill you and you know it. Should you hurt my husband, I will eradicate the Malfoy line. I will make your family pay, starting with your son. So choose your next actions wisely," he ended coldly.

Lucius hissed from somewhere behind him, "Draco, stop!"

The Malfoy heir ignored his father and hurried into the room, holding pieces of parchments within hand. Draco looked furious as he stormed up to his mother, blocking her view of Harry and dropped the parchments into his her lap. He straightened to his full height and peered down his nose at her. "It's my life, Mother," he drawled coldly. "Read them. Read them now. I will not have you dictating my life. I will be happy and you will need to accept it. There should be no blame cast only for me finding happiness. You're treating my relationship with the fiends like a curse when I see it as a blessing. So, please, Mother, read the letters."

As Narcissa dropped her gaze to the parchments in her lap, Tom waved his wand in Harry's direction. Harry didn't move even though he'd been released from the binding spell. Though instead of just his eyes, annoyance colored his entire face, and Tom was unsure why that was.

Narcissa picked up one of the many parchments, one of the many non explicit love letters Draco had received from Fred and George over the last few months. The parchments looked like they had been handled many times over. As soon as she started to read the first letter, Tom strode across the room and dragged Harry up, his eyes lit in fury that Harry would continue to just sit there.

Harry jerked his arm away from Tom as soon as they left the room. "I'm fine," he muttered and they strode down the hall, completely ignoring Lucius, leaving the Malfoy family up to their own devices. Harry figured it was in Draco's hands now to set his mother straight.

"What possessed you to come here?"

"I wanted to help!"

"You're the one always going on about how insane she gets over Draco! Surely you knew what would happen..."

Harry flushed, rubbing the back of his neck. "I thought... I thought I could get some words in before she started cursing me."

"Harry, really..."

Harry turned towards him; the sheepishness and annoyance gone, and smiled blindingly up at Tom. "Thanks for coming to save me."

"You're lucky I came home when I did."

"You were all cold and menacing. So sexy," Harry breathed with a shiver, speaking as if he hadn't heard Tom. "Threatening the Malfoy family like that. And then Draco came in and started talking all... manly and authoritative. Haven't ever heard him speaking in such a way with Narcissa before. I reckon that's what she needs. Draco has never acted like a *man* around her."

"Yes, that's true. He prefers to whine like a child far too much—why were you annoyed?" Tom asked suddenly as they stopped in front of the Floo.

"Err..."

"When I first arrived. You looked annoyed to see me."

"I was kind of annoyed that I had to be saved. Besides, not everybody is happy to see you all the time. Most times people tend to fear for their lives."

"As they should," Tom replied with a nod.

Harry grinned. "Whatever. I know the truth. I know you're nothing but a big softy."

"Harry, should you ever call me a big softy again, I will have to do something deplorable to you."

"That doesn't put me off at all."

Tom grinned roguishly and threw in some Floo powder for Harry. "You're twisted like that, my love."

Harry was whisked away home with a happy bright smile on his face.

Chapter Eighteen

The Black Bunny

Chapter Eighteen

Harry leaned against the wall, crossing arms over his chest and sighed impatiently. Currently he, the twins, and Hermione were waiting within a small bare and cold ante chamber, waiting for all the called Death Eaters to arrive and assemble. Voldemort had not yet arrived nor had Lucius, but Severus was already there, so Harry figured it would be safe enough to enter without his husband.

"Think he's going to be here tonight?" one of the twins asked.

"He has to be," Hermione answered. "It's a full meeting tonight. And since he's now in the Inner Circle, Draco's attendance is very mandatory. He's probably already inside."

Three days had gone by since the incident with Narcissa and neither he nor the twins had seen Draco since. Not that he was in trouble. He wasn't. It was just that Narcissa had a bit of a breakdown after Draco went all manly on her and Draco had to see to her after wards. At least that's what the owl the twins received said. Apparently there had been screaming and sobbing and a fainting spell and several vials of Calming Draught.

Five minutes later, Harry whipped out his wand to check the time with a tempus. "They should all be here by now. Ready?"

"We were born ready, mate," replied Fred and George.

Hermione pinned the three boys with stern looks. "You must behave. Remember, this is Voldemort's territory. We mustn't show him any disrespect here."

Harry raised a brow while the twins looked at her oddly. "Hermione," said Harry. "We never disrespect the Dark Lord. That's not what we're trying to do when we prank and tease him. And he knows it."

"I know Harry," she said as she and the twins drew on their masks and their aliases, "but here we are guests, to stand back and watch. Nothing more."

"Speak for yourself," Belial mumbled as he drew on his own mask. "Voldemort is going to announce our marriage, which means I'm not simply going to be a bystander. And if you think I'm going to behave, Hermione, then you've gone mental."

"Are you two done?" Agni asked, waving for Belial to take up the front position in front of the door. "We really want to get in and see our lovely Draco."

"How much do you want to bet they'll all bow before they realize it isn't the Dark Lord coming through?" he asked. The door they were about to go through was the one Voldemort

used. The Death Eaters always entered the room by way of the back door, unless they were entering the room along with the Dark Lord, but only high ranks were seen walking in with Voldemort.

"Ten galleons?" Rudra put forth.

Belial nodded and grasped the doorknob. As the door swung open, he shot a grin over his shoulder at the three behind him before walking in... and immediately laughed. Most of the Death Eaters were on their knees. They must have knelt the moment the door cracked open.

His laughter had heads snapping up in surprise at the sound and then the assembly rose to their feet, some scowling at the newcomers, others watching them with deeply hidden curiosity in their eyes. Belial caught sight of Drake, standing beside Severus and Bellatrix and he gave the blond a wink, though he didn't think his best mate saw it as his attention was on the two wizards following him.

He felt bad for them. It was the first time in days they had seen each other, and yet they couldn't really speak or touch now. They had to play a game until the meeting was over since no one knew who Rudra and Agni really were- with the exception of the Inner Circle and Remus. And they couldn't act like they knew each other well now because their intent to marry had been all over the *Prophet* recently.

Belial's smile abruptly disappeared when his eyes travelled over to the dais to find someone already upon it. Ignoring the silence of the room, he narrowed his eyes upon the figure kneeling down beside the throne upon the dais. He growled as he strode towards Peter Pettigrew. He strode right up onto the dais, ignoring the gasps- most of which were outraged- and kicked the huddled black cloaked figure right off the edge.

"Quiet!" Severus told the room at large. How he managed to get his voice to travel like that without actually bellowing the word impressed Belial; then again, this was Severus so he shouldn't have been too surprised.

"What right does he have to be up there?" someone called out. Belial thought it funny no one really cared that he'd physically kicked Pettigrew from the dais. They only had a problem with his audacity.

Belial's problem with Pettigrew was quite obvious to only a handful of people within the room. As he stood, staring at the shocked Death Eaters below him, Belial's nostrils flared in fury. Yes, Voldemort was the one to kill his parents but he understood it had been war and his parents were fighters in it and had become casualties. The same as countless others. But it was this *vermin* that had made it possible. At least his husband never betrayed someone the way Pettigrew betrayed his mother and father. Voldemort never needed to betray someone in such a way. He came right out with his agendas. Going so far as to approach his parents twice for their loyalty. His parents knew Voldemort would be coming for them again because he'd made it plain he would do so.

"You really are a filthy rat," he hissed. He was so enraged he almost slipped into Parseltongue. "Severus, please."

The Death Eaters watched in shock when Severus stepped forward to grab Pettigrew by the arm and jerk him to his feet, hissing for the rat Animagus to take position somewhere at the back. It wasn't long after Pettigrew disappeared into the crowd when Belial heard low growling. The kind from a feral animal that had just discovered its next meal. There was a squeak and then he saw Pettigrew quickly moving away from the group he'd first stopped next to. It was then Belial recognized the growling. Remus. The werewolf reacting to the betrayer as well. Directly following the growling was a low amused chuckle, which Belial figured belonged Fenrir.

Belial took a deep breath and glared at Pettigrew one last time before he collected himself. He cleared his throat and grinned at the assembly below. Backing up a step, Belial flung himself onto the throne, twisting around until he could swing his legs over the side as he usually liked to do. He tipped his head back, staring up at the stone ceiling and laughed delightedly when the uproars started.

This was the scene Voldemort and Lucius walked into. Most of the assembly was in an uproar and Belial was laughing outrageously- like a mental patient- with his hands laced behind his head as if he hadn't a care in the world. Penth, Rudra, and Agni stood at the foot of the dais, just in front of the throne as if to protect their Gold. Voldemort mentally sighed. Harry did say he was going to make an entrance and he hadn't really forbidden the little minx from doing so. If he had, Harry would have pouted for an eternity.

Only most of the Inner Circle seemed to notice his arrival and were the only ones to have knelt upon his first steps into the meeting chamber, while the rest were openly scowling at his husband. Well that wouldn't do at all. He moved towards the dais, and only then did the rest of the assembly see him, some gasping, and all of them quickly falling to their knees. "Before we begin," Voldemort said lowly, his voice easily heard over the sudden silence, "I would like all of my Inner Circle to approach and line up."

Once he was immediately obeyed, Voldemort turned to his most trusted followers, smiling a cold smile. Most tensed, perhaps waiting for punishment of some kind. "Now pick someone out of the group who failed to recognize my presence immediately. Choose anyone behind you. They all failed. Those who are picked, you will come up and stand before the one who chose you."

Again he was obeyed and as his Inner Circle began to choose, Voldemort climbed upon the dais and to his throne where he looked down into Belial's grinning face. The Dark Lord shook his head slightly, even as a veiled smile crossed his face. He leaned down, brushing fingers through raven hair and watched Belial sigh and lean into his touch. Most missed this interaction, as they were too busy hoping not to be picked.

Voldemort pulled his hand away and as he did so, jerked Belial's hood up over his hair. He then leaned against the throne beside his husband's head when there was a line of Death Eaters nervously standing before his Inner Circle. "Unmask," he hissed at them.

Belial sat up straight, peering down curiously. Telling them to unmask during a massive meeting like this was way of punishment as well. It made the lower ranking Death Eaters vulnerable to everyone. As they unmasked, he hoped Remus wasn't one of those to have been picked, and a moment later, was relieved when he didn't see the werewolf amongst the group.

Though he did grin when he saw Draco had picked Pettigrew. The blond turned slightly and smirked at Belial before turning back.

"Punish them," Voldemort ordered coldly, waving a hand over the unmasked Death Eaters.

Rounds of Crucios were called out and a little over a dozen unmasked men were soon found writhing on the cold stone floor in pain. Voldemort smiled viciously as he turned away from them for a moment, turning to stand in front of his chair, looking down at Belial.

"You've done a good job keeping Pettigrew away from me," Belial said lowly, his tone purposely flat. "Until now."

Voldemort stiffened, though he was sure only his husband noticed.

"Why," Belial went on lowly, his voice cold and menacing, "do you allow that pathetic rat to cower at your feet? Why is he here, Voldemort? Does he do anything useful? Didn't he fulfill his usefulness with my parents' deaths and with your second coming four years ago? It makes me sick to think of someone so pathetic worshipping you. It makes me sick to think you allow it. You surround yourself with power, not weakness. He is the epitome of weakness."

Truthfully, Voldemort was kind of at a loss for words. Belial was always talking about how he found the Dark Lord sexy when he was cold and menacing, and now Voldemort could truthfully say the same about Belial. This was the first time he'd ever seen his husband like this and he could tell Belial really was truly angry that he'd allow the rat to remain in his ranks.

"What would you like me to do about him, love?" he asked, in the mind to do whatever he must to keep his husband happy.

Belial tipped his head back against the armrest, looking off to the side where he could see the twins watching and hearing the lowly whispered conversation. Both nodded eagerly when he looked at them in question. Belial grinned.

"Agni and Rudra would like to dispose of him. Remus might like to as well, as I heard him growling at Pettigrew not long ago. It was quite funny."

"Very well. But it will have to wait until the end of the meeting."

"I'm fine with that."

Voldemort inclined his head before turning back to his Inner Circle. "I trust the lesson has been learned," he said, a signal for the cursing to cease. Voldemort then turned back to the Gold and quirked an eyebrow.

Belial hummed a little tune, his lips quirking into an amused smile. Voldemort's eyes narrowed as he raised a hand, waving it at the space left of the throne. When Belial heard a whoosh, he sat up to look and found another throne had been created or summoned but Belial didn't really care about the details of where it came from. Instead of the chair being huge and stone, like the one he was currently sitting in, the other throne was a dark cherry wood with

intricate carvings along the legs, arm rests, and back. There were dark violet cushions for the seat and back rest. Belial raised an impressed eyebrow, but otherwise didn't move.

"Belial," Voldemort murmured, "do not make me physically move you."

"But... Voldemort," he whined. "I'm your favorite person," he declared loudly. "You shouldn't make me move."

"Now."

Belial huffed and finally stood, allowing the bloody Dark Lord back his chair while he looked at the other one. It was a nice throne. Not too overly done, but still Belial wasn't thrilled to see it.

"Sit," he was ordered. He huffed again and stuck his tongue out at the bastard. He then spun around, his cloak flowing around him as he did so, and perched his arse upon the unwanted but lovely smaller throne. Belial then made a show of trying to get comfortable, wiggling his arse all around the cushion right in front of assembly and all. Twin snickers could be heard from the front of the dais, while Penth simply shook her head, sending a glare and an elbow into the wizards who stood at each side of her.

Voldemort looked at Belial. He wanted to glare, but all he could manage was a flat look that bordered on amused. The flat look disappeared altogether when Belial sent him a smile. Lopsided and child like. *Damn it all*, he thought as he turned to his assembly, thankful that the hood of his cloak was up and most of his face couldn't be seen by those below the dais. Voldemort wondered how he was supposed to remain the cold hearted bastard Dark Lord with his husband sitting right next to him.

"Before we begin," he started, making sure everyone's undivided attention was upon him, "introductions are in order. By now most if not all of you should already be aware of Belial and his Silvers," Voldemort motioned to the minx sitting beside him. Many of the Death Eaters silently nodded. "They are with us today, for I am about to make a very important announcement. First, the Gold is Belial."

Belial sat up straight and held up two fingers, shooting a peace sign out at the assembly. Draco snickered when several Death Eaters looked at each other in confusion. Belial huffed when no one returned his greetings. "Fine then, wankers! Fuck you, very much!" He then flipped everyone the bird instead. The Death Eaters caught on to that one alright and Belial laughed when he caught several people glaring at him.

Voldemort turned to his husband with narrowed eyes. Belial shrugged and relaxed back in the not wanted chair. "I was only trying to be nice. *They* are making me misbehave. Maybe you should punish them."

"Belial," Voldemort went on to his minions, his tone slightly exasperated, "is the leader of the Silvers. Allies of a neutral nature. Below us here," he motioned to Penth, Rudra, and Agni. "Pentheseila, his Second-In-Command." Penth dipped her chin at the staring Death Eaters. "Rudra and Agni, Lieutenants to Belial," they as well dipped their chins.

"For those of you who have yet to figure it out," Voldemort went on, "Belial is my equal and my partner." Voldemort paused, letting the cold shock wash over. "He is also my husband and shall be acknowledged as such from now on. I trust you all know what this means."

The Inner Circle answered before anyone else did. Only because they were already aware of this information and weren't shocked speechless as the rest of the assembly. "Yes, my Lord," they chorused. That brought about the rest of the room's voices, and they answered as well.

"This isn't very comfortable. Not at all," Belial suddenly said, shifting once again in his new 'throne'. "It's not the best seat in the house, Voldemort. You promised me I could have the best of everything. You did!"

"Belial..."

Belial grinned impishly. "You promised," he sang.

Voldemort mentally sighed before raising his hand to his husband. Belial laughed delightedly as he jumped from his seat and quickly moved over to perch himself on Voldemort's warm lap, twisting around to swing his legs over his husband's thighs. He sighed, the contented sound travelling around the room. "Best seat in the house!" he exclaimed as he began to move his arse around to get more comfortable, grinning when Voldemort reacted to the movements. "It just got better!"

Draco choked on a laugh, knowing exactly what his best mate was insinuating. He would have continued to choke if his father and Severus hadn't roughly slapped his back a few times. Both glaring at him. Near the back of the assembly, Remus was smiling softly behind his mask, enjoying the fact Harry's playfulness hadn't dimmed in the slightest despite where he was. He especially liked the fact Harry didn't seem to let the solemn mood of such a place dictate his actions and the fact that Voldemort seemed perfectly happy to cater to husband's antics.

Remus' amusement died when he caught another whiff of Pettigrew. His amber eyes swiveled around, easily picking the traitor out of the crowd. This was the first time he'd seen Pettigrew since becoming a Death Eater, and he suspected this was the first time Harry had come into contact with the rat Animagus as well. A silent growl reverberated in his throat and he prepared to move. But just as he picked up a foot to move, a hand curled lazily around his forearm.

"Later," Fenrir murmured, pulling Remus until he was facing the front again where Belial was currently making himself comfortable, snuggling against the Dark Lord's chest with his arms wrapped around Voldemort's neck.

"Are you quite finished?" Voldemort asked lowly so only Belial could hear.

Belial grinned and waved a hand out towards the Death Eaters. "Yes. You may continue with your motivational speaking and torture."

"Stop squirming in my lap, brat," Voldemort hissed into his ear.

"You like it. Obviously," he purred, once again wiggling over the erection straining against his arse.

"Now is not the time."

Belial's smile widened. "Your speechless minions are waiting, Lord Voldemort."

Voldemort just barely refrained from sighing and lifted his hand towards Lucius. "The reports, Lucius."

Lucius went on to talk about blah, blah, blah, but Belial wasn't really in the mind to listen. He simply watched the goings on with a detached air. Studying the Death Eaters was more fun than listening to the actual comings and goings of the end of the war at the moment. All the Death Eaters were standing rigidly, as if just waiting for a curse to be hurled their way and knowing they couldn't duck it or it would mean a worse punishment. They were all standing so stiffly as certain members came forward to give their reports that Belial wanted to laugh at them. Until he felt a soft tapping upon his thigh. Looking down, he found it to be his husband's wand tapping, pointed off to whichever Death Eater was talking at the moment.

"You're the reason most here have premature gray hair," he whispered. "Wizards aren't supposed to have gray hair until they've reached a hundred."

Voldemort smirked. "I have a shocking charisma."

Belial snickered. "That was lame."

As the meeting progressed, no less than a dozen Death Eaters were punished and then threatened when it was apparent they didn't carry out the orders set for them perfectly. And at one point, Belial was annoyed when he had to vacate his very comfortable seat as Voldemort became enraged when he learned Kingsley had escaped a group of Death Eaters two days prior and he had never been clued in on the fact.

There was pain in his scar as his husband tortured those poor souls- yeah, Belial was snickering- but the addicting emotions swimming through their link more than made up for the throbbing. It was more of a fact that those Death Eaters had tried to go after Kingsley without permission and without a plan. Which kind of had Belial thinking they deserved the pain. They should have known better after Havershire.

When Voldemort returned to his throne, he calmed down some when Severus announced the owls the captive children had sent to their parents were received and they already had back several answers. And because he was soothed a bit with this information, the Dark Lord took a moment to brush his lips over Belial's mask, right above where his scar was, probably because he knew he caused pain there. Belial couldn't help but melt in his husband's lap at the display of affection.

One of the student's parents who already responded was Xenophilius Lovegood. Luna's father was pledging to stay out of the war, or at least not fight for the Light. Belial suspected his daughter had persuaded this decision. And several other parents had sent owls saying the same. They wanted their children back and unharmed and would do anything to see that it

happens. Since it was clear the Dark was winning, these families would adhere to the Dark Lord's demands if that meant keeping their family alive and well in the future. When Belial heard this, he wondered how long it would be before Molly Weasley would crumble to get her only daughter back. And then he wondered what Molly and Arthur had thought the other day after they were forcibly Portkeyed away from the battle without a word.

After the reports finished, Voldemort stood again and launched into a speech about the Dark's victory; speaking about how it was only a matter of time before all of Wizarding Britain would adhere to his rule. He spoke about how they would no longer be persecuted for practicing the Dark Arts, just another branch of magic and about how the world would change for the better; evolve into something greater than it never would have under the former Ministry's rule.

By the time he finished Voldemort had everyone in excited spirits, even those he tortured not half an hour ago, and even though he was neutral, Belial found himself excited to see what the future would hold now that these people had their hands firmly around it. He couldn't wait to see what his husband- the perfectionist that he was- would do. And Belial found himself eager to help however he could.

Voldemort was an exceptional public speaker; something Belial had suspected, but had never had the chance to witness before. Aside from their fear of him, it was no wonder the Dark Lord had an army of loyal followers. He had an extraordinary way with words; he had a way with wrapping his words in an aura and seducing his audience. He stood on the dais and simply exuded power. Who could stand there below him and not believe what he was saying? No one. No one would dare doubt him.

When Voldemort finished speaking, Penth, Rudra, and Agni turned to look at him and their eyes expressed the same excitement. Belial laughed because it was a sign that they all had truly changed. Especially the twins, who seemed like they wanted to rip off their Silver masks and exchange them for the white Death Eater ones immediately.

"Fenrir," Voldemort called as the enthusiastic cheering died down. "You and your current companion of the month come forward. You as well, Pettigrew. The rest of you aside from Lucius, Severus, Bellatrix, and Draco are dismissed. Return to your posts."

Remus frowned and turned to Fenrir with accusation in his eyes. "What does he mean current companion of the month?"

Fenrir narrowed his eyes at the dais. "He finds pleasure in discord, cub. Pay no attention to it."

Remus stamped down the discontent filling him. Irrational discontent. He didn't understand why that statement had annoyed him so much. "How often do you take in lodgers, Fenrir?" he asked, trying to keep his tone perfectly nonchalant.

Fenrir turned to him and he flashed his teeth in a charming smile. "Not to worry, Remus. You're very special."

"That didn't answer my question, did it?" Remus snapped back as they made their way to the front.

Remus noticed Fenrir had a strong grip on his arm and came to the conclusion that he didn't want him going off at Pettigrew again. But the moment the room emptied, leaving those Voldemort had called to remain, Remus jerked his arm free and ripped off his mask and then swiftly approached the rat to tackle him to the ground.

"Traitor!" he bellowed.

"R-Remus?!" Pettigrew squeaked in shock.

"Murderer! You murdered your best friends! They would have done anything for you, Peter! Anything!"

"I-I didn't!" Peter gasped, terrified and shocked to see Remus' furious face over him. To know Remus was a Death Eater as well. "I didn't kill them!"

"Might as well have," Belial stated as he jumped off the dais. "Without your *help*, my parents would have had protection. Might as well call you their murderer. You betrayed them in the worst way."

"Y-your parents? What?"

Belial grasped his mask and pulled it off as he came to stand beside his friends. All of them moving their masks to perch them atop their heads.

Peter gaped at the four. "You... married the Dark Lord," he whimpered. "But I wasn't the one-"

"If you hadn't betrayed them, my husband would never have had the chance to kill them, now would he? The Fidelius Charm would have held for as long as they needed it to."

Remus growled, baring his straight teeth, wishing to sink them into Peter's neck. "James and Lily would have been protected and Harry might have been able to grow up with his parents instead of being raised in that Merlin awful muggle home, becoming a slave to horrid muggles!"

Voldemort straightened and pierced the back of his husband's head with a look. Harry could feel this, but at the moment he was determined to ignore it. He was going to try and avoid that discussion for as long as he could.

"And Sirius!" Remus went on. "Sirius wouldn't have been put into Azkaban for a crime he didn't commit! Sirius might still be alive if it weren't for you, Peter!"

Sensing he was in mortal danger, Pettigrew turned pleading eyes to the unmoving figure sitting on the throne. "M-my Lord, please..."

"My husband feels you add nothing but weakness to myself and our cause. I must agree. If your death shall make him happy, then of course I will allow it. And you are also a blatant

reminder I must get rid of," he ended softly.

"My lord, please!"

Voldemort turned his crimson eyes away to look at the twins. "I'm told you two would like the pleasure."

The two nodded and stepped forth, grinning. "We're partial to cutting hexes. The ones that cut deep and fatally. Don't like the AK much..." Fred said as he and George circled Pettigrew where he lay still under Remus' growling form.

"No," Remus growled at them, his hands coming up to encircle Pettigrew's neck. "I'm going to do this and take pleasure knowing Sirius would agree with what I'm about to do. I'm going to finish what he started twice and was unable to follow through on. I picture him standing on the sidelines cheering me on right now. "

"He would be," Harry agreed with a shrug. Sirius may have fought for the Light, but he was still a Black and that particular line always thought betrayers got what they deserved. Pettigrew deserved what was about to happen to him. And that's what Sirius had set out to do that night anyway. Sirius had every intention of killing Pettigrew the moment he caught up to him in that street.

The twins pouted and backed away, stowing their wands while Bellatrix skipped forward to relieve Pettigrew of the wand he was scrabbling to retrieve from within his robes. His movements weren't very quick as Remus was in the process of choking him to death. Fenrir sauntered forward and grabbed Pettigrew's glove-like silver hand before he could think to hit Remus in the head with it. The elder werewolf grinned maliciously down at Pettigrew as he pinned the arm to the ground by standing on it with both feet.

"I wish I were a wolf right now," Remus growled. "I would rip you to bloody shreds!"

Harry turned away to climb back onto the dais before hopping back onto Voldemort's lap. "Thanks!"

"You only have to ask," the Dark wizard murmured, failing to meet Harry's eyes. He was very tense and looked uncomfortable.

Harry touched his face, fingers moving over his jaw and pulling until their foreheads were pressed together. "I've already told you I forgive you."

"If I could-"

Harry placed a soft quick kiss to his lips. "It's in the past," he whispered. "The past shouldn't be changed. It might shatter the present. I would never want that, Tom. Never."

Tom said nothing to that though he did nod and his eyes swam with indescribable emotion as they returned to Pettigrew and Remus.

Harry then declared, "your speech was wicked!"

"Of course it was." Voldemort pulled his red gaze away from the werewolf and rat, whom was turning blue already, and smirked at his husband. "Would you like to join me now?"

Harry yawned and shook his head. "No thanks. The Dark is much too uptight."

"Blasphemy," Voldemort muttered, but with no real heat.

"It's true! They turned their noses up at me when all I was trying to do was to spread peace, love, and happiness around!"

"Think I've just thrown up a little in my mouth," Voldemort replied flatly.

"Gross!" Harry exclaimed, laughing. "Hey, at least I didn't sing *the song*. I was seriously thinking about it."

"Thank Salazar for small mercies that you didn't... wouldn't you like to watch?" the Dark Lord inquired, gesturing to the strangulation going on.

"Not really," but Harry made himself turn to watch anyway. It wasn't a pretty sight, watching Pettigrew's face flame as red as a tomato and then fade to purple and finally take on a bluish tint. And Remus, well Remus' face was just blank as his grip around the choking Animagus tightened. It wasn't long before the life in Pettigrew's eyes faded and once he was dead, Remus climbed back to his feet. He stared at the body a moment before turning and storming out of the room without a word or glance at anyone.

"Remus!" Harry called out in worry, but the werewolf was already gone.

Voldemort narrowed his eyes and turned to Harry. "You see? Werewolves have no respect."

"He didn't come here expecting to see Pettigrew nor did he come here expecting to kill someone. Forgive him this one time, please," Harry asked softly, dropping his head against his husband's shoulder and closing his eyes.

He thought he would catch up on some sleep for the day was pretty busy after this. The Silver meeting in the late afternoon which was closely followed by Tom's Inner Circle dinner, though Harry didn't really need to attend that. But he would because he liked being seen with Tom by his husband's minions and he knew Tom enjoyed his presence as well. So a little nap right now would be good.

Voldemort stared down at Harry's face, and then back at the others and waved them off without a word. Fenrir was the first to leave, striding quickly out of the door. Draco grabbed the twins' hands and started tugging them out of the room, with the others falling into step close behind them.

"Did I behave?" Harry asked quietly.

"Of course you didn't."

Voldemort then stood and held onto Harry until the minx dropped his legs to the ground and could stand on his own, though he kept a firm arm around Harry's waist and enjoyed it when

his arm was automatically wrapped around Harry's.

"Where are we going?"

"Home. You were up too early this morning making fudge and cakes. You need a nap."

Harry was not about to complain about that. "Will you tuck me in and sing a lullaby?"

"No."

"Please," Harry begged. "I'm sure you have a lovely singing voice."

"No."

"What about Bunnymort? Can I snuggle with my bunn-"

"Harry."

Harry tipped his head up, his eyes meeting those of his husband's. "Yes?"

"Silence," Voldemort commanded.

Harry sighed. "Fine. But only because I'm tired, Voldemort. Don't think it's because I'm adhering to your Dark Lord power. That's never going to hap-"

Harry was then escorted home with a hand plastered over his mouth the entire way.

Remus braced his hands on each side of the sink, trying desperately to keep from looking at his reflection in the mirror a few inches from his face. He was afraid of what he would see in his eyes at the moment.

There was a knock on the locked bathroom door. "Remus, come out."

Remus ignored Fenrir and reached out with a trembling hand to turn on the hot tap, waiting until steam rose up to obscure his face from the mirror. He barely flinched when he thrust both hands under the scalding water and began to furiously wash his hands. To wash Pettigrew off him.

"Open the door, cub!"

"Leave me alone," Remus rasped and continued to wash his reddening hands, ignoring the stinging pain of the hot water. He had to get Peter off him. He washed and washed and washed and it was never enough. He never wanted to think of Peter again; never wanted to feel that thrill and justification as he took Peter's life again.

Remus was barely aware of it when Fenrir broke down the door to the bathroom. Barely registered the splinters flying across the relatively large lavatory. Fenrir took one look at the steam rising from the sink and Remus' scalded hands before shooting forward. He rushed to

turn the cold tap on before shutting the scalding water off. A sobbed moan escaped Remus and he jerked his hands away, fully prepared to sink to his knees in despair.

"No," Fenrir growled and forcibly kept Remus' hands under the cold water by pressing against his back. Keeping the cub trapped between him and the sink. The only sound between them was the sound of running water and Remus' ragged breathing. "That was very foolish," Fenrir murmured softly after a time, "leaving the Dark Lord's presence without permission."

Remus pulled his eyes away from Fenrir's hands, which were wrapped tightly around his wrists. When he looked up, Remus deliberately ignored his own reflection to meet Fenrir's. The elder werewolf's grip on his wrists tightened upon seeing his haunted expression. Fenrir couldn't help but lean forward to nuzzle the side of Remus' neck as he would have done if they were in their wolf forms. Usually he didn't have these instincts with the others of his pack outside of the full moon, but as he'd already come to realize, Remus was different.

"I strangled him to death," Remus whispered hoarsely.

Fenrir frowned as he leaned forward some more to shut off the water before pulling Remus back, still having a tight hold on his wrists. "Is that not what he deserved?"

"I feel... I feel dirty."

"In what way?" Fenrir inquired as he pulled the younger werewolf out of the bathroom and then out of the bedroom he'd given Remus.

"He was a disgusting traitor!"

"Yes and he took the closest thing to a pack you ever had. It wasn't a proper pack, but it kept you sane in your younger years," Fenrir replied, causing Remus to start in surprise. "If someone had the right to take his life, it was you, cub."

"How did you... how did you know that?"

"I don't know why I must always repeat myself. We have eyes and ears everywhere." Fenrir shook his head in annoyance as they moved into the kitchen, pushing Remus into a chair at the table. "Do not move," the elder werewolf ordered before leaving Remus alone in the kitchen. Remus remained where he was, staring unseeing at the rich red oak table.

"What good did it do to burn your hands?" Fenrir asked when he walked back in with a small ceramic jar in his hands. Remus didn't answer. Instead he watched the elder werewolf take a seat beside him and open the jar, which Remus recognized contained healing balm for burns and the like. His eyes widened nearly in panic when he realized what Fenrir meant to do.

"Thank you for your assistance, Fenrir. I can take it from here."

"You're still in shock. I think not," Fenrir said as he dipped three fingers into the burn salve and used the other hand to snake out and grasp Remus' wrists once again, keeping him firmly in the chair.

"Don't tell me how I feel!" Remus snapped and tried to rip his burning hands out of Fenrir's grip.

Fenrir took no notice of his snappish attitude, ignored Remus' growled annoyance, and began to slather the healing salve on to the scalded flesh. "Foolish thing to do," Fenrir muttered under his breath. "Working yourself up over a bloody rat."

"Let's not talk about him anymore," Remus replied lowly. Suddenly feeling sick all over again. As if sensing his thoughts, Fenrir's grip upon his wrists tightened almost painfully. But when Remus looked, he found Fenrir glowering down at the Dark Mark upon his wrist. "You always make that face when you see the Mark on me," Remus murmured. Fenrir immediately drew his eyes away from the Dark Mark. "You don't like I've been Marked by him. Why?"

"Why do you think," Fenrir returned lowly, his words coming out in slow growls. "He's marked what ultimately does not belong to him."

"I'm not a possession," Remus said on an annoyed sigh, though he felt his cheeks warming, knowing Fenrir hadn't meant it like that. "Aside from that, you were the one who came to me first to try and win me to his side. What did you think was going to happen if I agreed?" Fenrir finally met his gaze and he still looked tremendously unhappy. Remus felt it his duty to get him over that. "Besides, he's not my Alpha, is he?"

Fenrir straightened and grinned roguishly. "Too true, cub!"

Remus rolled his eyes and then looked away before smiling. Fenrir was so dramatic sometimes. Getting angry over the littlest of things. But Remus also knew the elder werewolf had purposely distracted him from the heavy oppressive weight he'd allowed to settle over him after fleeing Voldemort's meeting chamber. He looked up to find Fenrir studying him intently and Remus was soon carried away doing the same thing and was very aware when he started blushing for no apparent reason.

Remus hurried to his feet then, not at all happy Fenrir could make him feel like an awkward teenager again. "I-I think I'll go have a lay down. Thank you, Fenrir."

A slow smile curled Fenrir's lips as he too stood. "You could do that or you could come with me. I planned to visit one of the camps the younger werewolves stay in this afternoon. We need more teachers, Remus. For the younger Wizarding werewolves at least. Perhaps you would like to have a look?"

Remus nodded, a little excitedly despite himself. How could he possibly turn down that invite? He would enjoy meeting the young refugees Fenrir had rescued, and he knew- again despite himself- he would enjoy seeing Fenrir interact with the cast out children as well. Half of him wished to see something that would make him hate Fenrir all over again. Because hatred for the werewolf was so much easier to deal with and understand. He hadn't any idea how to process what was going on between them now.

"This will be recorded as the first official meeting of the Silvers," Hermione announced to those sitting around within the kitchen of Grimmauld Place; everyone with a silver mask laid

to rest on the kitchen table in front of each witch or wizard. "We'll start by a Q and A session to get everyone situated and acquainted with our base goals. We need you to be familiar with our goals because we don't want anyone joining just for the sake of joining. You have to want to be here and you have to contribute. If you don't want to get involved with anything at all, then you can be neutral at home and not waste our time. Also, becoming a Silver will not gain you any important information pertaining to the Light or Dark side of the war, so if you're here to perhaps spy on either side, you've come to the wrong place. Everyone understand?"

Those around nodded or exclaimed that they understood. Hermione smiled and called for questions. Harry sat back at this, grinning widely and lifting his arms and lacing his fingers behind his head as most eyes travelled to him with intense curiosity in their gazes while they thought about what they really wanted to know. After a few moments, Harry allowed his gaze to wander before settling onto Neville. As soon as their eyes met, Neville hastily looked away, his face flushing in guilt.

When Hermione had come to him stating Neville wanted to join, Harry had stared at her with a gaping mouth and then demanded to know why she thought he'd be alright with that since it had been Neville to betray him and allow the Order to kidnap him. But Hermione had had a little faith in Neville still and went digging for the truth, and eventually went to confront the bumbling Gryffindor himself. Apparently Neville hadn't known what was going on.

Apparently Neville's owl had been intercepted, since it was Neville who'd sought for the visit in the first place. When Hermione had come to Harry with this truth, she'd told him the reason why Neville had wanted to meet with him was because he wanted to leave the war as well. He was a pureblood and was proud of the fact and he hadn't liked how the war was turning out on either side. He had been seeking Harry's advice on how best to back out of the war.

He tried to find Harry after the kidnapping incident, but as Hermione pointed out, Harry basically disappeared after that as he had finally been in the Dark Lord's tender clutches. And aside from Hermione vouching for Neville, Luna did as well. Harry had finally agreed, but only after he'd given his old friend Veritaserum. Neville looked guilty now only because he was ashamed for his owl having been intercepted in the first place. Harry could honestly say he was happy and relieved Neville hadn't stabbed him in the back, and under the truth serum, Neville had admitted he'd been disturbed and saddened by the Slytherin massacre as well. He'd just been afraid to voice his thoughts aloud.

Quickly pulling back from those thoughts, Harry allowed his gaze to travel again and caught Charlie Weasley's eye. Charlie had come back upon his brothers' request to join the new faction and Charlie had agreed immediately- since the Silvers had been endorsed not only by the twins, but also by Bill, who was also in attendance tonight. Charlie explained his speedy coming, saying he was due for a vacation from the dragon reserves and he thought this endeavor would be fun. The end of the war was near and he wanted to be around for it, no matter which side he was on. Harry could kind of understand that. They'd all basically been involved in the war one way or the other, and it would be nice to see it come to a conclusion.

Harry suddenly gave Charlie a playful wink. Charlie laughed and shook his head in amusement at Harry's playfulness. Little did Charlie and the other Silvers know, Voldemort was within the room, sitting Disillusioned within a corner and glaring at his husband for flirting. Which is exactly why Harry had winked.

"Where are our loyalties?" Lee Jordan finally asked. "More importantly, where are your loyalties?"

"Ooh," Harry laughed. "Perfect question. Getting right down and dirty."

"Well," Hermione began levelly, "mostly to ourselves. However, we absolutely do not fight against Voldemort and his Death Eaters and they have been forbidden from attacking us. And should they call upon our services-

"We'll most likely help out without a problem," Harry ended. "It depends upon the situation."

"So you have gone Dark." This from Oliver Wood.

"Actually, the Dark is kind of like my... in-law. I've married into the Dark. But I'm a practitioner of all types of magic. Being distinctly Dark or Light is limiting... and severely boring. Do you know how much interesting things you miss out on when you only keep to one corner of magic and shun the others? It's mental!"

"Hear, hear!" the twins cried, while Hermione and Luna nodded at his words.

"But don't worry. The Silvers don't go out of the way to harm people," Harry added. "That's definitely not what we're about... unless it's drastically called for." That seemed to relax several people around the table.

"What's that mean, exactly, you marrying into the Dark?" Parvati Patil inquired.

Harry's smile grew wider. "What do you think it means?"

"Your spouse is a Dark wizard," Padma guessed.

"I think it means," Charlie began, "that instead of joining the Dark, he's gone and married the leader of the Dark. That man we've been seeing with you in the *Prophet*... that's You-Know-Who. You couldn't have a group like this without having very close ties to him. Even if you were married to one of his Inner Circle you couldn't have a group like this with the assurance the Dark Lord and other Death Eaters will never attack us. Aside from all that, the *Prophet* has been reporting your husband is rich and powerful, and yet no one seems to know who he is, which is strange. I think you're married to the Dark Lord."

There was a round of gasps, the tension in the room spiked again, and Harry's smile didn't leave his lips for an instant. "Clever, Charlie and you haven't even been back in the country for long. Unfortunately, now that you do know, I'll have to kill you all."

The reactions he got were hilarious. Most thought he was being completely serious. All except for the Weasleys, Luna, and Hermione. She brutally smacked his arm.

"What? I couldn't resist! The looks on their faces! Charlie knew I wasn't being serious!" Harry said.

"You're married to You-Know-Who?" Lee Jordan asked, his voice pitched low in awe. "How could you..." his words trailed off in a grimace. Harry found that funny as well, since he knew what Lee was thinking.

"Lee," Harry began with a smug grin, "my husband is—"

"Anyway, moving on," Hermione said, giving Harry a flat look. "Moving on to our faction, not the Dark Lord or Harry's marriage to said Dark Lord and his very good looks, because I know that's where you were going, Harry. Before you all leave, everyone will need to take an Oath promising not to spread that information around outside of our group. If you don't agree to take the oath, then you will be obliviated and leave our group. Now then, next question," she called for.

"Why are you giving us this information without hesitation?" Neville asked softly.

"That's easy. It's because I plan to kill you," he answered flatly. "This is an elaborate trap and the moment you step out of the front door, you'll be struck down dead. You especially, Neville."

"Harry, stop it!" Hermione shrieked.

"What?" Harry's flat expression morphed into amusement once more. "It's too funny! Their faces get so pale. If I do it enough times, maybe they'll pass out. They actually believe I'm capable of killing without a thought... okay, so maybe I did kill Moody without really a thought, but he had it coming, and Scrimgeour was just annoying—and look! Their faces are back to being totally pale again—wish Drake were here!"

Tom dropped his face into his hands and laughed quietly. Harry was having loads of fun with this. Raising his eyes again, Tom watched Hermione jump to her feet and grab Harry, who was still snickering delightedly over the room's reactions. She yanked him out of his chair and then out of the kitchen. Tom stood and followed. Hermione had Harry in the library, already in the process of chastising his little minx by the time he caught up.

"Honestly, Harry! You were the one that said we should do this right. Have official meetings and such! You don't seem to be taking this serious at all!"

"If you think I'm going to treat this like Voldemort does, with a wand stuck up his psychotic arse—"

"That's pleasant," Tom drawled, dissolving the Disillusionment charm.

"Admittedly it's a gorgeous arse but still psychotic all the same," was Harry's response.

"Harry James Potter!"

"Riddle," Tom interjected.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Calm down, Hermione. I am taking this seriously, but I'm also having fun with it. These people could use a few laughs. We laugh in the face of danger, they should too. That's our motto!"

Hermione's lips formed into thin pinched lines. Harry sobered slightly and took a little step back; sure he'd crossed the line this time with her. He wanted to keep his hearing intact. Glancing at Tom, he hoped for help, only to find his husband standing there with his arms crossed over his broad chest, grinning evilly in anticipation of what Hermione would do. Tom enjoyed it when Hermione scared him. The Dark bastard would be no help here.

"Do you want loyal members, Harry?" she hissed harshly, and her whispered words were worse than if she'd yelled at him. Harry was barely able to keep himself from looking at the floor and scuffing the toes of his boots against the carpet.

"Yeah, course," he mumbled.

"You aren't making them fear you-"

"I don't want them to fear me... much!"

"You're making them think you actually have gone mental. That's not going to make them want to stay."

Harry scowled at her. "I'm not insane. I know what I'm doing."

Hermione rose a brow. "Sometimes I wonder..."

"Hey!"

"Harry, you know this is important and I know how much you want this to work. So try and act like it." With that said, Hermione huffed and walked around him, mumbling, "sir," as she passed the Dark Lord and breezed out of the library.

"She has a point," Tom said once they were alone, waving his hand to close the library doors.

Harry growled and started tugging on his hair. "Sometimes it's annoying being underestimated all the fucking time! I know what I'm doing!" He raised his eyes, piercing his husband with steady determined eyes. "I know these people. I know how they work. Just as you know how your stupid stuck up Death Eaters work. They work best when they fear you. My Silvers are a different caliber and would only react negatively if they fear me! I know exactly how to manipulate them to do what I want without them thinking I've manipulated them completely. Doesn't anyone get that? With this bunch, it has to be fun, but it also has to mean something. It has to mean so much that they'll devote themselves to the cause. They won't do that if I act like you and how you act with your Dark lot. I have to be myself!"

"I understand," Tom said soothingly, mentally smiling at how endearing Harry was when he was severely frustrated. He wrapped Harry in his arms, running a hand through his hair. "It's rather brilliant of you to have realized how to lead this group."

"Why do you always sound surprised when I've done something intelligent?" Harry murmured petulantly.

Tom chuckled darkly. "Because I know the surprised tone annoys you... Don't be upset. Hermione only wants this to work for you. She's only looking out for all of you."

"I need to be soothed," Harry finally replied. "Can I bring Bunnymort in with me?" he questioned, making sure to hide the mischievous smirk against Tom's shoulder. If Tom knew what he was really about, the answer would be a quick and painful no.

A long drawn out sigh left Tom's lips. He'd planned to stay for the entire meeting anyway. "Give me something and I'll give you something," was his reply.

Harry pulled back, smiling. "Deal! What do you want?"

Tom smirked as his hands slid around to cup his husband's delectable arse. "I can think of a few things."

Harry reappeared in the kitchen half an hour later; smiling goofily, hair and clothes tussled and lips swollen, and more importantly, holding in his arms a little black bunny. The others stared at him and the bunny in bemusement, while Hermione just rolled her eyes. Honestly, couldn't the two keep their hands off each other for a few hours at least? Well no, they were still newlyweds after all. She had to give them that. But still, important things were going on now.

She thought about chastising him for not returning to the meeting right away, as it had been his idea all along, but since she'd gotten the meeting started well without him trying to scare everyone, and the fact she didn't think it would be proper to chastise Belial in front of his own 'minions', Hermione decided to wait until they were alone again.

Everyone watched as Harry retook his seat, slumping lazily into it and raising his legs to perch his ankles at the corner of the long table. "What'd I miss?" he asked cheerfully as he stroked the fluffy black fur of the bunny he had cradled against his chest. Padma, Parvati, Angelina, and Alicia looked like they were barely able to keep from cooing aloud, while Luna was giggling. No doubt she knew who the bunny actually was. She was a little scary like that.

"The entire Q and A session, but that's alright because you weren't any help to begin with." Harry only grinned at disapproving tone. "And they have the basics down as to what our goals are."

"And did you tell them why they were to sit here without the masks on?"

"Yes. They know should any of us be given up to any side by being betrayed by a fellow member, then they would also be snitched upon. The point is, ultimately, we protect each other."

Harry nodded. "Good. Does anyone object to our ways, our goals, our allies?" When no one objected, he grinned. "Great. Now we can get on to discussing business and our first official

raid." Every one watched as he dropped his feet to floor and placed his bunny on the table in front of him. "We've learned from reliable sources of something really horrible happening and I plan to see that it stops. Actually, the Dark Lord was going to take care of this *huge problem*, but I've decided I want the pleasure."

As he spoke, Harry withdrew a small bag from within his robes and set it down beside Bunnymort. Everyone was listening to him, but also watching the bag with their breaths held. It was clear to all now that it would be wise to be wary of whatever he planned to do. Well everyone but the twins and Luna were thinking this. The twins were leaning against the table, eager to see what their friend was about.

Harry smiled as he withdrew a small hair clip adorned with a Slytherin green bow on it and then withdrew another clip with a silver bow. "Apparently and for many years now, young Veela have been kidnapped and sold as slaves on the black market. I cannot imagine why the former ministry never did anything about this," he muttered, lapsing into a momentary scowl. "It's not like the Aurors never investigated the magical black market before. One would think..." Harry trailed off with a sheepish smile when he realized he was about to go on a rant. "Anyway, I've discovered where one of the camps is located. We need to destroy this camp and capture those responsible for running it. From there I'm sure we'll learn where more camps and warehouses are located."

With rising horror, Hermione watched Harry put those clips on the transformed Dark Lord- right behind its large fluffy ears- ignoring the bunny's attempts at escaping. "HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?" she screeched.

"No, really. I've positive proof this has been going on. Learned it from the Veela ambassadors," Harry replied as he ignored the wiggling of his furry husband. He wouldn't let Bunnymort escape the room so that he could change back in private and Tom wouldn't want to change back in front of all his Silvers, so he was basically stuck as long as Harry kept a tight hold on him.

"Ah, your bunny is adorable!" Angelina exclaimed.

"That's not what I'm talking about!" Hermione shouted. "You can't put those on him!"

"Geez, Hermione, when did you become so loyal?" Harry asked with a grin shot her way. "He'll like that."

"Hermione?" Neville inquired as he watched the small bunny wiggling against Harry's chest. "Why are you getting worked up over Harry decorating his pet? It's his pet. Surely it's not a big deal... and the bows kind of suit him."

"Um..." Oliver murmured, watching as the bunny tried twisting around to bite Harry. He glanced quickly at Bill, who sat beside him, and then back at the bunny. "Did its eyes flash red there for a moment?"

"Doubt it. That would be creepy," Harry said with all seriousness, trying desperately to keep the amused tremor from his voice. But, oh, was his scar burning at the moment. It was without question that Tom was going to punish him once they were home after this stunt.

"Anyway... so who wants to go with and take down slaving bastards?" Everyone around the table raised their hands. "Wicked!"

"Hold on," Lee exclaimed. "You said the Dark Lord planned to take care of the Veela slavers?"

"Yes."

"But why would he care? I imagine it would be the other way around. He'd be helping them."

Harry glared. "My husband is not a monster... okay, he's not that big of a monster."

"Haven't you been reading the *Prophet*, Lee?" Fred asked. "That propaganda is real. It's not just fake shite printed to make you fall for his charm and take his side."

George jumped in with a firm nod. "Yeah! He really is seeking equal rights for magical beings and such. He's fixing everything that's been wrong with the Ministry. He's just doing it in a very forceful manner..."

"Wow. You guys need to go get the white masks already," Harry muttered and then winced when Bunnymort's teeth pierced his finger.

"He'll murder you when you leave this room," Hermione hissed in his ear, still staring at the bows in horror.

An evil grin crossed his face. "Maybe he'll spank me."

"Too much info, Harry."

Harry was about to reply when he heard knocking at the front door. Those who weren't new Silvers perked up when they heard this. "Great, our other members are here!"

"There's more?" Padma asked.

"Yes. They're our enforcers," Hermione answered as she stood. "I'll go let them in. I don't trust Kreacher not to turn them away."

"Enforcers?" Neville questioned.

Harry and the twins grinned wickedly. "Promise they won't bite."

When the Enforcers walked in, they did so without their masks on, which pleased Harry very much. He went about greeting each and every one of them by name as they walked into the room, ignoring the fearful and gob-smacked expressions on the others' faces. Many of the newcomers still had their human looks while only a handful were old enough to have been affected by lack of sunlight and looked as if they had been living underground for a century.

"V-vampires?" Neville whispered fearfully.

Harry looked at him sharply. "Yes, they are vampires and they also have names. They are Silvers, just like you. People. Just cause they have fangs and suck blood and need to come out at night rather than day... Come in guys and pull up a chair," Harry told the vampires, waving to the stacked chairs against the wall. He watched in amusement as the vampires did just that, grabbing the chairs and shoving them up in between the other Silvers. Neville went completely pale when he suddenly found himself sandwiched between two handsome vampires who were grinning wickedly at him.

One of the vampires, Nathan, leaned over to say, "the sound of your rapidly beating heart is lovely."

Neville's eyes snapped back to Harry, only to find Harry wasn't even paying attention and was having a whispered discussion with the vampire who had sat beside him. Whatever they were speaking about seemed serious.

"Okay," Harry pulled away, nodding at Trent, who happened to be the unofficial leader of the enforcers and who had just given Harry valuable information about their raid. "Thanks." He turned back to the table, smiling when he saw there was a vampire in between each of the human Silvers. "Hermione."

Hermione nodded and stood. "My name is Hermione. Penthesilea(Penth for short) when we're out and wearing the masks. I'm Second-in-Command, liaison to our very nice enforcers, and hope to date a very attractive Auror in the near future. Very nice to meet you all." She nodded and then sat before waving her hand at the person beside her.

There was a sense of amusement from the vampires but they caught the hint and the vampire next to her stood up and bowed his head to the others around the table. "I am called Channing. Born in Eighteen-Fifty, died in Eighteen Sixty-Nine. Hmmm, oh yes. I find I enjoy drinking from the necks of blonds the most," he ended, giving a charming smile around the room. Luna waved cheerily at him. Harry ducked his head before snickering.

So around the table they went, with everyone standing in turn to introduce themselves and give a little tidbit about themselves. Most were soon laughing at the things revealed, which easily broke the ice. Everyone especially laughed when the twins stood together, introducing themselves, gave their Silver aliases and ranks. They explained they loved to cause mayhem and then announced they would be keeping their lovely Draco away from Channing. They said it with friendly grins aimed at Channing but only Harry knew they weren't really joking.

He had to admit these vampires were a nice bunch, and again he was glad they were all volunteers, otherwise he suspected the creatures of the night wouldn't have been so amiable to be part of this group. The group was large now that all twenty enforcers were present so the getting to know you bit took a little time. During which, he noticed Bunnymort had calmed down... that is to say, he stopped struggling to get away and was watching the proceedings with interest. Harry felt amusement through their link several times but he also knew as soon as this meeting was over, his arse would belong to the Dark Lord. And probably not sexually-he could always hope though.

Harry cleared his throat and shifted nervously when everyone had had a turn and looked at Hermione. She had packets of parchments and began to pass them out to everyone. "We'll be

meeting tomorrow evening at Hogwarts for training. We're not going on this raid with most of you being cold in your defensive and offensive spell work. That would be disastrous. So we'll be meeting in the Room of Requirement."

"What about Death Eaters?" asked Angelina, a worried frown creasing her features.

"Minimal association," Harry replied. "We'll need them to allow us passed the wards. Then we'll be escorted to the Room. After that we're on our own." He fixed everyone with a stern look. "No one and I mean *no one* is allowed to wander off. It'll be your arse if you do. I won't be responsible for what happens to you if you're caught somewhere you are not supposed to be." He looked around and made sure everyone understood that. Then he leaned back and waved for Hermione to go on.

"Now inside the folders, you each have a map of where this Veela camp is and the surrounding area. Study it. Become familiar with it. Draw it on your bloody hand if you know you won't remember everything," she ended, looking pointedly at Neville. He blushed and quickly looked back down at the map. "When we get there, every witch and wizard will be paired with an enforcer, so get to know the person sitting next to you as he or she will be your partner—I know Fred and George, you two will remain together—for the duration of the raid."

"I get the lovely beating heart here," Nathan said, indicating Neville who Harry thought did a good job of not fainting just then.

Channing leaned forward, peered at Luna and then stood, tapping the vampire beside her on the shoulder. The vampire chuckled and stood and they switched places so that Channing would be partnered with Luna.

"Channing...." warned Trent. "We've made a promise not to dine off any of these humans."

Channing only grinned and nodded. Luna didn't look disturbed at all.

After that they went over the other information in the packets. Hermione and Harry talked about how the young Veela should be handled when they were rescued, as that portion of the raid would no doubt be delicate. An hour later the Oaths Hermione had promised were being taken and no one asked to be obliviated, so Harry took that as a victory. He probably would have been much more pleased by this if he hadn't been freaking out about the meeting coming to a close, which meant he didn't have much time at all before Tom reappeared. Maybe he could stall.

"Fred? George? Wouldn't you two like to stay for a bit? Please? We could have tea or... go out or something. Say you will!" he shouted out, nearly hysterically.

"Sorry, Harry," Fred replied, looking at him oddly. "Have a job in an hour for Lucius. But we'll see you later tonight, yeah?"

Hermione grinned evilly at her friend as she grabbed the twins arms and steered them towards the front door, those three were the only Silvers left. "We really must be off now, Harry!"

"Why do I love you again?" he shouted after her, but his only answer was the slamming of the front door.

Accepting defeat, Harry placed Bunnymort on the floor and then slowly began backing away, cringing. Cringing because through the link, he couldn't feel rage. No, what he felt was the utmost calm, which was far worse than rage. And then when his husband transformed, his narrowed red eyes pinned on him, Harry blanched. He could almost forget they were married and madly in love. Tom was seriously pissed.

"T-Tom. Tom, I was just... I wasn't making fun of you—you looked really cute with the bows..." he trailed off in a panic, as there was no excuse that would get him out of this. Tom was furious and wouldn't hear anything he had to say anyway. Harry had already concluded he made a huge mistake.

His husband's eyes glowed menacingly, catching Harry's breath. "I don't think Tom is in at the moment," Voldemort hissed as he strode forward and grabbed the front of Harry's robes with a white knuckled fist.

Harry sucked in a breath. *I'm in for it now.* And on top of that, as Voldemort Apparated them away, he thought dazedly, *he's so bloody hot like this.*

"Ah! Fuck, Voldemort! That HURTS!"

The Dark Lord stepped back and admired his work. His gaze caressing the reddening flesh of his husband's exposed arse propped up in the air for him. He and Harry were back in the kink room and Harry was currently kneeling on the bed with his hands chained to the head board. He was also collared and leashed. The leash tied to the headboard as well.

Voldemort lifted the black leather covered paddle, smacking it against his palm, watching as Harry flinched at the sound of the thing hitting his hand. "No less than you deserve, brat," he murmured lowly as he pulled his arm back, preparing for another swing. "Now scream for me."

Harry tensed in anticipation of another hit, lowering his head quickly. This time his scream was muffled by the pillow he shoved his face against. Behind him his husband hissed and advanced, dropping the paddle to the side of the bed and climbing on. Harry whimpered when fabric rubbed against his stinging arse as Voldemort leaned over him. A hand dived into his hair, grabbing a handful and yanking, exposing Harry's face.

"I want to hear you scream," Voldemort whispered darkly into his ear.

Harry bit his lip as a hand caressed his inflamed arse before gripping his hip possessively. He turned his head a fraction and his lips were immediately captured in a bruising kiss. Without thinking about it, Harry pressed back against the hips pressing into him from behind. Enjoying the pain this caused his abused arse and wanting more. He tried to keep from showing his twisted sense of pleasure too much, but knew he was probably failing on that horribly.

"T-Tom," he finally pleaded.

The Dark wizard stretched out a hand to the leash and shortened the length, making it impossible for Harry to bow his head into the pillow again. "Your screams will echo around the dungeons."

Five more spanks and Harry did scream. Screamed loudly because he knew that's what his husband wanted. Five more spanks that hurt like a bitch, and yet also had his cock pulsing and hard as a rock, needing to be touched. Harry spread his legs further with each hit, seeking some kind of relief from the pain and pleasure building inside him. He was panting now; sweat dripping down the sides of his face, body flushed almost as red as his arse surely was. His entire being trembling and tense. Waiting.

Another scream tore passed his lips as his arse was hit again, but this time his scream ended in a needy sob as tears gathered on his dark eyelashes. That one had hurt terribly. He didn't think he could take anymore.

"My whore," Voldemort hissed as he dropped the paddle upon the bed and climbed up behind his husband. "You spread your legs just a little bit wider every time I hit you," he ended, pressing lubed fingers in between Harry's crease. Harry whimpered and pressed against those cold fingers eagerly, the coldness slightly soothing the fire the paddle had caused. "Answer!"

"Yes!"

Only for me, Voldemort whispered against his neck as he pushed in a finger.

Only for you, Harry gasped, moaning both from the pain and relief of having been breached with a slick finger. "Please..."

When a second finger entered, Voldemort brought his free hand around and grasped Harry's painfully erect cock in hand, stroking it roughly and causing Harry to choke on his breath as he was assaulted with that pleasure and pain building into a whirlpool low in his gut. Harry had to bite his lip to keep from demanding more, though he supposed his husband heard the moan that meant the same thing.

Harry dropped his head as far as it could go, straining against the leashed collar and panting. He squeezed his eyes closed and tried to ignore the pain as he heard the rustling of cloth behind him. He wasn't entirely prepared when Tom's hips slammed against his arse, driving his cock up his arse and causing him to scream once again. He'd expected Voldemort to play with him more, tease him until he was crying and begging for it.

Tom's hands were rough on his sensitized skin as pounded into the young body beneath him, half his force was from anger, but most was desire as he could never resist the emotional wreck Harry became in bed, no matter the case. That also angered him as he seemed to have no restraint at all when it came to Harry.

In the end, when he'd used his husband to expel that anger, he came to the horrifying conclusion that he'd gone too far. Especially with Harry chained there, panting and with tears falling down his face. It didn't matter that Harry had found release as well. Tom couldn't look

beyond the pain he inflicted. Some of the red marks he created looked on the verge of bleeding. Tom was so horrified by this that he wandlessly released Harry and could do nothing else but retreat after that.

It was perhaps unfortunate for Harry that the Inner Circle dinner was being held that night at their castle, which meant Harry had to sit down at the table shared by more than a dozen, and that meant many would see him wincing in pain as his arse was pressed against the seat of the chair. Never mind that there was a lovely cushion there that Tom had conjured for him before hand. And unfortunately, he was the last to enter the dining room, so all eyes would be upon him as he took his seat at the head of the table beside his blank faced husband.

Despite the satisfying sex, Harry could feel his husband was still a bit mad at him, or at least that was what he was assuming. Tom had fled shortly after their time in the kink room and they hadn't spoken a word since then. Tom's emotions were kind of flat but Harry wasn't overly concerned. He knew Tom would get over it. It wasn't that big of a deal, the bowties. It wasn't like anyone knew Tom was actually the bunny, beyond Hermione...and maybe Luna.

Harry tried to fight off an embarrassed blush- because although his arse stung something awful, every time he felt that sting he was reminded just why and how he had come to be feeling like this and strangely he found himself becoming aroused with each wince passing across his face. So he remained silent as he walked in, keeping his lips pressed into thin lines as he walked down the side of the table towards the head, and trying desperately to keep his arousal a secret from everyone, even his husband.

A little whimper escaped him when he first sat and shifted in his seat, and he quickly dropped his eyes to the table. He didn't dare look at Tom, but knowing him, the Dark Lord was probably smirking. Beside him, Hermione laughed under her breath, knowing full well Tom had spanked him for the stunt he pulled at the Silver meeting with the bows. Harry didn't appreciate her amusement in any way.

"What's so funny?" he hissed at her, his eyes narrowed in childish temper.

Hermione took no notice of it, and smirked. "Do you really want me to say it aloud?"

Harry grit his teeth and proceeded to ignore her and pretty much everyone else at the table, though he did take a moment to study everyone who was present, noting it was the usual bunch. The Inner Circle with a few more wizards and witches within that group he hadn't seen before. As well as Charleston and Lustre, as they were hardly able to attend these things all the time. Auror Andy was not seated next to Hermione at the table. A fact Harry was sure the both of them were annoyed about. He suspected Tom had done that on purpose just for his own amusement.

Fred and George were present, since they were now living here at the moment, and they were sitting on each side of Draco, the three of them sitting on Harry's side of the table beside Hermione. Narcissa was in attendance even though technically she wasn't a Death Eater and was sitting across from them. Harry *knew* Tom had those place settings done that way on purpose, just so he could see the twins cringe every time Draco's mother sent them scary

calculating stares. But she wasn't trying to hex them so that was a good thing. She didn't look pleased, but she didn't look violent either.

Severus and Lucius were seated beside her. The lovers weren't sitting together, and were instead sitting on each side of her, with Lucius next to the Dark Lord. Harry suspected they'd done that on purpose so as to keep Narcissa in line just in case she decided she wouldn't accept her baby's relationship with the twins.

"Harry? Harry, you've been very quiet," Hermione murmured after a time, near the end of dinner. Her voice was hushed, but Tom and those closest heard her. She frowned in worry at him; her eyes flickering to the Dark Lord quickly before going back to him. "Everything alright?"

A strong surge of emotion swept through Harry before he could answer and he looked to the man beside him to find Tom watching him with an unreadable expression. Others around might have thought his look was cold, but since Harry could feel Tom's emotions through their link at the moment, he wasn't bothered by the absence of any feeling in his eyes. But his emotions... that off feeling from before, Harry could now recognize it as rising worry. Tom was very worried at the moment and Harry suddenly realized Tom was worried he might have gone too far in the kink room. Harry nearly laughed aloud when he realized this.

Far from it, Harry thought. He ignored their guests and immediately leaned over to brush his lips against Tom's jaw while dropping a hand to squeeze his husband's thigh. At once the tension in the Dark Lord's shoulders released, though Harry was sure only he noticed the instant lightening of Tom's mood. Maybe Severus and Lucius too, since they were well used to dealing closely with the Dark psychotic wizard, and Harry had caught the two pensively studying he and his husband throughout the meal. Probably worrying about what Tom's bad mood would mean for the rest of them.

"Aside from the fact you were laughing at my discomfort," he finally replied lowly to Hermione. She nodded, again her eyes going between the married couple. "I'm fine, Mione. I was a bit lost in thought."

"What were you thinking about?"

Harry shrugged. "The people we're currently having dinner with," he grinned suddenly. "Bet you're mad you couldn't sit with *Andy*."

Hermione did several things at once. She blushed, frowned- because of the way he always purred Andrew's name- and she shifted uncomfortably because he'd said the name loudly, drawing said Auror's attention, though Andrew probably only heard him say his name. Andrew immediately caught Hermione's shy gaze and winked at her. Hermione smiled back before turning to Harry, hand rising to smooth down her hair. Harry snorted loudly at her actions and then immediately tucked his legs under his chair.

A moment later, a soft grunt escaped Tom. His eyes narrowed while Hermione's eyes widened in horror. Harry cackled gleefully. She'd managed to kick Tom's leg.

"I'm- I'm very s-sorry, sir," Hermione stuttered out, her fingers white around the handles of her fork and knife. "I... Harry—S-sorry," she whispered, truly terrified.

Tom's nostrils flared once before he took a deep breath. Her terror probably helped calm him down. "See that it doesn't happen again."

Harry snickered before straightening up, looking down the table at everyone's plates. "Who's ready for dessert?" he cried enthusiastically, because the room and conversations were far too subdued in his opinion. It had been that way the entire evening and it reminded him too much of the Death Eater meeting.

Anyone who was familiar with Harry's gift with desserts immediately announced they were.

"Great! I've made several new dishes for MR's, and I'd like all of your opinions!" He took a moment to eye those Death Eaters who looked particularly sour, especially ones who eyed him as if he were an experiment. He didn't appreciate it at all that they were making him uncomfortable in his own home. "This is a celebration of your victory of sorts! Please stop looking as if your entire family has died! Be happy. Relax, for Merlin's sake! Tom's not about to strike you down in the middle of a meal... unless you do something stupid."

When nothing changed, Harry turned to his husband with a plead in his eyes. The Dark Lord eyed his followers and gave a nearly imperceptible nod while he dropped a hand on the back of his husband's neck. At once the atmosphere was less cold as those around the table seemed to relax further. Harry sighed in contentment from that and from the fingers that moved from the nape of his neck up into his hair, massaging lightly.

At the mention of Harry's desserts, Severus had scowled at the table, while Lucius sent his lover a fond quirk of the lip. Severus enjoyed Harry's creations though he loathed admitting it.

"It's as if he uses magic to make the concoctions!" Severus hissed when he'd had enough of Lucius' smirks.

"Perhaps," Lucius answered, hard pressed not to laugh.

"It shouldn't be allowed!"

"You're only upset because he can do something exceedingly well," Lucius drawled; amusement clear in his tone.

Severus prepared to retort until he realized the Dark Lord was watching him with a raised brow. He schooled his features and accepted the white chocolate raspberry swirl soufflé Narcissa passed to him. He only had to look at it and breathe in the scent to have his mouth watering.

"Remember to take breaths between bites."

"Lucius, I'm warning you..."

Narcissa sighed. "And why did I need to be seated between you two? Is this my punishment?"

Tom chuckled darkly at that. They all took that as a yes.

Tom walked into the smaller parlor to find Harry standing before the fireplace, staring into the fire with a small frown on his face. Harry had discarded his outer formal robes and was now back in his low hip hugging muggle jeans and a t-shirt while his favorite blood red casual robe thrown on. It didn't bother Tom as this dinner was really only for the Inner Circle, and this was Harry's home so he could go about however he wanted unless there were dignitaries visiting. And Tom would never admit to anyone aside from Harry, but he liked when his husband wore those blasted casual muggle clothes. Those jeans were so low on his hips and that shirt was so tight that whenever Harry lifted his arms, like now as he crossed his arms over his chest, that shirt always lifted to show an expanse of delectable skin.

"Finished ogling me?" Harry asked in amusement. Tom's eyes lifted to find his husband smirking at him, the small frown gone.

"Never," Tom replied, moving forward until they were face to face. Harry sent him one of those brilliant smiles that had his heart constricting painfully. "Harry, I..." Tom paused with a grimace, lightly brushing the back of his fingers down his husband's cheek.

Harry laughed delightedly. "Me too," he answered, finding Tom's unease with saying the words and his worry cute.

Tom raised both hands to cup Harry's face, still looking a bit worried. "I may have been a little too enthusiastic with your punishment."

"As always." Harry sighed when Tom frowned. "Did I ever tell you to stop? No, I don't think I did and I think it was completely obvious how much your spanking was turning me on, Tom. Beyond that, who was the one who stocked the kink room anyway? Me, right? If I never wanted you to use that paddle on me, or the leashes and collars, I never would have put them in the cabinet."

"You were crying," Tom replied lowly.

"Yes," Harry purred. "It hurt so good."

Tom blew out a breath. "Why must you be so perfect?" he asked, and then looked stricken because it was obvious he hadn't meant to say that aloud.

Harry smiled, raising his hands to trap the ones upon his cheeks against his face. "I'm glad you think so. Means you'll keep me forever and ever."

Tom frowned then. Did Harry still have those same insecurities?

"Err, please excuse us."

"And please don't kill us," someone said from the doorway.

The two within the room turned to find the twins standing there, smiling sheepishly. Both on each side of the door frame with only their heads in view just in case they had to scat quickly.

"Yes?" Tom drawled, his eyes narrowed at the intrusion.

"We um... we need Harry," Fred answered.

"As in right now," said George.

"We may have... um..."

"Gone a little too far with Auror Andy."

"And he'll need a bed very soon. Like now."

"Hermione's ready to kill us."

"And we don't want Andrew embarrassed in front of the other Inner Circle..."

"Hermione and Draco are trying to keep that from happening."

"Yeah, that's it," they ended together, and promptly disappeared again.

Tom sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Why did I ever agree to let them live here?"

Harry laughed and stepped back, allowing Tom's hands to slide from his cheeks. "You didn't agree. You made the decision on your own. You only have yourself to blame."

Tom ignored that as they began walking out of their private parlor. "I'll have Lustre take him home."

Harry stopped short and glared at him. "No!"

"Excuse me?"

"He has to stay here, Tom!"

Tom chuckled darkly, in no way amused. "I don't think so."

"Doesn't he do good work for you? Doesn't he do what he's supposed to without fucking up like a lot of your Death Eaters do? How often do you reward him, huh?"

"This is my home and I'll not have-"

"It's *our* home now and I want him to stay!"

"You're whining like a spoiled child," Tom drawled.

Harry's eyes narrowed, recognizing that statement for what it was. A diversionary tactic. Harry wasn't going to fall for it. "He's staying here tonight." Tom matched his glare and

prepared a retort, so Harry suddenly changed tactics and smiled brightly, saying, "it'll make me happy!"

Tom deflated and cursed that fact half his existence now was to make sure his young husband was always happy. Tom found pleasure in keeping Harry happy and content. He'd never in his life had someone who looked to him to provide those things. It was easily done once he realized Harry strove to do the same for him. It was an experience he hoped never to be rid of. But sometimes... like now, that need drove him mad.

"Very well. I'll have the house elves make up a room," he agreed grudgingly. And there it was. That bloody illegal smile. Tom sneered at nothing in particular and spun away before Harry could ask for something else.

"The empty room next to Hermione's!" Harry called out. Tom growled lowly under his breath; making threats against his husband he knew he'd never follow through on.

Harry smirked at his husband's back as he watched his husband walk away towards his office. He then tilted his head slightly, gaze focusing on Tom's backside.

"Go and see to the Auror, Harry," Tom called out without turning around. "And stop staring at my arse. I'm quite sure *your* arse is not up for another round at the moment."

Harry spun around to race down the corridor back to the parlor where most of the Death Eaters had gone to mingle. He found the twins, Draco, Hermione, Louie and Andrew outside a little ways down the hall. Andrew was slumped against the wall. His eyes were closed, face slack, and it seemed to Harry that the only reason why he was in an upright position was because the twins and Lustre were keeping him propped up.

"I can't believe you actually did this!" Hermione was hissing at the twins. "This is considered his place of work! His boss is here! Colleagues! Were you trying to kill his rank? His reputation?"

"I have to agree with Hermione," Lustre said levelly. "Not the best place for you two to pull a prank."

The twins winced. "We were only trying to help you, Hermione."

Harry forced himself not to laugh, because laughing would draw Hermione's attention to himself in a negative way, since this could be seen as his fault. He had put the idea in the twins' heads after all.

"It's alright," he said quickly, stepping forward. "Tom's had a room prepared for him. We can take Andrew there now. And Tom's only annoyed at the twins, so Auror Andy is good."

"Err... how annoyed?"

Harry didn't answer and let the question hang in the air, as he quite liked the paling of the twins' faces.

Tom moved his attention away from the two he was speaking with to find Harry and the twins had returned, along with an irate Hermione and an amused Draco. Hermione and Draco were together- surprisingly- sitting on a lounge and talking to one another. The twins were across the room with Bellatrix and her husband, Rodolphus. Bellatrix was speaking and she had their rapt attention. Tom barely refrained from groaning. She was probably teaching them things. Was it a good thing those two were going Dark? Harry, also, had come to make an appearance. Every time Tom's gaze searched him out, Harry seemed well received with whichever Death Eater he chose to talk to. But he only chose to talk to those he knew the best.

It was only a few minutes later when Tom noticed he wasn't the only one constantly watching his husband. Tom's eyes narrowed when he saw exactly how his husband was being watched. He pulled entirely away from the conversation he was having with his Lieutenants when he saw the Death Eater head straight for Harry, who seemed to be going towards Draco and Hermione. The Death Eater caught Harry by the arm to gain his attention. It was not Tom's imagination that that hand lingered on his husband's arm longer than necessary. In fact Harry was the one to subtly shake it off with a quick glance across the room at him. Tom pretended not to notice. He wanted to see how far this Death Eater was going to go. Too far, it seemed.

Tom seethed as he watched the bastard drop a hand onto Harry's hip next, thumb half an inch away from his husband's bare skin. Enraged, he couldn't believe Fosston actually had the nerve to pull such a move in his own home, nearly right in front of him. Severus and Lucius felt the cold rage of his aura and unconsciously backed up a step. Their eyes quickly finding what had the Dark Lord boiling angry. Severus shook his head at the stupidity, while Lucius rolled his eyes.

"Ravenclaw," the blond proclaimed with a sneer. "No Slytherin would pull such a suicidal action."

"Quiet," Tom hissed as Harry looked down at the hand with a raised brow and then back up at Fosston.

Harry gave the soon to be dead wizard a polite smile. "Imperiused or just touched in the head?" he asked seriously, which nearly had Tom's rage dissipating to make room for amusement.

He then said something Tom couldn't hear but it had the Death Eater frowning even more. Harry backed away and then turned to leave the insulted wizard behind. Heading straight for his husband, Harry smiled slightly, shivering because he could feel the possessive freak was coming out of his husband; he loved it when Tom went crazy possessive. "Whatever you do, just please don't get blood on our beautiful Veela rugs, okay? Iseut and Diandre were very nice to have sent them to us as wedding gifts."

When Tom nodded, Harry smiled and then left the room, quickly followed by Draco, Hermione, and the twins. Severus and Lucius watched Harry go, amused with the workings of that marriage.

The moment Harry was gone, Voldemort approached the wizard whom the others had begun to back away from. Severus and Lucius followed closely behind.

"What did you think you were doing, Fosston?" Lucius hissed when the three stopped before the wizard. The entire room went silent, having felt the coldness seeping into the room from the Dark Lord, and seeing the Dark Lord and his Lieutenants with their wands drawn.

Before Fosston could answer, the Dark Lord had him under the Crucio. "You dare covet what is mine, Fosston? You dare follow him with your eyes in such a way? YOU DARE TOUCH MY HUSBAND IN OUR OWN HOME?"

"N-no, m-my lord! I w-would never-"

"Do you think I'm blind? *CRUCIO!*" Tom bellowed, upping the power behind the curse, reveling in the raw screams following his curse. Tom then turned, looking at his Lieutenants.

They pointed their wands and said together, "*crucio.*"

Bella came up, tutting. "You flirted with our little lord, Fosston? Shameful! He belongs to our Lord!" she cried right before her curse joined the others.

The Dark Lord pulled back his wand and stood there, watching as his followers continued to curse Fosston. An idiot to be sure, he thought maliciously. He wanted so desperately to decapitate Fosston but he did promise not to get blood on the carpets. He lifted his eyes, looking over the assembled group. "Let this be a lesson to you all," he stated coldly. "Harry is mine. I will not allow such disrespect to go on." He pointed his wand to the nearly mindless Fosston. "*Avada Kedavra.*"

Chapter Nineteen

The Black Bunny

Chapter Nineteen

Auror Andrew Charleston sat up with a gasp. He bolted up so fast he had to throw a hand against his dizzying head and close his eyes against the world around him spinning. "Bloody fuck!" he exclaimed and then immediately wished he hadn't when his head started pounding.

Andrew looked around after that, blinking rapidly when he didn't recognize where he was or when. After short silent pondering, in which he started to panic because the last thing he remembered was being in the Dark Lord's open parlor- did he get drunk in front of the Dark Lord?- Andrew spotted a folded piece of parchment upon the night stand beside the bed.

The Auror, who was still fully dressed, shifted and swung his legs over the side and carefully stood before grabbing the letter which had his name printed on the outside where he could see it. Opening it, Andrew's eyes moved back and forth rapidly as he read the rather abrupt letter. As the moments went by he realized this was from the Dark Lord and his face paled as he read the chastisement underlining the words that were written. Apparently the twins had gotten to him and managed to drug him without anyone knowing. The Dark Lord complained he was a horrible Auror to have allowed that to happen.

Lord Voldemort then went on to explain that he was still within the Dark Lord's manor. When he read this part, Andrew's eyes shot away from the parchment to look around quickly, expecting to see his master in the shadows and ready to dish out punishment for his lax in observation. When Andrew was sure he was very much alone, he went back to the letter and a smile curved his lips when the Dark Lord went on to tell him exactly why he was still there and what should be done immediately after reading this letter. Andrew had the distinct impression the Dark Lord had had to put up with a lot of nagging and was more than tired of it. And this was confirmed by the scribbling at the end by another's handwriting, telling him Hermione was becoming impatient and downtrodden.

Andrew laughed when he realized the handwriting belonged to Harry Riddle. He really liked Harry and this was certainly an order he had no problem following since he had become impatient as well in regards to Hermione. He had to be patient for nearly a year now, as he'd been watching Hermione since he first saw her in the cafeteria the first week of her employment at the Ministry. At that point he already knew who she was. Her role as Harry Potter's best friend was well known and at that time she had already been declared a neutral along with her friend. It was blasted all over the *Prophet* for weeks about the two turning their backs on the Light. That was one of the main reasons why Andrew didn't automatically turn his back on his chances with her. He had been only watching though, worrying, because the Dark Lord hadn't at that time declared what his intentions were anymore about Potter, and therefore Potter's friends.

Andrew turned from the bed, stashed the amusing letter into his pocket, and then strode for the door. He'd been ecstatic when Malfoy had given him a letter a few months ago to deliver to Hermione. Deliver personally. He watched her for a few minutes before approaching where her desk was located at the very back of the department. Watched her try to bite back remarks to her superior when she handed over work and tried to speak of other things only to be completely ignored. Her boss had simply ignored her words entirely and had dropped another load of files in front of her. She's stared at the files with something akin to loathing, and then it was definitely loathing she had in her eyes as she pinned her gaze upon the wizard's back as he walked away.

She was pretty; beautiful when her cheeks were flushed with rage and her hair, usually tame, seemed to curl into a wild mass as if her anger had induced it. Andrew had given her another minute to calm down before finally approaching and he did not miss how she flushed in a different way as they spoke and tried patting down her hair in a subtle manner. He had been delighted by her reactions to him.

Andrew's thoughts on the matter and his steps down the hall came to a standstill when he heard voices floating into the corridor from a door that was barely ajar. He heard Hermione and another male's voice. He approached and prepared to listen before he would allow himself to jump to conclusions... not that he and Hermione were seeing each other yet. But he'd made it plain he wanted to stake claim. Andrew paused right beside the door and leaned against the wall.

"Don't wanna get up, Mione. I'm still tired."

Andrew recognized the whining voice belonging to Harry and mentally breathed a sigh of relief.

"Well maybe if you didn't stay up at all hours of the night fucking your sexy Dark Lord... Honestly!"

A quick grin flashed across Andrew's face. She sounded annoyed.

Harry chuckled lowly. "Again with the bitter tone."

"Shut up."

"Andrew's right next door, you know. I'm sure he wouldn't mind it at all if you snuck into the room and slipped beneath his sheets."

Andrew continued to grin. *No*, he thought, *not at all*.

"Harry."

There was a dramatic sigh that trailed off as a loud yawn. "Fine. I'll stop teasing you."

Andy moved then, slowly, barely sticking his head in through the crack of the door to peer inside and easily spying the two lying together on a crème colored four poster. Now Andrew knew Harry was a gay bloke, but he couldn't help be insanely jealous at the moment. The two

of them were lying upon the bed, beneath the covers. Lying so close that one might think they were lovers.

Hermione lifted a hand and softly brushed Harry's fringe away from his tired eyes. "Harry, really. What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Tom got up early and I didn't want to be alone, so I came here. Like I usually do. Nothing strange about it."

"You only slip into my bed when something is really bothering you... You have that same look about you. The same one you get every time you think something tragic is going to happen." Harry remained silent. Hermione nodded. "This is also about your wanting a ba-"

"Auror Andy is standing at the door," Harry said suddenly, scaring the daylights out of Andrew. How had he known? When he heard Harry snickering, Andrew cleared his throat and immediately stepped inside despite the action being quite rude, walking in without permission. But he'd already been caught eavesdropping so it didn't really matter, not to mention the fact he had the letter demanding he spend some time with Hermione anyway.

Instead of being embarrassed or shying away as he thought she might, Hermione jumped from the bed, grabbed the robe hanging on the post at the end of it and hurried over to him while tossing the robe over her shoulders. Andrew tried to do the right thing and *not* look her form over as she quickly approached. By Harry's snort Andy suspected he didn't do a very good job of being gentlemanly. But honestly! Hermione wore... very sexy things to bed.

"Andrew! Are you okay? I'm sorry about what happened. Bloody twins..."

Harry sighed and forced himself out of bed for the second time that early morning. "I'll just be going," he said on the way past them.

Hermione turned worried eyes onto him. "Harry-"

"I'm fine," he said with a dismissive wave of his hand. "See you at Hogwarts." And then under his breath he muttered to Andrew as he passed the Auror, "snog her for Merlin's sake."

That evening Belial and Penth stood waiting for the rest of their Silvers just outside of the Hogwarts wards.

"Belial," began Penth lowly, staring at him.

"Give it a rest. I don't want to talk about it," he answered her inquiring look.

"But what happened to make you start thinking things like this again? Did you two fight?"

"No! Seriously, I don't want to talk about this," Belial answered firmly, turning and walking to the gate, leaning against it. "Tell me about Andrew," he said to distract her.

The narrowing of her eyes told him she wasn't that easy to distract, but thankfully she did drop it for the moment and went on to tell him about her time with Andrew and about how he

finally snogged her. Right up against the bedroom door. "And he was trying so hard to keep his hands in one place," she giggled. "He was gripping my hips a little too hard...not that I minded that part at all." She sighed dreamily, "he snogs brilliantly."

Belial listened half-heartedly, though most of his attention was inward. Harry had woken up this morning just after Tom's alarm had gone off. Harry had still been very tired and whined quite loudly (with a lot of vulgar language) about the early waking and Tom's early departures each morning. This only had Tom laughing and wrapping Harry in his strong embrace. This was part of their early morning routine, and Harry had spent moments with his face against his husband's neck breathing in Tom's scent while Tom's hand carded through his hair. Tom held him so tenderly and yet so possessively, leaving Harry feeling deliriously happy.

And after, when Tom finally left the bed to get ready, Harry had remained there with that same smile, listening to Tom shower and then after watching his husband get ready for the day. Tom had shot him a playful smirk from the bathroom and Harry realized then that he couldn't possibly ever be happier.

And that's when it began; the reminders niggling at the back of his mind making his smile fade. Whenever he was happy with his life, content whole heartedly, something always happened to destroy it and he was struck by panic and an overwhelming need. He had to... he had to make sure he didn't lose Tom. He had to be very careful, to do whatever he must to keep Tom happy and interested even if that meant sacrificing certain things...

"Belial."

He blinked rapidly, wrenching back to the present. He frowned at Penth and turned away, relieved when he saw Draco and Remus approaching. Draco smirked and opened the gate just as the other Silvers arrived, coming over the slight hill from Hogsmeade.

When the rest the Silvers arrived minus Luna since she was already within Hogwarts, Belial instructed them into two line. As each one stepped up to the wards, Draco and Remus took an arm and led them through. Once they were all on Hogwarts grounds, Penth took up the front and began to lead the nervous Silvers across the lawn towards the grand doors while Belial took up position beside the line.

He remained silent as they walked; his lips drawn into pensive lines. He gave Remus and Draco nods of thanks as they broke away to go do whatever it was they were supposed to be doing at this time. He did, however, manage a real smile when Remus fondly gripped his arm before leaving with Draco.

As the group approached the stairs, a figure appeared out of the shadows next to the staircase. "Belial," the voice purred. Most of the Silvers froze in fear. Belial heard Neville whimper. It was clear to all who this person was.

Belial shook his head in amusement as his eyes lit upon the tall wizard drenched in black with only his red eyes visible as he examined the cowering group before him. The Dark Lord took a few steps forward, and the Silvers- all except the twins and Penth- took a few steps back. Even Charlie, Bill, and the vampire enforcers were nervous enough to back up

unconsciously. Voldemort's eyes narrowed, though Belial knew it was in amusement. "Belial," he called again.

Belial waved a hand at Penth. She nodded and started to usher the Silvers up the stairs. They were quite happy not to linger in the Dark Lord's presence.

"That's not nice," Belial muttered when he'd stopped in front of Voldemort. "Scaring my minions."

"You cannot tell me you didn't find their paling amusing," Voldemort replied softly, a hand lifting to Belial's jaw and placing a chaste kiss upon his lips.

"Maybe a little," Belial answered, smiling. "Actually, yes, a lot. It was funny."

"I knew you would appreciate my presence."

"Always."

"Hmm... I did have another purpose for meeting with you now. I'll be at the Ministry for the evening. I don't know when I'll be home and I don't want you to wait up for me. Go to bed when you're tired."

"Is that an order?"

"Of course, brat."

Belial's bottom lip stuck out in a pout. Voldemort had just sucked that lip into his mouth as a group of Death Eaters came up from the dungeons and passed right by them. The only thing Belial registered about this was the fact the Death Eaters went deathly quiet upon seeing their Lord and the Gold embracing intimately, but neither seemed to care they had an audience for a brief moment.

When Belial arrived in the Room of Requirement many minutes later, he was quickly approached by Neville. "H-Harry... does he, does You-know-Who know that you're Harry Potter? He called you Belial."

Belial looked around, noticing everyone who didn't know looked like they were thinking the same. He laughed. "What? Do you think I've kept my real identity a secret from Voldemort?" he asked. "How do you suppose I could have done that? Do you think I keep my mask on when we shag every night?"

"You mean every hour," Fred said, snickering.

Neville's cheeks bloomed a lush red. Harry shook his head. "Yes, Neville, he knows who I am." Then he turned away to look at all the faces around him. "Everyone, keep your masks on. You'll want to get used to fighting with them. And from now on, when the masks are worn, so are your aliases. I don't want to hear anyone's real name. Got it?" As the masks were reapplied, he had calls of understanding. "Great. Let's get started."

Two days later Tom returned from the Ministry early. He stopped outside of the parlor when he heard voices and stuck his head inside hoping to find Harry there as well, only to see it was the twins and Hermione. From their talk, he discerned they were going over the details of the Silver raid taking place tomorrow.

"Where is Harry?"

"He's gone to bed already, sir," Hermione answered.

Tom nodded and departed. From Harry, he already knew the training sessions going on the last couple of days had gone on well. Harry was very pleased with everyone's performances. This isn't what concerned Tom at the moment, the raid. What was concerning him was one reason why he'd returned home early.

Harry's behavior. His young husband had been acting strangely these last couple of days. In that Harry was mostly very quiet and very well behaved and this really annoyed Tom. Along with that, Harry had been tense. Always tense in a way that suggested he was preparing for something dreadful to happen and Tom knew it had nothing to do with the raid taking place the following day. The fact was, Tom secretly- or perhaps not so secretly- adored Harry's boldness and exuberance and for his husband to suddenly start acting like an obedient minion... well, Tom couldn't stand it. If he wanted a minion he would have married a minion.

Just as Hermione said, Harry was already in bed when he walked into the bedroom, though he wasn't sleeping and was instead stretched out on his side, propped up with an elbow and reading some parchments. As soon as Tom opened the bedroom door, Harry quickly began to shuffle the papers and stuffed some at the bottom in what he probably thought was a subtle move. Tom inwardly snorted at this. But at least an impish grin was immediately shot his way upon his entering the room.

"You're home early," Harry said.

Tom shrugged nonchalantly. "Tired already?" he asked. "You've been tired a lot lately." Which was true and also worrying.

Harry smiled lazily. "You tire me."

"Physically I hope." Harry's smile broadened. "You aren't getting sick are you?" he asked as he discarded his outer robe.

"No. Nothing like that. I'll be fine tomorrow. I'll get a proper rest tonight."

"You will, yes. Think I'll join you."

"If you join me, how will I get a proper rest?"

"Brat," Tom laughed, stripping under Harry's bold gaze. "Try and control yourself."

"It's very hard with you, Tom."

Tom studied Harry as he approached the bed, thankful Harry wasn't acting oddly at the moment. "I didn't only mean joining you in bed now," he said as he slid in beside his young wizard. "I meant on your raid."

Harry sighed. "This is a Silver affair, Tom."

"You thieved the Veela problem right out from under my nose," he pointed out.

Harry twisted around, pressing against Tom's side. "I did, didn't I?" he said smugly. "At least I'm still letting you do the torture and interrogation parts... and I know why you really want to go. There's no need. I'll be fine. We'll all be fine. And it's not really fair if you come along. It's like saying you don't trust me to do this on my own."

"Harry, you know perfectly well I trust you."

"You'll scare my minions," Harry returned drowsily, his lips moving against Tom's chest as he spoke. Tom could tell he was seconds away from slipping into sleep. "Please let me do this on my own. I need to prove—I want to make you proud."

"You can do it on your own," Tom replied, wrapping his husband tight in his arms, keeping him plastered against his chest.

The minutes ticked by in silence with Tom leisurely running a hand through Harry's hair and listening to husband's breathing finally becoming slow and deep. When he was sure Harry was deep asleep, Tom reached over behind the little minx to spread the parchments out, giving them a look over.

Most were the plans of the raid; maps marked with where each Silver was to be set up at the beginning. The procedure was written down in incredible detail- Hermione's doing no doubt. Tom could find no fault with the laid out plans at all. Beneath the raid plans, Tom found several pieces of cut out newspaper. Tom grabbed those before sitting up completely to study them. There were about a dozen cut outs. All from Wizing real estate listings. Villas. Tom laid aside all but one of the cuttings when he found Harry had circled the picture several times with red ink.

"This is the one you want, little minx?" he murmured into the air, studying the descriptions.

It was a beautiful villa off the coast of Spain. And it had everything they would both enjoy. From its location it would be nice to go there during the English winters and it was remote enough that he could send Harry there in case of emergencies. The fact that it was bloody expensive had Tom chuckling as he set aside the papers inside the drawer of his bedside table.

Tom wondered why Harry had been trying to hide the villa cutouts when he already said he'd buy Harry whatever he wanted. Was Harry not going to show him? Again, this was strange behavior and it bothered Tom so much that he left the bed after that, quickly dressing and then returning down to the parlor the twins and Hermione were in.

"I would like a word with you," he immediately said to Hermione. The witch quickly stood from where she'd been sitting on the rug in front of the coffee table. The twins shared a look and then focused back on Hermione and the Dark Lord.

"Yes, sir?"

"Have you noticed Harry's odd behavior recently?"

Immediately the twins nodded. Hermione bit her lip, dropped her gaze to the floor, and nodded slowly. Tom immediately knew she was aware of what was bothering his lover. "Tell me," he ordered.

"Sir... I can't break his confidence like this." Upon his narrowing eyes, she quickly went on, "but I will say this. Harry's afraid of losing all that he has now." She paused and looked sad. "I hate to say it, but he's right. Every time something good happens in his life, something else always happens to turn his world upside down. In a bad way. That's all I'm saying. He's very afraid."

Tom knew he could pull more from her, but he really didn't need to. He could figure the rest out on his own. He gave the three a curt nod and left, returning back to his room. He stood beside the bed on Harry's side and watched his husband sleeping. His hands balled into fists at his sides. It was those blasted insecurities again. Tom knew he was responsible for much of that and he had a plan on how to make up for the bad he'd caused his husband. But he knew not all the insecurities came about because of what Voldemort had done to Harry's life. So the question was, where the blasted hell were the rest coming from? Again, he had his suspicions as there were several blatant clues but finding out the absolute truth from Harry was becoming a bit of a chore.

As he stood yards away from the ramshackle camp in the middle of nowhere, hidden amongst trees and Disillusioned along with the rest of his team, Belial wondered if Tom would keep his promise and stay out of this. He knew if the Dark Lord did make an appearance, it would simply be because he was worried and not because he didn't trust his husband. Belial knew better by now. But he also knew he had to do this alone without his husband. He had to prove he could go on missions, do things for Voldemort without needing his aid. He had to prove he was strong enough and more than capable.

Trent returned to his side, making himself known by speaking into Belial's ear. "The place is quiet at the moment, but there are visitors who seek to buy. The young Veela are being roused and lined up for auction."

Belial's eyes narrowed upon the clearing just outside where the camp wards used to be. Unbeknown to the kidnappers, Harry and Hermione had already pulled the wards down right after erecting their own ward to keep those within the camp from knowing the wards they put up had been dismantled. "We'll be able to capture those trying to buy the Veela as well. Brilliant. Might be able to find out who else has bought Veela in the past."

He cringed then. He didn't really like to think about the Veela that had been taken in the past. They were probably dead. The kidnapped Veela were never found after having been taken,

and Harry was not naive. He knew eventually, those buying would tire of their 'toys'. And those who were sick enough to buy anyone, especially children, for their pleasure would be sick enough to just kill the Veela once they were done instead of risking setting the prisoner free. It always made Belial sick in the stomach. And now was no different. Just thinking about it had his stomach rolling; he had to swallow thickly several times and take deep breaths to keep from vomiting all over the ground at his feet. Definitely not the right way to start off their first official raid.

"Are you well?" Trent asked with some concern, studying the masked wizard beside him. He couldn't see most of his face, but what he could see was very pale; he could hear Belial's heart racing when a moment ago it wasn't in such a state. He'd gotten to know the leader of the Silvers well enough by now to know Belial wouldn't be this worked up only because they were about to engage in battle.

"I'm fine," Belial answered hoarsely, willing the bile back down his throat. "Are we ready?"

"Yes. Everyone is where they are supposed to be. They are waiting upon the signal."

"Good. Shall we go?"

"Yes. I've been looking forward to this," Trent hissed. Belial managed a smile then, knowing how the vampires felt about the kidnappings. They weren't Veela, and they didn't always have a good relationship with the Veela nation, but Veela were magical creatures, just like Vampires, and in this instance, magical creatures take care of their own. And these were also children, so it meant far more.

Belial raised his wand, weaving it softly back and forth; the tip caressing the wards he and his people had set up outside of the others. Every one of his Silvers were keyed into the wards while the slavers were not. And when he activated it... Belial continued to caress the wards as he hissed out, *ssussnamahessh*. Belial smirked when it was complete. A little surprise waiting for those they'd come to capture.

Belial then looked at Trent and nodded. The vampire's lips parted, his fangs gleaming in the moonlight as he smiled in anticipation as the two moved forward, stepping through the wards as easily as they passed through the mist surrounding the camp. They were the first and only Silvers to come through at the moment. Both were Disillusioned and they walked through slowly. Already they could hear voices as they moved through the camp.

The camp was located in a large grove and several dilapidated shacks made up the camp. As Belial and Trent passed a few, the doors were opened, and Belial could see cages within the shacks. Cages and chains and filth. His jaw clenched tightly as anger and disgust filled him. Trent peered at his companion, his eyes widening as he felt the power pulsing around the young wizard and seeing those green eyes brightening with rage.

"A'right, gents! Next one up! We'll start the bidding at-"

"One hundred Galleons!" someone called out. Silence followed this.

Trent and Belial rounded a shack and came to stop beside it when they saw a group of cloaked men standing before what looked like a makeshift stage. Upon the stage was a tall balding man, holding a girl by her arm. Her hands were chained behind her back and she was glaring poisonously down at those meant to bid on her.

"Nothing below five hundred!" the man spat. "You know the rules."

"That girl," drawled one of the figures, "looks on the verge of sixteen, Mr. Dru. I'll not pay full price when she'll be no good in a month."

The others murmured agreements. As for the girl, she did look older than the other Veela chained together standing in front of the stage. She looked like she'd hit full puberty, where as the rest, boys and girls and ten altogether, looked only on the verge, some even younger than that. Again Belial became sick at the sight. He hadn't expected them to be so young. The girl glared at everyone and started shouting, yelling out in French. The man holding her arm shook her harshly and told her to shut up. Belial smirked when the girl turned to him and spat in his face.

Belial quickly raised his wand to the sky and released red and white sparks that sailed high into the air before the man could retaliate by hitting her as he looked prepared to do. The sparks let off high whistles as they sailed into the air, drawing attention. The cloaked men before the stage spun around to see two masked figures standing not ten feet away, one with his wand pointed into the air.

"Death Eaters," someone hissed.

"Death Eaters have white masks," someone else murmured. "Those aren't white."

"So what? They're still Death Eater masks!"

"W-what are you doing here?" Mr. Dru asked. Belial was quite sure that wasn't his real name. "H-how did you get passed the wards?" Instead of answering, both Belial and Trent remained where they were, silent.

And then someone gasped. It was the girl Mr. Dru still kept a firm hand on. Her gasp drew the others attention. Out of the mist, robed and masked figures emerged. All at once, from all sides of the camp. Belial had to admit the scene was creepy the way they emerged into view. He felt quite proud of that fact, especially when he caught the terrified look on Dru's face.

"We're here for you," Belial finally hissed, his cold gaze roaming over the dozen cloaked men in front of him. "You have all committed heinous crimes by taking and buying these children and you will no longer get away with it. So says the Dark Lord and the Silvers. Us."

As he spoke his last words, the rest of his silvers raised their wands, each trained on a target. The cloaked figures backed up and then scattered just as quickly. They didn't even try to pull their wands and attack. They ran as soon as they realized Apparating was impossible.

Belial sighed and rolled his eyes. "They think we're Death Eaters," he said to Trent.

The Vampire chuckled and watched as his vampires misted in and out of sight, chasing after their next meals. "Your husband's army is feared by everyone."

"That's not very fair!" Belial huffed. "We wanted to battle! We practiced for ages!"

Trent continued to chuckle as he and Belial moved towards the stage where the chained children were huddled down together. The older girl was there as well, having been immediately released when Mr. Dru ran away with the rest of the scum. She was standing in front of the younger kids and many of the children had their arms locked around her legs, probably for solace and protection.

Belial stopped a few feet away from them. He stowed his wand and raised his hands in a peace gesture. Behind him, he knew Penth and the other Silver girls had congregated, prepared to help with the prisoners. "We're not here to harm you. We've come to help. To take you back to your parents."

Some looked at him in confusion and some still looked like they didn't trust him. But the girl, the older Veela, gathered herself and began to speak in rapid French, though instead of obvious insults being thrown at Belial, he could tell she was trying to tell him something as she kept gesturing off to one of the cabins; her eyes drowning with fear and tears.

"Can't understand a word she's saying," Belial whispered to Trent.

"She says her younger brother was bought just before we arrived. A man took him away into one of the back cabins."

"Get them out of here," Belial told Penth before he spun around, wand back in hand, and dashed across the clearing.

Tom was waiting in his office with Lucius when he felt the wards trembling, alerting his attention to the fact Harry had returned. The moment the wards trembled, Tom was hit with a load of emotions. Mostly sickly ones. Disgust and sorrow were prominent. Tom stood from his desk and quickly left his office with a quick word to Lucius to remain where he was.

His pace was brisk as he headed up to the Master bedroom, but when he started to feel panic and disorientation, his gait turned into a full out run. When he rushed into sitting room, Harry was slouched in a chair, his head bowed and his fingers digging into the armrests. Tom's gaze swept over him, looking for any kind of wounds but Harry seemed without though his skin was pale.

"Harry, are you hurt?" he asked, kneeling in front of him, sliding his hands onto Harry's knees.

"No," was the soft reply.

"What's-"

"Did you know the youngest they had there was six years old?" Harry interrupted, his voice almost too low to hear. "A little boy. He had been bought just before we arrived. I found them in a small shack. The wizard was touching—I-I killed him and it was so easy. I killed that wizard right in front of the boy. I shouldn't have done that in front of him, but I- I couldn't help myself, Tom. I couldn't help making his hands shrivel up into dust... and other parts. I couldn't help making every one of his veins close up... And now—I can't help thinking, how many others? How many other children before tonight had been taken? Even now..."

"Harry, it's best not to think about it."

"Somebody needs to!" he shouted, his face finally lifting. "There wasn't one child above the age of sixteen!"

"After that age, Veela are too hard to control. That's when the Veela allure manifests," Tom stated in such a flat tone that it had Harry quickly enraged.

Harry surged to his feet, glaring down at Tom. "Why the fuck do you have to talk about it as if it's not a big deal?" he shouted as he ripped off his gold mask. "As if you don't give a shit!"

Tom stood, taking in the shaking, bristling young man in front of him. "Harry," he began softly, "I care this has affected you so badly."

"You really don't get it," Harry murmured, trying to step back and away. "You don't care at all."

Tom's hand shot out and captured his chin, his eyes were hard. "I didn't need to offer my services for this in order to gain their allegiances. I could have pulled the Veela to my cause in other ways. Do you honestly think I don't care at all?"

"I'm... No, I don't think that," he whispered.

Tom's eyes softened. "It does no good to get so worked up over something that has already happened and cannot be changed. At least you're saving them now. That is what you should focus on. It's as I've taught you. You must control your emotions. Don't let emotion control you when it'll do you the least good. In this case you must bundle your emotions and use it as motivation."

Harry nodded finally, dropping his eyes to look at the floor and clenched his hands into tight fists at his sides. "I-" Harry's voice broke. Tom saw his eyes were getting wet. "I don't want to be weak in front of you," he whispered at last.

"Am I not the last person you should be afraid to show weakness to? You should trust me, above all, with your weaknesses."

"I don't want to disgust you," Harry answered in a trembling voice, making sure to keep his stinging eyes on the floor.

"Your emotions make you unique to me, Harry. And nothing about you will ever disgust me. Why is it you refuse to believe me when I say this? These fears you have about us are

ridiculous."

Harry was silent for long moments. And then finally he stepped back, putting unnecessary space between them. "The prisoners need to be interrogated so we can find if they have other camps or if that was the only one," he replied flatly. "Three were the kidnappers and the rest of the prisoners are buyers."

"Don't do that," Tom warned lowly, stepping up and grabbing the back of Harry's neck. "Don't you dare step away from me."

Harry's gaze shot up, his temper beginning to flare again only to see the beginnings of fear swimming in Tom's eyes. Harry released a strangled breath and threw himself against his husband, pressing the side of his face against Tom's rapidly beating heart. An arm wrapped tightly around his back while the hand upon his neck travelled up and curled tightly into his hair, nearly to the point of pulling painfully. Tom's arm was squeezing and Harry held onto to Tom's back just as tightly.

Like this they were both easily soothed. Nowhere else would be as perfect. Harry was back to feeling safe, protected, loved... Tom was his sanctuary.

"Brat," Tom hissed, arm tightening more. The pain had been quite literal when Harry made to put distance between them and he didn't appreciate the rising emotions immediately bubbling up because of it. "We need to finish this. If there are other camps, they'll disappear quickly once they've heard..."

Harry nodded as he lifted his face, seeking his husband's mouth as Tom did the same; meeting softly, lingering with each soft caress for a few short minutes before Harry returned his head to Tom's shoulder; still amazed that such a short soft nearly chaste kiss could still leave him breathless. "You should go."

It took a lot of willpower, but Tom finally managed to pull back. When he did, he studied Harry's flushed face carefully, thankful at least his husband wasn't so pale anymore. "Are you sure you're alright? Physically?"

"Yes. Why do you keep asking?"

"Through the link... I felt panic and disorientation."

"I don't know what that was," Harry answered. "Probably the side effects of the Portkey. It's nothing to worry your evil head about."

Tom nodded even though he thought that didn't make sense. The disorientation must have been bad if Harry had started to panic. Not only that, but the disorientation happened a minute after he'd arrived. It didn't add up. Still he nodded and left it alone, not wanting to get Harry worked up again. He then ordered Harry to bed with the promise he would alert his husband should they need to have another raid that night.

Soon after, he left their rooms and went back to his office to collect Lucius before returning to Hogwarts where the prisoners had been taken. They had decided this because Tom wanted

the students to hear the interrogations. He wanted the students to learn a lesson here. He wanted them to know exactly why, after information was pulled, these wizards deserved death.

Harry remained at home, because like he said before, he was not into torture and he never would be. Therefore he had no problem handing this part over to Voldemort to take care of. Most of the Silvers had gone home to celebrate a job well done and await further orders. All except the twins, Hermione, and Luna. The twins were at Hogwarts, insisting they be able to help with the interrogations, while Hermione and Luna went to Malfoy Manor to help out with the kidnapped Veela and sending out owls to their parents.

Lucius and Voldemort met the twins and Draco in the Entrance Hall; Agni and Rudra looked grave. "Is he okay?" they immediately demanded.

"Why wouldn't he be?" Voldemort inquired.

"He snapped!" Agni exclaimed. "He bloody well snapped after rescuing that boy from the nasty pedophile! After we pulled the wizards from the wards- that was bloody wicked, by the way- Belial set the entire camp on fire and stood there, watching it burn to ashes. He would have burned the prisoners with the camp too but Penth managed to convince him not to."

Rudra cleared his throat. "I don't think he was quite all there at the time. He kind of looked like... you, sir. You know, he had this psychotic light in his eyes."

"Do you think insulting me is wise?"

The twins snickered. "But, sir! We think you're brilliantly psychotic!"

Draco sighed while Lucius shook his head. "What about these wards? What made them so 'wicked'?"

"Yeah!" the twins exclaimed, very excited. "Belial used Parsel magic... those fools all ran away nearly the moment they saw us. Didn't try to fight or anything. Just ran."

The other twin nodded rapidly. "When we caught up to them, every single one of them was stuck in the wards like gum on the bottom of a shoe. It was brilliant! They couldn't move until we'd extracted them. And the ward must have sapped their energy because they were all basically boneless useless masses once we'd pulled them out."

"So everything went well then?" Draco asked as they all turned to head to the dungeons.

"Course, hot stuff! It helped that the bastards in no way wanted to be caught and thought running away would be the best thing to do. If there are any more camps, hopefully it'll be just as easy."

Voldemort nodded. "We're about to find out." Beneath their masks, the twins grinned wickedly and began to rub their hands together. They were so joining in on this.

As the five descended down into the dungeons, Voldemort thought about what the twins had told him about Harry. He wondered why Harry hadn't said anything about burning the camp

to the ground... though he supposed it really wasn't that important. He would have done the same. And he could imagine what his young husband's mentality would have been like after finding that wizard molesting a little boy because despite being neutral, Harry could have a very violent mentality when pushed very hard. Voldemort suspected this came from their bond through the link. But also from the things he'd endured during his life. And unsurprisingly, this bit of news pleased the Dark Lord very much.

Harry shifted in his chair, sighing in boredom. It was later in the week and two days after the last raid which took out the last of the Veela camps within Britain. Only three had been in operation and luckily for the Silvers, the remaining camps had not heard about what happened with the first one before being taken down. Despite how he had been feeling lately, Harry took great pleasure in watching the young Veela being reunited with their families and Iseut and Diandre declared he had the Veela nation's everlasting gratitude and loyalty. Tom was immensely pleased when he heard this. Those loyal to Harry were inevitably loyal to the Dark Lord.

"Is this what you do all day when you're posted here?" Harry asked Draco. Currently he was slumped in a chair within Draco's rooms at Hogwarts doing absolutely nothing at all. The same went for Hermione and Luna. "'Cause this is booooring," he went on. "Do you even have an actual job when you're here?"

Draco didn't answer. Draco was too busy lying on his back on the couch, completely under Fred's thrall. Fred, who had his hand down Draco's pants and his mouth sucking vigorously on the blond's neck. Draco's hands were digging into Fred's shoulders while his head was thrown back; eyes closed and small pants escaping his swollen lips as he hitched his hips in rhyme with Fred's stroking hand.

"We're right here, you know?" Harry reminded. Still no answer. Knowing Fred, he was going to make Drake come within the next few minutes if it were the last thing he did no matter if they did have an audience. Apparently Draco was alright with that.

Draco groaned, arching his back and hitching his hips. "Fred," he gasped. "I'm gonna... I'm gonna..."

"Yeah?" Fred murmured against his neck. Then he purred, "good."

Harry sighed, shifted in his seat- because yes, he had a hard on- and tipped his head to the side to peer at the two witches sitting on the rug near his chair. Both had their backs to the snogging couple. Hermione was ensconced in her reading- surprisingly it wasn't an academic book, but unsurprising at the same time was that it was large lingerie catalogue. When Luna wasn't looking at the catalogue, she was peeking over her shoulder, staring unabashedly at the couple on the sofa. Harry quickly looked away when Hermione pulled away from the magazine to watch him, her eyes narrowed in worry. She'd been doing this all week and Harry always ignored her silent questions.

The door opened then and in strode George. He took one look at the couch and grinned. He then plopped his arse down on the rug right in front of the couch and just watched. He wasn't

watching long before Draco made a strangled gasp. His eyes squeezed closed, body arching into Fred, who had pulled his face back to be able to watch Draco's expression as he came.

"Bloody hell," Harry murmured and pointedly turned away to the girls again, only to find Luna leering at him. "Slag," he said to her.

She laughed. "That was intense. An enjoyable experience."

"Luna, you weren't even a part of it," he replied, a smile tugging on lips that had been turned down most of the day.

"Who says I didn't have a physical reaction to it though?"

"Merlin," Harry muttered, turning away from her. He really hadn't needed to know that. He turned back just in time to see George stand, shifting his robes around the trousers that had suddenly become too tight.

"Lucius wants a word with us, bro. Business," he explained, striding forward to slap his brother's arse.

Fred broke away from Draco's swollen mouth, sucking on Draco's bottom lip as he did so. "You good, love?"

Draco smiled dazedly and then lifted his arms to George, who immediately knelt down as Fred climbed off the blond. George wrapped Draco in a hug, kissing him sweetly as Fred waved his wand over Draco, cleansing the evidence of his orgasm.

"What about you?" Draco asked Fred, eyeing the copperhead's straining crotch.

"Don't worry about me, love. We'll finish this later," Fred promised with a roguish grin. "Can't keep your father waiting, can we?"

"You too?" Draco asked hopefully, looking at George.

George nodded, smiling as he stood. The twins stared down at their blond. "You are so cute in your post orgasmic daze. Completely cuddly and adorable."

Draco was already flushed, but his ears reddened further at this. Harry sighed. The twins were right. Draco was adorable some times.

"We'll be back soon, love. And then we'll go ring shopping like you wanted."

Draco's returning smile was brilliant.

When the twins had gone, Harry jumped from the chair and approached the couch just as his friend turned over to snuggle against the back of the sofa. "C'mon, Drake. Get your lazy arse up. I want to fly; go do something."

"Give me a few minutes, Potter," Draco replied through a yawn. "I was up at the crack of dawn today. No thanks to your husband. Just a little lie down."

Harry groaned and turned away. "Fine."

Being completely bored and seeing that the girls and Draco didn't seem to want to do anything other than what they were doing, Harry donned his cloak and mask and left Draco's chambers, figuring he'd walk around a bit. Tom was somewhere, busy doing Merlin knows what as he had been for the last week and Harry wasn't sure his husband was even at the school at the moment. Eventually he ended up in the Headmaster's office, sitting in a chair before Dumbledore's portrait.

"Ah, Harry," Dumbledore greeted as soon as his portrait had been reanimated. "I'm glad you came to see me again. I wanted to talk to you about something."

Harry smiled politely even though he felt a little wary, wondering what Dumbledore could want to talk to him about. Despite Dumbledore's apparent acceptance of his relationship with Tom, he thought it weird Dumbledore hadn't tried to change his mind in any way. Maybe that would come now. And as much as Harry liked and respected Dumbledore, he wouldn't be able to stay and listen if that was what Dumbledore was about now. Anyone who tried to sway him away from his husband no longer had any rights to speak with him. He was pretty sure he'd made that clear to everyone of his acquaintance.

"Harry..." Dumbledore began and he looked a little embarrassed which ensnared Harry's attention. "Do you remember when you came down to find Tom and myself conversing?"

"Yeah. I was really surprised."

"Yes. Well... Tom came to me for advice. In a roundabout way, I suppose."

Harry leaned forward eagerly. Tom refused to tell him what he and Dumbledore spoke about that night. Now it seems he would find out and Harry would do anything to get out of the current mood he'd been in recently.

"Tom was concerned about babies. He told me you were determined to have his child."

Harry sat back, frowning. Tom had gone to Dumbledore about that? Shocking. Aside from that, this line of discussion was definitely not going to cheer him up. "I'm amazed he talked to you about it."

Dumbledore smiled. "Yes. He said you were determined and he asked me to tell him he wasn't fit to have children so that he could relay that message back to you." Dumbledore paused to smile when Harry only blinked at him. "I told him I couldn't do as he wished since he had you now. Harry, I know you are determined but please do not trick Tom into becoming a parent. You must talk about this with him. You both must be in agreement. You know him. Probably better than I ever did. But what I know of Tom Riddle... he does not take kindly to losing control or being pressured."

Harry nodded, eyes dropping to the floor. He'd already thought about this, quite often actually. "He would definitely resent that," he said more to himself, but Dumbledore answered with a nod.

"Yes. Now I say this because I could tell the last time I saw you two together that you make each other happy. I am happy for you both, Harry. Never doubt that... even if the Dark *seems* to be winning. I would hate to see this happiness you've both found washed away simply over a misunderstanding of sorts. I know how stubborn the both of you are."

Harry nodded again, his lips pinched thin. Dumbledore studied him a moment, smiling understandingly. "I know how much you've always wanted a family of your own-"

Harry suddenly stood. "No," he said firmly. "No, I was being selfish, foolish. We're happy as things are, Tom and I."

"I didn't say for you to give up, Harry."

"No," Harry said more to himself. "He's all I need. Tom's my life. I can't... I can't lose him. He doesn't want children and I'm not going to ruin what we have by pushing it. I only want him to be happy."

"Harry," The portrait tried again, but Harry shook his head and lowered the mask over his face.

"Besides, what do I know about raising children?" he turned and pierced Dumbledore with a flat look. "Wasn't raised in the best of ways, now was I?"

"You know love," Dumbledore replied softly.

"Love?" Belial laughed hollowly. "Not the love of a proper family, Dumbledore. You messed up there. They loathed me."

"What do you mean? Surely you aren't speaking of your relatives?"

"It doesn't matter anymore."

He said nothing else and turned away, leaving the office and not bothering to give a goodbye. It quite surprised Dumbledore when after two minutes had passed Tom appeared, walking in from the stairway leading up to the bedroom tower. Dumbledore watched him walk across the office. "I hope you heard everything," he stated softly.

Tom remained silent as he walked through but he did glance at the portrait from the corner of his narrowed eye while drawing up the hood of his cloak. At the door, he turned back and shot a spell at the portrait before leaving, rendering it inanimate once again. Harry's words bounding around in his head as he went. The unhappiness he could hear despite Harry's assurances that he was fine with the way things were. And then the insecurities about their relationship. Again. He'd heard that as well. How could Harry be so strong in character and yet so fragile at the same time? Harry was a very self assured young wizard which was one of the reasons why Tom was so attracted to him, so why was Harry so insecure about the two of them? And why would he cave about the child thing so easily? That wasn't like Harry at all.

Tom snorted and shook his head as he descended the stairs. Harry was going to change his mind now? A little late for that. Tom had already made up his mind. He already spent hours-

days really- thinking about it. He was the reason Harry had no parents, no real family. He'd taken Harry's family and now he was determined to give it back any way he could. It was what he wanted and Harry would have to deal with it. It was a brilliant plan and he refused to let the brat thwart him this time around.

And again, his home life had been mentioned in a disparaging manner, though not enough was said about it for Tom's liking. Harry was always desperate to change the subject whenever he brought it up. Tom was on a new mission. Find out about Harry's home life and if necessary, eradicate those who might have made Harry's life hell. As he stalked down the corridor, his red eyes lit with a malicious light. This would be fun.

Tom raged into the Malfoy parlor the next day, so intent on his mission that he didn't stop to think about why there was a strong silencing and locking charm upon the room and door as he dismantled them with a simple flick of his wand. But he soon realized the moment he stepped inside and found Lucius and Severus in a position he'd been in with Harry not fifteen minutes earlier. He quickly looked away and pointedly cleared his throat.

Severus' gaze shot over his shoulder and then he hastily pulled back from leaning over Lucius' back where he had the blond bent over the lounge; aborting his mission of unclasping his lover's pants, fully intending to drag them down to his ankles.

"Tell me about Harry's home life, Severus," he demanded. "Before he left school."

Severus didn't answer right away. Instead he stared at the Dark Lord while Lucius pulled himself together. When the blond finally turned around, Lucius took one look at Tom and uncharacteristically and unwisely snorted in amusement. Severus quickly sidestepped to stand in front of the blond idiot. Fortunately Tom was on a mission and paid no attention to their reactions to his appearance.

The Dark Lord narrowed his eyes when the two remained silent. "I'm getting tidbits here and there that maybe not all was well with the muggles who raised Harry and he desperately changes the subject whenever I bring it up. I want information."

Severus cleared his throat and glared over his shoulder at Lucius; the blond had yet to stop looking so amused. "My Lord... forgive me," he began cautiously when he turned back, "but did you know you have chocolate on your face?"

"And what looks like flour in your hair... my Lord?" Lucius whispered faintly, staring in awe because the Dark Lord's hair was tussled fantastically as if he'd had a thousand hands running through it minutes before. A thousand hands covered in flour. Never before had they seen him look and dressed so... tussled and so very young. One could almost forget he was the Dark Lord if not for his narrowed crimson eyes promising all sorts of bad things.

Tom bit back the urge to curse them. He could imagine his appearance well enough. Earlier, he'd gone to the kitchen to confront Harry about his relatives and somehow the little minx had easily gotten out of it. Again. This time by spilling a pot of heated fudge all over himself. Afterward Tom knew Harry had done that on purpose, because really, how else had he

managed to get the fudge spilled on his back, *under* his t-shirt, unless he'd done it on purpose. And then the brat had gone on screaming about the fudge burning and to "get it off!"

What else could Tom do then but vanish the t-shirt and send a hasty cooling spell. Harry had then peered over his shoulder at him with those blasted half lidded eyes and soon, predictably, Tom was leaning Harry over the counter without conscious thought and licking the fudge off his back. And of course that led to him licking other delicious parts of Harry because the chocolate had travelled and Tom wasn't exactly sure how Harry had managed to get flour in his hair as the little minx's stomach had been pressed against the counter the entire time. Well there was that one time when he'd reached back for a heated kiss, and then the other time when Harry had done this brilliant maneuver that caused Tom to uncontrollably shout out in ecstasy...

"My Lord?"

Tom blinked away the memory, clearing his throat again and caught the barest traces of smiles on the lovers' faces. He scowled. Harry had pulled a vanishing act right after that; disappearing from the kitchen and the castle as well just to get away from the discussion he knew Tom wanted to have.

"His family," Tom prompted lowly as he spun around and stalked to the mirror hanging near the door. He scowled at his reflection and lifted his wand to his face, cleaning off the fudge around his mouth and chin. He absolutely did not allow his cheeks to darken when he saw the chocolate and where it was and why it would be there.

"I was always under the assumption Harry was spoiled and pampered at home, my Lord," Severus finally replied. "I've heard nothing to negate these thoughts."

"Spoiled and pampered?" Tom asked lowly as he turned around to face them. He looked more presentable, except his hair still looked wild. And now he was looking exceptionally angry, which was always a bad sign. "Do you think a spoiled pampered brat would be made to wait until he returned to school before he could get a burn on his arm tended to? A burn so bad that it scarred even after Madam Pomfrey tended it? Does that sound like someone pampered?"

"What about a boy who was made to learn to cook at a very early age? If he were pampered, why would Harry have been made to cook at all? Or how about the fact when Harry eats, at times he has the tendency to curve his arms around his plate and lowers his head as if expecting his meal to be taken from him at any moment. Do you think he learned these things at the place where he was supposedly spoiled?"

"You see, Severus," he said when looks of comprehension crossed Lucius' and Severus' features. "We've all seen how very confident he can be, except when it comes to those he loves. The relationships he has now. He's very insecure. He was terrified when he thought Draco would stop being mates with him. He told me it would be very painful. And I don't think the word ecstatic could cover how he felt when he had the bloody twins back with him. And as for our relationship, he's full of insecurities no matter what I say. Why would someone like Harry be like that? Especially when he sends- and I'm taking Harry's words here- a big 'fuck you' to the rest of the world."

Lucius and Severus could only stand there looking at him. They had no idea what to say. Severus had always believed Harry had grown up just as pampered as his father had been and Lucius' opinions stemmed from Severus' knowledge.

"Answer me now!" Tom shouted.

"He grew up with his Aunt and Uncle and their son. In Surrey somewhere," Severus finally replied.

Tom growled. That wasn't enough. The two in front of him tensed, waiting. Finally he took a deep breath and focused on Lucius. "Summon Fred and George. They will know," he said, suddenly sure, as he was reminded of the looks the three had shared. When Harry had had his arm healed after the Alley ambush and Tom demanded to know where the burn scar had come from.

"I will need a vial of Veritaserum immediately, Severus," he said as Lucius hurried to do his bidding.

Again he was immediately obeyed and Severus left, no doubt travelling down to the Malfoy dungeons where he had his own lab and potions store room. Once Lucius returned, he announced the twins would arrive shortly. Tom called for tea.

The twins arrived quickly and were immediately told to sit. Once they were sitting upon the lounge in front of the coffee table, Tom pointed to the two steaming cups. "Drink," he ordered, fully aware they would be immediately suspicious. But he wasn't going to waste time coaxing them. They would drink willingly or he would make them.

The twins eyed the tea cups suspiciously and then turned to each other, raising an eyebrow; apparently having a silent discussion. Then they turned back to the Dark Lord. "That's not really necessary, dousing us with truth serum," George said.

Tom surged to his feet. The twins pressed back against the lounge, raising their hands in surrender. "What exactly do you want to know?" Fred asked hurriedly. "We'll tell you whatever you want!"

"We want to know about Harry's home life with the muggles," Lucius interjected smoothly before the Dark Lord could curse them.

"I will force you to take that serum if I have to," Tom replied.

"No, that's not necessary," Fred said darkly.

"We'll be happy to tell on those beastly muggles," George ended. "Even if Harry would rather forget about it."

"Start talking," Tom ordered and with a wave of his wand, vanished the drugged tea. Severus scowled as he and Lucius also took seats. He didn't much like it when his potions were wasted. Lucius gave Severus' thigh a comforting pat, knowing his lover was mentally complaining.

"Um... where to start?" Fred said to himself.

"He wasn't ever physically abused, not exactly..." George began, lost in thought.

Fred eyed him. "Don't know about you, but I count being made to stay in a locked cupboard under the stairs to be physical abuse. That's why he was malnourished. That's why he's so short now. Maybe that's why his eyesight is so bad as well. He was always in the dark."

"What about this cupboard?" Tom pressed.

"That was his bedroom until he got his Hogwarts letter."

"A cupboard under the stairs?" Lucius asked faintly. "The boy who lived- a wizard- was made to sleep in a cupboard?"

"Yes, that's right. For ten years."

The tea set on the table began to tremble furiously and everyone held their breaths until the Dark Lord could control his temper.

"You said there wasn't any physical abuse," Tom said through gritted teeth, "and yet he has faint scars. I've seen them. More than just that burn scar. Explain those."

"Most are probably scars from when he was a little kid, just learning to cook. The burn mark you saw was an accident too, so Harry says, but it was his aunt who pushed him when he accidentally burnt breakfast. Pushed him right onto the stove burner thing," George said.

Tom hissed in disbelief. "He would have had to keep his wrist pressed upon that burner for some time in order for the burn to be bad enough to scar. If it were truly an accident, he would have fallen upon it and then immediately jerked away."

George nodded. "Harry insisted it was an accident but Fred and I think he was lying."

"And the rest of the scars are probably from his cousin. He's a big bully and had this game called 'Harry hunting'. I'm sure you can imagine what happened once Harry was caught."

"The summer before his second year we had to rescue him from that place and there were bars on his windows!" George exclaimed. "Locks all up and down the door and a small square had been cut out at the bottom of the door for food they slipped into his room once a day."

"Some days he didn't even eat!" Fred went on. "And if he did, it was always scraps left over from the food he was made to cook them. When he came to the Burrow, Mum was always trying to stuff him full."

"He really was too thin," George murmured, looking at his brother. "I remember thinking it mustn't be good for his health to be that thin. Mum thought so too which was why she was always trying to feed him at every possible turn."

"Harry was basically their slave," Fred went on. "Made to do everything. Cook, clean, garden work, manual labor around the house... The verbal abuse was the worst though. They usually ignored him but when they didn't they always made sure to remind Harry they hated his very existence. That he was really no member of their family and only tolerated him because they had to."

"Harry told us when they addressed him, it was always by calling him freak or boy. He didn't even know what his name was until he started going to muggle school."

"Honestly, house elves are treated better than he was! He said he'd been cooking and cleaning for them for as long as he could remember... which means he must have been a toddler if he can't even remember when it started!"

Fred dropped his eyes to the floor, clasping his hands between his knees. "It was the mental abuse that messed with him in the long run. Being made to slave all day for them, he really didn't react to that, he didn't care. Not really. But it was being constantly reminded he didn't belong is what got to him. That's where it hurt the most. All he wanted was a real family. They were supposed to be his family and yet they did their best to make sure he knew he wasn't wanted.

"He was never allowed to have any friends either. His beastly cousin always ran off any friends he might have made at the muggle school. And his aunt and uncle forbade him from making friends lest they catch on to his 'freakishness' and draw unwanted attention back to their family."

George shook his head sadly and rushed a hand through his copper hair. "Harry had this beautiful white owl," he began softly. "Hedwig. She was sweet. He counted her family..." he stopped and took a breath that seemed painful to Tom.

Fred went on, his eyes burning with rage. "The summer after the Ministry fiasco," here he looked at Lucius, "Harry's uncle killed her. Broke Hedwig's neck right in front of him. It took a long time... Again to remind Harry he had no family. Harry loved that ruddy owl. She was his first friend ever. And this on top of Sirius' death. The depression he fell into that summer was awful."

The parlor lapsed into a cold silence. Tom remembered Harry saying something about liking Damas even though he was shit scary because Damas was the complete opposite of the friend he'd lost. He didn't like to be reminded of her...

"Why does he try so hard to change the subject when our Lord tries to find out the truth?" Severus finally questioned. The Dark Lord himself was glaring at the twins, though the fury everyone felt was obviously not directed at any of them.

"He has this twisted sense of honor. He still sees them as his family; the only link he has to his mother. They're his only living blood relatives, you know. He doesn't want the Dark Lord killing them."

"How did you two come by this information?"

Here the twins gazes skidded away from the Dark Lord. "We ah, um... It was Harry's sixteenth birthday and we were all pissed, you see?"

"Harry doesn't much like birthdays. Probably because he'd never had a proper one and he'd been really depressed again, like I said. We waited until he was completely sloshed before pushing him. Then he wouldn't stop talking. Kind of like a break down. But he definitely needed to talk about it and we got the information we wanted... and found a way to ease his depression somewhat."

"I don't think he's even told Ron or Hermione that much about his home life."

Tom sat back, drumming his fingers along the back of the lounge where he had his arm stretched out. He ignored the other four and even ignored the twins snickering when they'd calmed down enough to really look at the Dark Lord's appearance. "So I cannot kill them," he finally murmured to himself, eyes narrowing in displeasure. "But they must pay."

"Destroy them, sir!" the twins cried jubilantly. "Destroy their lives! Fucking burn it to the bloody ground!"

"Control yourselves," Lucius told them.

They settled only slightly. "Sorry, Lucius."

Tom refocused on them, smirking at their excitement. "Do you know anything else about these Muggles?"

The twins leaned forward, tapping their chins. Fred brightened. "Harry told us about this one time when his uncle was throwing a dinner party for his boss... Grumbles I think is the place he works at. Sells something like... something, I don't know. But he seems to be very proud of his whale of a self."

"Not Grumbles, idiot. Grunnings," George corrected. Fred shrugged. "And their son works there now as well."

"Lucius. Buy this Grunnings," Tom instructed. "Do whatever you have to, but I want you to be the owner by the end of the week."

Lucius smiled like a hungry fox. "It will be done, my Lord."

"Once that is done, then we'll move on. However, I want to have a look at this place and these muggles before they realize they've lost everything."

"Can we go, sir?"

"If you behave."

"We can!"

Tom looked at Severus. He was shaking his head rapidly. Tom's lips curled in amusement.

"One more thing," Fred announced, suddenly back to being serious. "Harry's uncle has a sister. She liked to let loose her bloody dogs on Harry. Those stupid dogs received more food than Harry did. One time when he was little she let her dogs race him up a tree. His *family* didn't pull back the dog and he spent nearly the entire night up that tree."

"She tormented Harry every time she went to visit," George spat. "Always saying dirty things about his parents, laughing about their deaths right in his face. She was always trying to persuade Harry's uncle to beat him too."

"Harry got her back, once. He became so angry that he accidentally blew her up. Inflated her like a balloon and the Ministry had to come out and fix that, along with her memory."

"Where does she live?" Tom asked. "I think the Death Eaters miss torturing muggles. This one we will kill."

"Don't know. But we'd really like to be part of that."

Tom studied them. "Do you two want to become Death Eaters? Harry swears you do."

"We'd rather not have to bow to you all the time and kiss your robes, sir. But other than that, we're all for you!"

"I think... we can work something out. Later, after we've taken care of Harry's family."

The twins smiled wickedly and again Severus was shaking his head rapidly. "So...." George went on with a smirk. "When are you going to make us uncles? Any kid Harry has immediately becomes our niece or nephew. And you know that's what he wants more than anything right. To have children of his own. A real family."

"He doesn't want that anymore. I heard it from his own mouth," the Dark Lord replied despite his annoyance with them for bringing up something so personal. He only answered in this way because he wanted to see their reactions.

"Bullocks!" they yelled.

"Not that it's any of your business," the Dark Lord replied levelly.

"That can't be true," Fred said softly. "He's already picked a room in the castle for the nursery. He bought a crib and portable bassinet too."

George hissed and jabbed his brother in the side. "You weren't supposed to say anything about that!"

"Yes well," said Tom as he stood, beckoning the others to do the same. "You will be showing me this secret room just as soon as we return from the muggles. Location?"

"Number four Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey," the twins replied immediately. Tom suspected they had been waiting forever to tell him this.

"It's all horribly... boring," Lucius murmured from where they stood Disillusioned across the street from number four Privet Drive. "How could Harry stand to live in such... low class?" He was looking up and down the street with a sneer on his lips. They'd been standing there for an hour watching the house. Five times already they counted Harry's aunt peering out of her windows, looking for neighborhood gossip to throw about no doubt.

"From what I remember of Dumbledore's ramblings, he hadn't a choice," Severus murmured. "He had no choice but to live here and accept the way he was raised." And now that he knew how Harry was raised, Severus felt massive amounts of guilt and pity for the brat. He hadn't a choice. *"The world wanted a Gryffindor... I gave them one."* Severus mentally grimaced. Harry had only wanted to belong, to be accepted.

"A splash of blood here, a bit of entrails there," Bella breathed, "and it would look a lot better."

"None of that at this time, Bellatrix," Voldemort murmured, watching as a vehicle turned onto the street headed towards them. He narrowed his eyes, quickly focusing onto the two muggles within the car. Two obscene looking males. "I take it this is Harry's uncle and cousin."

"Yep! That's them," the twins replied as the car pulled into the driveway.

"So while he was never fed, they gorged themselves on food he had to make." Lucius frowned as they watched the two go into the house. "I wonder if Harry thought the way he was raised was normal..."

"He knew it wasn't," Fred murmured. "That bastard and his wife always made sure to spoil and cuddle their son in front of him."

"Made sure he knew that if he wasn't a freak he would be loved as normal children are," George spat.

"Come," Voldemort gestured to the two twins to precede him. "I want to watch you up close."

He glided across the street behind them and wondered if he should worry since the twins had their heads bent together and were hissing back and forth, ending with a lot of snickers. He should have probably asked exactly what they were going to say but by that time, the two were already pounding on the door and the muggle woman answered it almost immediately.

The moment she saw the twins her eyes narrowed, disgust clearly on her face. "What do you want? The freak isn't here," she said acerbically and tried to slam the door in their faces. George quickly braced a hand against the closing door.

"We know *Harry's* not here. We were wondering if you knew where *your nephew, Harry*, might be."

"No we don't know, nor do we care to know where the freak's gone. Probably gotten himself blown up like his foolish parents. A waste, the lot of you! Now be gone! I don't want the neighbors to catch you on my doorstep!"

This time George allowed her to slam the door closed. "A rotten woman!"

"I must agree," the Dark Lord stated lowly, just barely able to keep his wand at his side. How could Harry be even remotely related to that woman? Harry was sweet, fun, beautiful... the list went on. But that muggle was just trash! After all he'd learned Tom was still amazed how Harry had turned out in the end.

Fred nodded. He was going to enjoy this part. He began pounding on the door and soon it was thrown open, but this time by Vernon Dursley. Before he could bellow because it looked like he was prepared to do just that, Fred grinned and said, "by the way, your son. The one whom you love so much and believe is just the most normal boy in all of Britain. He happens to be gay. That's right!" Fred exclaimed dramatically when Vernon Dursley paled. "He's a secret homosexual! He stares at men's arses. Dreams about being fucked by or fucking blokes! As freaks, we have easy ways of discovering such things to be true. Bye now!"

With that, the twins and Voldemort spun on the spot, Apparating away. Not far though. They reappeared in an empty lot which was close enough to allow them to hear the monumental slamming of a front door.

"Merlin! That was fun!" George laughed. "Did you see his face? He was horrified! So glad Harry told us that little tidbit."

"I don't understand the point of that," Severus drawled when the three returned to the group across the street.

"Quite simple," said Fred. "These people believe those who stray from the norm of muggle society are... well, freaks. They're bloody intolerable and fearful of anyone different. That includes those who like others of the same sex. In the muggle world that sort of thing isn't really accepted as the norm as it is in the Wizarding World. Not as much, anyway."

George nodded. "Yeah, and even if he didn't believe us it'll place suspicion in his mind. He'll probably ask his son about it and if we're lucky, the son won't be able to hide the truth. And there, a crack in the family. Discord between the three loving relatives."

Bella laughed delightedly before asking, "but how did our little lord find out about such a thing?"

"Not much gets passed our Harry. They went about their lives ignoring him while he stood back and watched. One night Harry was out walking and caught his cousin doing naughty things."

Fred grimaced. "I still can't understand how anyone would willingly do *anything* with that fat blob. How Harry was not completely traumatized is beyond me. Just ewwwwwwww-"

"Alright, we understand and concur with your disgust," Voldemort interrupted lowly. "I for one am grateful Harry wasn't turned asexual."

"Yeah, us too," Fred unwisely returned, and then blanched when he realized what he'd just insinuated.

The Dark Lord turned to them slowly, eyes narrowed. "You're going to want to leave my presence now," he warned.

Seconds later, two pops of Apparition was heard.

"Did they say something wrong, my Lord?" Bella asked.

"They stole Harry's virginity from me."

Bellatrix found this amusing and cackled while Severus murmured, "that explains so much of their behavior when they are together."

"You as well, should leave my presence," Voldemort hissed. "All of you leave."

"I cannot believe you said that just now!" Lucius whispered harshly as he, Severus, and Bella hurried away before Apparating.

Voldemort chuckled under his breath as he turned back to the house, narrowing his eyes. It would only take the snap of his fingers to bring that house crumbling down around the muggles' heads. But then the suffering would end much too quickly. And again, he wanted them to pay without killing them. In this instance, their suffering would be much more enjoyable to watch.

Chapter Twenty

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty

"Harry, are you sure you're alright? You're not sick, are you?" Draco inquired, his brow furrowed in worry.

Harry frowned. "You know, I actually miss people asking me if I were insane. I much prefer that now."

The blond's lips quirked. "You've been depressed lately. You've been quiet and standoffish..." Harry turned, looking surprised at Draco's observation. The blond rolled his eyes. "I like to think we're good enough friends that we can recognize oddities in each others behavior."

This had Harry smiling. "That's nice to know. And I'm fine."

"That may be true but you don't look alright. You're pale as death."

"I'm fine, Drake. Just tired, I guess. Here, help me start packing this away," he said, indicating a batch of fudge off to the side.

Draco shook his head. "Let's have a break first. You've just finished that batch," he went on in a rush seeing Harry was going to decline, "which means you have time to sit down for a bit."

"Fine... just a few minutes." When he was sitting, Harry's eyes went to the large stack of parchments making up the orders he hadn't even gotten to yet. "Don't know why there's suddenly an influx of orders."

Draco smirked. "That's easy. I took out several adverts in several well known papers. We've also had raving reviews from some of our communities strictest dessert critics recently. We've blown up, Potter! M.R's isn't only famous amongst certain circles anymore. Your creations are famous everywhere!"

Harry blinked owlishly at him. "And when," he started after pulling himself out of his shock, "did you decide to do all that, Drake?" The blond flinched under the narrowed glare and hissed words. "I thought this was a partnership."

"It is, Harry, but we needed marketing! We can't expect our business to prevail on simply word of mouth! I just... I thought I was in charge of everything aside from all the baking!"

"You are!" Harry shouted as he shot from the stool. "But it would have been nice to know! I could have maybe prepared for more orders instead of now feeling completely overwhelmed! I definitely need to be in the know when it affects me personally! I need to be ready. What if I'm not ready for this yet? Did you even think about how this would affect me at all?"

"I'm sorry!" the blond exclaimed, knowing instantly that Harry was right and it wouldn't do either of them any good for him to deny or continue to argue about it.

"That doesn't really help me now," Harry muttered as he turned his back and went back to the stove.

Draco watched his back a moment before looking over at the stack of orders and wincing. It would take Harry forever to finish those and that pile was the immediate pile. "Can I help?" he asked softly. "I could help you bake."

Harry turned, looking over his shoulder at him, and saw how serious he was being. Draco had the most earnest face on him that Harry had ever seen. The brunet finally smiled and shook his head. "No thanks, Draco. Spoiled wanker. You're horrible at baking, or anything to do with the kitchen actually. I'll get Tally to help me... and probably look to recruit two more elves. Tally's very good with following my recipes. She's already helped me make batches of fudge, and she made the soufflé your mother ordered last week... your mother sent a raving review back about that."

"But I want to do something to help."

"Do what you've been doing. Pack the made desserts into their respective boxes."

"The house elves could do this as well," the blond muttered, but when Harry shot him a glare, Draco quickly nodded and hurried to start the chore. Several minutes later, he suddenly snickered and looked at Harry with bright eyes. "Actually that soufflé was for Severus. He had Father have Mother order it for him."

Harry had a good smug laugh over that and stowed the knowledge away for when he would be able to tease the Potions Master with it. It was just too good an opportunity to pass up. "Why don't I see a ring on your finger?" he asked. "Weren't you three supposed to go ring shopping last week?"

Draco smiled, cheeks flushing softly. "We did."

"Well?"

"Well what? My engagement ring and our wedding rings are still being made."

"Did Fred and George pick out engagement rings?"

"Plebs, the two of them!" Draco exclaimed. "They say they're fine with plain wedding rings."

"Plebs..." Harry shook his head. They were only getting wedding rings because Draco's engagement ring probably wiped them out.

"I know what you're thinking, Pot Head!" the blond spat. "No, I did not wipe out their savings! They can very well afford it with the dowry Father gave them and also from the copious amounts of Galleons he pays them per job! They even got a hefty advance just last week too."

"An advance for what?"

Draco scowled. "Father is sending them across the pond... to the states for their next job. They'll be gone a week."

"It's a big job then?"

"Yes, but he won't let me go with them," the blond whined. "It's not fair!"

"He wants to test them then."

"I could still go. What if they get into trouble?"

Harry snickered. "It's not a what if."

"Exactly! Honestly, I don't know what Father is thinking!"

They spent the next two hours talking and working; Draco spent that time both helping Harry pack away orders and watching the brunet closely. He had come upon his mother and Aunt Bella at the manor two days ago, and they'd been having a quiet discussion; one in which had his mother looking horrified. Draco had been surprised when he learned it was Harry they were speaking about. When he walked into the parlor the two went quiet for a moment, but he wasn't immediately dismissed. In fact after a moment his mother nodded and Bellatrix told him to sit down and the witches began talking again.

He didn't say anything. He only sat there and with each minute passing, his eyes grew wide in horror at what he was hearing. Harry once said in passing that he had been a slave to his relatives and Draco would admit he thought Harry was probably exaggerating. Who would turn the Boy-Who-Lived into a servant? But apparently he was wrong and Harry had been telling a truth that wasn't completely whole. The truth was much worse! So Draco, as he listened, learned all that the others had and by the end he was fuming. Furious at both Harry's past situation and the fact his idiot best mate didn't want his family to die when they completely deserved it. Those were the type of muggles who needed to be wiped off the face of the earth!

Draco stepped back when he was done with packing all the finished orders and narrowed his eyes on Harry's back. "Harry. I want to... I want to take you out," he said firmly.

Harry turned around, looking at him curiously. "Um, alright. But I'm sure Tom will kill you after whenever he returns from Germany," he ended with a grin.

"Not a date, you git! Just... just a mate outing."

"We can't go now. Probably not today... you see all these orders you are directly responsible for?"

Draco sneered and drew himself up. "MR's is about quality, not quantity. They can wait a day."

"But..." Harry looked over at the orders. "Have you seen where some of these orders have come from? I should have known you'd done something. There's even an order there from the French Minister's office."

This made Draco pause, his eyes widening. All thoughts of going out suddenly gone. "Really?" he asked excitedly.

Harry nodded briskly. "The parchment on top. It's a huge order, Drake."

Draco ran over to the order pile and snatched up the parchment, his eyes widening further when he saw it was indeed from the French Ministry. "I bet this is for some sort of Ministry gathering. A gala or something... this gives me an idea," the blond trailed off with a smirk.

"Oh, Merlin. More work."

"We can be a catering service!"

"Isn't that what we do already?"

"Yes, but this way we can have 'employees' who travel around. This gives us the right to charge more, Harry. We can have 'employees' hand deliver and set up the dishes. Then charge for labor and travel expenses. It's brilliant! We can do weddings and Balls and parties of all sorts!"

Harry sighed. "And of course the 'employees' are going to be us in disguise?"

"Correct!"

Harry rubbed his forehead, wondering why he was already prepared to agree when he knew he shouldn't. Maybe it was Draco's enthusiasm or it could be the excited pleading smile and the hilarious greedy shine in the blond's eyes for more Galleons. Or he could be readily agreeing because it meant more work and more work meant less chance to think of stupid useless things that made him tremble and panic.

That night Hermione and Harry ensconced themselves in the library to talk about what the Silvers would do next. They soon gave it up, deciding they would wait for the twins to get back from where they were holed up working on things for their stores, and eventually both picked up reading material. Harry stretched out upon Tom's favorite lounge while Hermione curled up in the stuffed chair near him.

Harry busied himself with reading the papers. Papers as in plural. Not just the *Prophet*. He was curious because Voldemort had been making very public appearances over the last week and not just around Britain. Most notably Britain, France, Spain, and Germany. Rumor had it the Dark Lord had meetings with both the French Minister and Spain's Minister. Rumor also had it these meetings weren't forced and Voldemort had been invited. Half of this was true, Harry thought with a smirk. Voldemort's people sent owls to particular places and made it very clear that either they 'invite' the Dark Lord or he would arrive, forcibly, and most certainly not pleased.

France wasn't hard to convince since they were very aware of the Dark Lord's involvement with the Veela and there were a plethora of French politicians who were Veela. Spain though, Spain tried to insist they were neutral on all levels and couldn't possibly meet with Britain's Dark Lord. Tom had laughed coldly at this and then sneered. "Fools. Even France admits my power stretches across Europe."

Harry nodded to himself as he discarded the Spanish paper and picked up the German one, muttering the translating charm upon it. Even Germany quaked under Voldemort's rule. Most Germans were Dark anyway. And the German politicians hadn't any problem with Voldemort appearing out of nowhere, especially when it was clear Voldemort wasn't going about things the same way Gellert Grindelwald had. Not only did Voldemort's reach stretch across Europe, but his husband also now had complete control over Hogwarts, Durmstrang, and Beauxbatons. All three of the prominent European Wizarding schools.

Harry went back and forth looking gleeful and then pouting as he read all this. Voldemort had been away most of the week. Sure Tom came back each night, but by morning he was gone again and by the time he did return every night, Harry was usually already in bed and coherent enough only to receive a kiss and snuggle against his husband. He absolutely hated having Tom leave so early every morning. He abhorred it when he slept through Tom's leaving only to wake up in a cold empty bed.

To top it off, Harry wondered why Belial was never invited to any of these outings. Wasn't he supposed to be Voldemort's equal and partner? Isn't that what Tom promised? That Harry would be able to stand beside his husband, help his husband shape the world how they wanted it? What happened to those promises?

"This sucks!" he suddenly spat, throwing the paper away from him.

Hermione pulled her eyes away from her book and gave him an understanding smile.

Harry tugged at his hair and groaned in frustration. "Maybe we should graffiti the Ministry walls... something like 'Silvers R Us'. That would piss the evil *absent* bastard off. Oh! Or the twins and I can set loose several of their swamp things in the Ministry halls..."

Hermione snickered and shook her head. "No way, Harry."

"What? No to the swamps or to the graffiti? Honestly, I'm loving the graffiti idea. Cursed graffiti—**Nagini! My favorite snake!**"

Hermione not so subtly lifted her feet off the floor to tuck them underneath her as she and Harry watched Tom's familiar slithering towards them. That huge snake never failed to frighten her a little bit. "No cursed graffiti, Harry," she mumbled, her eyes widening a bit as Nagini didn't pause in her movement and slithered right up on the lounge and began to coil around Harry, who appeared pleased and comforted by the snake's actions.

Harry relaxed completely and smiled for the first time all day that she could remember. "She feels a bit like Tom sometimes," he murmured when he caught her staring at him.

Hermione watched them curiously for a while, listened to the two hissing to each other as she pretended to read. When all went silent, she lowered her book and found Harry had fallen asleep. Nagini's eyes were open but Hermione knew snakes didn't have eyelids so their eyes were always open, and it was hard to tell if she were sleeping or awake. Still, Hermione stood and conjured a blanket. She hesitated a moment before draping the blanket over them both.

Nagini's head was lying upon Harry's neck so her head wasn't covered by the blanket, but the snake hissed something when the blanket was lowered, which caused Hermione to jump back. The snake didn't move beyond the short hiss and Hermione turned away, hurriedly picked up her book with a shudder, and left the library.

It wasn't long after that when Tom returned home. He found it very fortunate Harry was sleeping at the moment. He quickly left the library and went in search of the twins. He found them in a room he graciously allowed them to use for their experiments.

"Show me this room now."

Fred and George pulled out of their contemplative observations of a new spell they discovered and looked to the Dark wizard who hovered just inside. He raised an impatient eyebrow when all they did was stare at him in confusion and a bit in wariness.

"The nursery," he elaborated with annoyance at their slow expressions.

The two exchanged wary glances before nodding and following him out of the room. As he followed the directions Fred mumbled out, Tom wondered why they were so wary when they'd already told him about it, but then he surmised it was because the room was supposed to have remained a secret and perhaps they saw showing it to be betraying Harry in some way. "You two need to learn to think before speaking," he said coldly.

He cringed because his tone was very cold and it was clear what he was referring to. More than just one instance. "Yeah, okay."

He paused and turned to face them, broad shoulders back and chin lifted, looking down his nose at them with narrowed crimson eyes. The two shivered from the Dark aura washing over them.

"We will, sir," they quickly added, more firmly because they sensed he was in no way genial enough at the moment for their usual antics.

When they arrived at the room, the twins stood back while they watched the Dark Lord dismantle the wards Harry had set at the door. They grinned to each other when the Dark wizard couldn't immediately pull down the wards and they heard a mumbled, "very well done, brat."

Once the wards were down, Tom opened the door and froze upon the threshold. "When did he do this?" the Dark Lord questioned with an emotionless tone as he slowly turned to the two standing just behind him.

George pressed his lips firmly together and looked as if he were, for once, not going to answer. Fred shifted uncomfortably, glanced at his brother and then back to the Dark Lord. "Err... right after you were married, sir. The crib and bassinet too."

Tom arched a brow and returned his attention to the nursery that had once been closed off and severely dust ridden. But now the room was immaculately clean and Tom may be imagining things, but he was sure he felt the room was just waiting for a new paint job and more décor and... babies. "You may go."

"Yes, sir."

He continued to peer into Harry's nursery as the twins' hurried footsteps echoed down the corridor, and he continued to stand there even after he could no longer hear them. When suddenly a vision invaded his mind of Harry bustling around inside the nursery with a faceless baby on his hip, it didn't disturb Tom as it would have before. Especially when that faceless baby morphed into a little being that had his dark brown hair and Harry's green eyes. Tom pulled in a breath. He could picture Harry running around in here, chasing after a laughing child. Harry laughing and smiling along with the baby... and that vision had him unconsciously smiling. That's how Harry should always be.

Turning away from the room and the visions, Tom quietly shut the door behind him and made his way back to the library. Harry hadn't moved a muscle but Nagini did. Perhaps she anticipated her Master's movements, for now Tom saw her slithering off. He stood over the lounge a moment staring down at Harry's face and wondered when he should bring up the topic of his relatives again. Perhaps tomorrow morning before they went out. Tom nodded to himself and then bent over, sliding arms under Harry's legs and back. The little minx shifted in his sleep, rolling over to his side, which helped Tom and he was able to get a good hold and hoist Harry up to his chest.

The Dark Lord immediately scowled. Harry wasn't nearly as heavy as he should be at his age. And on top of that the house elves told him their young master had been skipping meals again. Tom sighed and turned to head out of the library and up to their room. "What am I going to do with you?"

Harry woke up cozy, warm, very refreshed, and... he was in the bedroom and completely naked. Hadn't he just been in the library? Squinting he saw the room was bathed in morning light. He found it disturbing that not only had he fallen asleep early yesterday evening and had managed to sleep throughout the night, but apparently he hadn't even noticed when he was moved to the bedroom. That must have been one hell of a deep sleep.

Harry smiled widely when as he stretched, he felt a body pressed against his back. He sighed in contentment when an arm draped across his chest and pulled him more firmly against the hard lean body behind him. And when lips pressed against the nape of his neck- kissing softly, sucking gently across, and biting purposefully- Harry just about melted in the mattress.

Heat began to spread throughout every inch of his body when Tom started to rock against him; continuously brushing against his arse in a tantalizing manner. Harry murmured a sound of appreciation as he wiggled his arse back against Tom's hips as it was clear they were going

to have a nice morning fuck. It had been a while since they'd done that. He felt the Dark Lord's lips curve into a grin that was no doubt perverted.

"That ring on your finger," Tom murmured after a moment, his voice low and rich like velvet, "isn't a flippant promise, Harry. It's an everlasting contract, as is the ring on my finger."

Harry went still, holding his breath at the vehemence in his husband's tone.

"I will never take it off. I will never allow you to remove that ring from your finger. Nothing you do or say; nothing that might happen will change this reality. Do you understand, my love?"

Harry nodded at first, his eyes blinking rapidly as tears filled them. It felt like his heart would beat right out of his chest and most of the tension he'd been feeling lifted from his shoulders to be replaced by a warm contented blanket. "Y-yes, Tom." He then cleared his throat. "I understand you're a possessive freak."

"Yes, that's right," Tom said and amusement colored his tone. "Though I don't count you as a possession or an object. I count you as my most prized and worthwhile treasure."

"I'm not sure there's a difference..." then Harry smiled widely. "Did you have tea already?"

"Yes. Gallons of it."

Harry twisted around until they were chest to chest. "You didn't go to work," he whispered as he pressed his face against Tom's shoulder.

"I decided to take the day off. Are you complaining?"

"I'm complaining about you going off and not once asking Belial to accompany you," Harry replied lowly, clearly still annoyed by it.

"I have my reasons for not taking you at these times. There will be other opportunities."

Harry wasn't sure he should let this go but he was promptly distracted by Tom's hand sliding over his arse and fingers immediately questing to make him forget everything beyond the hands on him.

"Did you... Did you take the day off to spend with me?"

"You shouldn't even need to ask."

"Then of course I'm not complaining. I'm not an idiot."

"Sometimes I wonder," Tom replied, the corners of his eyes crinkling in amusement. He then leaned forward to kiss those pouting lips.

"I've missed you," Harry whispered against his lover's mouth. "Hardly see you anymore."

"I know. I'm sorry," Tom murmured, rubbing the pad of his thumb over Harry's forehead. "World takeover and all that." Harry grinned and nodded. "But I plan to make it up to you today. We're going out."

"A date?" Harry asked excitedly.

"Yes, I suppose it will be." He remained silent a moment, watching Harry's eyes drifting closed again. He shifted and wrapped Harry tightly in his arms, keeping him tight against his chest to ensure his slippery husband couldn't wiggle away when he began. And he began without toeing around the edges. "Harry... I know about your relatives. I know how they treated you. I finally have full understanding of where your fears of abandonment come from."

"I don't have abandonment issues," Harry muttered against his chest.

"I'm going to pretend I didn't hear you say that."

"Fine," Harry replied flatly. He knew he wouldn't be able to escape this forever. "You know. So what? You're going to kill them now?"

"Harry, you know I'd like nothing more than to... I think about how they treated you and I want to... by hand, without my wand, I'd..."

Harry shuddered from the raw rage he could feel coming from his husband. Tom was so enraged he couldn't even finish speaking his thoughts. Silence descended and during that, Harry worried about what Tom would do to his relatives because now that he knew, Harry was aware there was no way he could keep the Dark Lord from taking revenge if that was what he wanted. Even if Harry didn't want his relatives dead, even if it would start a row, he knew Voldemort's need for blood would win no matter what.

So when Tom spoke next, he completely shocked Harry by saying, "I will not kill them, Harry. They deserve it but death is a quick release. I want them to suffer, love. Suffer for a very long time. I want them to suffer as they made you suffer."

"What are you going to do?"

"I've decided to ruin their lives. To take away everything they hold close and dear."

"What do you mean exactly?" Harry asked, slowly relaxing which Tom took as a good sign.

"Lucius is now the owner of a muggle company called Grunnings and starting next week, they will be downsizing." No more needed to be said. Harry was intelligent enough and knew him well enough to be able to understand why he wanted Lucius to buy that company. And Harry did understand... and maybe he felt a sort of vindictiveness at the thought of what his *family* might be going through in the near future.

"So... you promise not to kill them?"

"You want them to stay alive. They will stay alive—but not the Aunt Marge, love. She's going to die."

Harry snarled. "I hate that bitch and her dogs."

"Good. Her death goes nicely into the plan of ruining your aunt and uncle's lives. Oh and that fat son of theirs."

"Bloody Dudley. And he had the nerve to call me a faggot. Did it all the time... how did you find out about them anyway?"

"I have my sources... Harry, I want you to talk to me about them."

"I'd rather not think about them ever again, thank you very much."

Tom could understand that. He never wanted to talk or think about his past either. "You need to move on from their neglect, Harry. I don't want you fearing about us anymore. I don't want you falling into a depression again. I've gathered from your friends that you do this sort of thing every so often. You were not yourself recently and I can tell you... it pains me," he ended softly, uncomfortable with saying that out loud. But he had to speak his mind and his heart to Harry otherwise his little minx would never believe. "When you hurt, so do I. Do you understand that? This? Us? Harry, there will never be an end. I swear it."

"I get it." Harry pressed his face against Tom's chest to hide the face splitting smile.

A hand slipped into his hair and tugged to reveal his face. "Do you really?"

"I do. I really believe you this time." The brilliant smile on his face relayed that truth for his husband to see clearly.

Tom scowled. "You should believe me all the time without question."

The younger wizard smirked. "But that's a sign of gullibility. You don't like gullible fools."

He had him there. "Cheeky brat," he mumbled as he lowered his head and swiped his tongue down the column of Harry's throat. He also recommenced with probing Harry with his fingers. Harry seemed very susceptible... then again, he always was, thank Merlin.

"Harry?"

"Hmm?"

"Have you-" Tom's voice hitched when nimble fingers were suddenly wrapped around his cock. "Have you picked out the villa you want me to buy for you yet?" he asked through gritted teeth.

Those fingers paused in their teasing for only the briefest of moments before going on. "Ah, no. Decided I didn't really want one. No need, right? We have this huge castle... It was a stupid request," the brat murmured. Tom didn't miss the wistfulness in his voice though.

So that would explain why Harry hadn't shown him the clipping. Mentally sighing, he sat up and pressed until Harry was lying on his back. Harry's eyes drifted open and he looked up

with drowsy blinking eyes. Tom moved until he was hovering over his legs. Harry's heart began to beat faster when Tom adopted one of those perverted grins.

"Spread your legs for me, little minx," Tom commanded as he grabbed the silk sheet covering Harry and began to pull it off.

Harry licked his dry lips as he did what he was told. He slowly spread his legs, his eyes never leaving Tom's as his husband's gaze traveled down along his exposed body. He shivered when desire darkened Tom's eyes, like the color of hot blood. Tom stared at him for long moments, obvious pleasure in what he was seeing in his expressions.

"You need to eat more," Tom finally declared as he bent forward to trail his lips down Harry's stomach. "You've been skipping meals again. I will not tolerate it."

Harry frowned even as his breath hitched when Tom's tongue dipped below his naval, lightly flicking over the head of his cock while thumbs stroked the sensitive skin along the inside of his thighs. Bloody house elves had been tattling on him again. "I-I seem to h-have lost my appetite recently... Tommm," he ended in moan, fingers clenching into the sheets.

"You will eat," Tom murmured before leaning back in to take Harry's length completely into his mouth.

Harry laughed breathlessly. "Yes, yes, whatever! Just don't stop!"

He didn't stop. Tom didn't stop until Harry was on the edge of the precipice. And only then did he pull away, smirking when Harry loudly cried out his displeasure from being denied the eminent orgasm. "Evil! Evil bastard! So close, Tom! Fuck!"

Said evil bastard only continued to smirk as he spread out over his panting flushed husband. "Tell me about Belial," Tom demanded before swirling his tongue around a nipple, grinning when Harry gasped and arched up into his mouth. Hands were roaming down his back, fingertips digging into his flesh as he tasted and teased his little minx into a hot panting mess. How he loved Harry like this.

"B-Belial?"

"Hmm," Tom returned as he moved over to lavish attention to the other nipple. "Tell me why you love being Belial so much." He finished speaking and hitched his hips, making their cocks slide together once more. Harry moaned and wrapped those gorgeous legs around his hips seeking more friction.

"I can be whatever I want when I'm Belial."

"You can be whatever you want now, Harry," the Dark Lord responded, sliding and sucking his way up to Harry's throat while a hand went the opposite direction, brushing against Harry's opening, slicking and spreading him with a hissed spell that had Harry moaning in anticipation.

"With Belial, I just feel—Mmm, Tom, right there—I feel it's easier to be unrestrained. I like having a mental personality. Belial's just fun—fuck, Tom! Stop teasing me!"

"Do you want me in you? Do you want to feel me in you?"

Having the words dripping like dark syrup into his ear had Harry shivering and nodding rapidly. "Yes! I want you to fuck me until I can't see straight."

"You can't see straight usually."

"Oi!" Harry laughed. "I only ran into that stupid door frame once! And that was your—Ah!" he cried out when he was suddenly filled; Tom filling him inch by inch until he was buried as far as he could go. It was painfully delicious and burned fantastically. And Tom was inside him, throbbing and holding still, and now draping back over Harry's front. Tom crushed his lips over Harry's, sweeping him into a greedy passionate kiss. A kiss of feuding tongues, clashing teeth, and bruising lips. The type of kiss Harry always gagged for.

"Love you," Harry panted when they separated a second for more air. Each time their lips separated there was an, "I love you." And when Tom started to move inside him, pulling back slightly and sliding Harry's legs up over his arms, he began a mantra that seemed to spurn Tom on. "Iloveyouloveyouloveyou..." and since he'd been teased to the edge a number of times already, Harry was soon crying out and arching into Tom as he came, while his husband watched entranced as his eyes exploded into color as his seed sprayed between.

Tom was still pounding inside him as he came down. Harry managed to move his arms to latch onto his legs in order to hold himself open for Tom, who shifted, dropping his hands to lace into Harry's hair and pressing his lips and teeth against his husband's slick neck, moaning out Harry's name until his movements became erratic; his control slipping and he adored Tom like this. When he lost control of himself wrapped in Harry's arms.

When it was over and they were both panting limp bodies, Harry tangled his fingers into Tom's hair. "That was lovely."

"Yes, you are," Tom murmured before rolling away and sitting up, smirking at Harry's blush. "Now it's time for a shower."

After a long luxurious shower, the two separated to dress. Tom frowning in annoyance when Harry sped away back to his old room to do it out of Tom's presence. He wasn't exactly sure why Harry needed to go somewhere else to dress, but Harry wouldn't explain and promised to meet him in the breakfast room in a few minutes. Harry had been in quite a hurry to leave actually. Tom may have been imagining things, but he thought Harry's face had been a little green as well.

Tom appeared first in the breakfast room and was just entering as Hermione was leaving. He noticed right away that she had a magazine tucked under her arm. He grabbed it before she could escape and smirked when he saw what it was. He chuckled darkly when her face went red as a tomato.

"I'm curious, Hermione," he began, purring the words, "but does this place cater to men also?"

If anything her face reddened further. Especially when Harry appeared then and she caught the perverted grin Tom sent his husband and immediately caught sight of the hickey and bite marks left on Harry's neck from earlier.

She floundered for a moment, having no idea what to say nor did she trust herself to speak. So she settled with nodding. "A men's catalogue then?" Tom went on, still staring at Harry. Both of them were now blushing. Again Hermione nodded. "You'll procure one for me."

"Y-yes, sir."

"Good." He handed back the lingerie magazine. "You may go."

Hermione hurried out without a backward glance. "What was that?" Harry hissed.

If he were any less controlled, Tom would have snickered. Messing with these two particular Gryffindors at the same time was amusing. "Sit down and eat, Harry."

Harry touched about a quarter of his breakfast while wrinkling his nose at it and he ate even less than that. And his scowl was enough to keep Tom from demanding he eat more. That scowl was the premise for a battle he wanted nothing to do with at the moment. They neither had the time nor the energy for such a thing today. He wanted to keep Harry in a good mood so he let it go this time. And since it was apparent Harry was finished with breakfast, Tom pushed his own away and stood with Harry eagerly doing the same.

"Where are we going?" Harry asked as he hurried to Tom's side and entwined their fingers.

Tom squeezed his hand, a smirk on his lips. "Office."

"And then?"

"It's a surprise."

At this, Harry became even more excited. He remained silent as they walked on to the office and he watched Tom curiously as the wizard walked to the desk and pulled out... "A key?"

"We'll be taking a Portkey," Tom said as he pulled his eyes away from the large ornamental key and looked to Harry, studying his husband intently. "Are you up for it?"

"Of course!" He clamped his lips together to keep from asking where exactly Tom was taking them. He was excited enough that he wanted it to remain a surprise.

Tom moved back over and tucked Harry tightly against his side. "Close your eyes and keep them closed until I tell you to open them." Harry nodded and closed his eyes. Tom activated the Portkey and they were soon off.

When they landed Harry kept tight hold of Tom, taking deep breaths from his nose and pushing down the nausea that the unexpectedly long trip had caused. "You could have-" he

swallowed thickly before going on. "You could have warned me it was going to be intercontinental!"

Tom would have been amused if his little love's face wasn't so pale. "Do you feel nauseous?" he asked softly, slowly leading them over to a stone bench only a few feet away.

"Can I open my eyes now?"

"No. Not yet," Tom answered while holding Harry against him upon that bench and rubbing circles along Harry's back. "When we return, you'll be seeing a Healer."

Harry rolled his eyes behind his closed lids. "I don't need a bloody Healer! Merlin, would you people get off me!"

"No need to snap at me," Tom hissed back. "And you'll do as I tell you."

Harry smiled at the annoyed/commanding tone and pressed against the warmth beside him, smiling when he started breathing normally. He noticed almost immediately the change in temperature. Wherever they were, it was warmer than Britain. One could say it was hot even; hot enough that Harry wanted to discard his outer robe. He started noticing other things beyond the warmer temperatures then. The scents around him were fragrant and musky. Fragrant in that he was sure a blooming garden was somewhere nearby. The wind smelled nice too. Harry caught the scent of the sea and if he listened carefully, he could actually hear the ocean.

"Where are we?"

"I believe," Tom responded slowly and from his voice Harry was sure he was looking away and around, "this place will become special for us."

"You're becoming sentimental in your old age, Tom."

He was pinched rather roughly in his side for his cheek. "You bring out the worst in me," Tom spat.

Harry's smile grew. "Don't worry. I won't tell. The Dark would be in chaos if they knew exactly how soft you are with me."

Tom hissed in annoyance. Harry settled with a low chuckle but he didn't move and neither did Tom. Harry could have sat there with his husband with his eyes closed forever if it were possible. There was just something about this mysterious place that exuded a calm and blissful feeling in him. Much of that had to do with Tom's presence of course and the fact that neither of them had any pressing engagements to get to that day.

Tom pulled his eyes away from the surrounding area to look at the face planted against his shoulder. Harry was of course correct. He was becoming sentimental; or rather he was already very sentimental when it came to his husband, but he didn't entirely mind since it was Harry. No one in the world beside Harry would ever see this side of him. Harry offered him what he never thought he would have. A happiness that wasn't shallow or brought on by his

victories in his conquest for domination. Harry brought to him the feeling of being content and at peace in another person's presence.

Tom lifted a hand, allowing his fingers to drift along Harry's jaw. "Are you ready now?"

"Yes."

They stood and moved on. Tom led Harry perhaps a yard down some path before stopping and positioning him in a direction. Tom told him to open his eyes and he did. And then he gasped upon seeing the very villa he'd wanted from the first moment he laid eyes on the listing in the paper. A smile widened on his face as he took it in. It was a wide square two story structure made of white stone and terracotta roofs and it had windows everywhere. The villa also had one square tower that was four stories high. Three windows up and three smaller windows across at the top on each side of the tower. Harry had loved there were so many windows and most of the second story rooms had balconies.

"It's yours. I obtained the deed last week."

"You shouldn't have done this," Harry chastised when Tom pressed in from behind, wrapping his arms around his middle, though he couldn't wipe the broad smile off his face.

"Am I not allowed to spoil you?" Tom asked sounding insulted, which made Harry laugh.

"Yeah, you're allowed. I expect it, actually."

Tom nodded, even as he felt relief swamp him. Perhaps Harry finally understood now. He would never be discarded or tossed away as nothing important. "Aside from that, your birthday is coming up at the end of the month. Consider this an early birthday present. You'll have to wait for your actual birthday to receive the rest of your gifts."

Harry spun around. "Don't you dare get me anything else! This is... I don't get to have any more gifts for a decade after this!"

"Don't be ridiculous, love. Come, I want to show you around," Tom prodded before Harry could say any more on the matter. Harry only acquiesced because he was excited to see everything and didn't want to waste time arguing. "I spent a great deal of time here this past week restructuring the wards and making sure there weren't any unwanted surprises inside. I have to admit you have good taste."

Behind the protective wall- and powerful wards- which surrounded the estate, Harry delighted in the villa's Moorish ornamental gardens Tom said were about two hundred years old and had been laboriously restored to their former glory sometime last year before the villa was put up for sale. As they walked through, Harry could tell the gardens were made to allow people to wander or relax in total peace and tranquility and it was easily done when surrounded by centuries-old palm trees, shady bowers, and colorful exotic plants. Every turn of the outdoor path led them to a secret garden overhung with vines and Harry delighted in it all. And finally, when they came upon to the edge of the gardens, there was a low wall and a view that took his breath away. Words couldn't describe the beauty but there were cliffs and the ocean and a picturesque town down below...

When they moved on, Tom led him to the pool fed by a natural spring which was bordered by ancient cypress hedges. There was also a private chapel nearby that Tom sneered at and Harry thought the chapel probably brought back unsavory memories of Tom's early childhood. There was also an outside summer bar/dining area and Harry could picture them having lovely dinners at dusk out there. And everything was surrounded by magnificent views of the hillsides and valley, and the ocean very close beyond.

"Ready to see the inside?" Tom said from behind him where they had been standing, staring out at the view.

Harry nodded eagerly and allowed Tom to take his hand and lead him back through the extensive gardens to the stairs that led to the back veranda and into the villa.

The central point of the main floor was without a doubt the brilliant vaulted and columned drawing room. It came with an original stone fireplace as well as antique chairs, couches, and tables scattered throughout the room. Every hallway and stairway led to this living area. Other main rooms include a smaller wood-paneled drawing room- which Harry knew Tom would procure for himself and he didn't have a problem with that- a library, an inner patio, and a dueling/exercise room. Again, both Harry and Tom were pleased with that one. Tom had a thing with keeping fit and Harry had a thing for watching him keep fit and most times being pestered into joining the dueling or exercises.

The formal dining room was large but not overly so and it could seat at least fourteen people, while the large kitchen was fully equipped with two ovens, four refrigerators and other kitchen appliances. Harry went mental in here. He was exasperatedly pleased to see there were some muggle appliances. Tom had not commented, but he did sneer slightly and quickly vacated the area, muttering under his breath since he knew Harry would be in the kitchen for some time just standing there and drooling like an imbecile.

Harry left the kitchens about ten minutes later and hurried upstairs. With each peek into the rooms, he grew just a little bit more awed. Every bedroom in this place was like a miniature palace: unique and enchanting, but not overly luxurious. "I do have good taste!" he exclaimed excitedly to no one but the empty guest room.

He finally calmed down enough to notice Tom was no longer trailing after his excited self. He turned and travelled back through the halls, still not quite believing Tom had bought him this incredible place. Finally he found his husband standing in a doorway of a room not far off down from the Master bedroom. When he came to stand beside his husband, the grin slipped off his face when he noticed what Tom was looking at. It was a crème colored nursery split off into three sections.

Harry spun around and began to stalk away, his good mood instantly dashed like waves upon the cliffs. "We'll need to change that room into something more useful."

"No, I don't think so."

He stopped short and slowly turned around, confused, to find Tom was now watching him.

"We won't ever need a nursery."

Tom shook his head, a slow smile drawing on his face. "I'm sure, sometime in the future, we'll need this nursery."

"What for?" Harry asked and he was unable to keep the bitterness out of his voice. He hadn't meant to sound bitter since he'd made up his own mind to forget about having kids, but it was still a dream dashed and of course he would be bitter about it.

"Why do you think? For children."

"Right, well... if our friends do visit and they have babies, their kids can stay in their rooms. We don't need this nurs-"

"Our children," Tom elaborated since it was apparent Harry was going to go back to being stubbornly oblivious... or just plain stubborn.

"But... Y-you said you didn't want kids, Tom. You're very against the idea."

"Perhaps I spoke too hastily. I think I'd like to be the father of your children, Harry."

Of all the things Tom expected, he certainly wasn't prepared for Harry to blow up at him.

"WHY?" he shouted. "Why are you saying this? You HATE children, Tom! This isn't funny! It's not a fucking game! STOP! Stop whatever-"

"That is enough."

Tom's coldly stated words had more of an effect then they would have if he'd yelled them. He strode forward, grabbed Harry's arm and began to drag him through the villa, though Harry was too busy fuming with silent confused tears running down his face to really put up much of a fight.

"I do not understand you right now," Tom hissed as they returned to the main floor and into the drawing room. "Your behavior recently leaves me... confounded. It is not to be borne."

"I-it's not a joke," Harry whispered brokenly. "It's not funny."

Tom practically threw Harry into the closest chair and stood over him, glaring coldly. "Listen to me, Harry, and listen well. From the moment you became a resident in my home, I've had a plethora of plans already laid out for our lives. For *our* futures. And children have been one of those plans."

Harry's eyes blazed. "You're a liar!" he screamed. "You're a fucking liar!"

Tom moved quickly. Bending over and pressing hands against Harry's shoulders, pushing Harry forcibly until his back was pressed firmly against the back of the chair. "Now is not the time. You will take caution when speaking to me right now."

"But you're lying," Harry cried; he suddenly paused and sniffed, and then glared up at his husband. "And how dare you presume you can map out our futures without any opinion from me!"

Tom smirked. That was the Harry he knew and loved. "That's what I do, Harry. Don't act as if you never knew that. Aren't you happy?"

Harry's eyes widened upon his face. "Don't do this just to make me happy, Tom," he whispered faintly. "I know you love me. Don't. Don't do it just for me."

"I don't understand."

"I... I don't want our children to have only one loving parent," Harry finally whispered. "It would be worse than having none. Because... because you'd be right there. It would be a different kind of torture I would never put any child through."

Tom nodded and lowered to his knees. He could understand Harry's view perfectly well. "Harry," he began softly, grasping his love's wrist and tugging until Harry immediately left his chair to straddle his thighs. "I can't promise to love any child you may have—no, listen to all I have to say before you respond," he pushed on when Harry made to speak again. "I can't promise such a thing because I'm not sure I could love another soul aside from you. I don't know if I'm capable... But I can promise affection. I can, Harry. The child will be yours, and mine. And it would not be ignored or mistreated. Nor will I treat a child of ours as a 'mini me' as you so described. I can promise you that."

Was that enough, Harry thought frantically. Was that enough for him? Yeah. Yeah, because that's all he'd ever dreamed of having from Tom when they first got together. He hadn't known then or expected Tom to ever feel as much as he felt. But it had happened. Tom was capable of loving.

"You are capable," Harry finally spoke, eyes never wavering from Tom's. "I know you are."

"Your belief in me is sometimes astounding."

Harry finally laughed, and it was blissful. "I believe you're capable of anything, Tom. And that includes loving a child."

"I'm not sure," Tom murmured. "If it turns out to whine as much as Draco..."

"Tom! That's mean!"

The Dark Lord chuckled against Harry's throat. "It's the truth, brat."

They were silent for a minute until suddenly Harry pulled back from nuzzling him. He was smiling in that fashion that said Tom was losing ground. "Let's make a baby!"

Horror filled the Dark Lord. "Now?"

"Yeah, now. Look there's this new rug here, conveniently underneath us that needs to be broken in... wouldn't you like to put rug burn on my back?"

"Yes, but, Harry... now?" he tried to say around the mouth that was trying to lick away his restraint. "I'm sure we have other things needing to be discussed now, love."

"Don't be so scared, Tom. It's all part of your evil master plan, isn't it?" Harry said as he started to shove Tom's outer robe off.

"Yes. It was my plan," replied the Dark Lord with a firm nod.

Harry smiled indulgently. "Yeah, course it was. You thought of it first, the child thing."

"Are you mocking me?"

"I'm trying to get you to shag me on this carpet that's probably worth a fortune," Harry said as he budged off Tom's thighs and finally managed to get the wizard's robe off.

Tom's eyes narrowed and he seemed immune to the fingers unbuttoning his shirt. "I think you were mocking my plan."

"Right. The plan you thought of before I thought of it," Harry said with a lopsided grin before he shoved the Dark Lord back onto the nice expensive carpet.

"You're ruining it, Remus! Don't burn it, damn you!"

Remus laughed and shook his head before looking over his shoulder to where Fenrir was sitting at the kitchen table. Fenrir's eyes were wide with worry. "I've only put the steaks on the burner just now."

Fenrir lifted his nose to the air and sniffed. "Smells like you're burning the meat, cub."

"Do you want me to serve you cold meat? No? Then be quiet and let me do this."

Only when Remus returned his attention to the stove did Fenrir flash a grin at his back, though it didn't last very long and was soon taken over by apprehension. "Don't burn it!"

"Merlin!"

"I don't do well cooked, cub. I don't even do medium rare..."

"Neither do I! Shut up, dramatic idiot!" Fenrir went back to grinning. "Have you never cooked for yourself, Fenrir?"

"No. There's never been need to cook for myself," the elder replied as he sat back and continued to watch the younger werewolf at the stove.

Remus lifted a hand to press a stray strand of auburn hair behind his ear and Fenrir noticed Remus intentionally angled his body then so that he couldn't see any part of the cub's face. "I see," Remus said softly. "You've managed to coerce your former lodgers into cooking for you as well."

"I didn't coerce you," Fenrir replied, standing and suddenly annoyed. "You wanted to cook. Insisted, even." Remus remained silent. "You're the first lodger I've ever had." When still Remus remained quiet, Fenrir rounded the table and prowled closer until he was standing

directly behind him. When he placed a hand on Remus' hip, the younger wizard went very still.

"It's not as if I care," Remus replied flatly.

"I think you do."

"You're not always correct in your assumptions," Remus growled.

Fenrir raised a brow. "I cannot be sure who you are angrier with. Me... or the nonexistent wolves you think I've allowed to live here."

"I'm not angry! I don't care!"

"The wolf in you," Fenrir murmured, brushing his nose against Remus' neck. "The wolf in you is jealous. Are you jealous, Remus?"

Remus spun around glaring and knocked the hand off his hip. "Stop playing with me, Fenrir. I don't find it funny."

Fenrir had every intention of telling Remus he was being silly and that this was not a game to him, but before he could Remus roughly pushed him back and away. "Remus," he hissed. "You're always running away from this!"

Remus growled and stalked away, right through the kitchen to the back door. He wrenched it open and was quickly gone. Fenrir huffed in annoyance when he soon heard the sound of his cub Apparating away.

He ran a hand through his hair. "Could have handled that better." And then the sizzling of the stove gained his attention and his eyes widened upon the nowhere near raw meat. "It's ruined! Remus, you ruined it!"

Of course Remus didn't hear him. Remus had already appeared across Britain to land in front of a two bedroom cottage near the sea and was even now being welcomed inside.

"I'm sorry about the hour," Remus said, slumping into a seat.

Charlie and Bill, who had taken to sharing the small cottage, glanced at each other before taking a seat. Bill sat across from Remus on the sofa while Charlie sat in the chair next to the werewolf.

"Remus," said Bill. "You're welcome here at any time."

"We're mates now, ya know?" Charlie said. Remus smiled softly at that. "But we are worried... you look out of sorts. Everything alright?"

"Course not!" Bill said with an eye roll. "Look at him!"

"Shuttup, Bill!"

Remus chuckled. "Are you sure you like living together?"

The redheads grinned. "Yeah," Bill said, looking at his brother. "It's like old times."

"Having problems with being a Death Eater?" Charlie asked curiously, not being able to think of anything else that could have Remus looking so bothered. The full moon was next week so it couldn't be that.

Remus shook his head. "Surprisingly... being a Death Eater isn't a nightmare."

"Besides," Bill went on, now smirking at the werewolf. "I know what this is about. This is about Fenrir Greyback and Remus fancying the git."

Charlie stared at the side of Remus' face, just barely keeping his jaw from dropping to the floor while Bill went on to snicker. Remus then shot to his feet, stammered something about this being a mistake, and quickly headed for the door. Only Bill got there first and he had upon him one of the more wicked smirks usually only found on the twins.

"You fancy Greyback?" Charlie cried incredulously. "When did this happen? How? What the fuck has been going on?"

"This is what happens when you stay away in Romania so much," Bill replied as he grabbed Remus' arm and dragged him back to the seat. "You miss lots of interesting things."

"Says the wizard who went off to Egypt as soon as he could!"

"I don't fancy him!"

"Don't lie, Remus," said Bill. "I saw it weeks ago."

"You shouldn't talk to him like that," Charlie hissed. "What would mum say?"

"Since he's acting like a teenager at the moment, I'm gonna treat him like a school mate! He's lying," Bill replied. "Whenever they're together, all they do is stare and smell each other- that part is rather funny to watch. And Remus is always blushing around him. Also funny."

"I'm a grown wizard!" Remus snapped.

"Also," Bill went on, "Remus is always in a shite mood when it comes to Greyback which probably means he wants to shag the git and is in denial."

Charlie had just turned to laugh quietly, because Remus' mouth was floundering, when someone started pounding on the door. The three turned to it in surprise. "Who's that?" Charlie mouthed to his brother. Bill shrugged as they all pulled their wands. They may have been relatively safe now, what with basically being on the winning side, but that didn't mean they weren't out of complete danger.

"He always finds me," Remus muttered quietly.

"State your name and your business!" Bill called out.

"Kingsley and Tonks! And you would do well to let us in now," Kingsley demanded in a tone that told them he wasn't there for a friendly visit.

"Remus, go through the Floo," Bill whispered as Charlie came back beside him. "You have a Dark Mark. Charlie, go check the windows. They may not have come alone. They're desperate..."

Remus shook his head. There was no way he was leaving these two behind. "Let them in and then seal the door shut behind him. If there are others, at least they can't get in that way."

"What are you planning to do, Remus?"

Remus wasn't exactly sure. The last Death Eaters to try and capture Kingsley were punished because they had done so without permission. Then again, he was quite sure no punishment would come about if Kingsley were actually captured, and alive.

"Will you back me up?"

"Yeah," Bill said after a short pause in which he understood what the werewolf was asking. "I'm not exactly a fan of Tonks and Kingsley anymore. They were right up there backing everything Moody planned ... only, they are trained Aurors, but at least we've been practicing dueling at the school... Harry's shown us some wicked spells we'd never have learned at school."

Remus nodded and released a breath. "Do you suppose they know we've changed sides?"

"I can't help but wonder... Mum and Dad must have thought about why they were suddenly whisked away from the battle, landed in their own yard- within the wards- safe and sound. If they told that to anyone with a half a brain..."

"I'll hide in the back room until you give a signal," Remus said as Charlie came back, saying he didn't detect anyone beyond the two waiting at the front door.

When they were ready, Bill opened the door for the two Aurors and immediately backed away, just in case Charlie was wrong and there were more standing there Disillusioned and just waiting to send curses. But only Tonks and Shacklebolt stepped in with Tonks shutting door directly after herself.

"Where have you been?" demanded Kingsley immediately, his gaze swiveling around the small family room quickly before piercing Bill with cold dark eyes.

"Trying to survive. The same as you," Bill replied. "What are you two doing here... you do know someone could have tracked you here? Paying door to door visits is dangerous in these times, Kingsley. Surely you of all people know that."

"How were you able to find us anyway? Not many people know we live here."

Kingsley looked between the two. "Your parents. They also told us about what happened in the Alley. We told them we'd come check on you since you seem inclined to not talking to your parents recently. Why is that? Is there a reason you've pulled away from your family?"

Tonks pulled her wand on Bill then as if they'd rehearsed this.

"Brill, Tonks," Charlie said, glaring, though neither he nor Bill were ready to pull their wands quite yet.

Kingsley pointed his wand at Charlie. "Show me your wrists... slowly!"

The two eldest Weasley siblings glanced at each other and then shrugged. Both Kingsley and Tonks tensed even more. This made the two annoyed. Clearly they expected Bill and Charlie to be Death Eaters. Why? What evidence did they have?

"Know what? No, I don't think we will. Get out," Bill stated lowly. "You two no longer have any working authority. You-Know-Who has won, despite your shitty attempts at stopping him. He's completely taken over. He's already passing laws and most of the citizen are already under his control, whether they want to be or not."

"Traitors," Tonks hissed.

"Yeah, cause we're the ones that instantly started arresting innocent people. We're the ones that, without any evidence, started accusing people of being Death Eaters... tell me, how many people did you send to Azkaban before You-Know-Who took that over as well?"

"It would be best if you two revealed your wrists. Someone within the Order turned traitor. Someone was giving out sensitive information. You-Know-Who's supporters have managed to find all of our safe houses. All of them," Kingsley said through gritted teeth. "The Dark Lord has even managed to erect a ward around the wards surrounding Order headquarters! That place was under the Fidelius Charm! Most of the Order is already dead! So that leaves you two and Remus... whom we suspect is also dead."

Tonks smiled sweetly. "You two haven't been to a meeting in ages. Not since the Hogwarts and Ministry take over... you really should show us your wrists now."

"And I've already told you to fuck off!" Bill snarled.

They weren't going to back off, Bill realized. Not at all. He could see it in their eyes. They'd come here prepared to take him and Charlie down. Internally he cursed. This was not an ideal situation. The only good going for them now was Remus, still hidden in the back room. But Bill didn't know when to signal him out. He was wary since Kingsley had his wand pointed at his brother.

It was taken out of his hands when the door was pounded on once again. "Cub! I know you're in there!"

"Oh, brilliant," Bill hissed, but he was also internally amused because he knew Remus had heard and was muttering about stalking werewolves.

"Who's that?" Kingsley asked lowly.

Charlie suddenly grinned. "That's definitely a Death Eater."

"*Expelliarmus!*" Bill shouted.

Kingsley ducked and rolled away, and sent his own curse hurtling towards Bill, who barely ducked in time. He heard Kingsley's blasting spell connect with the lamp in the far corner. Tonks aimed at Charlie who was already moving away. "*Avada Kedavra!*"

Rage and fear filled Bill as he watched Charlie just barely jump out of the way of the sickly green light. "You fucking bitch!"

The pounding on the door grew louder, with Fenrir shouting out Remus' name in a clearly worried tone after Tonks yelled out the killing curse.

"Have you gone insane?" Charlie bellowed as both he and Bill ducked behind the couch.

"You refused to show your arms! That's enough evidence for me," Tonks panted. "It's live or die now, boys, and I don't plan to die tonight. I don't plan to give You-Know-Who more supporters!"

Remus ran out of the back room then, surprising the two Aurors and shouting out a stunner. He caught Tonks right in the chest and it sent her flailing back to hit the window where she nearly crashed through it. Both Charlie and Bill popped out from behind cover and trained their wands on Kingsley while Remus did the same, his straight teeth bared and his eyes glowing an eerie amber. Kingsley looked like he didn't know who to train his wand on, though he settled for Remus.

The window near the door caved in as Fenrir jumped through it; arms crossed in front of his face to protect from the glass. Remus couldn't help but notice and appreciate how gracefully the elder werewolf landed once he was inside. He landed on his feet, barely missing Tonks' face, and his wand was already trained on the severely outnumbered Auror, who was now sweating.

"Greyback!" Kingsley snarled.

"Ah," Fenrir began as he saw the two Aurors and then he began laughing. "Very good. We'll be rewarded." And then he stopped laughing, suddenly deadly serious. "You *will* stop pointing that wand at my cub or I'll be forced to rip that arm off, Shacklebolt."

"They came here to kill Bill and Charlie," Remus hissed as Fenrir moved carefully around the room, his wand still on Shacklebolt but his eyes solely on Remus, who appeared to be unscathed.

"And he will be punished for it."

Kingsley spat on the floor in front of Bill and Charlie. "I knew you were Death Eaters!"

"We aren't!" Charlie replied. "We're neutral!"

"But they are," Bill said, cocking his head to the side where Remus and Fenrir were standing. "And they will be taking you two cunts to the Dark Lord now. Have fun."

"I don't like to repeat myself," Fenrir began, stopping nearly directly in front of Shacklebolt and seeming unconcerned with the wand the black Auror held in his tight grip. "I told you to stop pointing YOUR BLOODY WAND AT MY CUB!"

"Fenrir," whispered Remus, two burning splotches appearing on his cheeks.

Despite the situation, the Weasley brothers grinned.

"You think I'll lay down my wand and go peacefully?" Shacklebolt returned, a grim determined smile twisting his face.

"We can hope, right?" Bill said.

Shacklebolt suddenly spun away and as he did, he shot a quick hex at Remus. But the werewolf was quicker and managed to dodge it. Fenrir roared something unintelligible and shot as quickly as lightning at Shacklebolt, who wasn't quick enough to dodge a rampaging werewolf who'd already made his intentions known.

Fenrir somehow disarmed the Auror without the use of his wand, and as Bill, Charlie, and Remus looked on, they heard the sound of breaking bone and tearing fabric. Bill made a gagging expression. He was also sure they heard the sound of tearing flesh as well. Fenrir making good on his threat. Looking over at Remus, he found the younger werewolf staring over at Fenrir's back with an unreadable expression.

"Remus! *Stupefy!*"

Bill looked over to find Tonks had awakened and had shot a dark red spell at Remus before Charlie stunned her again. He recognized it as severe cutting hex, and it was aimed directly at Remus' chest. It would be a fatal wound and Remus didn't have time to dodge it.

Remus was rooted to the spot. Everything was happening in seconds and as he watched the spell come hurtling at him, his view of the jet of light was suddenly blocked when he was swiftly thrown to the ground by Fenrir's heavy form.

As Remus heard Bill and Charlie cry out simultaneous stunners, at both Kingsley and Tonks- just to make sure- Remus was focused solely on the face close to his. Fenrir's expression was one of pain. He looked into Remus' eyes and glared. "Trouble, cub," he rasped. "That's what you are. Trouble."

"You saved me," Remus whispered in awe.

Fenrir took a look at his face. "And you ruined the meat." He laughed weakly when Remus frowned at that.

Remus' annoyance suddenly gave way to panic when blood began dribbling past the elder werewolf's lips. And then as if all his energy was sapped, Fenrir's forehead dropped against Remus' chest and the younger werewolf realized with growing horror that Fenrir's breathing was ragged, and he could also feel something warm and wet spilling against his stomach. He moved his hand and found it to be blood.

"They're fools, Harry. Suicidal fools," Voldemort hissed, his annoyance with Spain's politicians very evident. Harry hummed in agreement, but didn't stop what he was doing. "Do they not realize—slower, love. Go slowly. Yesss, like that—do they not comprehend? I can annihilate the entire system, but that is not what I'm after—your tongue, Harry. Just your tongue..." Voldemort left off the rest of his rant and relaxed against the back into his throne, pleasure coursing through him as Harry was successfully and skillfully using that sexy mouth to relieve him of tension and anger.

"I love your mouth," he murmured as he watched Harry's mouth moving up and down above his cock. Harry, the minx, hummed again, louder this time, which was on purpose and had Voldemort moaning and lifting his hips. "Let me fuck your mouth now."

Harry pulled off, licking his swollen lips. He smirked up into the shadowed face of his husband and dropped his elbow on Voldemort's thigh, mouth inches away from his husband's cock. He raised a hand and lightly brushed the head of the Dark Lord's gorgeous cock with his fingertips.

Voldemort narrowed his eyes. "Do not make me turn you into a cat," the Dark wizard warned. "It takes but one word."

"You've been itching to turn me into a cat again," Harry answered with a low laugh before he leaned down to swipe his tongue down Voldemort's member. Just once and clearly not enough, if his husband's frustrated growl was as anything to go by.

Harry internally smirked when hands dived into his hair, pulling painfully hard. Exactly what he'd been waiting for; what he wanted. He allowed his head to be jerked back into position, hollowing out his cheeks as he swallowed his husband's throbbing erection and prepared to let Voldemort fuck his mouth.

Lucius and Bellatrix appeared then and stopped quickly when they came upon this scene of Harry kneeling between their Dark Lord's legs. Quickly the two backed into the corridor and wisely trotted a ways down the corridor.

"What to do," Lucius murmured to himself. "I do not feel like dying right now."

"But our Lord will want to know immediately," Bellatrix said, tapping her wand against smirking lips. "You are right, though. If we interrupt at this exact moment, we'll die," she said with certainty.

"I'm surprised he didn't seal the room," Lucius whispered.

Bellatrix grinned widely. "Our little lord is a scrumptious distraction, Lucius. I bet he attacked our Lord the moment the meeting was over with and we all left."

"Yes," Lucius said with a nod. "Belial had been *sauntering* around the room the entire meeting, smirking and winking at our Lord. Only he would get away with such actions when clearly our Lord had been angry the entire meeting."

They waited out in the corridor for ten minutes more before stealthily approaching the door again. This time Harry was no longer kneeling in between their Lord's legs but was instead lying on the dais with Voldemort hovering over him, apparently licking his way down his husband's chest and hissing out words only the two of them could understand.

"He really is a delectable thing, isn't he, Lucius?" Bella reiterated very softly. "Our little lord?"

Lucius most certainly could see the appeal Harry Potter had. It was always there of course, and since Lucius was gay he could appreciate a fit male when he saw one. And even though Harry was still completely dressed at the moment with only his dress shirt bunched up to allow the Dark Lord access to the skin beneath, Harry was still rather fetching laid out like that. He wouldn't say any of that aloud of course, especially not in front of Severus, for then his lover would refuse to touch him for a month. But still Lucius could understand why Lord Voldemort was constantly distracted by his new husband.

Shaking out of these thoughts, he prepared himself for they had important news to bring and he knew there was a high possibility of punishment since they were obviously interrupting a 'moment'. But at least, he thought gratefully, Harry was still fully clothed, which means they probably wouldn't die for interrupting as they might have been ten minutes prior.

The blond nudged Bella with his elbow and then motioned to the two on the dais. She wouldn't care about getting hit by the Cruciatus one way or the other. Bella took a step forward, calling out to their Lord. She hadn't even finished speaking before Voldemort's wand was out and trained on her. In less than a second she was under the Cruciatus and their Lord hadn't even looked away from Harry's flushed face, nor had he stopped caressing the skin beneath his free hand. Lucius watched as Harry unconsciously arched a little, gasping as if breathless when the Dark Lord threw the curse at Bella and he wondered if Harry always reacted that way to their Lord's magic. And the Dark Lord seemed to enjoy watching Harry's reaction immensely.

"Have an exceptional excuse for returning without being called," he ordered coldly after lifting the curse. Lucius shivered and finally stepped forward, helping Bella to her feet when he reached her.

"My Lord," he bowed quickly, making sure his eyes did not stray to Harry's outstretched form because he knew his Lord would see it the way it was meant to be seen. "We have important news to impart."

"Get on with it," Voldemort hissed as he pulled himself off his husband and helped Harry to his feet. Harry grinned unabashedly at the two as he and Voldemort returned to the chairs. Harry ignored his chair and plopped himself right on the Dark Lord's lap.

"Bill and Charlie Weasley were attacked by Aurors."

Harry gasped and lurched forward. Voldemort placed a restraining arm around his middle. "Go on."

"Yes. They were visited by Shacklebolt and Tonks. The two Aurors immediately began demanding to see the Weasleys wrists. When they refused, the Aurors attacked them and one Auror immediately started with the Killing Curse. They even admitted to going there in order to 'take out' potential followers of You-Know-Who. However, Remus Lupin had also been there when the two arrived and soon after the Aurors arrived, Fenrir also appeared looking for Lupin. A short battle ensued and now, my Lord, we have Shacklebolt and Tonks within our custody."

A twisted smile appeared upon Voldemort's face. "Excellent."

"Are they alright?" Harry shouted. "You didn't say if they were okay!"

"Don't worry, little lord! The wittle Weasleys are well and so is your werewolf. But Fenrir was badly injured when he threw himself in front of a curse meant for Lupin."

"Will he be okay?"

"The curse was damaging, but Severus assured Pomfrey can handle it," Bellatrix answered with a nod. Harry leaned back against his husband's chest, breathing a sigh of relief.

Lucius cleared his throat. "My Lord, concerning Shacklebolt... Fenrir used extreme force against him. According to Bill Weasley, 'the bloke went psycho when Shacklebolt wouldn't stop pointing his wand at Remus'. So he..." Lucius paused and cleared his throat again when the Dark Lord narrowed his eyes curiously. "Shacklebolt's arm is entirely useless now. To be fair, Fenrir did warn him. Twice."

Harry started to snicker. "Fenrir's got a crush on Moony," he sang, very pleased by this.

"Yes," the Dark Lord drawled. "Fenrir hasn't exactly been discrete about his affections. It borders on harassment." Harry nodded; his lopsided grin back in place. Voldemort then nudged Harry and they were both standing and stepping off the dais. "I'll assume the two Aurors are being held at Hogwarts?"

"Yes, my Lord," Lucius said. "All those involved in the incident are at the castle. Severus went to the infirmary while Fred and George sent their brothers to Draco's quarters for much needed Firewhiskey. And Lupin was told to await you in the Great Hall."

"Remus did not follow that order," Harry said with certainty. "If Fenrir threw himself in front of a curse meant for him, I guarantee you Remus went with him to the infirmary."

"They're so cute!" Bellatrix exclaimed, which drew raised brows from both Voldemort and Lucius. "They are!" she defended, mostly looking at Lucius for she wouldn't dare yell at her Lord.

Harry wandlessly summoned his mask from where it had been discarded beside his chair when Tom threw him to the ground, and went to join her as the four departed the room and the wards so that they could Apparate.

When they were in the Great Hall, Voldemort demanded the Aurors be brought in. He also called to him others of his Inner Circle. As they waited for all to arrive, Voldemort wrapped a tight possessive arm around his husband. "You'll show yourself to them. You and your friends."

Belial nodded. He'd planned to do so anyway. Shackbolt and Tonks were soon being dragged and shoved inside and those Voldemort had called to him appeared soon after that. Belial first looked at Tonks. She seemed kind of out of it as if hit with one too many confundus charms, but she also had blood running down the side of her face which made Belial think she'd hit her head somehow. Shackbolt was wavering on his knees just like Tonks, but he seemed in more pain, and it was obvious why. He held close to his chest his right arm. A couple of inches down from his shoulder, his arm was torn horribly. Literally it was hanging on by a thread.

Belial turned to Voldemort, fingers curling into his husband's dark robes. "That's disgusting," he whispered lowly. The Dark Lord rose a brow and returned his attention to the slumped Auror, studying the injured arm that was only hanging on by mere muscle and tendons.

"Do you want me to do something about it?" Belial nodded. "Very well." Voldemort then sent a silent severing hex at the tight lipped Auror and grinned in satisfaction when Shackbolt finally cried out in surprise and pain as his arm fell from the rest of his body to lie at his feet.

Belial wrinkled his nose. That wasn't any better. He looked at the Auror dead on as Kingsley tried to cradle what was left of his arm. Belial extracted himself away from Voldemort, eyeing those around the room. The twins, Nevan and Penth had come along and stood back. None of the lesser Death Eaters were present. Not many of the Inner Circle was present either. Only Draco, Lucius, Bella, Rodolphus, and Rabastan and two others that Voldemort had instructed to keep their masks on for the moment. Belial had a pretty good idea of who they were and why they were present. He shook his head. His husband wanted to have some fun. Voldemort loved to see the looks on others faces when they realize they've been betrayed.

The Dark Lord looked all around, noticing the pleased expressions on Lucius and Bellatrix's faces. They knew what having Kingsley meant. "Belial. Begin."

Belial grinned wickedly and approached the two. Stopping in front of Shackbolt, Belial kept his eyes on the top of the man's bowed head, making sure to not look at the severed arm. He then nudged the Auror's knee with the toe of his boot. "Hey? Hey, Kingsley?" The Auror's head moved, his eyes shooting up to his. Belial grinned. "Have you heard of me? Have you heard of my Silvers?"

"Your name is Belial," Kingsley murmured lowly. "The *Prophet* describes you and your group as the Silvers. A Neutral vigilante group... Bullocks apparently if you're here with them."

"No, the *Prophet* has it right. We are neutral... well, most of us," he said, turning to grin at the twins. Draco lifted his chin and smirked proudly from between his fiancés. When Belial turned back, both Kingsley and Tonks were studying him intently. "I'm not a Dark wizard but I am married to Voldemort."

He paused then so that the shock had time to fade. He wanted them to pay attention to the rest of what he had to say. They seemed especially interested in hearing Voldemort was married, not that that information would do them much good now. "Did you know," he went on, "you are really the only remaining thorns in my husband's side within Britain? Amelia Bones was killed two nights ago along with Vance and Proctor... they were leaders of the little rebellion groups you were trying to build, right? Too bad you got yourself caught so soon, yeah?" Belial laughed then and motioned to Penth, Rudra, Agni, and Nevan to take up positions behind him. "I cannot believe you went there to kill Bill and Charlie. They aren't even Death Eaters. And you," Belial sneered at Tonks, "what would your parents think?"

"They'd tell me to burn you all," she hissed.

"See? That's what's wrong with you. No, I don't think they would at all. Sirius... now Sirius would definitely never say something like that, even if he wasn't into the Dark Arts. Especially if he had all the facts. There must be balance in our world. A balance your side has been taking away for generations. You lot are biased. Bigoted. You are the same things you accuse the Dark of being." When the two made faces of denial, Belial glared. "Those who want to practice the Dark Arts have been persecuted for more than a century while the Light has free reign! That seems biased to me! It's not right!"

"Why shouldn't Light, Neutral, and Dark magic have equal standings within our world? Not all wizards and witches are born Light, you know. Some are just more suited to Dark magic. Why fight that? What's the point? Dark doesn't necessarily mean evil—pay no attention to the Dark god standing behind me. Obviously he is a bit evil in a great sexy domineering way-"

Voldemort not so subtly poked him in the back. "And you were doing so well," the Dark Lord drawled. Several people around them coughed to cover up laughter.

Belial laughed. "Sorry, couldn't help it. How bout I start off your fun then?" without waiting for an answer, he turned to his Silvers with a silent message and the masks immediately came off. The twins were glaring murder at the two, while Hermione smirked at them. Luna was standing there serenely, blinking owlishly at them. The Aurors stared with widening eyes.

"Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock," Belial sang as he waved his wand back and forth in front of Kingsley's face. He could practically see their minds working. He knew they would figure it out. Despite everything, the two weren't stupid. "Tick tock, tick tock—that's right!" he exclaimed when Kingsley finally looked back at him with eyes full of understanding.

"Potter?" Kingsley gasped.

"No," Tonks whispered fearfully.

"Oh yes. And it's Riddle now. Harry Riddle," he answered as he slid his mask off and bent down till they were almost eye level. He lifted his hand to proudly show off his wedding ring. "Ah," he cooed when Tonks looked devastated. "And you tried so hard to find me, too. Perhaps you should have searched within Dark lairs."

Luna giggled then and turned amused eyes onto Harry. "You're very good with the mean teasing, Harry. Did you learn that from Voldemort?"

Harry smirked. "I may have picked up a few bastard traits."

Kingsley growled and tried to lunge for him. Several people moved at once, but Harry remained where he was and was already hissing out a sharp word that had Kingsley freezing in place. Harry nodded, a grim smile growing as Voldemort finally came to stand beside him.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" Harry asked Kingsley. "It's not excruciating though. Nothing like the Cruciatus Curse, but it's still painful. I haven't been able to use this spell yet. But it's supposed to make you feel as if your bones and all your veins are being stretched beyond limits. I'm not into torture, but I figure during battles this spell could be a real asset. Does it feel like I described, Kingsley?"

Kingsley remained frozen and wasn't able to answer. "Right," Harry smiled at Voldemort sheepishly. "Forgot he couldn't answer." Harry hissed out another word to release the spell. Kingsley collapsed forward, his left arm trembling as he could barely hold his face off the floor. But moments later, he was crying out when he succumbed to Voldemort's Crucio, falling and rolling over onto his back, twitching from the very powerful and painful curse he was under.

Harry winced in mock sympathy. "The Dark Lord doesn't like it when people attack me. Doesn't really like it when people touch me either. He's very possessive. Guess I should have warned you. The last person to touch me in a way he didn't like kind of ended up dead real fast..." he left off with a cold chuckle.

"How could you do this to us?" Tonks gasped. "How could you?"

Harry instantly sobered. "What about you? How could you try and kill Bill and Charlie without any sort of evidence? Did you look Arthur and Molly in the eye and lie, telling them you only wanted to talk to their kids, make sure they were safe when in fact you were going there to kill their eldest children? I wonder... will Molly and Arthur still be on your side when they hear the truth about what happened tonight?"

When the two Aurors remained silent, Harry sighed in annoyance. "I'm curious but what exactly do you think I've done? I haven't helped Voldemort win Wizarding Britain. I didn't give him any information. Didn't give him names. I actually only started to become active with him *after* he took the Ministry and Hogwarts, and still I was only active in a neutral capacity.

"Voldemort won on his own because you all were weak and left a boy to deal with the most powerful wizard in the world! YOU ARE TO BLAME! So don't fucking look at me as if I've betrayed anyone!"

"You have been betrayed by some," Voldemort cut in, placing a soothing hand on Harry's shoulder. "But it was never by Harry."

Harry stepped back and into his husband as the Dark Lord raised his hand to the two masked Death Eaters. The two strode forward. Harry watched curiously, wondering if the two beneath the masks felt any sort of remorse for their betrayal. But knowing them, they probably didn't. The two were completely loyal to Voldemort. He was their Lord in all things. They enjoyed being Aurors, but they enjoyed being followers of the Dark Lord more.

"These two are part of my Inner Circle, Shacklebolt. I'm sure you'll find their identities a pleasant surprise," Voldemort drawled. He then instructed the two standing beside him to unmask.

They did. Andrew and Louie unmasked without any sort of hesitation. Not only that, they both adopted small smirks when the two Aurors who were on their knees gasped in something akin to horror.

Tonks was shaking her head rapidly, staring at Andrew. She looked more devastated than she had when Harry revealed himself. "Andy? Andy, tell me this isn't real! We've worked together! We've been dating—you can't be a Death Eater!"

Harry narrowed his eyes and discretely peered at Hermione, who looked none too pleased to hear what she had if the scowl on her face was anything to go by. Andrew quickly looked over, shaking his head at her. This didn't seem to calm Hermione down a bit. She pointedly looked away from him. Andrew wasn't looking too pleased with himself now. And of course he couldn't dismiss the glares he was receiving from Fred, George, and even Draco on Hermione's behalf. Voldemort found that amusing as well.

"I TRUSTED YOU!" Kingsley suddenly bellowed at the two.

"That was the point," Voldemort replied and smiled maliciously at their reactions. Then he looked at Hermione. "That was the point," he repeated firmly for her benefit. Hermione's lips thinned into firm lines and she still refused to look at the Auror. "Louie, report."

Louie turned to Voldemort and bowed while Andrew continued to stare at Hermione. She huffed once and quickly left the Great Hall, her hands clenching and unclenching as she went.

"My Lord," Louie began. "The few Aurors that have not been caught or killed are holed up in a house within Wales. Two of the remaining Aurors are Death Eaters, so of course there will be no problem with attacking the house."

"Yes. That will be done tomorrow," Voldemort responded. At this announcement Tonks and Kingsley seemed to fold, both sagging in utter defeat.

Someone purposely cleared their throat. Voldemort turned, narrowing his eyes on the twins. "Yes?"

"They tried to kill our brothers, sir," they said and both had their wands grasped firmly in hand. It was clear what they wanted to do.

Voldemort turned back to the captured Aurors and began to tap his wand against his lips. He stood that way for a few silent minutes until finally he laughed coldly. "I want to make an example of these two. They tried to kill innocent people and injured one of my trusted followers." He turned back to the twins. "Would you be willing to kill these two in front of a crowd? A more important question, would you be willing to *execute* them in front of, let's say, your parents?"

"We'll do it wherever you want and in front of whomever you want, sir."

Harry sighed. "You're going to steal two of my Silvers, aren't you?"

Voldemort smirked smugly at him.

Remus stood outside of the infirmary, head bowed and shaking slowly. He could still barely wrap his mind around the fact Fenrir had jumped in front of a curse to save him. Fenrir jumped in and took a curse he must have known would injury him badly, if not then kill him, as all within the room could recognize the light of the curse. Remus blew out a pained breath as he raised his gaze from the floor to look at the opposite wall. He clenched his fists. Fenrir could have died. He would have died if they hadn't rushed back to Hogwarts and enlisted Pomfrey's help. She didn't even ask questions. She and Severus jumped into healing Fenrir as if he were a student.

"How is he?"

Remus spun around to find Harry, or Belial approaching, smiling softly at him. Remus relaxed as he leant back against the wall. "Pomfrey did a good job. Saved his life. Fenrir..." Remus inhaled a sharp breath, his fists clenching. Belial noticed the wizard was shaking. "He's sleeping now," Remus ended softly.

Belial didn't say anything for a moment. Just moved over to lean against the wall beside him. After a while Remus could feel sharp green eyes staring at him. "What is it?"

Belial pushed off the wall and moved until they were face to face. "You wouldn't be judged, you know? No one would care if you and Fenrir, erm... if you two got together."

Remus smiled softly. "I'm not sure what I was afraid of... I had already forgiven him. It's not as if he lied. My parents did pay him to bite me, to save me from an incurable illness. Though I can't help but be angry with them since by doing what they did, I went from having one incurable illness to another... but I'm beginning to stop thinking lycanthropy is an illness. Fenrir won't let me think of it like that." Here he smiled again. "He becomes... angry when I do."

"And you're still alive, Remus. The lycanthropy won't kill you."

"He took me to meet his mother."

Belial's mouth dropped open. "He has a mother?"

That thought was entirely shocking. Fenrir was just one of those elder people you look at and think, "hmm, he was born an adult. Came into existence on his own. No parents involved in his rearing."

Remus laughed and shook his head at the young wizard's expression. "She's not his real mother. She's a witch who was bitten about sixty years ago. Took Fenrir in when he was a teen. He doesn't know what happened to his real parents, but he calls her mother and puts up with her nagging. She's one of the elders who oversee the largest of the werewolf settlements in Britain."

"He took you to see his mother?" Belial prodded and a smirk appeared on his face.

Remus cleared his throat and lifted a hand to tuck an errant strand of hair behind his ear. "Technically he took me to the settlement and I met a lot of werewolves, Mattie included. Her name is Matilda but she insists on being called Mattie. She made us dinner."

"And who was at this dinner?"

Remus cursed when his face went warm. "Just Mattie, myself, and Fenrir... I found her very pleasant to be around, even though she's a bit rough around the edges and barks at Fenrir a lot. But it's definitely something he deserves. She taught him most of his manners. Mattie said Fenrir was almost a lost cause by the time she got her claws into him... she kept giving us these weird looks."

Belial snickered. "I'm sure the looks weren't weird at all. I bet they were, 'I know you two want to shag. You should shag already' looks. Yep!"

Remus blew out a breath. "He was hurt badly. He could have died."

"But he didn't die."

Remus nodded and they lapsed into a short silence before the werewolf cleared his throat and looked at Belial closely. "How are you? Are you... better?"

Belial nodded rapidly, a wide grin on his face. "I'm loads better, Remus! Tom—erm, Voldemort bought me this brilliant villa for my birthday!"

Remus smiled at Belial's excitement and was glad. He'd been worried about Harry. The Dark Lord and Harry's friends hadn't been the only ones to notice Harry's deteriorating mood. Remus had become quite concerned, but every time he brought it up, Fenrir always told him to not worry as the Dark Lord would make it better. Remus had a hard time putting the entirety of Harry's well being into the hands of the Dark Lord, no matter how much the two seemed to love each other. But apparently Fenrir had been right. Again.

They went on to talk for another few minutes before Remus had the urge to go back into the infirmary and Belial said he needed to return home and finish working on orders. Before they separated, the infirmary doors opened and Severus appeared, sneering as usual. He said nothing to them as he passed. Belial grinned wickedly. "Had any soufflé recently, Severus? Thank you for your patronage!"

The wizard nearly stumbled, but he caught himself at the last moment and threw a scathing glare over his shoulder at Belial without stopping. Belial and Remus shared a laugh. "I'm going to pay for that during my next Potions lesson."

Remus pat his shoulder in sympathy, because yes, he would pay for the teasing in some way. They said their goodbyes then and Belial went on his way. Remus watched him until the young wizard disappeared around a corner. He then pulled in a deep breath and entered the infirmary. Pomfrey was in her office and immediately looked up upon his entering. She gave him a severe frown and Remus wanted to laugh. It hadn't anything to do with him being a Death Eater. It had everything to do with him coming in after hours to maybe disturb her patient.

"Madam Pomfrey," he said, coming to stand directly in front of her. "Thank you for healing him. May I... May I sit with him?"

"Did he really throw himself in front of a curse to protect you?" she immediately asked.

Remus could only nod, as a lump had suddenly formed in his throat.

She looked at him for long minutes before a small smile curved her lips. "You may. Just as long as you do not disturb him, Remus. And if he should awake, please let me know right away."

"I will, Madam Pomfrey. Thank you."

She nodded and returned to her office while Remus turned and headed slowly over to the only bed occupied. He pulled up a chair and sat down, not prepared to move for the world until Fenrir opened his eyes.

"It is time we released the students. The students whose parents have signed over an Oath of loyalty in exchange for their children's freedom," Voldemort told those gathered within the Headmasters office. "And those students whose parents have not returned our owls will be moved out of the dungeons and into the dorms. But they will have no contact with the outside world until their families bend to my wishes."

Harry had come by to tell him he was going back home, but remained when Voldemort asked him to. And now he sat on the edge of his desk, swinging his legs, and listening intently.

Voldemort eyed those present. Lucius, Bellatrix, Severus, Draco, Andrew, Louie, the Lestrangle Brothers, and surprisingly he'd invited Fred and George as well. "It's nearing the middle of July and the students must be allowed to recoup from their long stay here. Hogwarts will reopen on September 1st as usual. Are we prepared for this?"

Severus nodded. "Yes, my Lord."

"And the professors?"

"It is as you predicted, as you were hoping. Professor McGonagall, once she heard, insisted on being kept on as the Transfiguration professor in order to keep an eye on her students. Same for Flitwick, Hagrid, Sinistra, and Sprout. Pince, also. I don't think she cares one way or another about who's running what. As long as the library is her domain. Madam Pomfrey is also prepared to stay."

"Good," Voldemort murmured. Harry nodded, knowing that even though McGonagall was Light orientated, Tom thought she was a rather brilliant professor and the best in her field. And in regards to students, the Dark Lord wanted the best of the best spurned out of this school every year.

They went on to talk about the other professors and which ones would be kept on or be sacked for more darker and neutral orientated wizards and witches. Harry was very interested in the discussions and debates that this topic produced. At one point he caught movement from the corner of his eyes, high up on the wall. He looked and then did a fast double take. Tom had apparently animated Dumbledore's portrait again as the old man was definitely awake and was also listening intently.

"What about the Dark Arts and Defense position?" Bellatrix asked.

"Since this is a school, there aren't many who are... tame enough to teach it the way I want. At least for the younger students."

"What about Barty?"

Everyone turned to look at Harry. "Crouch Junior?" Lucius asked.

"Yeah! He may have been masquerading around as Moody but despite it all he was an excellent DADA professor," Harry ended, looking at Draco and the twins. They nodded in agreement. "He's brilliant, isn't he? Got twelve O.W.L.'s."

"Wait," Fred interrupted, "didn't he get the Kiss?"

"No," Harry shook his head. "That was only for the public."

"Thankfully Fudge's stupidity did not come to fruition," Voldemort went on. "Severus managed to save Barty and secreted him away. Fudge told the *Prophet* Barty had been given the Kiss to save face, though that did him more harm than good in the long run."

"He's was a huge help to you. Why haven't I seen him at all these past few months?"

"He has been posted out of the country since your fourth year. Recovering his barely there sanity and mostly he does extensive research for me and has been keeping Karkaroff in line. But your suggestion is a brilliant one, Harry. Barty will do well as a professor. He didn't exactly hate teaching children, except there were a few who were a bit... slow."

"Hey!" Harry exclaimed when Voldemort turned to look at him pointedly. "If I wasn't enthused with the 'tips' he was giving me, it was only because I didn't want to go through the

stupid tournament in the first place. You bloody well made me. You and your stupid nefarious plot!"

Voldemort smirked. "A plot that worked, might I add."

Harry crossed his arms over his chest and smirked back. "Still got away. Not all that slow, am I?"

Voldemort made a noncommittal sound and turned back to the amused Death Eaters standing around. Harry stuck his tongue out at his husband's back. "Now then, the next order of business. The Aurors. You two no longer need to keep your allegiances a secret and you will begin to form a new Auror department."

"Yes, my Lord!" the two exclaimed. Their excitement was badly hidden, but Voldemort didn't seem to mind it all that much. Andrew's excitement dimmed a bit when he once again found himself being subjected to glares coming from four pairs of eyes.

"Severus, do you enjoy your position as Headmaster?"

"Yes, my Lord," the wizard promptly answered. Harry saw him glance over at Dumbledore's portrait. Harry did the same and saw Dumbledore give the Potions' Master a small nod. His eyes were back to twinkling! Severus sneered but Harry and probably Dumbledore knew it was mostly only habitual.

"Very well. The position is yours until your death."

"Did you purposely say it like that to make him think he's going to die next month?"

"Harry..."

"What? I just think that was mean of you. Look at him! He's pale... paler, I mean. Even Lucius looks worried for his lover now!"

Dumbledore's eyes widened and Harry smirked. Voldemort whipped around and in seconds had Harry caged between him and the desk, his hands pressed firmly upon the desk beside Harry's legs. "Brat," he hissed.

Harry, who was perturbed in no way, smiled innocently. "Yes?"

He promptly raised a hand, slipping it beneath Voldemort's hood to grab the nape of his neck, and pressed forward, biting his husband's bottom lip into his mouth to coax his husband into a burning snog. Voldemort allowed it for longer than Harry expected, but he wasn't complaining. When his husband pulled back, Harry was uncertain as to how much time had passed but beyond the pleasant buzzing in his head, he could hear the others in the office had taken to quietly talking amongst themselves.

Voldemort was glaring but his glower held no real heat behind it. The only heat that was there was a nice boiling lustful passion, backed by the nice hardness pressing against Harry's thigh. "It's time we start showing ourselves to the world, brat."

Harry's eyes widened excitedly. "Really?"

"Yes." Voldemort pulled away and turned back to his followers. "Soon I will no longer hide my face." Many of the Death Eaters looked pleased by this announcement.

"Why do you do that anyway...sir?" George asked.

"Is it for fear?"

"In my younger years, in my quest for more knowledge of the Dark Arts, I lost my body- it was not intended- and my followers began to see a monster and not a man. They feared more... those of lower rank responded better to a monster than they did to a man. They were misguided. When I returned four years ago, they still responded better when I looked as I did. And because we were on the brink of victory, when I regained my human appearance, I hid my features so that I had complete commitment. I did not have time to take care of followers who would try and test me. But I have more power now that I am whole; more power than I had when I was first resurrected. I will be tested now when I never was before looking the way I did. But now I'm looking forward to it."

Harry jumped off the desk, his green eyes dark and sharp. "You expect people to attack you?" he asked harshly. "Your own followers?"

Rodolphus snorted. "Only the dimwitted ones."

Rabastan nodded and sat back, lacing fingers behind his head and grinned at Harry. "And then we can stand back and watch you protect our Lord. As you did with Scrimgeour."

"Bloody brilliant, that was," Rodolphus murmured. Everyone in the office murmured an agreement to that and Harry ducked his head, blushing from the fact Tom's most trusted actually trusted *him* to be able to protect their Lord if it were ever needed. That was pleasing and also kind of terrifying.

Voldemort looked around the room, nodding. "We are finished for tonight. We'll continue this meeting tomorrow afternoon."

The twins and Draco departed immediately, again shooting scathing glares at Andrew who seemed both reluctant and determined about something. He followed shortly after, along with a smirking Louie. Harry figured Andrew was going to go and try to talk to Hermione. He narrowed his eyes. Hermione was hurting real bad right now. And mostly because Andrew hadn't told her. She probably would have been okay if Andrew had just come out and told her before she had to find out like this.

Harry turned to Tom. "If I want his head, can I have it?"

The Dark Lord raised a brow. "He's one of my best-"

"I don't care!"

Beside them on the wall, Dumbledore had grown concerned. "Harry, surely you aren't asking for-"

"Quiet, old man," Tom hissed. "This does not concern you. Harry, he did not set out to hurt Hermione. His mind is full of her. His relationship with Nymphadora Tonks was strictly a job; simply to gain more trust and perhaps a way into the Order, though that did not work out. She shared those secrets with few."

Harry's eyes narrowed. "Are you sure about his intentions?"

Tom sighed. He despised this type of drama. "I use Legilimency frequently on my minions. Especially those of my Inner Circle. Charleston's amorous feelings for Hermione are very real, whereas he cared nothing for Tonks."

The young wizard huffed. "Fine. But if he doesn't fix this..."

Tom finally smiled. "I'm sure he knows what's at stake if he doesn't, little minx."

"Bugger off!" George snarled when he saw who stood on the other side of the door.

Andrew drew himself up. "No. I need to speak with her. She needs to know-"

"You should have told her the truth when you had the chance! There was no reason why you had to keep that part a secret. It's not like she would have gone off and told on you! It's not as if she would have freaked out!"

"I need to explain..."

Fred appeared beside his brother. "Listen, *mate*. You should take off now or we'll pull up everything in our arsenal and toss it at you! Understand?"

"I'm not leaving until I've—Hermione."

The witch had come up and placed hands on the twins' shoulders to separate them so she could stand on the threshold. She waited until the twins had gone back to the common couches. "Alright, now that I've calmed down, I understand- and hope- dating Tonks was part of keeping you firmly undercover," she said as soon as they were alone, staring straight into his eyes. He was relieved to see she looked less angry. Andrew nodded firmly. "But I need to know one thing. Did you sleep with her?"

Damn. He hesitated and then very slowly nodded. Hermione's eyes hardened into stone. She stepped back and slammed the door in his face.

"Fuck," he breathed out. He thought about knocking again but there were six inside the room and all were very against him at the moment and he believed the twins when they said they'd get him back for this if he didn't leave. So he had no choice but to turn around and leave.

Louie was waiting for him down the hall. "Didn't go so well?"

"Fuck!"

"I told you to tell her. I told you if you were completely serious about her, which you clearly are, then you should have told her and explained before she found out in a horrible way... like tonight. She's a Gryffindor, Andy! I told you she'd react this way."

Andrew pulled on his hair. "FUCK!"

"Now she probably thinks you're a cold hearted bastard with no morals at all. A stereotypical Death Eater."

"Not fucking helping! Besides, it's not like I slept with Tonks recently! It was months ago!"

Louie smirked. "Gonna give up?"

Andrew snapped his gaze away from the ground and met his partner's eyes. "Fuck no!"

"Good. Cause I'd hate to label my partner a pussy. And let's not forget about Belial, who will want your balls. If you don't fix this, our Lord will hand your bullocks over to him on a silver platter and you know it."

Andrew winced. That was completely true. "Merlin, sometimes I hate you."

Louie grinned. "Likewise."

Chapter Twenty-One

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty-One

Hermione stepped back after slamming the door closed in Andrew's face. Her eyes dropped to the floor and she began to chew on her bottom lip. Was she overreacting?

"Exactly what he deserved!" Fred called out. Draco and George hissed at him to be quiet. Hermione paid no attention to them.

It wasn't like she and Andy had been officially dating. They spent all of a couple of hours together at one time. And that had only been twice. And they only snogged the one time. Not only that, but he was a Death Eater and would apparently go to any lengths to get what he needed for his Lord. But Hermione had already known that. His devotion to Voldemort had not been a secret. It was one of the first things they talked about when they had the time; during the Falcons and Cannons Quidditch match. And truthfully Andy's committed loyalty and passion for the cause had made Hermione even more infatuated with him.

She asked him then at that Quidditch match, how he'd come to be a Death Eater and Andy told her. Andrew was a Ravenclaw and had gone in search of a Death Eater recruiter halfway through his seventh year. Same as Louie. He hadn't gone for the promise of muggle and muggleborn annihilation. No, he'd gone for the pride of Dark magic, for the pride of all magic's and having enough of the discrimination. Andrew was a lot like Harry in that regard and many of the Death Eaters were in it for that. For the promise that one day they would have the freedom to be who they are without discrimination. He'd gone to learn more, to become more. And Hermione couldn't help but respect that.

But still, there was that one annoying fact. "He didn't need to sleep with her in order to gain more information," she snapped to no one in particular.

"Hermione, come here," Draco called out. She sighed and turned to join them on the common seats. She slumped down on the couch next to Luna, who reached over and pat her hand.

Hermione managed a small sad smile, but then it disappeared completely after a moment and a small sob escaped her. "He should have told me," she cried, covering her eyes with her hands. The twins bolted from their seats and rushed around the couch to throw arms around her from behind.

Draco sighed in annoyance before grabbing a chair and moving it until it was directly in front of her. He then turned it around and straddled it. "Hermione!" he leaned forward and yanked her hands away from her eyes. He didn't let her hands go and instead squeezed them. "What none of you seem to realize," he began, looking at Hermione and the twins, "is the fact he had a job to do and if he failed, he would have died. If he refused, he would have died."

"You were glaring at him right along with the rest of us, hot stuff," George murmured.

"Of course I was! He should have told her! But I don't think you should let this break up whatever it was you two were having. Because, and I stress this bit, *he would have died*."

"He didn't have to sleep with her," Hermione mumbled again.

"Tonks was being tight lipped."

Everyone turned towards the door to find Belial there. He nodded and came forward, removing his mask. "Tom says Andrew was having a hard time gaining information from her so he had to try harder."

"And being intimate with someone adds another layer of trust to a relationship," Draco continued, looking into Hermione's eyes.

"Obviously it didn't work since he was never invited into the Order," Hermione replied.

"No, but he must have learned something incredibly useful since he is as we've all seen, still breathing and still part of the Inner Circle. The Dark Lord does not put up with useless tools." Harry replied as he came to stand beside Draco's chair. "Hermione, I'm not saying to forgive him right away, but you should know that he feels for you. He never felt anything for Tonks. His wanting you has nothing to do with any mission or scheme. He really fancies you. Tonks was strictly a job to him."

"Tonks is a slut anyway!" Bill suddenly called out from where he and Charlie were sprawled out in front of the fire. "That's why Andrew didn't get any information after sleeping with her. She sleeps with everyone!"

"I've done her... she wasn't anything special," Charlie announced, and Bill nodded along. "And then the bitch tried to kill me!"

"Oookay," Harry laughed. "They're obviously on their way to being pissed."

"It's true!" Bill exclaimed. "Andy probably got cheated on. Tonks was even sleeping with Kingsley! Poor Auror Andy never had a chance, you know. He's a bloke and she's an easy bird. They were dating. So what was he supposed to do? Say no?"

"Wow," Draco whispered before breaking down into a giggle fit.

Hermione had also started to snicker. "None of that really made me feel better, guys."

"Sorry, Herm. Only trying to help the bloke out. He's alright. And he had a mission..."

Hermione looked around. "So... you all think I should forgive him?"

There was hesitation and then everyone began to nod. They understood Andrew's position.

"You have to make him grovel though," Luna said suddenly. "Some men are even hotter when they grovel and sometimes they'll buy you pretty stones..."

Draco was suddenly looking at the twins. "Exactly," he purred dangerously, a dark and eerie light brightening his eyes. "That's exactly right, Luna. Don't forgive them until they grovel and offer up their souls for your consumption."

Harry looked to Fred and George. "What did you do now?"

"Don't know," Fred murmured. "Is it strange that I want to rip my head off right now and give it to him?"

"Yes," Hermione and Harry said at once.

"Merlin," murmured George breathlessly. "We should unknowingly piss him off more often."

Bill shook his head mournfully. "Tragic, bros. *Tragic*," he slurred. Charlie nodded and then made the sound of a whip being snapped in the air.

Harry snickered and then tapped a smirking Draco on the shoulder. "We need to go plan this French Ministry gala."

Draco jumped up. "Brill! I've been thinking about the type of outfits we should wear when we're our own 'employees'."

Harry groaned.

"You'll love it! I swear!"

Harry groaned again.

Remus didn't move from his beside vigil all night. Mostly because he wanted to stay by Fenrir's side and partly because now he knew without a doubt the dramatic idiot would do the same for him. He didn't know how long he managed to stay awake but apparently he must have dozed off with his forehead pressed against the bed next to Fenrir's side. He awoke when he heard a rusty groan and a hand buried itself into his hair.

"Remus, you could have crawled into bed with me."

All Remus felt was relief at the instant teasing. His head popped up to find the werewolf rubbing his eyes with his free hand. Remus shot to his feet and Fenrir paused to stare at him.

"Remus?"

"Fenrir, I-" Remus broke off and growled in frustration. He wasn't exactly sure what he wanted to say.

"Come out and say it."

Remus' shoulders sagged. "How do you feel?" he asked quietly.

Fenrir looked annoyed, probably because he knew that's not what Remus had set out to say. "How do you think I feel? Feel like I've spent all night wrestling around with a pack of teenage cubs." Fenrir groaned again and slowly sat up. He then twisted around and climbed out of bed.

"You're supposed to stay in bed! At least until Madam Pomfrey checks you over!"

"Your concern is touching."

"Fenrir!"

"Don't nag, cub. Madam Pomfrey will have to wait. Nature calls now."

"Alright, but I'm going to get her... don't try and escape out of the infirmary."

"I wouldn't do that. I'd be leaving you behind and that would be counterproductive wouldn't it, Remus?"

"Go to the bathroom already," Remus murmured, hurrying away to Pomfrey's office. Fenrir's soft chuckle clued him in to the fact that he didn't run away soon enough and the elder werewolf had caught the blasted blushing.

When Fenrir returned, Remus and Madam Pomfrey were waiting for him beside the bed.

"You can both stop looking expectant. I'm not about to get back in that bed."

"But you said-"

"I never said I'd get back into bed, Remus." He turned to Madam Pomfrey and nodded.

"Thank you for healing me, Pomfrey, as I'm sure you would have rather been doing the opposite."

"And you'd be wrong, Mr. Greyback."

"I told you to stop assuming things, Fenrir. You really need to get back into bed now. That curse you were hit with was not a mild one."

"No," Fenrir growled, fed up. "What I really need is for you to come to terms with what is happening between us. I need you to stop running away, cub. And the only way I'm going to get back into that bed is if you join me and Madam Pomfrey disappears from the infirmary. Is that going to happen?" Remus turned away and Pomfrey stood there looking sort of amused. "Didn't think so."

"No, I... Fenrir—Madam Pomfrey, could you leave us alone for a minute?"

"Very well."

When she was gone, Remus finally met Fenrir's steady gaze. "You're annoying."

"And you're scared."

"I was scared," Remus replied softly. "And then you threw yourself in front of that curse... you didn't even think about what you were doing before you did it. Why did you do that?"

"I thought that would have been obvious by now! Can't let you go, can I?" Fenrir snapped and this time he was the one to look away. He missed Remus' startled look. "Don't I get some reward for saving a Gryffindor? I thought there was a Gryffindor code about honoring those who sacrifice themselves for others... or some such nonsense."

"Yes. I suppose you do deserve a reward... dramatic idiot."

Fenrir's gaze whipped around to find Remus had closed the distance. He'd only time to blink in surprise before Remus' hand was slipping into his hair and a nose was pressing and rubbing against his neck. Fenrir quickly recovered and wound an arm around Remus' waist so the younger werewolf couldn't escape. Remus seemed to realize this and little puffs of air caressed his neck as the younger werewolf laughed.

"Was it really necessary to rip Kingsley's arm off like that?" Remus whispered, pressing closer and closing his eyes; delighting in Fenrir's warmth and scent, and the arms circling him possessively.

"He was warned, Remus."

They remained silent like this for a few moments and Remus was startled to discover he felt at total ease like this. Even more startled that Fenrir seemed to feel the same and did not make a move to pull away or move things along.

"You need to return to the bed," Remus finally murmured. "Madam Pomfrey will not let you leave."

"She will if I turn into Greyback the monster."

Remus pulled back slightly. "Fenrir, please."

"Will you come to me?"

Remus sighed. There was that moving things along bit. "I don't know if I can do that... if that's all you're looking for. I'm not like that."

Fenrir bared his teeth in anger. "Is that what you think I want?" he hissed. "A warm body in my bed? Why would I spend all my free time *chasing after you* if that's all I want?" When Remus didn't answer, Fenrir took two mental steps back and was suddenly smirking. "There are two werewolves in my pack who'll roll over for me at any given time, cub. So if I really wanted a quick fuck, I know where to go. There would be no chasing."

Remus didn't like that at all. Fenrir enjoyed the sudden jealousy and dangerous fury lighting Remus' eyes. Fenrir was also aware that he basically made sure Remus would win any fight the cub would have to battle upon the next full moon. Remus was no push over; he would not be beaten down. And this delightful jealousy insured he would beat anyone in order to be able to stay the closest to the Alpha.

"Has anyone ever told you how attractive you are when jealous, Remus? Because you are. Very attractive."

"Get back into bed," Remus growled.

Fenrir smirked. "Make me."

Madam Pomfrey rushed in soon after when she heard shouting. She skidded to a halt to find Greyback sprawled on his bed, hands tied to the headboard while Remus stood off to the side, arms crossed over his chest and smirking smugly.

"I swear, cub. I'll get you back when I'm released."

"Suppose you might try."

"This isn't fair, Remus. You didn't even give me a reward."

Remus smiled softly. "I did. I gave you a hug."

Fenrir stopped struggling for a moment and nodded. "Yes, and it was very nice. I could do with more of those."

"Maybe I could do with giving more."

Fenrir blew out a breath. "I swear to stay in this bed for however long Pomfrey wants me to... as long as you promise to stop running away."

Remus ducked his head and nodded; he didn't much care he was blushing now. "I can promise that," he replied and flicked his wand, releasing the bonds keeping Fenrir on the bed. And as promised Fenrir stayed there, grinning roguishly at Remus whenever he had the chance. Though he stopped grinning when Pomfrey next informed him he would need to stay in bed until the following morning.

Fenrir growled in annoyance. "Cub, come here. I want to say something to you."

Remus narrowed his eyes in suspicion. When Fenrir crooked a finger at him, Remus sighed and moved until he was pressed against the bed and bent down when the elder werewolf motioned him to do so. "Yes?"

"Since I am to be detained here until tomorrow morning, you will bring me meat. Don't ruin it this time."

Remus laughed softly and nodded. "Anything else?"

"Yes, actually. Madam Pomfrey, please turn away."

"Why-" Remus barely registered the sly smile blooming on Fenrir's face before he had hands in his hair, jerking his face down until their lips pressed together. Remus only had time to gasp before Fenrir forced his way into his mouth. He melted like butter against Fenrir's upper

torso, sliding a hand to the back of Fenrir's neck and angling his head and kissing back without thinking about it, because honestly he had thought about this for a long time now.

Fenrir pulled away far too soon in Remus' opinion, and the younger werewolf backed away with a dazed expression. "I'll-" Remus had to clear his throat twice before he could speak again. "I'll go get your meat now."

Fenrir grinned smugly, lifting his hands and lacing them behind his head. "Yes, you go do that."

"I..." Remus trailed off, giving it up for a lost cause and hurried out of the infirmary. As he walked down the corridor, he passed Severus who was on his way to the infirmary. "Good morning, Severus!"

The Potions Master did a double take, raising a brow at the delighted smile upon the werewolf's face as they passed each other. "Remus," he greeted, bewildered. The stupid Gryffindor laughed softly and cheerfully waved at him before rounding a corner and disappearing from sight.

"You want me to do what?" Draco exclaimed, looking around at the wizards staring at him. Fred and George were none too happy and were frowning at Lucius.

"We want you to become friendly with Dudley Dursley while we visit this Grunnings place. We want you to act very friendly in certain situations."

"But, Father!"

"We'll kill him if he lays even one fat meaty finger on our Draco," the twins said seriously. "So you might want to rethink this part of the plan."

"You," Tom said lowly, pointing to them, "brought about this part of the plan by telling us about the son's secret, so you will deal with this in silence or I will make you. Understand?"

Fred and George grit their teeth, veins clearly popping out on their necks. Clearly they were not pleased with this situation; especially when the Dark Lord went on to tell them they were forbidden from coming. They would have complained loudly if Draco hadn't shaken his head rapidly, knowing the Dark Lord would have punished them for it this time.

"But I don't want to flirt with him!" Draco went on to whine. "I don't want to bend over and show off my arse! Father!"

Lucius sighed and began to rub his temples. "He won't actually touch you, Draco."

"But-"

"Draco, do I need to find someone else to do this? Someone else who appears to be more devoted to myself and my husband."

The blond's eyes widened. "No, my Lord! No, I just...eww!"

"Prepare yourself with the clothing your father and Hermione purchased for you. We leave in an hour."

An hour and a half later, Draco was sauntering down an open corridor, passing workstations and offices. *Too easy*, Draco thought when he heard heavy footsteps following behind. He'd appeared with his father and their Lord half an hour ago. They spent that time within the owner's office discussing this and that, knowing that their very presence made all the workers nervous. He'd passed the enclosure Dudley Dursley worked in with three others just now and already the oaf was following him.

"Oi!"

Draco sneered and kept right on walking... or sauntering, though he loathed doing it here and for this person. It was much more fun and gratifying sashaying his hips and arse for his fiends.

"Oi! Are you deaf?"

Draco paused then and turned around slowly, careful to keep the disdain off his face and look as interested as he could. He barely managed not to flinch upon being faced with Harry's obese cousin. *Disgusting*. "Were you addressing me?" he asked, raising a brow.

"Yeah," Dursley answered, rolling his eyes. He kept right on walking until there was only a foot between them. Draco stamped down the urge to back away as far as he could. "Didn't you hear me?"

"Is that how you usually address people?" Dursley blinked, obviously confused. Draco sighed, lifting a finger to brush aside a single strand of white blond hair away from his eye. Dursley followed the movement closely. "I only answer when I'm addressed directly. *My name*," Draco grit out when the fat arse continued to blink in confusion.

Dursley frowned. "Don't know your name. Who are you anyway? Haven't seen you around. You don't look like a regular here," he ended, his eyes sweeping up and down Draco's immaculately dressed body.

"My father, Lawrence Spinks, is the new owner of this quaint little business. David Spinks," he offered and forced himself to extend a hand. *Give a little, Draco*.

"Your father..."

This seemed to make Dursley pause; made him look nervous and Draco internally smirked. "Yes, that's right. Did you know it's terribly rude to leave me waiting?" he went on, looking at his outstretched hand pointedly. Dursley shook himself and quickly grabbed his hand for a shake. A sliver of a grimace crossed Draco's face, but Dursley was too busy staring at Draco's hand to have noticed it. "You can let go of my hand now."

"Right," Dursley murmured and did let go, though not as quickly as Draco would have liked. "So why are you here?"

"My father thought I should get to know this place. Eventually I will be taking over our businesses for him when he decides to retire."

"Businesses?" Dursley asked, very interested.

"Of course," Draco said as he turned to continue his walk. "We own many businesses all over the world."

"Do you need a tour?" Dursley asked, rushing to catch up. "I could show you around. It's a big place. You might get lost."

"If you like."

"Yeah."

They went off and Draco had to tolerate the fat arse staring at him every chance he could get. If the fiends hadn't told them this arse was gay, then the staring would have clued Draco in. He wasn't exactly subtle about the staring. Draco didn't know if it were because he wasn't trying to be subtle or if he didn't know how to be.

"Your suit," Dursley suddenly said just after he'd leaned back a bit to stare at Draco's arse. "Where'd you get it?"

"It's an Anderson & Sheppard."

And according to Hermione- who had helped Lucius, Draco, and the Dark Lord with their attire- only muggles of exceptional money could afford these suits. And apparently she hadn't lied when she said anyone muggle would recognize the name.

Dursley's eyes widened. "B-but Prince Charles goes there!" he sputtered.

"Does he?" Draco remarked.

"Yeah! Um... it looks good on you," Dursley murmured. Once again his eyes sweeping Draco up and down.

"Yes," Draco said. He turned so that Dursley could only see his profile and leaned over a bit, pretending to study the fine print on a poster upon the wall. Dursley sucked in a breath and Draco mentally grimaced. *I want my fiends*. "I've been told by past boyfriends that I look good in anything." He then turned only his face so that they were eye to eye and forced a flirty smile. "I also look good in nothing at all."

It took a moment and Draco patiently waited until, "boyfriends? You're queer?" Dursley burst out.

"I find labels distasteful," Draco answered as he straightened and pierced the blob with narrowed eyes. "If you'll excuse me." He turned and continued down the hall the way they'd come at a brisk pace, smirking when he caught sight of someone quickly ducking into an office a ways down.

"No, wait! I didn't mean to offend you!" Dursley rushed out and hurried after him. Draco eyed him speculatively and then finally nodded. Dursley smiled at him. "C'mon, I'll show you the rest of the place."

"Yes, alright."

Dursley began to lead the way again, and if his hand lightly brushed against Draco's arse as he passed, the blond didn't mention it for though he now wanted to return home and shower until the next morning, it was worth it knowing anyone behind them would have seen the move. And Draco was aware they had been followed by three persons for the past ten minutes. Two wizards and a muggle who would be having a heart attack any moment now.

Vernon Dursley pulled at his tie nervously, clearing his throat as he did so while his round beady eyes peered out of his office window to where he could see the new owner of Grunnings standing away near the lift, discussing something with another fellow who was apparently part of this new ownership. They both looked like fine upstanding citizens. One with short blond hair parted respectably down the left side of his head and the other had brown hair... it was a bit long in Vernon's opinion, nearly brushing past his ears, but Vernon could find no other fault in that one's appearance. They both wore business suits of the highest cut and Vernon admitted it would take three months worth of paystubs to be able to afford clothes that fine. Probably more.

Beyond that, they both made Vernon and a lot of the others working here extremely nervous. It was something about the way they moved and the way their eyes watched the goings on around. One got a chill when faced directly with those eyes. And Vernon had a meeting with the new owner in fifteen minutes time.

Though Vernon wasn't too worried about this. He did good work here and was head of his department. The owner also had a son about the same age as Dudley. Perhaps Dudley could make it in good with the son; it might help Dudley climb the ladder. Then again, perhaps that wasn't such a good idea if it were true what the freaks said. The owner's son was a very handsome boy... But those freaks had to be wrong! Dudley said it was a lie, and Dudley would never lie to him.

He nodded firmly and cleared his throat again. He suddenly had the strange urge to go and find Dudley. The boy was probably on another break. Vernon slowly stood from his chair and gazed out of the window through the white blinds. He didn't particularly want to leave his office when the two men were standing right there; close enough to where Vernon would be perfectly visible to them once he left the confines of his office. But he should really get up and go check on Dudley, make sure he wasn't spending all of his time within the break room. If the boy wanted to be successful, he had to properly work for it.

The moment he stepped out of his office, Lawrence Spinks glanced over at him and gave him a curt nod. Vernon returned that nod and walked on, wanting to pass them as quickly as possible. But as he was walking by the dark haired one, a Mr. Brent Turner, caught his eyes and held them. It was all very strange. Vernon could not seem to pull his gaze away. The blond suddenly looked nervous, but Vernon didn't see this. He was only seeing the dark eyes

narrowing... out of nowhere, he suddenly had a picture of Petunia's freak of a nephew flashing across his mind.

That disgusting freak! Vernon hoped he was dead. He'd often thought he should have done the world a favor and drowned the rat in the river the very moment they found the freak on their doorstep. Surely left alive, he would get up to nothing good. Directly after this thought a sharp pain speared through his head. Mr. Turner blinked then and turned away and Vernon quickly moved on, shaking himself and rubbing a hand against his temple. It was suddenly very cold around here.

Vernon travelled through the building and two stories down. He had to ask around for his son and was directed to the last place Dudley had been seen. Following these directions, Vernon's steps faltered when he heard voices down a hardly used part of the building. He recognized Dudley's voice right off and spotted him in the dim light speaking to another man.

They were walking down the corridor, speaking quietly. Vernon would have called out to his son, but something compelled him to remain silent and simply watch in the shadows. He recognized the other man as the owner's son, David Spinks. Vernon was pleased Dudley seemed to be making friends with the boy. But as time went by and he continued to follow them silently, that pleasure quickly faded away to disbelief and disgust and just plain shock. He would have had to be blind to miss the way his son's eyes caressed David Spinks as if he were staring at a girl he wanted.

Vernon's face exploded in red and he would have raged; only he couldn't properly move. He was just in too much shock. And then... and then he heard Spinks say he'd had past *boyfriends* and Vernon calmed down because Dudley reacted as he was supposed to. With disbelief and disgust.

Perhaps, perhaps I was seeing wrong. All this new owner nonsense... yes of course! Dudley's a good boy. A good boy who has a healthy obsession with girls. Not boys!

Those bolstering thoughts were dashed when Dudley raced after Spinks. When he saw his son cop a feel. And as the time went by, Vernon had to stand quietly watching his son blatantly flirting. And then it got worse. Dudley cornered Spinks in an empty part of the building.

"So you said boyfriends. That must mean you have plenty of experience with that pretty mouth."

Spinks looked startled and lurched back, but he couldn't go far and bumped into a corner. Spinks looked down the hall, but of course no one but Vernon was there and Vernon had ducked quickly into an empty office. He waited a moment before peering out again and caught the tail end of Spinks' response to his son's shocking statement.

"...and since you know this is an Anderson & Sheppard, you're barmy if you think for one moment I'll drop to my knees for you in this dirty dank hallway! As if I would drop to my knees for *you* anyway!"

"No need to get so worked up," Dudley murmured, seemingly not picking up on Spinks' disgust. "I don't mind sucking you off."

"Excuse me?" Spinks pressed himself further into the corner and looked horrified. "No!"

"In fact, we're alone here. Why don't I show you what I know? You'll have to unbuckle those nice pants and turn around—here, I'll do it for you."

"Hey! Let go of me!" Spinks then squeaked something that Vernon thought sounded like 'fiends!'

"David, there you are!"

"Father!" David hastily walked-jogged- down the corridor and immediately hid behind his father and Mr. Turner.

Vernon was finally able to move and lurched out of the office, spearing his son with a disgusted look. Dudley had jumped a mile away from David upon hearing the elder Spinks' voice.

"Mr. Dursley," Lawrence turned immediately to the man who practically stumbled out of the office. "Are you aware you are five minutes late for our meeting?"

Vernon could only shake his head. He was so angry he couldn't speak one word. The other man, Mr. Turner, caught his eye and smirked at Vernon. A malicious knowing smirk; the man looked evil like that. Smirking and standing in the dim lighting of the corridor. That's all Vernon could think. Evil.

"Shall we get on with it?" Lawrence pressed; eyes narrowed on Vernon as Mr. Turner took hold of David's shoulder and started to guide the young man back down the corridor.

"Yes, of course," Vernon managed to ground out. He speared his son with a meaningful look before slowly following Spinks, leaving Dudley alone in the corridor looking horribly pale and shaking.

The Dark Lord continued to lead Draco back the way they'd come. The whiney brat was shaking. "Calm yourself, Draco," he murmured.

"It was horrible, my Lord. Horrible. He was going to—"

Tom squeezed his shoulder again. Not painfully, but persistently. "And you did very well, Draco. We wouldn't have let anything happen. You did a fine job of leading him on."

"Course I did. I'm an expert. But I didn't think he'd be so bold or stupid enough to do something like that out in the open."

"He was purposely leading you to the part of the factory not used."

Draco gasped and his eyes widened in horror. "Do you think he might have tried to—"

"As I've said, your father and I would never have let that happen."

Draco nodded and then his shoulders slumped. "I want my fiends."

Tom nearly let the fond smile he felt actually manifest upon his face but stopped it at the last moment and instead rolled his eyes. He was relieved he'd forbidden Fred and George from coming today. Otherwise they would have cursed Dudley Dursley for even attempting the corner Draco like that. For laying his fat hands on the blond. "We're almost finished here and then you can return to my home where Harry and your fiends are waiting. I've been told you'll be staying the night to help Harry with the orders."

"Yes, my Lord. We'll also be breaking in the two new house elves Harry bought the other day."

Tom nodded and they remained silent after that as now they were passing other workers and Dursley was catching up from behind, along with Lucius. Once at the owner's office, Draco hurriedly opened the door and stood back, allowing his Lord and his father in before him. He then went in and let the door shut in Dursley's face.

When Dursley came in, his face still a blotchy purplish red, he was immediately told to sit in the coldest voice Lucius could muster. "I shall be brief, Mr. Dursley, as I find being here distasteful and my son needs a thorough wash. After extensive reviewing over the last week, my partner and I have decided Grunnings is no longer in need of your services or the services of your son. You have fifteen minutes to clean up your office and depart. Good day."

Dursley gaped at them, eyes going back and forth between Lucius and Tom. "What are you saying?" he demanded. "Surely you aren't implying-"

"You are fired, Mr. Dursley," said Tom with a disdainful air. "You and your son."

Dursley shot from his seat, a thick finger pointed in Lucius' face. "You can't do this to me! I've been working here well over two decades!"

"Yes and it's time for new blood, as they say. New and," Lucius paused to look the muggle up and down, a disgusted sneer forming on his lips, "trimmer-"

"You have no right!"

"I have every right, Dursley, seeing as I am the owner. And if you continue to stand there yelling, I'll have to alert the authorities and let them know you are causing a disturbance. And if I'm made to go that far, then I will of course go one step further and tell the authorities of your son's intent to sexually assault my son," Lucius announced, a malicious smile upon his face. "There were three witnesses after all."

"Get out," Tom purred. One look at the dark look on his face and Dursley didn't dare argue further and quickly vacated the office; shaking his head, unable to believe he'd just been sacked nor could he wrap his mind around the fact that his son was in fact a homosexual.

Lucius stood, looking at his Lord. "That went well."

Tom nodded. "Next week we'll move on to the next part."

"Why can't we terminate all these muggles and set the building on fire?" Draco asked, his tone on the verge of whining.

Tom knew, but he refused to say. So Lucius did it for him. "What do you suppose Harry's reaction would be if we did that?"

Draco huffed. "He'd be angry we've ruined the lives of hundreds of muggles instead of three. These people have done nothing to us."

"Correct."

"Bloody Pot Head."

"Bloody Gryffindor," Tom agreed, a smile tugging at his lips. "He's more Gryffindor than he likes to admit."

After that the three left. Lucius off to Malfoy Manor to change before his appointments at the Ministry, and Tom and Draco back to the Dark Lord's castle. Tom released Draco's shoulder upon landing. Draco mumbled a "thank you, my Lord," and then he tore across the hall and up the stairs in order to get to the shower in the room the twins occupied. Tom spun away and had only taken a few steps towards his office before he was called out to.

"Err... Tom, that you?"

Tom turned to find Harry standing a few feet away near the hallway which would lead down to the kitchens. Apparently from the back, Harry only half recognized his husband since Tom was still dressed in his very expensive black business suit. Harry's eyes widened and dropped slowly down and then back up again.

"Tom," he moaned. Tom smirked. "Gods, Tom. You look... you look—Mmm."

"You are drooling, love."

Harry only nodded and continued to eye him up. "Uhm. Where... are you going?"

Tom had been going to the office to work for a bit, but he could not ignore the way Harry was staring at him. He began to prowl towards his young husband. He saw Harry swallow thickly. "Where are the twins?"

"In the kitchen... eating my fudge and waiting for Drake. Tom, you—"

"Yes?" the Dark Lord purred as he reached Harry and began backing him up into the darkened alcove very nearby. Harry's hands instantly latched onto his shoulders.

"I should... get back to the kitchen."

Tom grinned suddenly, and it was that delightfully poisonous grin. "No. I don't think so."

The twins meandered out of the kitchen twenty minutes later and just as they were crossing the Entrance Hall and turning towards the grand staircase, they heard Harry shout out. Very near and off to the right. They spied the alcove, though they couldn't see all the way in as it looked drenched in darkness from where they stood.

"Tom!"

"Yesss... fuck, Harry! So tight...you like that?"

"Ung!" which was followed by a lot of slick flesh slapping together and heavy panting from both parties.

Fred's jaw dropped while George smirked. Fred then started walking closer but George quickly grabbed his arm. He shook his head, pointed towards the alcove, and then drew a line across his neck. Fred paused to consider and then nodded, grimacing at the thought of what might actually happen if the Dark Lord did catch them.

The two then tried to ignore the interesting and arousing sounds coming from the alcove—the Dark Lord liked to talk dirty. Who knew?—but when they were on the first step, the two paused. They turned to each other, saw the doom in each other's eyes, and then sprinted back across the hall towards the alcove. They were five feet away when they walked straight into a ward that lit up like lightning and struck out at them.

Inside the alcove, as he pounded away into Harry's tight heat, Tom grinned maliciously against Harry's slick neck and listened to the screams as Fred and George were attacked by his cursed proximity ward. "Nosy brats," he hissed before sinking his teeth into Harry's neck and aiming deeper. Harry laughed, hitched his leg up higher around Tom's hip, and held on tighter.

The next afternoon found Harry and Tom taking a quiet peaceful hour together within their private parlor, along with Nagini. "The twins are still twitching," Harry murmured after a time.

Tom smirked. "Serves them right."

"You set them up. Wanted them to come close. You could have silenced the alcove." Tom said nothing. He only continued to look smug and went back to reading. Harry sighed.

"Suppose it did some good though. Draco stopped whining about Dudley and spent all of his effort looking after the twins. He completely put the Grunnings incident out of his mind."

"I knew what I was doing," Tom murmured.

"You didn't know that was going to happen."

"Yes I did."

Harry let it go, knowing it was pointless to argue. So he settled back down, head in Tom's lap where Tom had a hand in his hair, and went back to reading his own book. After a while,

Nagini shifted slightly and then broke the companionable silence by saying, **you smell different, young wizard.**

Harry set aside the Ancient Runes book he'd been studying recently and raised his head from Tom's lap to peer down at the snake partly coiled in a ball upon his stomach and chest. Her triangular head was raised so that they were mostly eye level at the moment. **How so, Nagini?**

Tom paused in his reading to watch and listen curiously, wondering what Nagini was about now. At first the large snake didn't reply and instead weaved closer to Harry's face, flicking her tongue out against his chin. The brat tried to douse a giggle when Nagini's tongue tickled him, but Tom heard it and chuckled lowly. Finally the snake seemed to shrug, if that were even possible, and laid her head back down on Harry's chest.

I am not sure what is different. When I know, I shall let you know.

Harry furrowed his brow. "Okay then." He tipped his head back to look at Tom. "Your snake is weird."

"No. She's very intelligent, Harry. If she says you smell different, you smell different... are you sure you aren't feeling sick?"

Harry didn't answer, which had Tom frowning. Harry only remained quiet when he didn't want to lie. And Tom already knew anyway because Tally had informed him of Master Harry having been kneeling in front of the toilet this morning and yesterday afternoon, vomiting up the little food he'd consumed the last two days.

Nagini's head popped up. And it was a rather amusing sight, especially coming from the usual languid moving snake. But her quick movement stalled Tom from grabbing Harry and carting him to St. Mungo's as he'd been thinking of doing since yesterday. Nagini uncoiled herself and slithered up until she was draped across Tom's shoulders and could hiss into his ear. Harry stroked the scales of the part of her body draped over him and had gone back to reading. This wasn't a onetime occurrence, the two whispering to each other in his presence, so he wasn't bothered by it now.

Master, you did not say you intended to breed.

Tom blinked. **And why would you say such a thing, my pet?**

Nagini seemed to hiss in annoyance. **Master, your mate is breeding. This is why he smells different.**

After this announcement, Tom went completely stiff. Not from shock- alright, maybe a little shock- but mostly he sat still in silent contemplation. And shock. And Panic—but Dark Lord's do not panic! No, he definitely was not panicking. He'd known this would happen eventually. He'd planned for this... only, not really. Not for *right now* actually. Again, this was all Harry's fault. Tom didn't usually like to use prep spells when they made love because with Harry it was always better doing it the slow hands-on way. And if he forewent the prep

spells, then he usually forgot about the conception spells, and Dark Lord's weren't supposed to forget things but that was the bloody Power of Harry Riddle.

Nagini shifted over his shoulder. **Master?**

Quiet, Nagini. *I'm panicking here.*

Parts of Harry's behavior- the exhaustion, the decreased appetite, the heightened snappish attitude, disorientation, and the nausea... now it all made perfect sense. Tom mentally groaned and pinched the bridge of his nose. "I'm supposed to be a genius. Why didn't I realize before? Though to be fair, this is new... for me. It's perfectly understandable that I would not put the signs together—*do not panic*," he hissed harshly under his breath.

Harry craned his head back to look into his husband's face. "Talking to oneself is generally a sign of-" he cut off upon seeing actual apprehension on Tom's face. "What's wrong?" he demanded as he sat up, ignoring Nagini's annoyed hiss when her body slipped off his chest and off Tom's shoulders to land on the back of the lounge.

Tom stood and held out a hand. "Come. We're going out."

"A mission?" Harry asked as he climbed to his feet.

"Something like that," Tom murmured and snapped his fingers. A house elf appeared. "Travel cloaks."

"Right away, Master."

"I'll begin to use my real identity now. I will only glamour my eyes. Those we are seeing will quickly come to realize who I am."

"Wicked!"

A short time later Harry's excitement vanished and he scowled when he found himself being led into St. Mungo's. "I don't need a healer!" he snapped as he was dragged through the lobby and towards reception.

Tom, the arse, ignored him and immediately demanded an appointment upon reaching the lobby desk; he began rattling off names of certain healers and asking for whichever ones were available, and if they weren't available then to make them available. Harry thought it rather funny and telling that the receptionist only nodded along to whatever Tom was saying, and went along with whatever his husband demanded. He wasn't Voldemort at the moment but he didn't need to be in order to be immediately obeyed.

Harry huffed when the receptionist scuttled off as soon as Tom gave her a piercing 'now' look. "Geez, you're blowing this way out of proportion. It's probably only a cold."

Again he was ignored, though he hadn't expected anything less. He was about to go and sit in one of the lobby chairs, leaving Tom alone to stand rigidly in front of the desk, but stopped when he heard his name called by a familiar voice he hadn't heard in a long time.

He spun around to find two of his old dorm mates coming out from the main part of the hospital. "Dean, Seam—whoa, Seamus! I didn't know you were expecting!" he exclaimed, taking in Finnegan's large stomach.

"Err, yeah. Next month. We're married," Seamus blurted out, gesturing to his long time partner. Dean went from staring at Harry warily to beaming proudly.

"Yeah, the whole school figured that's the way it would turn out."

The two nodded and then an awkward silence descended. At least on Seamus and Dean's part. Harry actually found this situation funny. These two hadn't exactly been encouraging or accepting of the changes he'd gone through the last year of Hogwarts or after. He could admit he wasn't too sorry to have lost their friendship. Harry studied them with a critical eye as he saw Dean trying to think of something to say. They both looked really tired and worn out. Their clothes weren't... fitting. They actually looked like they were homeless. *Am I becoming a snob?* Harry gasped. "Oh no! I'm starting to think like Drake!"

Now they were both eyeing him as if he were crazy and Dean was back to looking hostile. "Here for a mental check up then?" he asked snidely, bitterness creeping into his tone.

Harry, amused, nodded. "Yeah, finally. I've had loads of people telling me to come already... So why don't you tell me why you haven't had a proper meal in months?" he shot back.

Dean bristled while Seamus just seemed to sag. "What's it to you?" Dean demanded.

"You look awful," Harry said with a shrug.

"You have some bloody nerve! It's no thanks to you I haven't been able to get a job after Hogwarts," Dean snapped back.

"How's that my fault?"

"Because of you, people are afraid to leave their homes. We only came here today because Seamus had to have a checkup..."

Harry shook his head, sighing in annoyance. "Again, that's not my fault since I'm not the Dark Lord. Still don't see how that's going to keep you from getting a job, Dean. You weren't exactly a bad student... Unless you fear you're going to be targeted by Voldemort. But I don't know why you would think such a thing. Just because you're a half blood. Have you heard anything about the Dark Lord targeting anyone who hasn't directly tried to defy him? Are businesses actually closed due to the Dark Lord's rise in power? Now that he's in power, is the Dark Lord doing what everyone stupidly thought he would do? Wipe out all half blood and muggleborns? No, he hasn't. He isn't. So why cower away in your homes?"

The two remained silent and Harry shook his head. *Pathetic*. "Well, whatever. It's not my problem if you're not Gryffindor enough to try and live your lives and with a baby on the way."

"You're a bloody bastard," Dean growled.

Harry grinned. "Yeah? Well guess I have to be after the shunning I took our seventh year. Do you expect me to feel sorry for any of you?"

Harry watched as Seamus grabbed Dean's hand and squeeze, as if keeping Dean from retaliating to this in some way. This surprised Harry as he figured Seamus would be egging Dean on. But then again, Seamus looked dead on his feet... Harry did feel sort of bad for them.

Seamus glanced Harry up and down, a jealous frown twisting his lips upon seeing the nice fitting robes and the healthy happy glow of his eyes. "Heard you got married. Living the nice life then, Harry?" he asked bitterly.

"Yes, actually. There he is," Harry answered waving to the finely dressed wizard standing at the desk becoming dangerously annoyed. Harry winced. Tom was burning inside with impatience. He wondered if Tom was going to kill that receptionist for taking too long. Hopefully not. "Don't know why we're here actually. He's going overboard. As usual. I've only got a cold." He turned back to the two and found them staring at Tom with widening eyes. That was usually the reaction Tom got from everyone. "Look," he went on, scratching the back of his head, "despite everything, are you two doing well?"

"Do you even care?"

"Just because I went neutral doesn't mean I don't care about what happens to individuals I spent seven close years with, even if you were all being brain dead arses," Harry snapped, annoyed with himself for actually caring. But Seamus was so thin, not nearly as round as he should be at eight months and his saving people complex was rising to the surface. When the two didn't answer, Harry sighed. "Neville. Have you spoken to Neville recently?"

"Haven't spoken to anyone since school let out," Seamus murmured, his eyes widening with each passing word until finally he was looking directly over Harry's head. Dean doing the same.

Harry ignored the presence at his back for the moment. "Neville's starting up his own business and he's building three greenhouses at the moment. He told me he needs help and would be willing to pay for it. Dean, contact Neville. He'll give you a job. It's better than nothing. And stop worrying about Death Eaters and Voldemort. If they were going to go after you, you'd know it by now. They don't care about the little people. Now, if you were thinking of joining the little rebellions rising up then you'd have a problem with Death Eaters, but if not then you're very safe."

"How do you know that?"

Harry's arm shot up and he jerked his thumb over his head, barely missing Tom's nose. "Tom," he said simply. "Tom knows about everything Voldemort's doing—could you please stop flinching every time I say his name? It's annoying."

"He's bloody scary, Harry," hissed Seamus.

Harry laughed. "That rhymed!" Behind him, Tom groaned. Beyond that, Harry wondered who Seamus was referring to. Tom or Voldemort.

Dean's lips tilted up slightly upon Harry's exclamation. "Umm, no offense, but why would he know about everything You-Know-Who does?"

Harry didn't need to turn around to know Tom was narrowing his eyes on Dean. "Because Tom's a politician of sorts and nowadays he has to associate with a lot of Death Eaters and sometimes Voldemort too."

Tom moved then, wrapping an arm around his waist and tugged lightly. "Say goodbye to your little *friends* now, Harry. They're ready for us."

Harry looked over to the doors leading into the main part of the hospital to find a very nervous looking medi-wizard standing there waiting to lead them to a room. "Alright then. See you guys around. And Dean, contact Neville," he said in parting and allowed Tom to lead him away. He hoped Dean sought out Neville. If he didn't, then Harry would probably ask Neville to look up Dean. They may have been arses to him in seventh year, but he didn't like to see them suffering like this. Harry even thought about sending an anonymous note to Molly...

He allowed Tom to pull him through the hospital though he didn't let it go on quietly and spent most of the walk complaining. Tom still said not a lot. And he walked rigidly. Harry couldn't actually pinpoint what was wrong with Tom now. "I'm sorry if I said too much back there..." he ventured just in case that was it, but he didn't think so.

Tom shook his head. "You did fine and it was easy to see why you wanted to help them. That boy was too thin for being that far along."

Harry smiled up at Tom, pleased his husband had noticed. "Did you hear everything?"

"I started to listen as soon as you were called out to just in case they thought attacking you would be a good idea."

Harry rolled his eyes. "I can handle two Gryffindors who only know defensive spells that I taught them."

"Nevertheless..."

They finally entered a room and Tom told Harry to sit on the bed before murmuring quiet commands to the medi-wizard, who was now trembling and looked scared out of his mind. Harry sighed and flopped onto his back. "It's only a cold!"

"Quiet, you," Tom muttered as the medi-wizard quickly scampered away with a promise the Healer would be right in. "I know you threw up this morning, Harry. Yesterday as well. Were you ever going to tell me?"

"No! I knew you'd react this way, wasting our time here when we could be doing more useful things. Like shagging!"

Now it was Tom's turn to roll his eyes. "You and your teenage hormones. Is there nothing else you think about?"

"Fudge and Quidditch and don't act as if you're not always thinking about shagging me!" Tom smirked in answer. "By the way, Draco and I are taking a trip to France in two days for our business. We're catering the French Ministry gala."

Tom's eyes narrowed. This was news. "Excuse me?" he hissed dangerously.

Before Harry could elaborate, a Healer walked in stammering a greeting first to Tom and then to Harry. Tom told him to hurry up and get on with it and Harry was then subjected to a number of tests he didn't understand and it annoyed him that neither Tom nor the Healer felt compelled to explain the tests to him.

Both Tom and the Healer were being strangely quiet and this had Harry's nerves spiking. Especially when the healer was done and stepped back, peering at Harry's chart after the results automatically appeared upon it. It didn't help Harry that the Healer looked severely uncomfortable and kept shooting worried glances at Tom as he read the chart.

"Yes, well..." the Healer began and then paused to clear his throat, looking between the standing and rigid wizard and then back to Harry.

"Oh Merlin," Harry yelped, jumping off the bed to face the Healer fully. "Is there really something wrong with me? Am I dying again? Is that it? Why do you look so nervous?"

"It's because he knows who I am, love," Tom soothed and then pierced the terrified Healer with a glare. "Get on with it. And do tell me it is the news I expect to hear. Good news," he prompted.

"News you expect... ah, yes! Good then. Yes, yes, good news, my Lord!" The Healer smiled at Harry, though it was still a nervous smile. "Congratulations! You are six weeks pregnant."

Tom raised a shocked brow. Eight weeks? Harry was that far along? *Salazar... don't panic.*

"Pregnant?" Harry croaked. "Eight weeks?"

The Healer smiled. "Yes."

Harry gaped like a fish for a few seconds before his eyes rolled to the back of his head and he fainted dead away. Thankfully Tom had come to stand beside him and easily caught him before he fell to the floor. He chuckled at Harry's reaction as he placed the little minx back onto the bed. When the Healer cleared his throat, Tom's attention went back to him.

"My Lord, it would be wise to do a full prenatal examination at this time."

"Very well. Proceed."

"He'll need to be undressed."

Tom nodded and waved him away. "Return in five minutes."

"Yes, my Lord."

Tom was in the middle of discarding Harry's pants, leaving his young lover only in his boxers when Harry finally awoke. "Tom! I had a lovely dream! We were at St. Mungo's and the healer said I was pregnant! Two months pregnant!"

Tom shook his head. Now that Harry knew his firm position on their having babies, the little minx was always talking about it and acting as if his odd depressive mood had never happened. "Not a dream, brat. Now lie still. You'll need to have a prenatal check up."

"Not a dream," Harry whispered happily. "We're going to have a baby!"

Tom laughed at Harry's exuberance; at the absolute bliss radiating from his eyes. "Yes, my love."

"And..." Harry's smile dimmed in worry, "and you're not upset?"

Tom leaned over, brushing their lips together. "No, Harry. Not upset." A knock upon the door stalled anything else Harry might have said, but Tom could tell it would have been more babbling of the ecstatic persuasion. "Enter!"

"Geez, you take charge everywhere."

Tom smirked. "I am Lord everywhere."

The Healer returned with the same medi-wizard. Harry wondered if the medi-wizard were a Death Eater. When he looked at his husband in question, Tom nodded and smirked. He had people *everywhere*. No wonder the poor wizard looked terrified of Tom.

"Right then," the Healer began as he came to stand beside the bed, most certainly aware of Tom standing on the other side with his narrowed eyes upon him and the medi-wizard. "First we'll check the state of your abdomen and then move on from there."

Harry nodded eagerly. "Do we get to see yet?"

"Yes. At the end we'll do that. But you won't see any features. The fetus is far too small for such a thing yet."

Harry grinned happily. The medi-wizard sucked in a breath then. "Harry Potter," he whispered as if just realizing, as if just seeing the scar on Harry's forehead. Tom's wand was out and pointed at his heart in the next instance, while Harry rolled his eyes.

"Harry Riddle actually." **Tom, we've just found out we're going to have a baby. Please don't ruin the moment by killing someone,** he pleaded. He watched his husband slowly lower his wand, but the threat of death was still in his eyes. "And you," Harry went on to the medi-wizard, "be quiet before you get yourself killed."

"Yes, he's quite right," the Healer snapped at the cowering medi-wizard.

"Do your jobs and keep quiet about all of this," Tom hissed menacingly. "Should the pregnancy be leaked before we want the public to know... we'll know exactly who leaked it and I will not waste time asking either of you. I'll just kill the both of you and be done with it. Understand?"

Both nodded and the rest of the check up went underway without any more incidents. But when the check up was nearly over and the Healer drew up a vision of the inside of Harry's abdomen, his eyes widened.

"Is there a problem?" Harry and Tom demanded at once.

"My Lord, your husband is pregnant..."

"Yes," Tom hissed. "We've already established that."

"...with twins."

Tom turned back to his husband, staring into Harry's widening eyes. "That was not part of the plan," he replied quietly, gritting his teeth and trying to keep his own eyes from rolling to the back of his head.

The moment they arrived back home, Tom released Harry and strode away straight to his study. Slowly, Harry followed after, not really sure what to do or say. It was clear Tom was in a state of shock. Perhaps panic too, though he knew Tom would never admit it aloud. An insane giggle slipped passed his lips as he trailed after his stiff husband. *Twins*. He was having twins.

Tom entered his study and went straight for the liquor cabinet. He uncorked the Firewhiskey, poured himself a hefty shot, and tossed that back. He then repeated the process. He was bringing the second to his lips when Harry finally caught up. He came in and hovered just inside the room and watched Tom down that shot and then pour a third.

Harry was still feeling giddy, but that was quickly making way for wariness. "Tom... I-I didn't know. Didn't do it on purpose."

"Of course you didn't," Tom replied sneeringly and then threw back the third shot. He then took in a deep breath and finally turned to his young husband. He snarled, "fate likes to fuck with us both!"

He slammed the shot glass upon the counter so hard that it cracked in several places. Harry winced and backed up a few steps, eyes wide and a little terrified.

"No. No, Harry. Come here," Tom demanded softly when he saw this, when he saw Harry shrinking in on himself. Harry didn't move so Tom went to him. "I'm not angry with you, love."

"But you are angry. With the situation... with our babies," he ended in a whisper as Tom gripped his shoulders tightly.

"No, love. I'm simply surprised and... unprepared." Tom could admit he was most certainly panicking too, but Harry didn't need to know that. Especially not now when his little love looked less happy now and scared about his reaction.

"You're not happy," Harry muttered as Tom brought him close to his chest.

"Harry, I didn't expect... I should have though. I should have known."

"You didn't answer."

"I don't know what to be right now," Tom responded truthfully. "But your pleasure with this pleases me... Now we need to make plans. Equate the twins in... Firstly, you will cancel your trip to France. I'll not have you working-"

"What? No way, Tom!" Harry cried, backing away indignantly. "I'm only eight weeks. I'm actually looking forward to this trip. It'll be fun. I can spy for you a little bit and I'll get to see firsthand what people think about my creat-"

"And perhaps we should take a holiday; move into the villa," Tom went on as if he hadn't heard him.

"Tom!"

"You don't have to give up working completely, Harry. I'll order you more house elves and Draco will be ordered to assist you completely here and at the villa until after our babies are born. I'd have Hermione do that also, but I'm sending her to Russia..."

"Tom!"

Tom walked over and sat behind his desk. He immediately picked up his black quill and began scratching out notes and preparations. This was much better, much more productive than panicking. "It's a catering service you two are looking to do? You can hire actual employees. We have enough money..."

"TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE!" Tom's head snapped up, eyes narrowed. Harry glared right back, fists clenched at his sides. "I'm not giving up my job! I'm not cancelling the trip! I'll not be hidden away at the villa! And I'm ONLY EIGHT WEEKS ALONG! Next you'll be telling me no sex either!"

"Actually yes," Tom replied as he went back to scratching on that damnable parchment. "There will be no sex until after our twins are born."

Harry's mouth dropped open and the only sound he could hear beyond the beating of his heart was the sound of that quill. No sex? NO SEX? What the fuck? Before he could say anymore, Tom was up from the desk, pecked Harry lightly on the lips, and declared he needed more information and would be out for a while. They'd talk about it more when he returned. Harry was still in a state of shock and barely registered his departure. NO SEX?

Narcissa smiled and curtsied upon his entering her parlor. "My Lord. A pleasant surprise."

"Narcissa, I've come seeking information." The Malfoy matriarch inclined her head. An indication she was listening. "I'm in need of books pertaining to pregnancy. Male pregnancy, to be specific. I haven't anything like that in my own library and I'm aware there have been Malfoy men who've given birth. The library here should have the information I need."

Narcissa's eyes widened a fraction before she nodded and stood along with the Dark Lord to accompany him to the library since it was obvious he wanted her to come along. Otherwise he would have gone himself without coming to her first. "Lucius' great uncle, I believe. My Lord, does this mean..."

"Yes. Harry is expecting."

Narcissa smiled genuinely. "Lovely! We must plan a baby shower!"

"He's only eight weeks along, Narcissa. Eight weeks and we've learned he's carrying twins."

Narcissa gasped loudly. "Oh, but my Lord! This means we must plan the shower immediately if there are to be two!"

"Let's move on to the library, Narcissa."

"Yes, my Lord."

Once inside the library, Narcissa moved over to a pedestal which held a brass ornamental book upon the top. She withdrew her wand and tapped the book three times before announcing in a clear tone, "male pregnancy and all relevant information."

"Male pregnancy? Why ever are you looking up information on this?" Lucius asked as he came out of the recesses of the library. "Has Draco gone and been irresponsible before the wedding?"

"Lucius, dear," Narcissa greeted through clenched teeth as she watched the library pick out and deposit the needed books upon the empty table beside the pedestal. "This is not about Draco."

"My Lord," Lucius greeted Tom and bowed.

Tom gave the blond a curt nod as he walked to the table and gazed upon the dozen books on the needed subject. He picked one up and flipped it open. "Lucius. It appears Harry is pregnant with twins and I've come seeking information."

"Harry must be ecstatic," Narcissa commented while Lucius just stood there dumbfounded.

"He is and he insists his daily life should not change. Insists he should still work and even go off with Draco on this catering business instead of hiring employees. I do not think I can allow this. He must remain healthy."

"What about his happiness?" Narcissa asked quietly. Tom snapped the book closed and looked at her sharply. She flinched and looked to the floor, though her shoulders were squared. "Forgive me for my bluntness, my Lord, but if you want to keep Harry healthy *and*

happy, you cannot be too stifling. He will be perfectly fine going on business trips at present. His body will let him know when it's time to slow down, my Lord. I promise you. And Draco would be happy to be with him at all times when they go on these trips. The France trip especially since Fred and George," she went on, her tone lowering only slightly, "will be leaving the country soon. In two days, in fact."

"Yes. Lucius did tell me about that," he paused and stared at said blond, who wisely avoided eye contact, "after the fact." Tom pulled his wand and waved them over the books, shrinking them and then depositing the tomes inside his pockets. "I will return these to you when I've memorized everything within... and I will give your words some thought, Narcissa."

"Of course, my Lord."

"Barty should be arriving here tomorrow, Lucius. Bring him to me as soon as he arrives."

"It will be done, my Lord."

"My Lord, before you leave," Narcissa rushed on and then paused in order to gain permission to go on, which she quickly received with an impatient wave of Tom's hand. "There is the matter of hormones. And since he is already eight weeks along... those mood swings should be manifesting soon."

"Lovely," Tom deadpanned.

Narcissa forced herself not to giggle. "Also I think you should be prepared because those hormones will be twice as bad because there are-

"Two."

"Yes, my Lord. Patience will be required here."

"Thank you, Narcissa."

Tom left before she could bombard him with any more information.

"Drake!" Harry exclaimed the moment the blond wandered into the kitchen with Fred and George. He ran to Draco and threw his arms around the surprised blond. "I'm pregnant! Eight weeks," he pulled back from the stunned blond to be enfolded by Fred and George, who still twitched slightly every few minutes. "With twins!"

"Twins? Good going, Harry!" they cried.

"That's great!" Draco exclaimed.

Harry beamed as he pulled back to look at them. "Yeah, yeah it is, except..." he trailed off and sighed in annoyance.

"What? What's wrong?" Draco demanded.

Harry growled in frustration and tugged at his hair. "Tom's gone insane with these plans for me. Mapping out the rest of the seven months. And the worst of it... he says no sex!"

"Come again?" George asked, blinking owlishly at him.

"No sex, he said!"

Draco and the twins took it the wrong way. "I'm sorry, Harry," Draco murmured. "I never thought he would find pregnancy so repugnant."

"You actually had that thought before?" Fred asked with a raised brow. Draco glared and stomped on his foot.

"No, guys! No! It's not like that! Tom's old fashioned! I mean, completely old fashioned. He gave me this long lecture... my body is a temple and all that shite! It would be disrespectful to engage in sexual activity while I'm carrying his child... or children in this case. That's what he said. Never mind we've been having frequent sex for the past two months already!"

"He's gone completely mental! I thought it was perhaps what you thought and he was only using the temple crap to appease me- to try to hide the fact he was disgusted with my body because I'm carrying- but he took some truth serum since he knew I'd think that way and under Veritaserum he repeated the same lecture! He's mental! Won't touch me until after the babies are born!"

A long moment of silence ensued until it was finally broken by the twins, who both folded over and started laughing like they'd never laughed before. Harry's eyes widened on them. "It's not bloody funny! You're supposed to be understanding!"

Draco turned to his fiancés and narrowed his eyes. "SHUT IT!"

Harry thought it was rather wicked that they immediately obeyed and straightened, clearing their throats and not meeting Draco's blazing eyes. The blond then turned back to him.

"Now, Harry. This is the time you need to start acting like a complete Slytherin. You must be cunning in this if you want the Dark Lord to get over this crazy, and yes, old fashioned notion."

"It's actually kind of sweet if you think about it," Fred muttered.

"Yeah, it is," Harry agreed, smiling softly. "Brilliant actually, but also pretty fucking annoying. Guess that's what I get for marrying an old guy who likes tradition—Drake, you were saying," he prodded.

"Cunning, Harry. And deviousness. Patience, also. Any other man in this situation, I'd say he'd crack in a few days maybe, especially if he and his partner go at it as much as you and the Dark Lord do. But since this is the Dark Lord we're talking about, I'd say... two to three weeks maybe. Now what we need to do is go out and find you a nice new sexy wardrobe. Not the tame shite you got last time."

"Oh," Harry's eyes widened in horror. "Draco, no."

"Yes, Harry. Yes. And then you wear these nice new clothes around and never say one word about sex. Act as if you'd never had sex before. Act as if you don't care about the no sex rule. As if you never need sex again in your life. And no snogging! Only chaste kisses here, Harry. At first you do all this and then, if you see him wavering, you start the next phase."

"Which is?"

"It's brilliant! Start sleeping in your old room!"

"That's not brilliant at all."

"Yes, trust me on this. You start sleeping out of his reach, yeah, and you also start with the silent innuendos. Sucking on lollies and spoons, that sort of thing. Subtle flirting, Harry. Rub up against him like you usually do. But again, never mention the no sex rule. Never mention sex. Are you with me so far?"

Fred suddenly waved a spoon in front of Draco's face- they were conveniently in a kitchen after all- and begged Draco for a spoon sucking display. Draco snatched the spoon out of Fred's hand and studied it before giving it back. "It needs to have something on it for me to suck off, dolt."

George moaned as the words "suck off" rolled from Draco's tongue.

"I'm not sure about the sleeping in different rooms, Draco. I don't like to sleep without him. And no kissing? He never said anything about not wanting to kiss me. His mouth is brilliant, Drake! How do you expect me to live without-"

"You'll have to if you want him to renege on this, Harry! It'll drive him mental, especially since you say he's insatiable. He is the Dark Lord but he's also a man. He has a cock that he loves to budge up your arse, Harry. He can't stay immune. We've all seen it," Draco said, waving to himself and the twins. "The Dark Lord can hardly keep his eyes off you at any given moment whenever you're in the same room... Then he'll start to think of why he's going along with this old fashioned rule anyway. Believe me he'll eventually change his mind."

"Okay, mostly good plan and all that," Harry began, "but what sort of clothes are you talking about? I will not wear anything I don't feel comfortable in."

"Actually, modern wizards wear is becoming quite popular. I'm sure we can find you something delicious and comfortable to wear. Just every day clothing. Clothes that aren't muggle and that the Dark Lord will appreciate. Now, Harry, are you with me on this? Otherwise, I don't see how you'll change his mind. This has to be a silent seduction that spans weeks. But it's also something that doesn't go against his wishes, you see? If you say nothing at all and he changes his own mind, he's more likely to act and not be angry over the fact he did change his mind. He's the Dark Lord so I don't know if he'll feel guilt about changing his mind, but this way you don't have to worry about that."

"Your mind," George breathed, "is beautiful. I could listen to you talk and scheme all day."

The blond smirked. "You do that already."

Harry spent the next few minutes thinking about it, during which time Fred had hurriedly covered the spoon in melted fudge and then handed it back to Draco. The blond smirked and started to lick it clean while the twins stood behind Harry and avidly watched him.

Finally Harry nodded. "Okay, I'm in. This might actually be fun."

"Wonderful! We can do the shopping when we're in Paris!" Draco announced and then proceeded to wrap his lips completely around the spoon, eyeing the copperheads standing stiffly behind Harry. The brunet wondered how Draco could manage to smirk around the spoon, but he managed fantastically, and it made the blond look even more delicious as told by the needy whimpers coming from behind him.

"Plan?"

"Chocolate? Flowers? The Book of Euvion?"

Louie shook his head at the first two. "You know that won't get you much. But the book. The book will earn you points. You're willing to give that up?"

"Yeah."

Louie sighed, mourning his best mate. "Love turns men pathetic."

"When you fall, I'll laugh at you," Andrew murmured before picking up his ale.

"Don't hold your breath, Andy. I don't plan to fall."

"Whatever. I've seen you looking at the Lovegood bird."

"And? She's a Ravenclaw and she's oddly pretty. Course I'm going to look. Doesn't mean I'm going to lose my head over her like you have with Hermione."

"Careful not to lose your head completely," Belial said as he slipped into a seat across from the two and waved a hand, erecting a very powerful privacy ward. He ignored the staring of the other patrons of the Three Broomsticks and grinned maliciously at Louie's surprise and Andrew's apparent fear. "Imagine it would be uncomfortable to walk around without a head. Do you know what I would do with your head after Voldemort gives it to me? He did promise to give me your head if you didn't fix this, just in case you were wondering. I would mount it on the wall, right over the main fireplace. Sound good, Auror *Andy*?"

"I wasn't trying to keep things from her... I just didn't think it was important. Besides, I am going to fix this."

"Are you prepared to grovel?"

"For as long as it takes."

Belial smirked. "It might take a while. She's stubborn." At Andrew's crestfallen look, Belial laughed. "But... I'm prepared to help you out."

Andrew looked at him warily. Belial was full of tricks; he could be as bad as the twins, so it was wise to be cautious. Especially since this was Hermione's best friend. "Help out how?"

"Hermione's been given a mission to go to Russia to visit the vampires. She's going without Draco but Bellatrix will be accompanying her."

"What?" Andrew asked incredulously. "She's going alone with Bellatrix? You can't let her go there with only Bella! Merlin, that's insanity!"

Louie looked just as stunned and was nodding rapidly in agreement. Belial glared. "Are you calling my husband insane?" he asked lowly.

Both Aurors' eyes widened when they realized their mistake. "NO!" both yelled quickly, obviously eager to appease which had Belial snickering. "No disrespect meant at all," Andrew rushed out. "But she's going to the vampire catacombs with only Bellatrix as backup... Bellatrix doesn't strike me as one who would help Hermione out of a dangerous situation."

Belial nodded, grinning. "You're right. She'd stand back and watch. Laughing the whole time with her new best friend, Nadia. But the Dark Lord has realized this- because he is a genius- and has decided Hermione will be in need of a bodyguard."

Belial stood then and smirked as he tossed a letter of detailed instructions upon the table in front of Andy. "You'll have an hour to prepare and arrive at our home. No later."

With that said Belial gave a little wave, discarded the privacy ward from around them, and left as quickly as he had come.

Louie watched Andrew grab the letter with obvious relief and delight. "Better hurry up and grab the book."

His partner nodded and quickly scrambled to his feet. They shook hands and then he was off. Louie smirked into his ale as he watched his best mate scamper off. "Good luck," he muttered into his drink. "You're going to need it."

Andrew appeared at the Dark Lord's manor with thirty minutes to spare.

"Did you even pack a bag?" an amused voice asked from behind him. He turned to find Harry standing near an open hallway.

Andrew smiled in amusement. Harry was standing there with a blue apron on. He had a bowl cradled in one arm while his other hand held a mixing spoon and he was slowly mixing whatever was in the bowl. It was a scene he never thought he would see within the Dark Lord's home.

"Yeah," he finally answered and pat the pocket hidden inside his outer robe. "Right here."

"Alright then... guess what?"

Again, Andrew was wary, because Harry had this insane smile on his face. "Erm... what?"

"I'm pregnant with twins!"

"Harry!"

Harry shrunk back a little, looking incredibly sheepish, though he still had the smile on his face. And then he snickered under his breath. Andrew looked around to find the Dark Lord approaching, along with Lucius and a man he recognized as Barty Crouch Jr.

"Sorry, Tom. Couldn't help it."

"We've talked about this," the Dark Lord murmured as he came to stand in front of his husband.

"I don't want to keep it a secret!"

"We'll talk about this later."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Fine. Hello, Barty!"

"Hello, Potter." Harry frowned and shook his head. Barty grinned. "Riddle, then." Harry was back to grinning. "Twins you said?" he asked, and then cleared his throat when the Dark Lord speared him with a 'look'. Harry nodded rapidly. That same beaming smile upon his face. Barty nodded and took a few steps closer, eying Harry curiously. "I've been told you were the one to suggest I become the next Dark Arts and Defense Professor. Gave me a glowing review even. Thanks for that."

"Only spoke the truth," Harry said with a shrug. "You were brilliant despite your ulterior motives. I'm actually kind of disappointed I won't be taking your class next year."

"You could always drop by sometime to sit in."

"Really? You wouldn't mind?"

"No, I wouldn't mind. In fact, you could help me out during a few class projects."

"Wicked!"

Tom cleared his throat. "Harry, why don't you go and collect Hermione. Give her a little warning before she comes down to find him," he said, pointing to Andrew, who twitched nervously.

"Okay!" Harry moved forward, tipping his head back. Obviously wanting a kiss. The Dark Lord was fully prepared to give one... only at the last moment Harry gasped and quickly pulled away, blushing. "Right, forgot," he muttered to himself. Then he was back to smiling. "I'll go get Hermione now."

Tom watched, annoyed, as the little minx turned tail and raced back to the corridor leading to the kitchen. *What the hell was that about?* He spun away, mentally muttering. He'd wanted a blasted kiss! Harry looked far too appetizing in that apron with that bowl and spoon.

"Come," he ordered harshly to the three Death Eaters standing quietly in the Hall with him. Barty, Lucius, and Andrew quickly and quietly filed after him like the obedient minions they were. This appeased Tom's annoyance only a little.

Chapter Twenty-Two

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty-Two

"Hermione! Stop hiding away!"

Hermione turned away from her wardrobe to frown at Harry as he flopped down onto her bed. "For your information, I am not hiding. I need to pack, Harry. And I need to focus for this trip that's completely short notice."

"Um... Hermione," Harry began sweetly, fingering the embroidery upon the bed covers. "You know how my husband is sometimes cruel and likes to play games? How he loves to mess with people..."

"Yes," she answered warily.

"Well," he went on, grinning slightly, "your bodyguard for Russia is here."

Hermione's hands dropped limply to her sides. "No," she moaned.

"He's waiting downstairs."

Hermione took a deep breath and then glared at him. It was actually a very evil glare that had Harry rising from the bed and slowly backing away towards the door. "I'm pregnant!" he exclaimed before turning and bolting out of the room.

Hermione huffed in annoyance. Usually she would have sent a stinging hex at him, but how was she supposed to do that when he was pregnant? She couldn't. "Blast you, Harry," she muttered.

"Tom did it!" she heard Harry yell from down the hall. "Tom's the evil bastard! It was his idea!"

Hermione sighed and turned back to her wardrobe. Somehow she doubted it was completely the work of the Dark Lord. But... despite it being Andrew, she was glad to have a bodyguard. She'd actually been kind of worried to be going on this mission with only Bellatrix Lestrange as a partner. That was actually a terrifying thought. Especially since Bellatrix only slightly tolerated her and that was only because for some reason, Bellatrix adored Harry.

Putting Andy out of her mind for now, Hermione continued on packing and went back to smiling as she thought about Harry and his pregnancy. Obviously the pregnancy made her friend ecstatically happy and she couldn't be happier for him. Even the Dark Lord seemed pleased over a baby, though a little annoyed that there would actually be two at the same time. That was sort of funny but no one dared show their amusement around him.

After the pregnancy announcement, Harry had gone on to complain about how the Dark Lord was trying to control his life and the fact he had declared there would be no sex. Hermione was not surprised Voldemort was trying to control Harry now that he was pregnant- she could understand his reasons- but she had been surprised by the no intimacy rule; but only a little. Tom Riddle had been born in the nineteen thirties and grown through the forties and fifties... back then, some people were very strict when it came to intimacy with their pregnant spouses. She reminded Harry that at least the Dark Lord hadn't waited until they were married before consummating their relationship.

Harry had pouted a bit and he had admitted this rule of Tom's was cute and flattering- "we'll not tell Tom that ever"- and it wasn't as if that's the only thing they had going for them in their relationship. He'd fallen in love with Tom long before they ever had sex. In fact, Hermione could admit to being surprised at the beginning when she realized Harry's love for the Dark Lord didn't have anything to do with wanting the older man physically. That was just an obscenely great bonus. The Dark Lord being a fit Dark God and all that. Hermione snickered as she recalled Harry saying those exact words and having no idea Voldemort had come upon them just in time to hear that. The Dark Lord had smirked smugly throughout the rest of breakfast.

"Twins," she said to herself as she finished packing and shrank her belongings. She laughed as she headed to the door, anticipating seeing Harry and the Dark Lord with their babies. Her laughter abruptly cut off as soon as she left her room and came face to face with a grinning Bellatrix Lestrange.

"Finally ready, Granger?"

"Yes."

"Good. We'll have fun, I think. You and I."

"I doubt that very much, Lestrange. You hate my guts."

"I don't hate your guts," Bella said as she spun around to lead the way downstairs. "I merely want to rearrange them!"

Hermione cringed as she followed, trailing after Bella's insane laughter. She sincerely hoped the Dark Lord had forbidden Bellatrix from doing her harm.

"So then," Bellatrix went on as she descended the stairs. "A wittle bird told me you and Andrew had an argument."

"It wasn't an argument," Hermione muttered and wondered how Bellatrix found out about it. "And I'd rather be put under the Cruciatus than have to talk about it with you." Then she wrinkled her nose. "He slept with that... witch!"

Bellatrix had turned to catch her expression and cackled. When she had her laughter under control, the elder witch pierced Hermione with a look. "Come now, Granger. Surely you understand."

"Yes. Though I don't have to like it."

"Andrew is an exceptional wizard. You couldn't do much better. In fact I rather think you don't deserve his attention."

"You do know he's a half blood?" Hermione returned, trying to ignore the barb.

"Better than being a mudblood."

Hermione hissed under her breath. Bellatrix smiled sweetly before turning and continuing down the stairs. Harry was waiting at the bottom and he pouted at Bellatrix. The witch sighed and turned to Hermione.

"I apologize. And never fear. We will work together on our mission and I will... restrain myself from allowing you to fall into harm." Bellatrix turned back to Harry, her fingers reaching forward to fondle his black fringe. "There, little lord. Was that to your satisfaction?"

Hermione rolled her eyes and passed both of them as Harry grinned at the insane witch and nodded. Again she wondered how Harry had managed to wrap these Death Eaters around his little finger. He wasn't evil. He wasn't all about the Dark Arts. He was still himself and yet everyone seemed to love him. This last thought made her smile. Harry could be himself here and still he was welcomed. At first it may have been because of the Dark Lord's orders, but now it was easy to see those around held a lot of fondness for him and genuine respect. Not to mention Professor Snape seemed to have warmed up to him as well. She and Harry were still having trouble getting over that one.

Hermione walked on towards the Dark Lord's office, as she'd been told to go there once her packing had been completed. She was three steps away from the door when she was grabbed from behind and spun around. Only to come face to face with Bellatrix again. The witch sized her up, looking her from head to foot.

"Granger, do try to act like a pureblood in this situation. Lift your chin and look him dead in the eyes. Never act afraid to look him in the eye. Give him smiles without any warmth. Pretend you've never met him before. It's sure to drive him mental, yes?"

Hermione was at a loss for words. Had Bellatrix LeStrange just given her advice on how to get back at Andy? Again the witch looked her over. Hermione was seriously becoming annoyed with these looks, and when Bellatrix spoke again, Hermione had prepared for more barbs against her character. She wasn't expecting to be complimented. "At least you've managed to dress yourself in something that befits an ambassador of the Dark Lord. Lovely dress, Granger."

Hermione stuttered. She couldn't help it. "D-Draco helped me with my wardrobe a few days ago when I asked him."

Bellatrix's elegant dark eyebrow rose. "Did he?" Hermione nodded. "Well. I've always thought my baby nephew has splendid taste."

And with that said, Bellatrix released her and went into the office, leaving Hermione outside gaping at the spot she had just been.

Harry approached then and he had a wicked smirk. "What did you do?" she hissed.

Harry shrugged. "She loves me."

"That explains nothing!"

"Just take her advice, Mione. And watch how Andrew grovels." Harry then laughed and the light in his eyes was slightly crazed. Hermione rolled her eyes. That was one reason why none of the Death Eaters gave him trouble. They were too afraid to actually press him.

Harry took her hand and led her into the office. Immediately Hermione raised her chin and her gaze went around, passing over Malfoy and Crouch before landing on Andrew. He wasn't looking at her. The Death Eaters were lined up in front of the Dark Lord's desk. Hermione moved over to the side to stand beside Bellatrix, who gave her a wink, while Harry went to the opposite side in order to throw himself onto his half lounge and throw his legs over the side.

Hermione stood there motionless, actually very shocked at how 'nice' Bellatrix was being to her. It could have been Harry's doing but even so, Bellatrix's behavior was troubling and set her on guard. Perhaps that was the Dark witch's intention. Hermione pulled in a deep breath and pushed all that away to focus on what the Dark Lord was currently telling three of his Inner Circle while Harry was lay back with his eyes closed, a small smile on his lips. She shook her head, knowing he enjoyed the way Voldemort's voice washed over him... then again, she could kind of see his point of view. The Dark Lord did have a sexy voice; seductive in its power even if he weren't trying to seduce anyone. When she saw Harry shiver, Hermione rolled her eyes and looked back at the desk just in time to watch the Dark Lord hand a folder to Crouch and then another one to Lucius.

"You'll be residing at the school, Barty. I trust this is acceptable."

"Of course, my Lord."

Hermione mentally rolled her eyes. Like Crouch would tell Voldemort no. A loud snicker from Harry's lounge told her he had similar thoughts. Hermione looked at him to find Harry looking at her and they shared a smirk. A throat cleared. She and Harry turned back to the desk to find the Dark Lord and the three before it studying Harry and herself. Harry grinned at his husband and pretended to zip his lips while Hermione watched Andrew without emotion.

It was actually really hard, to look at him with a blank face. He was really very attractive and she could see in his eyes how sorry he was though there was also a small bit of defiance there, because yes, he had been doing a job and had had no choice. Hermione understood this but it didn't mean she wasn't going to play for a bit. She wanted to see how much he was truly serious about her. She wanted to make sure he was worth it because down the road she didn't want her heart broken beyond repair.

A sharp sting to her side had Hermione crying out and blinking away from Andrew's face. She turned and glared at Bellatrix, who was withdrawing the tip of her wand from Hermione's side.

"Bella," the Dark Lord warned.

"I was only trying to help, my Lord. Granger wasn't paying any attention to you," Bella replied sweetly.

Hermione grit her teeth and tried not to blush. Somewhere along the way, Lucius and Barty had left the office leaving only herself, Andrew, and Bella. As well as Harry, but he was too busy laughing under his breath to send Hermione any look of comfort or understanding.

"I certainly was paying attention," she snapped at the witch next to her. This statement was immediately followed by a lot of harping going on between the two witches.

Andrew stood back and watched a bit apprehensively while Tom turned to his laughing husband and wondered why he'd allowed this. It had been Harry's idea to send Hermione to Russia with Bellatrix, despite everyone involved thinking the Dark Lord had made the decision. And it had been Harry's begging that had Tom deciding to let Charleston go along with them.

Why do I let him talk me into these things?

Charleston really wasn't needed this time around. He and Harry knew Bellatrix wouldn't do anything too drastic to Hermione. She wouldn't go above verbal barbs and small hexes and a bodyguard wouldn't really be necessary at this point. The vampires and the Dark Wizarding forces had already signed a peace treaty that would last three hundred years until it had to be updated and signed once more. This visit was more of a 'you've been to my place, now I shall come to yours' kind of visit.

Hermione had been specifically asked for by the Lord of the vampires. Apparently the vampire ambassadors had been impressed by her. Such a young witch but incredibly bright. Also incredibly driven to see wizards and vampires coexisting in peace. Nadia seemed to think Hermione would be that someone who finally had the drive to see those promises through. Tom rather thought the vampire was correct. According to Harry, Hermione had been about this for years. She only needed financing and power to back her up. And now that she had it, Harry was certain she could accomplish anything Tom wanted of her. And more surprisingly, the vampires liked the fact that Hermione was a muggleborn. Tom wasn't certain why, but this was the word he'd received from the Lord of the vampires. And if they wanted Hermione to visit in order to keep their allegiance to him, then they would have Hermione. As long as they meant her no ill will, which he had been assured they did not.

Tom turned away from his laughing husband to pierce the two witches with a look the both of them instantly sensed; therefore making them immediately stop fighting. He then turned to his desk where the Portkey awaited.

"Hermione," he began, handing the Portkey to her, "any decisions or amendments needing to be made in regards to the treaty, I want to hear about it before you decide. Understood?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Activate the Portkey and go. I've had enough bickering for today."

"Good luck, Mione!" Harry called out with a wave.

Hermione gave him a tight smile as she held the small button in her palm while Andrew approached to get close enough to lay a finger on it, as Bellatrix was doing. The elder witch had a wide smile on her face, enjoying the thick tension swimming around between Granger and Charleston.

When they were gone, Tom turned back to Harry who had sat up the moment the three disappeared. "You realize she'll be enraged when she learns there is no need for a bodyguard?"

"You'll save me from her wrath."

"Not likely," Tom replied with a smirk as he sat beside Harry. "I enjoy watching her strike fear into you. Rather annoyed she has that ability with you and I do not."

Harry snickered. "Yeah, well... you didn't have to grow up with her and her domineering ways. She's got claws, that one. Intellectual, psychological claws. That's worse."

"We have important things to talk about."

Harry tensed. He had a pretty good idea of what was coming. And he wasn't mistaken. Tom stated they needed to keep the pregnancy a secret. "I don't want to," Harry replied. "I don't see why we should."

His husband ignored him and then went on to tell him what would be happening in the coming months. As if Harry was one of his subservient followers. Harry grit his teeth the entire time, knowing no matter what he said, Tom wouldn't hear him. He knew Tom only wanted to keep him safe and healthy, but that didn't mean Harry was going to sit there and follow his every rule. When had he ever? So Harry said nothing, pretended to listen, and made internal plans of his own. Tom would just have to get over it.

Remus walked purposely through the halls, tucking back a strand of hair behind his ear in a nervous agitated gesture as he headed to Gryffindor tower. He hadn't seen Fenrir in a few days. Almost immediately after Madam Pomfrey released him, Fenrir disappeared and Remus was only made aware that he'd been sent on a mission thanks to Severus telling him. Remus didn't know what kind of mission Fenrir was sent on nor did he know when his Alpha would be returning. He was a little upset about that.

Remus became lost in thought as he stopped in front of the portrait of the Fat Lady. The full moon was in two days... hopefully Fenrir would return by then. Maybe it was a good thing Fenrir was gone. Remus had a need to prove himself to the rest of the pack before he let this relationship with Fenrir grow. And he had an overwhelming need to fight for his right to be beside his Alpha and no one else. He would let no one else close to Fenrir.

A terrified squeak drew Remus from his thoughts, and he blinked in surprise when he looked up to find the Fat Lady cowering behind part of the frame. "What's wrong?" he asked her.

"You were growling horribly at me!" the obese woman accused.

"Oh." Remus cleared his throat. "I wasn't growling at you. Godric," he said, speaking the standardized password for the tower. The portrait swung open quickly, as if the Fat Lady couldn't open it fast enough.

Remus stepped inside and allowed his amber eyes to travel around; making sure everything was as it should be for the students that were even now being led from the dungeons up here. He learned only a dozen Gryffindors remained as prisoners while the rest of the house had been released to their parents.

Ginny Weasley was one that was still here and Remus couldn't believe Molly and Arthur hadn't done anything to get her back yet. She wasn't even a student anymore, though she would have to take the N.E.W.T.s late, just as the rest of last year's seventh years would. As Remus continued to look around, he thought it was about time he and a few others set Arthur and Molly straight about how the world was going to evolve now. The only thing the Weasley stubbornness was going to accomplish in the long run was their deaths.

By the time he was finished inspecting the dorms, Minerva arrived with the children. They walked into the common room looking as if they expected to be ambushed. Minerva had a severe frown upon her face as she looked at him. Remus was not masked at the moment but she already knew he was now a Death Eater. Minerva had agreed to remain a teacher here but that didn't mean she was amiable to the new government. Unlike some of the professors, and Madam Pomfrey, Minerva was still visibly against the Dark. She would need to watch that or the Dark Lord would dispose of her, no matter how brilliant a Transfiguration Professor she was.

"Everything is ready for them," he murmured as his gaze went to Ginny Weasley. She walked with her head bowed low. Her hair falling limply to cover her pale scarred face.

"Any unusual surprises?"

Remus smiled, almost feral in its intensity. "Minerva. I may be a Death Eater now but we were not the ones to try and kill an entire House... were we? Did you tell Dumbledore about that? About your involvement? Or did you cry and pretend you were shattered? Did you know not one of the Slytherin students that were killed had the Dark Mark?"

"Now is not the time, Lupin."

"Now is the perfect time," Remus hissed. "These children should know the truth. These children should know what the Light and Dark sides are actually fighting for. You," Remus pointed to a boy who looked around thirteen. "What is the Light fighting for?"

"Err... the-"

"The eradication of scum," Ginny Weasley interrupted.

"You are bitter and biased, Miss Weasley. Your opinion means nothing here. You and your brother committed a crime you should have gone to Azkaban for. You are a criminal and have no rights to speak so I want to hear nothing else from you!"

Most of the students flinched back. Ginny and Minerva never hearing the usual softly spoken Lupin speak in such a way. Ginny scowled. "It's true! All you do is cause death!"

Remus turned to her. "Your brothers would say differently. Bill and Charlie. They were nearly killed the other night. Set to be murdered. Shacklebolt and Tonks came into their cottage with the sole intention of killing your older brothers. *Kingsley Shacklebolt* and *Nymphadora Tonks; Aurors*," he stressed. "And do you know what happened? Bill and Charlie were aided by the so called scum you were talking about. Death Eaters aided your brothers and now they are still alive. And just in case any of you are wondering, no, Bill and Charlie Weasley are not Death Eaters." Remus turned back to the boy and smiled softly. "You were saying?"

"The Light is fighting to protect muggleborns and half bloods. The Light is fighting to stop Dark witches and wizards."

Remus frowned. That wasn't it. By a long shot. "But why?"

"What do you mean sir?"

"Why? It's a simple question. Why is the Light fighting against the Dark? To stop those who have an affinity for Dark magic?"

"They're evil," someone said.

Remus smiled grimly at Minerva. "You all heard the torture and execution of those wizards in the dungeon last week, did you not?" there were nods and a bit of trembling from the reminder. "And you heard why they were punished. For kidnapping children and selling them as sex slaves... these wizards were Dark, Neutral, *and* Light wizards. It's the wizard that's evil, not the magic they practice. Did you know there are powerful healing spells that Healers are forbidden from using only because those spells fall under the classification of Dark magic? And did you also know you can kill someone using the Lightest of spells? Wingardium leviosa, for example. You could levitate a bolder and drop it on someone's head. With enough height that boulder could instantly kill a witch or wizard.

"It's the wizard's intent," he went on to the wide eyed students. "Not the branch of magic that makes things wrong. This is a subject that has not been taught at the school in a century. But you will be learning this starting September. You will be learning all forms of magic. Discrimination is a thing of the past. And as for muggleborns and half-bloods... there is no discrimination either. Not anymore."

"But what was the Dark fighting for if not that?"

"Muggleborns and half-bloods were the majority of those who accused and persecuted against the Dark Arts. Whereas most purebloods accepted all forms-

"That's enough, Mr. Lupin."

Remus smiled in satisfaction. "I wonder why your Head of House doesn't want me to finish that. Think upon it." He turned to Minerva then. "Dinner will be served at the regular time. They are expected down in the Great Hall. And the Dark Lord has demanded your presence after dinner in his office."

"How could you turn your back on us?" Minerva murmured just as he'd turn to leave.

Remus paused, his gaze moving back to her. His eyes widened in anger. "You turned your back on me. You and the others of the Order, the Ministry, everyone. Siding with Shafer and his deplorable laws against magical creatures. None of you bat an eye when those laws were proposed. None of you. Don't you remember? I was sitting right there when you all began to discuss it. Or did you not notice my presence?"

"You didn't really care about me. All you cared about was gathering more allies, having someone to do the really dirty missions. And if you'd won, once the war was over, I have no doubt I would have been tossed away; persecuted under those awful laws that may have eventually had me locked behind silver bars for the rest of my life. What did you think I was going to do? Stand by and let it happen when there was another side that would fight for me and people like me?"

"Do you honestly think that is how I felt, Remus?" she asked. "Do you honestly think I had anything to do with the Slytherin massacre?"

"Someone in the school helped Moody with his plans, Minerva."

"It wasn't me," she replied firmly.

"Why are you trying to hide the truth from these children?"

"Because that is what they are. Children."

"Yes, and look what happened to her," Remus replied bitterly, pointing to Ginny. "She nearly became a murderer because she didn't have all the facts. But we can throw in assault and attempted homicide and poisoning on her record already—did you think she was tortured just for fun?" he asked when Minerva looked surprised. "No. What happened to her... for that to have happened, she had to have done something to earn that kind of attention. There's one thing I learned quickly after joining the Dark Lord. The Dark only strikes back when they have been attacked first in some form. That goes for everything. Not only what she's done."

Everyone was now staring at Ginny, who was shaking with bitterness and mortification. With a dry sob, Ginny tore away from the group and rushed upstairs to the girls' dorm. Remus followed her with pitiless eyes.

"What happened to you, Remus? You would have never done that before. Singling someone out—"

"I've learned to stop hiding in the shadows, Minerva. And she deserves it. I was told exactly what she did and I speak the truth when I say should charges be pressed, she'd go to Azkaban for assault and attempted homicide. That is not an exaggeration."

Remus left then feeling a lot better. He'd been meaning to speak that way to Minerva for a long time. He didn't actually know if she had something to do with the Slytherin Massacre. He hoped not, but like he'd told her, someone from the school had helped the Order. And beyond that, some professors- the ones who had been on patrol in Hogsmeade that day- had stood by and watched the attack go on without any counter measures until it was nearly over.

Remus was met by Severus at the bottom of the main staircase. "Remus."

"Hello, Severus."

The Headmaster inclined his head and walked alongside the werewolf as they approached the Great Hall. "After dinner, you are dismissed until next week. Go home. Prepare for the full moon."

"Thank you, Severus."

Severus scowled and Remus snickered. "Are you in need of the Wolfsbane potion?"

"No. I can do without now," Remus replied cheerfully. Severus stared at the side of his face with a contemplative expression.

"If you're sure."

Remus nodded. They remained quiet as they entered the Hall, but before they split to take their respective seats at the head table, Remus placed a hand on Severus' arm to gain his attention. "I've been meaning to ask you..."

"Yes?"

"Do you think Minerva had anything to do with the Slytherin attack?"

"No. Absolutely not."

"But how can you be sure? You weren't here at that time."

"I know Minerva McGonagall. She would never agree to an attack such as that. I don't care how desperate they had become, Minerva would never have agreed."

"She's still dedicated to the Light completely. Is it wise to keep her here as the transfiguration professor."

"It is what the Dark Lord wants. Our Lord is perfectly aware of where her true loyalties lie, and he is certain by the end of next year her views will have changed. And she'll be watched throughout the year."

When the students were brought down to dinner, Remus counted there were less than a quarter of the usual population of students and there were those from all years. They seemed to breathe easier when noticing the Dark Lord was not in attendance tonight and many of the seats upon the raised dais were taken up by some of their well known professors. By the time dinner was halfway over, some of the students had even ventured to start conversing despite there still being masked Death Eaters dining in the same hall. Remus turned and caught the barest traces of a smirk upon Severus' lips. Apparently this turn of events was pleasing to the new Headmaster, which probably meant it would be pleasing to the Dark Lord as well.

Ginny was receiving a lot of attention from the other students. Not in any good way. They were staring and whispering, and with his keen hearing, Remus understood the students wondered what she had done to deserve the beating and scarring received as well as the more hostile looks and pushes from their Death Eater guards when everyone else wasn't treated so harshly. There was a lot of speculation that wasn't anywhere near the truth. But one student hit it on the mark, and Remus wondered how he'd come to know that information.

It had probably been purposely expressed so that the entire student body would eventually know. The Dark only retaliated when there was reason for it. Remus learned that went along with the entire war. If the Dark faction wasn't being constantly persecuted, there wouldn't be a war. Tom Riddle probably wouldn't be trying take over the entirety of Wizarding Britain. He probably would have been happy enough to be a very influential politician... with a penchant for violent retaliation if he didn't get his way. Alright, Remus conceded. Voldemort probably would have become a Dark Lord no matter what, but still, that wasn't the point. The point was he now understood exactly why the Dark continued to fight. He could stand behind their reasons too and not feel an ounce of guilt.

Soon dinner was over and Remus was off duty until the following Wednesday. He was anxious to get home now; anxious to see Fenrir, though he was unsure of when the elder werewolf would be returning home. When Remus entered the cottage, he was immediately struck by Fenrir's scent. And though Fenrir's scent was always around, because it was his cottage, the scent was stronger now which meant the elder werewolf must be at home.

Remus tried to convince himself he wasn't excited, but that battle lasted only seconds and he gave up trying to deny it. As he hung his cloak up on the peg just inside the door, Remus figured Fenrir was in the en suite bathroom as he could hear the shower running. And then Remus had to mentally swat Moony on the nose, because no, he was not going to go and beat down the door to get to the elder werewolf even if the thought of doing so was completely delicious. So instead, Remus went to the kitchen and busied himself with making tea.

He had just sat down with a cup when someone knocked on the door. Remus stood and approached the hall which would lead him to the door or back further into the cottage. Looking back and forth from one direction to the other, Remus decided he had better get the door instead of prowling outside of Fenrir's room. "Moony, really," he muttered in exasperation. "You are not a young hormonal pup!" Moony was feeling differently. Remus felt differently as well.

Only a select few knew where Fenrir's cottage was, so Remus didn't hesitate to answer the door. He smiled finding Harry on the doorstep. Harry, who was grinning quite excitedly. The

young wizard immediately launched himself at Remus, embracing him.

"Harry. What a pleasant surprise!"

Harry pulled back with a mischievous grin. "Are you sure?" he looked over Remus shoulder. "Sure I'm not interrupting anything... naughty? Please tell me you've done something naughty."

Remus was ashamed to admit he blushed. Which only made Harry's grin widen. "No. Nothing naughty. Fenrir only now just returned from a mission. I haven't even spoken to him yet."

"Oh," Harry pouted which caused Remus to laugh and shake his head.

"Come in, Harry. You look excited about something."

"Yeah! Look, I brought you and Fenrir pumpkin bread," the young wizard announced, holding up a loaf shaped container. "I remembered how much you like pumpkin bread."

Remus grinned. "Especially if you made it."

"I did."

Remus took the loaf container. "Then it and you are very welcome," he replied before leading the practically bouncing young wizard through the cottage and into the kitchen. "Tea?"

"Um... no, thanks. Do you have any juice?"

Remus nodded and went about getting Harry his juice and warming his cup of tea. He set Harry's cup in front of him and then sat down, and they spent a few minutes silently drinking and studying each other.

Harry watched from under his black fringe as Remus sipped his tea; every so often Remus' eyes would leave Harry to wander over to the open doorway leading back into the hall where Harry presumed led to the bedrooms. Remus' nostrils flared frequently and the werewolf continuously squirmed in his seat. Harry took a drink to hide his grin. Bill was right. It was hilarious.

Remus was also looking better than Harry could ever remember seeing him. He wondered if werewolves aged differently than regular wizards; he always thought Remus was young looking, even when he looked haggard, and now when he looked completely at ease and healthy; his face no longer lined with worry and fatigue, he did look remarkably young. Not to mention the clothes he was wearing. Right now he wore a tunic of rich dark blue and his slacks were a dark brown, finely pressed and fitted like glove.

"Is that silk, Remus?" Harry asked of the shirt.

Remus cleared his throat and looked away. "Fenrir forced a new wardrobe upon me. Says I was a disgrace to all werewolves everywhere. Pushy prat. To be fair, his rant was amusing and he got this look, like a kicked puppy..." he trailed off with a soft smile.

Harry watched him in awe for a short time before speaking again. "You're completely in love with him," he stated with certainty, grinning brightly.

"I assure you I am no such thing."

Harry snickered. "Liar."

"Moving on," Remus muttered as he lifted his tea cup, not surprised his hand was shaking. "Did he buy you a castle this time?" he finally asked with a grin. "Is this why you look happier than normal? Or perhaps a fleet of new racing brooms?"

Harry snorted laughter and shook his head. "No way. I told him not to buy me anything else for the next decade."

"And what did he say to that?"

"Don't be ridiculous, he said. He also said that as my husband, he has the right to spoil me."

"I suppose he's never had anyone to spoil before. He's never wanted until you."

Harry wrapped his hands around his glass, smiling. "Yeah."

"Well? Are you going to come out with it or must I sit here and die from anticipation?"

"Don't let him die," a voice spoke from the doorway. "Not after I took that curse. I don't want my moment of insanity to have been for nothing."

Harry's eyes crinkled in amusement as he looked at a point somewhere behind Remus. "Oh, wow, Fenrir. You have a nice chest."

Remus spat out the tea he'd just taken into his mouth. "Harry!"

"What, I'm only saying... I can appreciate a fit body when I see one and Fenrir is fit. Don't you think he looks good? You haven't even turned to look at him." Remus glared at the mischievous gleam in Harry's eyes. "That leads me to another question. Do werewolves age differently than wizards?" he asked the elder werewolf.

"We age slower, yes. I'm much older than I appear."

"Wicked."

Remus went still when Fenrir pulled out the chair next to him and sat. Did he want to look? Yes. Would he? No. Not while Harry was here with that damn teasing glint in his eyes.

"You can look now, Remus. I put a shirt on."

"You should have put a shirt on before coming into the kitchen," Remus snapped. Though he did finally turn to look and found Fenrir dressed casually in black trousers and a white tunic. A tunic that wasn't closed at the top at all and Remus had a very fine view of the top of

Fenrir's chest and a sprinkling of curling chest hair just there. Remus' fingers itched to touch it.

"Can I tell you my news now?" Harry asked eagerly, thinking he had teased Remus enough.

Remus tore his gaze away from the smirking werewolf's chest and turned back to Harry with a raised brow. "You have actual news? You mean you didn't come here with the sole purpose of teasing me? Are you sure you weren't sent by Bill and Charlie, the prats that they are?"

"No I have real news."

"Let's hear it, Remus' cub," Fenrir said, beginning to drum his fingers upon the table. The other hand was thrown out and grabbed the side of Remus' chair. He then dragged the younger werewolf over until they were sitting pressed side by side without an inch of space between them. Remus wasn't exactly uncomfortable with this. At least not until Fenrir leaned over and pressed his nose against his throat and inhaled deeply.

"Idiot, stop!" he hissed, elbowing Fenrir and trying to keep his eyes from fluttering closed in bliss. He failed.

"Um... I'm pregnant," Harry announced, trying very hard not to laugh. "Did you hear me?" he very much doubted it.

"Wait," Remus murmured drowsily and then had to physically move Fenrir away by pressing his hand in the werewolf's face and pushing. "You're what?"

"Pregnant. With twins."

Fenrir stared blankly at him. "Our Lord has *two* heirs on the way?"

"Yeah! Isn't it great?"

"Scary."

"Fenrir!" Remus left his seat to go embrace Harry, who had the biggest smile Remus had ever seen on his face. "This is wonderful news! Harry's going to have a baby...babies!"

"No, it's scary," Fenrir muttered to himself. "You wait, Remus. Towards the third month mark, we're going to pay for it once his mood swings start. Who do you think the Dark Lord is going to take his frustrations out on? Us, I tell you! His loyal followers."

Harry grinned evilly. "Yes, it does suck to be you. Only Remus will be left out of that because Tom knows it'll make me angry if he hurts him."

"How is that fair?"

"It isn't."

After Remus was finished with hugging Harry, beaming pleasure at his cub's words, Fenrir watched his future mate take the seat next to Harry instead of moving back to sit beside him.

Internally he frowned.

"On my way home from the mission, I ran into Baron," he said when a short silence descended and Remus had summoned his cup of tea in front of him. "One of the werewolves I said would roll over for me at any time."

Harry rose a brow when a very quiet rumble started to emit from Remus' throat. It was fantastic watching Remus and Fenrir, especially when it was obvious the elder was trying to make the younger jealous. And it being so close to the full moon, Remus' eyes went completely amber and they glowed a bit. His teeth kind of sharpened as well. Harry knew this because Remus' lips peeled back in a silent snarl.

"Is that why you took a shower as soon as you got home?" Remus growled. "To wash his scent off?"

Fenrir didn't answer that. He stood and smirked before addressing Harry. "Congratulations, Harry."

"Thanks, Fenrir. Don't forget to eat the pumpkin bread I brought over."

Fenrir nodded with a smile and left the kitchen, chuckling darkly under his breath.

"Remus, can't you tell he said that on purpose?"

"Maybe you should go now, Harry. It really is too close to the full moon and I'm feeling very violent all of a sudden," Remus said softly.

It was really amazing the image Remus made. Speaking so softly while looking incredibly enraged. It gave Harry delightful tremors, but he wisely kept from laughing aloud. He would need to invite Remus and Fenrir over for dinner sometime. He knew Tom would find them amusing... in an annoying way. And that was the kind of entertainment Harry loved. "Yeah sure."

Remus led him through the cottage and out, staying with Harry until he Apparated away and then slowly walked back to the cottage, telling Moony to calm the hell down because Fenrir must have been teasing. He walked into the cottage and shut the door before leaning his forehead against the cool wood. "Do you want me to kill the other wolves?" he hissed out at the presence approaching from behind.

"No. I only want to make sure you beat them," Fenrir replied lowly, reaching a hand out and grasping Remus' arm. Remus wrenched his arm away and continued to stay pressed against the door.

"Why? Will you not have me if I fail?"

Fenrir pressed in from behind; caging Remus in by bracing his arms against the door beside Remus' head. "Your placement within the pack would make no difference to me," the other purred in his ear. "Did you know you are the only werewolf I've ever brought home to my mother? Infuriating wolf that she is."

"How do I know you speak truthfully," Remus whispered faintly; Fenrir's confession having stolen all his breath.

"All you would need to do is ask her. Mother does not tell lies. She feels it's a waste of time."

"Is that why she was giving us weird looks?"

Fenrir's low chuckle vibrated against Remus' back. "Yes. She was surprised. In a good way. Mumbled about it being past time. Not that it's any of her business." Fenrir made to turn him around again and this time Remus let him. He made a small sound of appreciation at the look in Remus' eyes. "Come. Come to my bed," he implored, leaning forward to skim lips against Remus' neck, pressing his body heavily against the other werewolf.

Remus remained silent. Closing his eyes and tilting his head, giving an eager Fenrir more access, Remus let the tension build in both of them before he minutely shook his head to clear his thoughts. And then he smirked. "No," he murmured and deftly squirmed out from under Fenrir. "Not until after the full moon, Fenrir. Not until I'm ready."

And then he sauntered away, leaving Fenrir pressed against the door. Remus' smirk grew when he heard the elder man whine. It was an animalistic whine. The sound of a wolf being denied something he really wanted. Revenge could be a sweet gratifying thing sometimes.

The next morning, the day Harry and Draco were set to leave for France, Harry sat in the breakfast room across from his husband and tried to keep the immense amusement he felt from showing on his face. It was a hard thing considering he was amused because of Tom's current mood.

"What's with the evil glare?" he demanded when he'd had enough of Tom glaring at him from across the table. "You better not be using Legilimency on me. I'll feel you."

Tom blinked. "Can you feel me now?"

"No."

"Then you know I'm not going through your thoughts. And you know I wouldn't do that before warning you... when you are awake."

Harry rolled his eyes. As if doing it while he was asleep was any less intrusive. "So what was with the glare? Trying to set me on fire?"

Tom opened his mouth, obviously prepared to say why. But then he scowled and picked up the *Daily Prophet*, obscuring Harry's view of his face. Harry turned to look out the window and smirked.

The look Tom had, the glare, was one of annoyance. Perhaps perplexity too. If it were the latter, then Tom was probably wondering why Harry hadn't once mentioned the no sex rule yet, when normally he would have gone on to complain about something like that. He complained about everything else so far. If it were annoyance it was probably only from the

fact Harry refused to cancel the France trip and again Tom was annoyed with both of them for allowing it.

Tom made a sort of strangled huffing noise and slammed the paper down. The evil glare was back. Harry turned and blinked, forcing an innocent smile on his face instead of a truly amused one. Tom was definitely uncharacteristically out of sorts right now.

"What are you up to?" he demanded.

Harry dropped his eyes to his plate, studying the food upon it. He knew he had to reply with something that wouldn't raise Tom's suspicions anymore. He didn't want Tom thinking he was planning something. Finally he grimaced and said, "at the moment I'm trying to eat something that might keep down."

Tom hissed and picked up the paper again. Harry's lips trembled. It was definitely the no sex rule and Harry making no mention of it. Tom was confused by his silence on that, which in turn made him severely annoyed. Before the laughter could escape, Harry pushed his plate away and stood.

"I can't do this. Maybe I'll have better luck at lunch." Harry rounded the table and ignored the ongoing evil stare. "Going out with Drake. Our uniforms are ready and we're picking them up."

He then bent down to brush his lips over Tom's cheek, softly inhaling his husband's scent as he did every time he was this close to Tom. He was prepared to make a hasty escape after that but Tom quickly pushed his chair back away from the table while grabbing Harry around the waist and dragging him down into his lap.

Harry held his breath. Draco didn't say anything about lap sitting but he was pretty sure this went along with no flirting or touching or rubbing. Still... sitting in Tom's lap was one of his daily pleasures. And he really did love Tom's mouth so when lips were suddenly pressed against his, it took a moment for Harry to remember he wasn't supposed to reciprocate tongue action.

He jerked back and quickly scrambled off Tom's lap. "I gotta go. Don't want to be late. Lots of stuff to do today. Bye, Tom!"

The evil glare was back, tenfold. Harry tried his best to ignore it and ran away as fast as he could. Tom watched Harry flee and when the little minx was out of the room, he turned back to stare at the paper, which burned without him saying anything. It curled and blackened right under his furious glare as if he'd sent a silent incendio at it.

Harry winced as he travelled through the castle. Raising a hand, he pressed it to his scar, which was throbbing. He sort of felt bad for Tom's minions. It was clear Tom was in a bad mood already and if Voldemort called a meeting... obviously some Death Eaters were in for a lot of pain.

It was confirmed an hour later when he and Drake were within Diagon Alley. He began to feel Tom's frustrations ebbing away with a psychotic gleefulness that had Harry shaking his

head. "I'm married to a mad man."

Draco turned away from the proprietor of Twilfit & Tatting's and quirked a brow. "You're only now realizing this?"

"Just be glad you are here with me instead of attending the lower Death Eater meeting," he replied with another shake of his head.

Just then an attendant returned with two largish boxes with what Harry assumed would be their new 'work' clothes. Harry had to admit he was excited. He didn't mind at all doing the labor bit since it would be good experience in the long run. And what was surprising was the fact Draco seemed excited also despite the fact they were about to endeavor in plebian work.

They separated after the trip into the Alley; Drake most certainly going off to meet up with the twins while Harry returned home. Once there Harry took time to hang his uniforms up in his old room wardrobe, placing the shiny black shoes below and making sure one of the uniforms had the MR's shield upon one of the high collars. The shield was actually a small pin and Draco had put a charm on the pin which would automatically translate most languages for them wherever they were.

Draco had once again shown his brilliance. Not only had he had the pins made and put the charms upon them himself, but he had also already contacted the French Ministry for work permits, orchestrating false identities for them and enabling them to pass through Ministry security without having to give away their real identities. It had taken some work and many Galleons on Draco's part for all of that and if Harry had any doubts about how serious his best mate was taking this, those doubts were now laid to rest. But of course Draco was taking this seriously. He was having fun being half owner of a lucrative business that didn't have anything to do with his father. Add to the fact that the French Ministry had paid them a hefty amount already to come in person to cater. M.R.'s was really seen as upscale. They didn't get skimped at all. In fact, they had practically been begged to personally attend the function being held once Draco let it be known it was possible for personal catering.

Harry pulled away from these thoughts and went back to studying the uniforms. And then a smirk curled his lips. This black and white outfit was nearly a replica of one of the costumes he had within the kink room. Black tailored pants, a white high collared shirt, and a black vest. He wondered what Tom would think once his husband saw him wearing it out in the open. In the kink room, wearing the outfit, Harry had served his 'customer' in every way possible and his customer had been very, very pleased with him at the end...

He shook himself and quickly exited the wardrobe. No sense getting himself worked up now. He didn't want to have to go off to the loo and wank. He'd made a promise not to touch himself at all during this intimacy drought. Though touching himself while Tom was watching was another matter altogether.

An hour later found Harry back in the kitchens, finishing up the order for the French Ministry. He only had three more cakes to finish and it wouldn't take him long at all. These were easy but delicious recipes.

"I've written to Iseut. You and Draco will be staying with her and Diandre for your time in France."

Harry didn't bother turning around as he was busy stirring beaten eggs, granulated sugar, and milk together; the start of a delicious cherry clafoutis. He did smile though. Tom had not wanted to agree to this, but he did anyway because he knew how much Harry enjoyed this occupation he'd fallen into. Creating yummy things to eat had turned into a flaming passion. But Harry was also perfectly aware that in Tom's mind, this would be the only job Harry would be doing personally for the next seven or so months. Harry wasn't going to waste energy disputing that. He'd let Tom keep thinking he was going to get his way in this.

"The Malfoys own a town home in Paris. Why not there?" he questioned.

"The Veela will take care of you," was Tom's only explanation.

There was no need to elaborate. What he said was true. Iseut and Diandre were now wonderful friends to Harry, and even Tom, though the Dark Lord always sneered when Harry said this because Dark Lords weren't supposed to have friends. Which then led to Harry laughing and telling Tom he was his best friend. And then Tom would mutter something along the lines of 'likewise' and then quickly change the subject after clearing his throat and demanding tea.

From his peripheral vision, Harry caught sight of a hand sneaking across the counter on the right. He reached out and slapped the hand away from the bowl of black cherries. "That's for the clafoutis. Hands off."

He looked now to find Tom standing there frowning down at his hand, and then at the bowl of cherries. Harry laughed. "You almost look petulant, Dark Lord Voldemort."

"Only you," Tom muttered.

"That's right. Only me," Harry replied with a bit of bite. Tom showed his possessiveness often, but Harry rarely did so, but when he did, Tom seemed to eat it up. Like now. He grinned roguishly, causing Harry's poor heart to flutter helplessly and he was the one left to clear his throat and returned his attention back to the bowl, cursing his reddening face. "So, err... anything else?"

"Only that you'll be watched."

"By you, no doubt. I know you're coming."

Tom didn't reply to that, instead he stepped behind Harry and wrapped arms loosely around his stomach, bending to kiss the back of Harry's neck before dropping his chin on top of his husband's head. Harry continued to mix his batter, but he did so with a smile as Tom stood there holding him; the wizard seemed content standing there with him. Silent peaceful moments like this were not rare between them and Harry thought it was no wonder he fell in love with this man despite him being the darkest wizard alive.

"I am pleased, Harry. Never doubt that," Tom finally said, ending the silence.

"Hmm?" Harry asked as he pushed the batter aside for a moment so that he could butter and sugar his baking dish next.

"Pleased," Tom repeated, this time sliding his hand against Harry's abdomen.

Harry stopped what he was doing and dropped his head back against Tom's shoulder. "Good."

And then Tom was pulling away. Not only was he pulling away, but he had a handful of black cherries and a smug smirk on his face.

"Oi!"

Tom chuckled lowly as he walked towards the door. "You let your guard down, love."

Harry sighed. "Watch out for pits then, wanker. Don't want you choking to death. The press would have a field day with that one. 'Dark Lord Defeated By Cherry Pits!' Tragically embarrassing."

"I will be going to Hogwarts in a few minutes. And I'll expect your Ancient Runes and Arithmancy homework handed in to me before you and Draco depart tonight," Tom said in parting.

Harry slumped. He had his Runes homework done but he'd pushed aside Arithmancy... due to it being very complicated. But Harry was sure he could bat his eyelashes and say he needed extensive tutoring for that. It wouldn't be a lie either. He wasn't catching on to Arithmancy as he was with Runes. In fact he was pretty sure he loathed Arithmancy.

"Don't want you two to go alone," Draco whined. "You'll get into trouble."

"Fun trouble," panted Fred, hoisting Draco's gorgeous leg higher up over his hip before returning his hand around their cocks.

Draco opened his mouth to whine further, but instead of words, a long drawn out hiss left his lips as George's tongue had just shot into him. All he could manage for a while after was a lot of inarticulate sounds as he had mouths at both ends and could only be there hoisted up around Fred's hips and spread by George's hands. Just as they promised in their letters; just as they liked to do all the bloody time- not that he was complaining.

The blond ripped his mouth away from Fred's, tilting it back to bump against the wall and gulped in much needed air while Fred's mouth instantly latched onto his neck. Draco's arms were squeezing around Fred's neck as his arse was assaulted with an enthusiastic tongue and his cock was continuously stroked against Fred's.

"Not... not going to last," he gasped and then keened in distress when George pulled away.

George wrapped his arms around Draco's middle and his face appeared at the blond's side, looking up at his brother with darkened eyes. "Fred," he said in a voice rough from want.

Fred nodded and dropped Draco's legs to the floor. They stood still a moment as both sets of legs were unsteady. "Wanna drop to your knees for George, love?"

Draco swallowed thickly and then nodded rapidly. They moved from the wall and down to the floor where Draco immediately took great pleasure in fastening his lips around his Fred's cock, while George prodded him with previously slick fingers. George wasn't known for his patience though. Not especially when it came to Draco's arse, so as soon as he was sure Draco could take him, he was lined up and thrusting in before Draco could brace for it.

Draco's mouth paused around Fred's leaking member, lips swollen and smeared with pre-cum, and moaned from the feel of George. The pressure filling him. Oh, Merlin, he loved this. And he especially loved it when the twins fucked him from behind. George moving so fast, so hard that it left Draco seeing stars with each and every inward thrust. George was a lovely animal with his cock. He always went wild. There was never anything soft when George got the chance to go at him from behind and Draco had not one complaint about this either.

And Fred... Fred's hands were tangled in his blond hair, pulling and guiding his mouth up and down, his blue eyes closed tightly; appreciative murmurs and hisses passing his lips. Draco moved one hand over his abs and up to his chest, brushing against a nipple. When Fred arched into the touch, Draco pinched roughly. Fred hissed out a laugh.

It was over far too soon in Draco's opinion. He and Fred came almost simultaneously shortly after, and Draco was going to blame it all on George's tongue and the feel of Fred's cock continuously sliding against his own. The moment Fred's cock slid out of his mouth, a hand dived into his hair and gripped painfully, jerking his face up to the ceiling. A mouth latched onto his neck and the movement inside him quickened, the thrusts sporadic, and it was clear George wasn't going to last any longer either.

Soon they lay together in a sweaty panting heap upon the floor; upon the soft rug within Draco's sitting room in Hogwarts. Draco sighed and happily snuggled against his fiends in between, staring at his hand where his engagement ring was perched around his finger. It gleamed silver, emerald, and diamond and sparkled brilliantly.

"Swear not to get into trouble."

"We swear to not get into any trouble that will keep us from returning when we're supposed to," Fred replied.

Draco sighed. That would have to be enough. "And you'll be careful."

"We promise to be careful," George murmured against his neck, against the mark he'd placed minutes before. "And we promise to make your father loads of money and to not disgrace the Malfoy name."

Draco burrowed further down between the two. Utterly content. He could finally understand why Harry always had that fresh joyful smile on his face whenever the prat was around the Dark Lord.

"And you, love. You be careful too. In France-"

"With all those wicked Frenchmen-"

"Who will no doubt want a piece of your lovely gorgeous arse!"

"And the women too!"

"French witches are vicious!"

"You go on and flash that shiny *expensive* ring around to let them know-"

"You belong to us!" they ended together.

Draco replied with a smug smirk and nodded, the top of his head bumping into Fred's chin.

"Salazar!"

The three twisted around towards the door to find Lucius standing there, an elegant hand thrown up to cover his eyes, which were apparently burned. Draco mewled and tried to bury himself under his fiends.

"This is why we shouldn't have given out the password," Fred laughed as George grabbed the nearest cover, which happened to be a robe, and threw it over Draco, not really concerning with himself and his brother. They were not known for being modest.

"Father always knows the passwords," Draco mumbled from beneath the robe.

"At least it wasn't Severus."

Lucius sighed and turned away. "Your Portkey leaves in twenty minutes, boys. You should have finished with your goodbyes by now... as well as been completely clothed."

"Well, you know, Lucius, you're son is oh so delic-"

A hand had shot out from under the robe to slap against George's mouth. Lucius turned slightly to look at the mound on the floor. He raised a brow and faced them fully before a smirk appeared on his face. One in which made the twins slightly wary since it was clear Lucius was eyeing their bits.

"Severus is bigger," he announced with no small amount of smugness and then sauntered out of the room.

"My ears!" Draco wailed. "My fucking ears! My brain... I've got mental pictures now!"

The twins looked at each other. "There's no way."

"I don't believe it."

"Only one way to find out for sure."

"Quit talking about it!" Draco shouted. "And no! You may not accost my godfather!"

Fifteen minutes later, Draco and the twins appeared down in the Great Hall and Lucius smirked upon seeing how pale his son was and the fact Draco refused to look at him and Severus. But the twins were eyeing Severus with barely concealed curiosity. Lucius chuckled under his breath.

Beside him, Severus sighed. "And why am I being ogled? Is this your doing?"

"Perhaps."

And then the twins were smirking and now 'stalking' towards Severus, and Lucius' smirk grew while Severus shifted uncomfortably and looked to his Lord, whom was standing a few feet away watching all this curiously. Draco jumped forward, grabbing the back of his fiancé's robes and halted their progress towards Severus.

"You have five minutes left here. Are you really going to spend it speculating over my godfather's size?" he snapped. The Dark Lord rose an eyebrow.

Severus spun around to his lover. "Lucius!"

Lucius lips quivered. He really felt like cackling.

"If it's true," Fred murmured to George, "then that's probably how he caught Lucius in the first place."

Severus spun around to face the twins, a scowl of monumental proportions on his face. "Excuse me?" he drawled. "Are you insinuating that's the only way I could have attracted my lover?"

"Course not! You're sexy!"

"We can definitely see the appeal."

Draco threw his hands over his face and groaned against his palms. Severus shuddered and made a quick exit, shooting one last glare at Lucius who had his knuckles pressed against his lips to keep from laughing aloud. When the Great Hall door slammed behind the Headmaster, Lucius cleared his throat and looked at his future sons-in-laws.

"I'll have you know Severus 'caught' me because he has a brilliant mind and a strong persona."

"Riiight. And the supposed huge cock helped not a bit," George said with disbelief.

Lucius dropped his gaze to his arm and dusted off an invisible piece of lint there. Though his smirk hadn't gone away at all.

"It's only a nightmare," Draco began to mumble behind his hands. "Only a nightmare. A horrible fucking nightmare. I'll wake up and remember none of this... except for the shagging. That was brilliant. But everything after will have been a nightmare."

The Dark Lord pushed off the head table and stepped off the dais, smirking at the young pale disgusted blond before he turned his attention to the twins, who had moved to cocoon Draco in between them. Petting his hair and mumbling nonsense that wouldn't make him feel any better.

"You're about to miss your Portkey," Tom announced. Lucius jerked out of his thoughts and nodded, dropping a hand into his pocket to retrieve the Portkey. A small empty vial.

"I have my own instructions for you two," the Dark Lord went on as they took the vial from Lucius. "You will return in one week's time. I will not push the executions back another day after that. And because of this trip, I've already had to push back certain events regarding Harry's relatives. I was not pleased. Was I, Lucius?"

"No, my Lord," the blond answered lowly, dropping his gaze to the Dark Lord's boots, trying not to remember the bouts of Crucio he'd had to endure under his Lord's wrath when he found out the twins were being sent to America without his say so.

"We'll be back in no time, sir," Fred said with a nod.

Draco peeled his hands away from his face long enough to reluctantly accept goodbye kisses from his fiends, though he continued to scowl at them just on principal. And then they were gone and Draco was left standing there, feeling utterly alone and still traumatized. The Dark Lord and his father went off too, speaking lowly, and Draco looked around the empty Great Hall, shuddering.

"Draco."

The blond spun around, finding the Dark Lord standing just inside. "My Lord?"

"Harry is waiting for you."

The blond perked up then. Right! They were leaving that evening too. And Harry probably needed help. Just the thing to keep his mind occupied. "Yes. Thank you, my Lord!"

They traveled to France via Portkey and the moment they touched down, Harry pulled away and bolted for the nearest available loo, leaving Draco in the middle of the foyer, torn. He knew Harry would want him to stick with the crates of desserts and decorative dishes they had, but he didn't feel right leaving Harry to be sick by himself.

"Mr. Malfoy, welcome."

Draco turned to find Iseut coming forward to greet him. Draco smiled and when she was near enough, he took her hand and bowed over it, brushing lips against her knuckles. "Thank you for having us. Please call me Draco."

Iseut smiled warmly and nodded. "Of course, Draco. We were delighted to accommodate the Dark Lord in giving you and Harry lodgings. Where is the dear?"

"Oh, he had to rush off to the loo. Hope he didn't vomit in a vase somewhere since he doesn't exactly know where the bathrooms are..."

"Ah, yes," Iseut looked off in worry. "Lord Riddle did inform us of his husband's pregnancy. I should have thought of the effects of a long Portkey trip. Terribly remiss of me," she muttered, clearly upset she hadn't thought about it before. "Which way did he rush off?"

"That way," Draco replied, pointing off down the hall.

Iseut then called a house elf and instructed the creature to see to the desserts with strict instructions to treat them like very valuable items. "Shall we go and find him, Draco?"

"Yes," Draco answered, relieved he would be able to go find Harry.

It didn't take long, and Draco was surprised to find Harry had actually found a loo. A house elf stood just outside of the thrown open door, wringing its hands and looking for the world like it wanted to do itself harm while they could hear the sounds of vomiting coming from within.

"Mistress's guest be looking for a washroom, Mistress. Minan helped."

"And you did a wonderful job directing him. That will be all, Minan. Thank you." The house elf nodded and then popped away. "Harry? Harry, do you need anything?" Iseut asked when the sounds of vomiting ceased.

Her question was answered by a groan. Draco rushed in, brandishing his wand and eliminating the sick smell and then plopped onto the floor beside his friend, frowning in worry because Harry's face was back to being pale and he was shaking.

"You need to lie down."

"It'll go away in a minute."

"Draco is correct. A nice lie down will do you some good. It doesn't need to be a long one. Perhaps an hour or two, and you'll be better."

It was probably a testament to how bad he was feeling that he simply nodded then and let Draco help him to his feet. He spent another minute leaning over the sink, washing his face and then letting Draco clean his mouth with a well aimed spell before letting them lead him to his room.

"At least the gala isn't until tomorrow night," he said as he crawled into bed.

"Forgive me for saying, Harry, but I was surprised Lord Riddle allowed you out of the country considering your condition."

Harry managed to laugh. "He's only going to let me go if he's nearby. So I figure he's going to attend. I haven't figured out if he's going to go as Lord Voldemort or go as Lord Riddle and out himself to France that way."

"And you let us stay here," Draco said. "Which is another reason why the Dark Lord agreed."

Iseut nodded. "Of course. He must know we would never let anything happen to Harry and yourself. Definitely not," she said, smiling fondly at Harry as he snuggled under the covers.

"Iseut, can I ask you a personal question?" Harry asked.

The Veela nodded. She turned for a chair, and Draco rushed to summon one from where it sat near the window. She nodded her thanks and sat, waiting for Harry's question as she folded her hands in her lap. Draco had a pretty good idea of what was about to be asked. He stood back with a smirk on his face.

"Um... you have children right?"

"Yes. Four."

"Right, and um... when you were pregnant, did Diandre ever, err..." he trailed off and blushed. "Did your mate refuse sex until after your babies were born?" Draco mentally snickered at the embarrassed blush heightening on Harry's face. Iseut blinked at him. "I'm sorry. You don't have to answer that."

Iseut shook her head. "No, it's alright. You only surprised me. And to answer your question, we did continue to be intimate for a time until it would not have been wise to do so. But that's near the end of the pregnancy." Then she smiled softly. "The Dark Lord refuses to be intimate with you until after your twins are born?"

Harry nodded, and then glared at Draco when he snickered again. "He says it would be disrespectful."

"I've heard of this practice before," Iseut said and laughed lightly. "I never expected a man as he to follow such a tradition. He really is old fashioned, isn't he? How sweet."

"It is. But I also don't understand it. I don't understand, but it makes me love him even more."

Iseut eyes glinted with a different sort of amusement. "But of course you aren't going to let him get away with this old fashioned notion. Are you, Harry?"

Harry smirked. "Definitely not. Drake came up with a mostly brilliant scheme."

"Not mostly, Harry. Completely brilliant," Draco responded. "And it's going to work. As long as you stick to the schedule."

"Well yeah, but... when the time comes, I don't know how I'm supposed to convince him to let me sleep in my own bed, Drake. He'll demand to know why. He'll demand I remain in our bed. What am I supposed to say without giving away the plan? Sorry, Tom. Can't do it. I want to make you super horny by sleeping in separate rooms. That's definitely not going to work—err... sorry," he whispered, having forgotten Iseut was there. She didn't seem to mind if the soft laughter was anything to go by.

"Don't worry, Harry," Draco replied. "I'll have thought of something before that time comes along."

Work permits in hand, glamours on their faces- only their hair and eyes had been changed, basically exchanged- along with their supplies, Harry and Draco Apparated to the French Ministry, a place Harry had never been to before. He'd heard about it, the fact that it was not an underground building, and instead was actually connected to the Muggles' parliament buildings. He thought that was rather wicked. The French magical government working right under the muggles' noses. Side by side. But where Harry loved it, Tom both hated and loved the idea.

They arrived at the event early in order to have enough time to set up the provided tables as they wanted before the guests began arriving. There would be both desserts and appetizers set up in a buffet fashion. Draco and Harry weren't going to really be waiters of definition. They were mainly there as representatives of their business. They would be there to refill certain dishes that ran out and such.

Once at the table, Draco took charge of the boxes containing the crystal and silver the desserts would be displayed and served in, while Harry began setting the desserts out onto the trays and into the bowls and crystal glasses; decorating the table as he wanted and keeping the desserts under the freshening charm until their long table was approached for the first time.

Draco had a permanent smirk on his face thirty minutes later as he gazed off at the appetizer table. Apparently that was being catered as well, and those caterers were glaring over at M.R.'s table. He and Harry were stealing all of their potential future customers. Draco was delighted and he was especially delighted every time someone came up to flush them with praises. He was mostly pleased for Harry as his now blond friend stood there, smiling, looking overwhelmed by the well earned praising. Harry had expected some, but not all of this.

At one point, Harry beamed when a witch spent ten minutes praising M.R.'s. At the end he offered up another crystal glass of chocolate soufflé she'd asked for and a dish of his cherry clafoutis to her husband, who seemed amused at his witch's exuberance over the desserts. "Thank you," Harry finally said to her. "I'll be sure to pass on your praise to the creator."

"Oh please do!" the witch exclaimed. "These custard tarts are divine! Simply marvelous! I think I'll contract M.R.'s Decadent Confections for my daughter's wedding. Do you do wedding cakes?"

Harry frowned a little. "Err..."

"We do. Yes, ma'am," Draco cut in and ignored the wide blue eyed stare from Harry.

"Wonderful!"

Harry turned to him, hissing, "what are you doing?"

"We did say..."

"Yeah. But I'm not ready for that yet," he whispered lowly, mindful that the couple was still in front of them, though they were talking together about their daughter's wedding and not paying any attention to him and Drake. "I have to practice making wedding cakes! I have to practice my decorating skills! Wedding cakes have to be absolutely perfect!"

"Harry, nothing you do is short of perfect. Relax."

Harry didn't have any time to smack Draco against the back of his head. The ballroom suddenly went still and deathly quiet. And the husband of the witch he'd been speaking to pressed a hand to her arm to gain her attention. She sucked in her breath when she turned towards the doors. "Is that? Is that the Dark Lord?"

Harry tried to keep the wide smile off his face. He really did. But it was always a fruitless effort. Because he was always happy to see his husband. Tom was shrouded in a dark cloak, his face unseen with the exception of his crimson eyes. He brought with him his Lieutenants, along with Narcissa. Harry sucked in a breath when Lucius stepped behind his Lord and grasped the cloak as Tom gracefully shrugged out of it. So, Tom was indeed outing himself tonight in France. Harry bounced on his toes in excitement.

"Merlin, you're like a little kid," Draco murmured into his ear.

"I missed him."

"We've only been gone a day!"

Harry shrugged, not pulling his eyes away from the Dark Lord. But he did say, "you miss the twins, don't you?"

Draco's silence was answer enough, as was the blush and the ducking of his now green eyes. Harry's smile twisted into a smug smirk before he turned back to his husband and small entourage.

By now Lucius had taken Tom's cloak and was handing it to an attendant, whom looked petrified at having to take the Dark Lord's cloak to the coat check room. Severus then turned to the man standing beside the door, the announcer, and spoke quietly to him for a moment while Tom's gleaming eyes traveled across the room, half a smirk upon his lips seeing all the fearful surprised faces staring back at him.

"A-announcing," called out the man Severus had been speaking to. "Announcing Lord Riddle. The Dark Lord of Britain."

More murmurs swept through the room, people backed away in what they thought was a subtle manner, while Harry giggled insanely under his breath.

"*Look at his face,*" the witch in front of Harry murmured to her husband.

"He has a lovely face," Harry breathed. The witch turned back to him in surprise because she had said that in French. Harry quickly blinked the hearts out of his eyes while Draco stood a

foot away laughing under his breath. "Err... can I get you anything else?"

"No thank you, young man." The couple turned and walked away, giving Harry room to just watch his husband. Harry wondered what Tom would do first. Intimidate, strike fear, threaten... well honestly Tom did all that in one go just by staring at people. Harry expected his husband to go around and mingle with the politicians, but instead Tom immediately turned to where Harry and Draco had set up their long table of desserts. Harry turned away and pretended he hadn't seen his husband.

"Severus looks good when he dresses up," he whispered to Draco.

His best mate smirked. "He doesn't often, and only when he has to. Only when Father or the Dark Lord makes him."

Harry lost sight of Tom as the man waded further into the ballroom, and some people were bold enough to approach him, though clearly they were still terrified. Harry recognized the French Minister as one of the first to approach and he bowed lowly to Tom, whom only inclined his head a fraction in return. The Veela politicians also approached Tom easily and seemed just a fraction less fearful. Tom looked more inclined to speak with the Veela anyway. Probably because they had more pull within the government and were already firmly on his side regardless of their country's views.

Harry stood back, watching all the politicians mingling around and dancing upon the dance floor and he had a lax in serving for a few minutes at least. But his moment of solitude came to an end when another politician stopped in front of the M.R.'s table, directly opposite him. Harry smiled at up the man. "Enjoying the evening?"

"I've always enjoyed causing fear. I find it's even more enjoyable when they see my real face and fear more."

Harry nodded. "Riiight. So... lemon meringue?" he asked, pointing to the dish directly in front of him and smiling brightly.

The politician's lips quirked and he didn't move his eyes away from Harry's. Didn't even look at the treat Harry pointed at. "Too sour for my tastes, I'm afraid."

Harry stepped closer until the edge of the table was pressed against his thighs. "Perhaps I can tempt you with something sweeter, Lord Riddle."

"Perhaps you can," the Dark Lord answered lowly.

"Anything you want," Harry replied.

Draco turned and walked away down the table towards the end, rolling his eyes at their blatant flirting. The Dark Lord was practically eye-fucking Harry at this point. But this made him pause and internally grin. Maybe Harry's silent seduction wouldn't take the full two weeks after all. And it helped that he and Harry looked very dapper in the black and white waiter outfits he'd had made for them. Yes, Draco had seen the kink room costumes before.

Draco turned back just in time to watch Harry dip a spoon into a small crystal glass of chocolate mousse while his gaze was still completely on his husband. Draco stamped over and grabbed that hand before the spoon could make it into Harry's opening mouth. "Excuse us, my Lord. Harry's in need of a break," he murmured before pushing and pulling Harry off to the side door nearby that led directly into a break room used by the servers.

"Harry! Patience! You're messing with the time table. It's not time for spoon fellatio! It's not even time for flirting! That's the first thing you did!"

"Couldn't help it. He was giving me that stare that makes me lose all sense."

Draco huffed and rolled his glamourised green eyes. "Stay here, sit down, and cool off for a few minutes."

Harry nodded and did as he was told, sitting there for about fifteen minutes, and when he returned to help Draco, Tom had gone off, disappeared in the large crowds. He was kept busy for the next half hour until Tom appeared before him again, which in turn had the others of the gala backing away from the tables, giving the two curious stares.

"Back so soon?"

"Is this what you call a disguise?" Tom asked softly, motioning between Harry and Draco. All they had done was switch coloring. Draco's hair was now black and Harry's blond. Harry had blue eyes, where Draco had green. Though Harry didn't have his glasses nor was his scar visible.

Harry shrugged. "No one has recognized us so far." His husband made a noncommittal sound while his eyes strayed upon Harry's uniform longer than was necessary. When Tom's eyes clearly darkened in appreciation, Harry bit his tongue to keep from smiling. And then a soft snort of laughter escaped him when Tom scowled to cover up the obvious lust.

"You are my husband," he whispered lowly. "You should not be wearing such things. You are not a common waiter."

Harry rolled his eyes then. "It's important to learn and to be part of every aspect of a business. Especially if you're the owner."

"I do not agree."

Harry chose to change the subject. "If you linger more, people will think you have a serious sweet tooth, *my Lord*," he said, practically purring the words.

The Dark Lord's eyes sparked at that. They dilated and darkened. "I like bold tastes," he responded.

"So you do. Sweet and bold."

"Yes, that's exactly right," the Dark Lord growled. Harry minutely shivered.

Draco mentally threw his hands up. "Harry!" he hissed. His friend turned and shrugged helplessly. "Hopeless," he muttered. "Ah! Look! The Veela Ambassadors!" he said, hoping to distract both Harry and his Lord. And at least Iseut knew of the plan. She seemed to like and encourage it, thinking it funny how Harry was going to play with the Dark Lord. She would gladly help out. She'd even invited herself to go shopping with them the following day.

The Veela came up and Draco caught her eyes before quickly looking beside him a few feet. Making his point clear. Iseut laughed under her breath. The Riddle lords were standing there just staring at each other.

"Lord Riddle," she said, coming to stand beside the Dark Lord and curtsying to him. Tom dragged his eyes away from Harry and nodded back to her. "It is a pleasure to see you tonight."

"Did you think I would leave him alone?" Tom said without preamble, though his tone was light and he spoke with a small smile.

"He knew you wouldn't. He was expecting your attendance."

"He's a clever little minx."

Meanwhile, Draco had grabbed Harry's arm and dragged to the other end of the table. "Harry, I know it looks like it's working already, but you know it's too soon. He'll realize what he's doing and draw back. Do you want to set yourself back a week?"

"No. Sorry. I'll try harder." Harry drew in a deep breath, determination lighting his eyes. "I'll ignore him as much as possible tonight."

Draco grinned and prodded Harry down towards the other end of the table, away from his powerful Dark Lord husband. It was then Harry spied a figure at the very end of the table, trying to sneak a treat without any of those of his acquaintance seeing. Harry grinned broadly and hurried over, holding out a napkin and spoon.

The wizard looked caught for two seconds before he scowled. "Your disguise is ridiculous," he hissed under his breath as he snatched the spoon and napkin. "Your bone structure is completely obvious."

"Only because you know me personally," Harry replied. "And... was that a compliment?"

Severus sneered one last time before turning and quickly walking away. Once the Dark Lord moved away from the table, others started to approach again. These pins of Draco's were brilliant. The ball goers knew the M.R. servers were English, and he and Draco made it plain at the start that they could not speak or understand French- though in truth, Draco was fluent in it. Many lingered by the table, speaking softly in French, unconcerned about the waiters who couldn't possibly understand them, and therefore Harry was able to listen in on their conversations about the Dark Lord.

Clearly they were all wary, and even if they tried not to show it, they were frightened of Tom's presence as well. It didn't matter that he'd been announced as Lord Riddle. Harry had

to bite back a grin when he realized some people had also noticed the Dark Lord's fascination with one of the waiters of M.R.'s. Harry looked away, pretending like he didn't notice the speculative stares. Some were even curious because they'd seen Harry talk back. They noticed he hadn't looked the least bit intimidated. *Oops*, he thought. *Maybe next time I should cower away... No, Tom wouldn't like that at all. He's probably enjoying the speculations.* And Harry, well Harry was definitely enjoying the speculations.

He was pleased to note none of the talk around him really had any rebellious tones to the conversations. A large portion of the guests even murmured their agreements, saying Britain had been a backwards nation that had seriously been in need of an overhaul for years. Tom would be pleased to know this. It was only Britain that largely discriminated against certain practices. Even the states weren't so strict in regards to magical practices, which was why Lucius loved to trade with the yanks. Harry surmised once everything had settled down, the European nations after this might even come to have better relations. It was an exciting thought.

"You're really very popular here... in a good way," Harry told his husband later where they were ensconced in Harry's room at the Veela chateau. Tom had stopped by to visit Harry before he returned to Britain. Lucius, Narcissa, and Severus had also come to visit with Iseut, Diandre, and Draco. But Tom and Harry had gone up to his room to be alone and discuss the recent gala.

Tom smirked. "Yes... and I learned your business is also very popular. I'd wondered, after speaking with you, if people might stay away."

Harry grinned. "It drew them in more. Curiosity gets the best of everyone, whether they like to admit it or not." Tom nodded in agreement to this. "But they have guessed we have a relationship of some sort. Many heard the familiarity in which we spoke to each other... should I act afraid of you the next time that happens?"

Tom's lips twisted in a grimace at the thought of Harry afraid of him. "Absolutely not. Besides, I hope the next time there is a function I must go to, that you will be on my arm instead of manning the dessert tables. You'll have employees, Harry," he said firmly. Harry rolled his eyes. "You're lucky I let you come here at all."

Harry bit back a sharp retort. Tom was still trying to control every aspect of his life, and yes, he had been lucky enough to get to France but he didn't think Tom would let him go anywhere else. It was annoying. More annoying than the no sex rule. And the one point that always infuriated Harry was the fact Tom wanted to keep the pregnancy a secret. Eventually, soon, this was going to cause unpleasantness between them because Harry had no intention of keeping their twins a secret.

But again Harry said nothing as his husband continued to be the annoying dictator that he was, with selective hearing, and instead closed his eyes and leaned against his husband, careful to keep his annoyance from traveling through the link.

"Now that it's over, you can come home with me tonight."

Harry's small frown diminished and he shifted to find Tom staring down at his face. "Did you miss me?"

Tom lifted a hand, caressing Harry's jaw as he liked to. "Yes," he answered truthfully.

How was it that Tom could instantly vanish Harry's annoyance so easily? With just a look or few words. "Missed you too. But I can't return with you. Drake, Iseut, and I are going to Paris tomorrow."

"Paris?" Tom asked, frowning fiercely. "For what?"

"We're going shopping!"

Tom grimaced and stood. "Enough said. I do not wish to hear the details."

Harry laughed as he was helped to his feet. "That's good. I wasn't going to tell you more anyway."

"But you will return tomorrow evening," Tom stated as they left his room. Harry nodded as Tom wrapped a tight possessive arm around his shoulders as they descended down to the main floor. Severus, Lucius, and Narcissa immediately stood when they saw the two standing just inside the parlor, taking the silent message of Tom's that it was time to depart. Narcissa cooed over Draco, squeezing her son tightly before stepping back to say goodbye to their hosts, allowing Lucius to say goodbye to their son as well. As they spoke once more to Iseut and Diandre, Drake narrowed his eyes on Harry, no doubt wondering if Harry had deviated from 'the plan.'

"I trust you know what would happen should my husband return home less than perfect," Tom murmured lowly to the Veela once his three followers had already left the room. Harry narrowed his eyes. Iseut and Diandre didn't seem the least bit bothered by this, but Harry was. He was insulted tremendously on their behalf.

"Of course, Lord Riddle," Diandre answered, and nodded. "Draco and Harry will be perfectly tended to. They'll have the very best protection throughout the day tomorrow as well."

Tom nodded and turned on his heel to leave. Harry huffed and held up a finger to those in the parlor before going after his husband, who waited at the threshold of the door.

"Tom, you need to stop threatening people when it's unnecessary. Iseut and Diandre have been very nice. They're our friends and didn't deserve that," Harry chastised softly.

The Dark Lord frowned at him, though Harry knew his thoughts weren't on him. "You're right," he finally murmured. "You will smooth it over for me?"

Harry smiled and nodded. He then found himself in a warm embrace. And soon their lips were meeting, and all too soon after, Tom lips parted, and Harry had to try very hard not to copy the action. But he managed this time and gave himself a mental pat on the back.

"Stop," he said, pulling out of Tom's arms.

The evil glare was back. "Why are you always pulling away, brat?"

"Because! When you kiss me like that, it makes me hot! So we can't kiss in such a way until after the babies are born."

Tom stared blankly. "It makes you hot?"

Harry blushed and ducked his head. "Tom."

Tom stared at his blushing bowed face for a good long time. Harry was uncertain as to what his husband would do next. What he did next was leave very quickly. He told Harry he loved him, kissed the top of his bowed head, and quickly left the chateau with muttered words about going hunting. Harry smirked at the closed door.

"That was very good, Harry." He spun around to find Iseut coming towards him. "You didn't see his face, but I did. What you said was perfect." Harry smiled and allowed her to take his arm to lead him back to the parlor. "Now then, we must make a shopping plan. I'm very excited about this trip tomorrow, and after, you must owl me when you return to Britain. I must know how the Dark Lord reacts to your new wardrobe."

"I'll write to you every day and give you reports."

Iseut laughed delightedly. "That's a splendid idea."

Moony inwardly snarled as he entered the clearing. There were more wolves this time. Wolves belonging to other packs. He didn't like so many wolves around when it was clear they were all there to watch a battle for hierarchy in Fenrir's pack. But he should have expected it. Fenrir was a leader amongst leaders. The Alpha among alphas and apparently most of the werewolves knew about their growing relationship. But there was something... something he was missing about all this. Something the other werewolves were aware of that he was not.

A lone wolf approached Moony then in a nonthreatening manner. This wolf was aged and female, and her fur was mildly matted in places. Moony let out a soft welcoming woof when she was right in front of him. Mattie moved and nudged her snout against his before she started to lick the entirety of his face. It was a welcoming gesture. Caring too as if she were washing her own little cub. It was different from how Fenrir cared for him. It was... it was a warm comfort Remus hadn't felt for a long time. Her actions had him remembering a time when his mother cradled him close to her chest, singing and rocking him to sleep when he was sick. Her actions seemed to melt something inside of him; inside of Remus and Moony. They weren't exactly aware of what it was, but Remus accepted it wholeheartedly.

Moony yelped when a wolf came up behind and lightly bit his flank. He was preparing for a fight as he turned, already growling and showing his teeth when he came snout to snout with a huge black wolf. Instead of attacking, Moony pounced playfully and the two spent several minutes rolling around playing while Mattie stood by and watched.

There were only three who didn't find this play amusing. And two were outwardly showing their displeasure. Finally one climbed to his feet, growling loudly and shot at the playing wolves. He jumped in with a soft snarl and struck Moony with his paw hard enough to cause Moony to tumble off Fenrir and roll a few feet away. Thinking that was the end of that, the other wolf- a black and gray- settled down beside Fenrir. The Alpha had taken to laying down the moment Moony was attacked and prepared to watch his cub tear this other wolf to shreds. Mattie padded over to lay beside her cub and the both of them watched with anticipation.

They weren't disappointed in the least. The other wolves quieted upon Baron's first attack and began to make a circle. Moony immediately jumped to his paws and lowered his snout. Lips pulled back into a vicious silent snarl. It wasn't a particularly intelligent move for Baron to turn his back on Moony; to automatically assume that just because Remus as a wizard was usually soft spoken in words and actions that his wolf would be the same.

He learned his mistake soon enough when fangs sank into his neck from behind, the top portion of his body was lifted, and he was forcibly thrown away from Fenrir. Baron landed in a daze and it would have taken a few moments to shake away the disorientation. Moony wasn't in the mind to give him those few moments. He was on a mission. Every bite and slash of his claws was almost lethal in their destruction, whereas he barely felt Baron's answering hits and bites.

The snarls and growls emitting from Moony were nasty and chill inspiring. The clearing filled with Moony's rage and Baron's yelps of pain. It took fifteen minutes for Moony to wrestle Baron into submission. It would have taken a shorter amount of time, but Baron didn't know when to wisely give up even when it was clear who the stronger of the two were. It was only after Moony managed to sink his teeth into Baron's neck a *fourth* time, did the stubborn wolf go limp. Moony forcibly pushed the unresponsive wolf onto his back, snarled once more in his face before limping around to retake his place beside Fenrir. Moony thought that had been too easy. He was rather annoyed the other two who had been showing hostility had backed out without a fight after seeing him take Baron in paw.

The Alpha lifted his snout to the sky, looking for the moon's location and wondering if Baron would make it through the rest of the night. Fenrir huffed as he turned back to the wolf beside him. It didn't really matter if he did or not. If he died before the sun rose, it would be his fault as Baron would not back down when clearly Moony had been the victor from the very beginning. At least the other two who had been showing hostility to Moony had backed down and now they along with most of the pack were mingling with the other packs. Some going off to hunt and play. Only a few wolves stayed behind in the small clearing.

Moony remained by his side, licking at one of the cuts he'd gained on his paw while Fenrir licked his ear, which was also cut. Fenrir wondered if his companion knew werewolves mated for life once they found that permanent partner. If he didn't, Fenrir would take delight in telling Remus once the sun rose.

When Harry returned from France it was to find his husband was away at the Ministry and would likely be there all day. This suited Harry just fine as he had a number of things needing to be done that day, and one thing would need to be taken care of without Tom knowing

about it. Oh, Tom would soon know. That evening in fact, since Harry was sure the *Prophet* would get the story out as soon as they could.

Immediately after his Alley business was taken care of, Harry traveled to the Longbottom estate. Neville was aware he was coming and was waiting for him. "Heard from Dean?" Harry asked after the first greetings were taken care of.

"Yes, actually. Two days ago. Took me by complete surprise."

"I was going to give you a heads up but so much has been happening and I kind of forgot."

Neville shrugged. "Aside from being surprised, I was actually kind of pleased to hear from him again... despite him having been a prat to you."

Harry gave a shrug of his own. He was over that. He moved on, and hopefully others would move on from that as well. "Did you give him a job? I told him to contact you about that."

"Yeah. Glad to have his help," Neville said as he sank down onto the rug where he had books and parchments spread about.

"Did you know Seamus is due for a baby next month?" Harry asked as he lowered down across from him, stretching out to lay on his side.

Neville blinked in surprise. "No. I mean, I knew they were married. A baby?"

"Met them at St. Mungo's. Seamus was there for a prenatal checkup... they both looked worn down."

"I'm happy for them."

Harry nodded. "They seemed happy enough. And I'm glad you gave Dean a job... even if he was being an idiot hiding from the world."

"Well, you know, Harry. Not everyone's got the courage you have." The statement was spoken softly and Harry didn't need to be told what Neville was thinking about.

"It wasn't your fault, Neville."

"I should have stood up with you and Hermione."

"It's in the past," Harry grit out, making it plain he wanted to move on from this. He came here to reacquaint with his friend. Not to dredge up painful and uncomfortable memories.

"Right..." Neville cleared his throat, wondering if Harry had always had that intense, slightly scary look in his eyes. "So what were you doing in St. Mungo's?" he grinned then. "Don't you ever get enough?"

Harry rolled his eyes. "I don't go there on purpose!" Neville snickered. "Actually Tom dragged me in. I'd had cold symptoms for a week... well three weeks actually, and Tom

finally reached his end and dragged me in. Turns out it wasn't a cold. Turns out I'm pregnant. With twins."

Neville didn't have the proper time to be stunned by that comment before they were interrupted. Interrupted by an extremely imposing figure who stormed into the room seconds later.

"What is the meaning of this?" the Dark Lord hissed as he strode into Neville's study, waving the copy of evening edition of the paper in the air. Harry slowly stood upon seeing the enraged light in his husband's eyes and he jerked Neville up with him.

Harry peered at the dark doom permeating from his husband. "Make no sudden movements," he whispered to Neville. He was only half playing around. Tom was enraged. The type of rage that generally led to homicidal tantrums. Mentally he sighed. They'd probably already lost a couple house elves.

"T-that's... H-Harry," Neville whispered in a trembling panic as he watched the seething wizard with the shining red eyes. "H-how did he know where I live? How did he get past the wards without me knowing? How did he know *you* were here?" He then grabbed the back of Harry's shirt tightly when the Dark Lord's eyes moved to rest on him and narrowed further.

"Don't ask stupid questions like that, Neville. It only makes him angrier," Harry replied. "He's the Dark Lord. How do you think he got in here? Now, back out of the room slowly."

"There's no other way out of the room," the young man squeaked back.

"Leave us, Longbottom," Tom ordered.

"Merlin, he knows my name!"

Harry grabbed Neville's arm and had to walk Neville forward and around Tom before pushing him out of the room since Neville seemed to have forgotten how to use his legs. Once he saw Neville racing down the hall, Harry turned back, skirted by his husband and took a stance in front of the fire behind the safety of a chair. He knew Tom wouldn't ever physically hurt him but Harry knew what he'd done was sort of wrong. And he knew Tom was spitting mad. Furious. And standing behind a chair gave him a little comfort and more defiant strength.

"Why have you done something so reckless?" Tom demanded as he moved forward to throw the *Prophet* down on the table so that Harry could see it. The front of the paper showed another picture of Harry and Tom, but the headline today announced the happy couple now expected twins early next year. The source was said to be Harry himself and Tom didn't doubt it for a moment. "Why did you do this when I specifically told you no?"

Harry lifted his chin, his eyes flashing defiantly. "And I told you I didn't want to keep it a secret."

"It's too dangerous for you at this time!"

"It'll always be dangerous for me. But at least if people know about it now and try to do something, I won't be too big and too slow to defend myself properly, and by then hopefully the people will have gotten over it. I doubt anyone would be stupid enough to attack me at this point anyway."

Tom didn't seem to have heard any of that. "We talked about this, Harry!"

"No! You commanded and I nodded along, pretending to listen to you dictate my life! I'm supposed to listen to you when you've been ignoring everything I say?!"

"AT LEAST I ALLOWED YOU TO TRAVEL TO FRANCE!" Tom bellowed before slamming his fist down upon the table between them in fury. Harry didn't flinch. He didn't back down either and instead continued to meet the furious eyes of his husband. Tom narrowed his eyes speculatively. "If this is about not being intimate—"

Harry's eyes widened as anger and frustration took hold. "IT'S NOT EVEN ABOUT THAT, TOM!" he shouted. "Do you honestly think that's all I think about? Our relationship isn't shallow like that and you know it! That's not even part of the equation!" Harry paused and gripped the back of the chair tightly. "This is about you trying to control every aspect of my life. This is about you trying to hide something that we should both be proud to acknowledge. Proud to have people know. You're the bloody Dark Lord! You should want people to know. You should want people to celebrate the birth of your heirs! I can't understand why—unless," Harry paused and his voice dropped down to an uncertain whisper. "Unless you're ashamed of us."

Tom's nostrils flared. "You know perfectly well I am not ashamed in any way, Harry! Of you or our twins! I will not hear such ridiculousness again!"

"I will not hide," Harry stated softly.

Tom jerked a chair out and fell into it, piercing the fire with his glare. The flames shot up for a split second before going back to the surface. Harry took a deep breath to calm down and to try and ignore his husband's anger, which was tangible around them. "You said you didn't want to control me. Remember?" he asked softly. "You didn't want to control me like the rest of the world."

Tom's gaze snapped back to him. "I don't want to control you," he answered just as softly, "but in my life I've only ever feared one thing..."

"Death," Harry whispered.

Tom nodded. "But that fear is now overshadowed by others. My greatest need is to keep you and our twins safe." *My greatest fear is losing you.*

Harry smiled as he always did when Tom referred to their babies as 'our twins'. And he hadn't needed the words to be spoken in order to hear them. Harry rounded the table to stand in front of his husband, reaching out cautiously to touch Tom's shoulder. Tom made an annoyed sound at this show of timidity and grabbed his hand, bringing it to his lips and kissing his

palm before pulling Harry into his lap. Harry settled down, pressing his back to Tom's chest and tucking his head under Tom's chin as arms wrapped around him.

"We can compromise—you do know what the term compromise means, don't you? Probably not. I'll have to teach you."

"I know what compromise means, brat."

"Let's compromise then," Harry replied as he played with Tom's fingers. "I'll start."

"Very well."

"We go on as we have been doing. Meaning, I still work. Draco and I will go off whenever there's a need for our catering services. I will continue to do Silver things. I can go out in public whenever I want- as long as I have my guards. And when I'm about five or six months along, I will go holiday at the villa and I will follow your every rule until after our babies are born. How does that sound?"

"You'll drive me mad if I don't agree," Tom muttered.

"Yes, that's about right. Also I want to come out immediately."

"Hmm, that had already been planned. The execution is in a few days and we will both be present along with many who have been ordered to attend... you realize when your identity becomes known, some people will realize you are also Belial? That will eventually get out as well."

"Yeah. Don't think there's any way to stop it. But that's okay. I can still be Belial on raids or whenever I want. Even if they know its Harry Riddle. So, do you agree to my compromise?"

"I do. However, you going to the *Prophet* without even consulting me. That needs to be addressed, Harry."

"I concede. That was a little underhanded and completely selfish. We should have had this argument before I did something like that. Sorry."

Tom tugged on his hair lightly. "You are forgiven. This time."

Harry relaxed further. Only to imperceptible tense when Tom asked him if he wasn't upset about the no sex rule. Harry made himself relax before Tom noticed the tenseness and then he shrugged. "Not really, Tom. It's not that big of a deal. We can do without having sex for *almost a year*. Like I said, our marriage isn't solely built upon sex." He shifted and looked at his husband worriedly. "Is it?"

"Of course not, Harry."

Harry patted Tom's hand. "You respect my wishes- most times- and I will respect yours."

"Right..."

Harry inwardly smirked; Tom didn't sound all that certain. What Harry said was true though. There entire marriage wasn't simply built upon sex but he'd be damned if he had to go without when it wasn't necessary. Harry did something mean then. He yawned and then stretched out against Tom and clearly heard it when his husband began to grind his teeth. He then disentangled the arms around him and stood. But as he was walking around to retake his seat, Harry froze mid step.

Tom stood, suddenly worried. "Harry?"

Harry spun around and grinned. "I'm hungry!"

Tom was immensely relieved. Harry hadn't been actively hungry for a month. "Then we must feed you immediately," he responded, standing. "Are you finished here?"

"Yeah. Just let me say goodbye to Neville... you scared the life out of him, you know."

Tom flashed a grin. Longbottom's fear had been funny. He would have found more pleasure in it had he not been so furious with Harry.

"I wonder where his grandmother is?" Harry murmured as they left the room "She's a right bitch. Wouldn't mind you scaring her to death. She treats Neville like shite."

"HARRY!"

Neville's shout had him hurrying down the hallway, wondering what could have happened to make Neville sound so frantic. Especially when Tom wasn't anywhere near him at the moment. Harry jogged down the hall, aware Tom's long legs kept him relatively near behind him only to stop suddenly after rounding a corner to find Neville trapped against the wall with a man pressing against him.

Harry cocked his head to the side, studying the grinning figure against Neville, before he sighed. "Nathan? What do you think you're doing?"

The vampire with dark hair and killer pale blue eyes turned and grinned at him. "Only getting to know my fellow Silver better."

Focusing back on Neville, Harry could see he wasn't really terrified. More like extremely nervous and surprised. "And... why are you here?"

"I've been living in his cellar. Didn't he tell you?"

Harry turned back to Neville with a raised brow. Neville's cheeks darkened. "H-he said he didn't have any place to go."

Tom snorted. "And you believed him, Longbottom?"

Neville was much too afraid of Tom to speak back.

"Really, Nathan, what are you doing?"

"What does it look like, Harry? I've still got my looks. Have about a century before I lose that. Trying to seduce this one here. He's very skittish."

Neville frowned in annoyance. "I'm right here!"

"Neville doesn't like men that way, Nathan."

"Err... actually gender doesn't bother me."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Neville, I was trying to help you out."

"Oh... sorry."

"Now *he's* the epitome of a Gryffindor," Tom drawled in amusement and then pierced Nathan with a stare. "Back off Harry's pitiful friend immediately."

Nathan followed that order without a second passing. He backed off Neville, raising his hands in surrender and bowing to the Dark Lord. He then turned, winked at Neville, and misted out of existence, like black smoke.

Neville sagged back against the wall in relief, only to freeze once more when Harry approached him, which in turn had the Dark Lord approaching him. "Did you really invite him to stay here? Neville, really?"

"I couldn't leave him out in the sun, now could I?"

Tom barked out a laugh as he turned and headed away, shaking his head. Unbelievable. How were Gryffindors able to survive life? And to think, he'd actually considered marking this one as his equal. Tom shuddered as he left the Longbottom estate, preparing to return home and order the house elves to make something light for Harry to eat.

Harry turned back to Neville and grinned. "You made him laugh. He's not likely to kill you anytime soon."

This in no way relieved Neville as the paling of his face indicated. Harry laughed, pat his friend's shoulder, and then turned to go after his husband.

Tom stepped into their bedroom just as Harry bent over to stuff his tailored slacks into the inside of his knee high black boots. Harry knew Tom had been approaching, which was why he waited to the very last moment to bend over. Harry's back was to the door, but he could feel Tom's magic. The younger wizard smirked to himself when Tom said nothing, so Harry pretended he didn't know there was somebody watching his arse like it was a last meal. And when he straightened and turned, Harry took on a startled look that was very convincing.

"Didn't know you were there... what were you doing?"

Instead of answering, Tom cleared his throat and asked a question of his own. His voice was nearly a rasp. "What are you wearing?"

"Um," Harry looked down at his clothes; the black sleeveless tunic with a high collar-buttoned up all the way to his throat- and the dark plum colored velvet vest that was light as a feather, accompanied by tight black britches and his dragon hide boots. Tonight was the first time he'd chosen to wear something of his new wardrobe. He'd had to pump himself up for this. "Clothes? You-" he cut off, looking unsure of himself. "Do you not like it?"

Tom strode into the room, as if on a mission, but at the last moment, halted two steps away, hands balling into fists at his sides. "Yes. Yes, you look lovely."

Harry smiled brightly. "Thanks!"

Tom hissed something under his breath and spun away. "Good luck on your mission. You will return in a timely manner or I will come looking for you."

And then he was gone and Harry was left there grinning at the spot Tom had last been. He then shook himself, grabbed his black cloak and gold mask and also strode from the room.

Fifteen minutes later, he stood within a mostly deserted field, squinting his eyes against the darkness around. And then soft pops echoed around him. Three pops announcing the arrival of his companions, who would be taking part in this intervention.

"Ready for this?" he asked as the three figures came to stand beside him.

Dante pulled in a deep breath and nodded. Charlie- whose alias was Caym- doing the same.

"It's for the best we do it this way," Belial said as he turned to study the Burrow. "Otherwise Voldemort will lose patience with them. He doesn't want to settle with them bleeding in the back ground. He wants it known the Weasleys have given over their loyalty. And they need to know, before the executions. They should be prepared."

"Either this is going to be very difficult or very easy," said Remus

"Still can't believe they've left Ginny at Hogwarts," Dante muttered.

"I think they're probably confused. They don't know what to do," Caym replied.

"Well, they're about to get a lot more confused," Belial answered.

Within the Burrow, Molly tended to dinner only methodically, not really seeing what she was doing. Her mind, as it always was, upon her family; her children. Arthur was currently home at the moment so her worries about him were alleviated for the time being. But her babies... Bill and Charlie had been missing for several weeks. She knew Charlie had returned to England, and yet she hadn't seen him yet. And just the other day, after she'd spoken to Kingsley and Tonks, the old grandfather clock had pointed out her two eldest were in mortal peril. But then the hand moved after a few minutes, going back to safe. Molly assumed Tonks and Kingsley had arrived just in time to help her sons.

And then she would look at the hand designating her youngest and Ginny's always read at "school". It was never on mortal peril and Molly couldn't understand this. Surely she was in mortal peril. You-Know-Who and the Death Eaters swarmed the school. They had to get her

out of there, but the only way to do such a thing was by swearing fealty to You-Know-Who, and she and her husband didn't want to do that. How could they?

"Molly! Molly, come and look!"

Molly hurried out of the kitchen and into the sitting room to stand beside Arthur. She looked to where he was pointing a rigid pale finger at the old grandfather clock. The golden hands of Bill and Charlie were pointed at "home".

"So much for the element of surprise," a voice drawled from the side.

The two quickly turned to find four figures standing just outside of the kitchen. Two Silvers, and their leader, the Gold. And then one Death Eater. The one closest to them, the one wearing a gold mask, lifted his hand towards them, and without a word summoned Molly and Arthur's wands to his hand.

"There, that's better. Don't want any hexes accidentally going off. Now if you two would be so kind as to enter here and sit at the table," Belial instructed, stepping back and making room for the two.

"How did you get passed the wards?" Molly demanded.

"Considering we've always been keyed in?" Belial inquired with amusement.

"Belial," murmured Arthur, staring at him.

A grin flashed at him. "You've heard of me? Wicked!"

The Death Eater shifted and came to stand beside Belial. Both Arthur and Molly stiffened further and Arthur moved to stand in front of his wife. "I think we should take this to the table," the Death Eater murmured lowly.

"Right, right... after you two," Belial said, waving their wands into the kitchen. When they didn't move, Belial narrowed his eyes slightly. "We can do this the easy way or the hard way."

"We haven't come here to harm you," Dante said with a small shove at Belial.

"Yeah, that too," Belial murmured.

"Then give us back our wands," Molly demanded.

Belial snorted. "No way."

Seeing there was nothing for it, Arthur led his wife back into the kitchen to sit at the table. "If you're not here to hurt us then why are you here?" he wanted to know as he and his wife sat. No one answered him until they were all sitting.

"We are here," Belial began as he held out a hand, palm facing up, "to help you."

"Help us?" Molly scoffed, glaring at the Death Eater. She had her suspicions on who the Silvers were, but she rather liked being in denial about that. And she eyed the Gold warily because there were strong rumors that the neutral Belial was married to You-Know-Who and that he was slightly mental. But of course he would have to be if he were married to You-Know-Who.

"Yes, help," Belial returned as his Silvers pulled their wands. He noticed, but made no mention, when Arthur and Molly flinched at their movements. Caym and Dante placed their wands into his hand, and then Remus did the same. Soon, Belial's own wand joined theirs. Wandlessly, Belial summoned a large pot. He placed the six wands in a bunch upon the table and then placed the pot upside down over the wands. "We are definitely here in a neutral capacity."

Belial leaned forward then, looking at a copy of the *Prophet* that had been discarded towards the end of the table. The copy which announced his pregnancy. He summoned that to him too and peered down at the picture, smiling goofily as he stroked paper Tom's cheek. A rough shoulder bump drew him out of his stupor. He looked over at Bill and grinned sheepishly.

"Who are you? Bill, Charlie?"

"Unmask," Belial ordered. Stupid clock had ruined their fun. Harry was the first to unmask and he snickered upon seeing their dumbfounded expressions. When Bill and Charlie unmasked, Molly's lips pinched into a thin line. She didn't look too surprised, because again, that stupid clock. They'd had moments to realize who was who. Remus was slower to unveil himself. When he did, Arthur choked on his saliva.

Harry grinned. The two elder Weasley looked as if they didn't know who to go after first. "Start with me," he offered, pointing at himself. "Come on. You know you want to."

"H-Harry... JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?" Molly screeched.

"Trying to talk sense into you."

"You should have returned. You should have helped us be rid of You-Know-Who," Arthur responded lowly.

"Dad, no," Bill hissed. But Harry raised a hand.

"I've got this. Now Arthur, I can't very well go and off Voldemort."

"And why not?"

"He's my husband!" Harry announced cheerfully and with a huge smile. "I'd never do anything to hurt my husband, the father of my unborn babies," he ended while rubbing his abdomen. He then tapped the picture of himself and Tom respectively. "Me, Tom; Me, Voldemort; Me, You-Know-Who... getting the picture?"

There was more of that gaping again. "Did you ever wonder why you aren't dead yet? Why you were whisked away from a battle that you would surely have been killed or captured in?"

Molly jerked then, both hands reaching out across the table. For a moment Harry thought she was going for the wands. Remus quickly pressed a hand on top of the pot to stop her. But that wasn't what she was after. Molly reached over and snatched the *Prophet* from under Harry's hands and brought it to her face as she studied the wizard standing with Harry, smiling down at his young husband. "Y-you-Know-Who?" she stuttered.

"Yeah, that's him! Handsome, isn't he?"

"Before you start," Charlie cut in. "No, Harry's not under some spell or potion. And he wasn't captured or brainwashed. Harry has full control over his mental capacities... mostly."

"Hey..." Harry mocked glared at the grinning redhead.

"I don't understand," Arthur replied hollowly.

"It's quite simple," Remus began. "The Dark Lord took Harry in. Gave him sanctuary and saved his life. Cared for him; cared for Harry and not the bloody boy-who-lived. Eventually, the two fell in love, got married, and are now happily expecting twins. *My Lord*," and here the werewolf stressed where all his allegiances lay, which in turn had Harry beaming, "is working to provide a better world for all magical beings. Muggleborns and half bloods included. He's in mind to advance our Wizarding nation, unlike with the former Ministry where it seems we've been stuck in time, or at the very least, going backwards."

"Which is why we don't fight against him anymore," Bill ended, motioning between himself and his brother.

Harry wiggled in anticipation. "Tell your parents about the murderers they sent after their eldest children."

Molly and Arthurs eyes widened even further. "We did no such thing!"

"You did, Mum," Charlie said. "You gave away our location to Tonks and Kingsley."

Arthur began to sputter while Molly's face paled dramatically. Harry savored the look. Remus gazed at them softly. "They didn't go to your sons place in order to ensure their safety. They went there to kill Bill and Charlie. I should know. I was there at the time."

"B-but, that's not right," Molly whispered.

"It's the truth," Bill said. "In their minds we were traitors just because we'd disappeared. Only because we refused to work for the Order anymore, because we were angry with you two and refused to speak with you. They were certain we had taken the Dark Mark-"

"Which they haven't," Harry interrupted.

"And when we refused to show our wrists," Charlie went on, "the two started firing out curses, Mum. The first curse Tonks sent my way was the Killing Curse. Remus saved us. Fenrir also. He arrived just in time too."

"Fenrir Greyback?" Arthur inquired; again with a hollow tone.

The four nodded. "He's a lovely fellow," Harry announced, and then looked at Remus. "Isn't he, Remus?"

Bill, Charlie, and Harry snickered when Remus blushed scarlet. "Merlin, you get redder every other time... did you finally do something naughty?"

"This is not the time," Remus gritted out.

Bill sighed and slumped back. "They didn't."

"What the hell, Remus?" Charlie demanded. "The bloke threw himself in front of a curse for you!"

Remus squirmed in his seat. "Werewolves mate for life... I never knew that."

"And?" Bill demanded. "Seriously, Remus. What more does he have to do to win you?"

"He's already won me!" Remus snapped back. He wondered if his cheeks were on fire. "I just... don't know if I'm ready for that. Mates for life, you know?"

Harry was having a grand time laughing at his friend's expense, only to suddenly stop. "Molly, what are you doing?"

The witch had gotten up and started bustling around the kitchen. "Harry, you're too thin! And with twins on the way!" she tisked and started looking through the pantry. "Surely the blasted *Dark Lord* has enough food to feed you properly!"

Now it was Remus, Harry, and the two eldest Weasley offspring who looked dumbstruck.

Bill was the first to shake out of his shock. "Mum, come back. We still have much to talk about."

"In a minute, Bill," Molly muttered distractedly.

Bill huffed, but Harry was grinning. "I could eat something."

"Of course, dear!" Molly exclaimed as she placed a plate loaded with biscuits in front of him. Harry took a moment, not caring how Molly would take it, to take his wand out from under the pot for a second and cast a few spells to make sure the food hadn't been tampered with. Once the tests came back negative, he replaced his wand and stuffed his face.

"How can you be so worried about Harry, who isn't even your own child- no offense, Harry-"

"None taken," Harry replied around a mouthful of biscuit.

"When your youngest child is still a captive?" Bill went on. "Why haven't you two gotten Ginny out of there?"

"You know why," Arthur answered.

"Dad! You've lost! Get over it!"

Molly stood with her fists planted on hips. "Charlie Weasley! You know better than to talk to your father like that!"

Charlie flinched back. "Sorry, Mum," he mumbled. Harry and Remus snickered.

Bill cleared his throat, looking at his father. One man to another, Arthur realized. "The sooner you accept defeat, the sooner you can move on. There's no winning for the Light any more. The Dark Lord is too powerful. He's even more powerful now than he was in the last war. And no, not because Harry's with him... though that is a perk."

"I'm still not a Dark wizard, though," Harry was quick to add. "And I don't go around killing and torturing people."

"And yet you married You-Know-Who. A dark wizard who loves to do those things."

Harry shrugged. "He does it to deserving people... anyway, not all couples are exactly alike. He has his hobbies and I have mine. He likes torture and I like Quidditch." Again with the gaping mouths. "You'll catch flies like that."

"You killed Alastor," Arthur breathed in comprehension.

The amusement fled from Harry's eyes; they turned cold and slightly insane. "He tried to kill me first. He is responsible for the killings of the Slytherin students. Were you a part of that, Arthur?"

Harry was surprised when Bill and Charlie didn't jump to their father's defense, and he realized they were waiting for an answer as well, since they were uncertain.

"Of course not!" Molly defended.

"Am I supposed to take your word on that," Harry asked lowly. "Since it's already been proven your husband will lower himself to kidnapping an innocent in broad daylight."

Arthur looked like he didn't know what to say, or that he didn't want to answer. Harry pulled in a deep breath and waved his hand in the air. He found he didn't want the answer either. "Never mind. I got Moody back for that, so we'll leave it at that and move on."

"All you need to do is reply to Ginny's owl," Remus said. "Stating loyalty. Which only means you'll not plan to cause any trouble for the Dark sect. Leave us be and we will leave you be. Do you want your job back at the Ministry, Arthur? You can have it back as soon as you accept the new government. Do you want to live in peace? In actual peace without the threat of war hanging over you? Then announce your intentions to accept the Dark Lord as the ruler of Wizarding Britain. It's as simple as that. The Light has lost. As your son said, get over it and move on."

Harry stood then and peered down at the two. "I'm aware you received a summons from my husband. To attend an execution. You are required to attend. Should you not do so, Voldemort will see that as a direct threat. He'll take that to mean you are still against him and plan to

cause him problems down the road. He'll start to think you'd be better off dead and he'll use you two to make an example."

Molly and Arthur turned to each other, apparently having a silent discussion until both sagged and turned back to Harry. "We'll attend," Arthur announced. And it was an agreement of many things. "We want peace."

"Good. You attend, pledge your allegiance, and you'll have Ginny back before the end of the night. Not only that, but your names will slip from my husband's mind. He'll not think of you in regards to being a problem again... unless you do something to draw his attention."

"I still can't believe you married him, Harry," whispered Molly; brokenly. "How could you marry someone who couldn't possibly love you? Someone who isn't capable of loving. How could you be happy to have children with that monster?"

Harry narrowed his eyes. The temperature in the room dropped while his companions shifted uncomfortably. "You don't know him, Molly," he stated coldly. "At all. He is very much capable of loving and he understands me unlike anyone else in the world. He loves me for me. For Harry. Just Harry. And I... I was never what you thought I was. I am more than happy *to kill* in order to protect my husband and his goals." He paused to stare into their widening eyes. "I hope I've made myself clear." After this he snatched the pot away and grabbed his wand. He then slipped on his mask and departed from the table and soon from the Burrow.

Remus was second to stand. "He will not tolerate the badmouthing of his husband. Consider this your first and only warning. It doesn't matter who you are." Remus nodded to Bill and Charlie and went after Harry, leaving Bill and Charlie to deal with their parents.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty-Three

Narcissa watched under half mast eye lids as her son bounced from his seat upon the house elf's announcement. She was drowning in the wide excitement and truly happy smile on her son's face as he pranced from foot to foot- very unMalfoy like, she thought with a frown- near the door, waiting. Honestly, she could admit she had not seen her son this happy in so long. Maybe she had never seen him this happy, or at least not this kind of happy. And the beautiful shine to his eyes as the door opened to reveal two copperhead scamps...

Narcissa sighed, the rest of her anger and wariness dissipating. They made Draco blissfully happy. And it was clear by the looks on George and Fred's faces that Draco did the same for them. As she watched, she found it rather odd Draco could immediately tell the two apart and she found it remarkable her son was able to split his affection equally to both young men. And the fact she could see how they shared Draco. Threesomes weren't a rare occurrence. She'd heard of a few within her circles, but this was the first time she'd come into close contact with one.

"Draco, love. We've come with a present."

"You didn't need to get me a present."

Narcissa quietly snorted. *Oh, Draco. You lovely liar. Just like your father.* She smiled when she saw the twins had seen straight through that as well. Apparently they really did know their intended. They grinned at him and shook their heads fondly before turning to look back towards the doorway. Draco looked over their shoulders curiously. He then gasped.

"Pansy!"

"Draco Malfoy!" a voice shrieked as a witch flew into the room and into Draco's arms. "Not once did I ever read in our exchanged owls that you were engaged to the Weasley twins! I had to read it in the society columns in the paper abroad! Shame on you!"

Draco pushed her back a little so that he could properly look her over. "Pansy... Merlin, Pansy! It's wonderful to see you!" the blond exclaimed, embracing her tightly once more. "I didn't know you were coming back! I would have been sure to throw you a party had I known!"

"Draco!" she shrieked in his face when the embrace ended. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"You should have told her," said Fred.

"We wouldn't have had to stalk and kidnap her then," George went on.

"She kept running away from us!"

"Know how long it took to find her?"

"Ages!"

"We almost missed our deadline to return."

"I thought it was a trick!" Pansy snapped at them. "I didn't actually believe the engagement nonsense until a few minutes ago."

George snickered. "She really didn't until she realized we'd brought her straight to you."

"I thought it was the flaming Order again. Trying another tactic to get back to Potter, by means of getting to you, which means abducting me..."

"We've won, Pansy dear. The Order is no more," Narcissa said as she stood to go and greet the young woman. "And Fred and George are completely on our Lord's side. They've also proven themselves to Lucius... and to me."

Draco turned and beamed at his mother. The brothers grinned widely, exclaiming, "yes!" and high fived each other.

"And we'll be proving ourselves completely to the Dark Lord tomorrow."

"Ah, yes," Narcissa said as she stopped in front of a wide eyed Pansy. "The executions."

"And that muggle woman."

"Yes," Narcissa agreed lowly, her tone cold as she thought about Harry's treatment as a child.

"And Pansy," Draco said, almost timidly, "there's more you don't know."

"You mean about you and Potter being best mates?" she asked and then waved when he prepared to answer. "These... kidnappers explained. Honestly you know I never cared about that. Potter was a decent bloke once he got his head on straight about us Slytherins."

"Um, yeah. But that's not all—you didn't tell her?" Draco asked his fiends.

"We didn't think it was wise at the time. The Dark Lord might not want her to know. We didn't want to say in case he decides to Crucio us for talking too much again. Honestly, love. He's conditioning us for the Mark... he's not easily teased now a days."

Draco snickered, thinking about the plan. "It'll be worse now," he muttered.

"Draco, do not tell her yet," Narcissa put in with a smile tugging at her lips as she watched the twins twitching. "If our Lord allows it, she will find out tonight."

"Tell me what?" Pansy asked, turning back to Draco. "You aren't actually going to wave something like that in my face and then make me wait?"

"You'll be able to see for yourself in a little while, Pansy," Narcissa went on. "You will join us for dinner. The Dark Lord and Harry will be attending and your parents are of course attending. They'll be delighted to have you back in Britain. They have missed you so."

Pansy's eyes widened. "Oh, but... the Dark Lord," she whispered fearfully. "I-I ran away."

Fred dropped a hand to her shoulder. "No worries, Pansy. You were never marked, so he wouldn't have seen that as desertion. Simply self-preservation."

Draco nodded. "And your parents remained behind. The Dark Lord won't punish you. I'm quite sure your father asked the Dark Lord's permission anyway before he sent you away."

"If you're sure..."

Draco nodded again, backed by his mother's nod. And then Narcissa took hold of Pansy's arm. "I'm sure you would like to freshen up before dinner. Would you like to stay here tonight?"

"Thank you, Narcissa."

Narcissa smiled and wrapped an arm around the young woman's shoulders. "I have missed you this last year, Pansy," she went on as she led Pansy out of the parlor.

The moment they were gone, Draco rounded on his fiends. "You kidnapped her?"

"There wasn't any other way! She kept running. Wouldn't listen to a word we said!"

"And she was still afraid of the Order, regardless of the reports going on about the Dark being victorious."

"She's a brilliant witch," Fred exclaimed with a grin. "Resourceful too. Almost didn't get her."

"And we wanted to surprise you. Knew you'd missed her. Sending her owls every week. And she missed you too, from her letters-"

Fred jabbed his brother in the side and George's mouth shut with a snap. Draco's eyes narrowed.

"Intercepting my mail now?" he asked lowly.

"Err... we only saw the one."

"It was open on your desk, love. We didn't mean to snoop!"

"And we thought... we thought you'd like her to be here for our wedding too."

Draco dropped his gaze to the floor, a light blush covering his face. There they go again, doing sweet things. Thinking of only him. "You're forgiven."

Their pensive expressions ceased to exist and Draco found himself once again in a tight four arm embrace. They hugged him so tightly he could hardly breathe. But he would hardly complain either. He'd missed them beyond reason.

"So? How did the France endeavor go?" George questioned as he ran his fingers through Draco's hair.

Draco pressed his face against Fred's shoulder and look up at George, his arm slung around George's neck. "It went wonderfully. We creamed the competition. I don't think I saw one person go off to the appetizer table. And Harry had so much praise for his creations that his face was red throughout the evening... and then the Dark Lord arrived, announcing himself as Lord Riddle, the Dark Lord of Britain. He was received fairly well. I think France likes him."

Fred laughed and tightened the arm around the blond's waist. "And what of the Silent Seduction?"

Draco's head popped off his chest so that he could look at the both of them. "You should have seen Him! Staring at Harry as if he were... as if he were one of his own delicious creations! I had to run interference! They were blatantly flirting from the very beginning! The Dark Lord was always coming over to our tables! Even the guests noticed his fascination with Harry! But," and here he grinned maliciously, "that could have been my fault seeing as I purposely had our uniforms reflect a costume Harry uses in their play room."

"The deviousness that is Draco Malfoy."

"Yes... and what about your trip? Did it go alright?"

"It went perfectly. And we didn't get into any trouble," said Fred with a grin. Draco looked at him with a dubious expression. "Or at least we didn't get caught making trouble and I think we might make your father, if not proud, pleased at least."

Draco smirked. "We'll see. He's out now, some mission. Think it has to do with Harry's relatives so you'll have to wait until tonight to report to him. Want to come visit Harry with me? He'll no doubt need help with his clothing for tonight."

"Course we want to go with! As if we'd think of being separated from you now that we've just gotten back."

Draco knocked on the door and when he heard Harry call out in a muffled voice, slowly opened it. "No Dark Lord?" he questioned, peeking inside.

"No!" Harry called out from within the recesses of the wardrobe. "Tom's working in the office! Come in!"

"The fiends have returned," Draco announced when he and the twins entered the bedroom.

Harry popped out of the closet with only boxers on and a wide smile. The twins whistled in appreciation. Draco sighed. He couldn't very well get mad at them since he was looking too. Harry was *hot*.

George cleared his throat. "How in Merlin's name can your husband stand to *not* touch you?"

Harry blushed a fetching red. "Draco, you need to help me here. I don't know what to wear."

"Obviously something that shows off what we're seeing right now," Draco murmured, passing Harry and going into the wardrobe. "By the way, no more walking around half naked. What if your husband caught you?"

"I would have thought that would be a good thing."

"No. Not until the next phase. You don't want to show him any skin unless you're wearing the sleeveless shirts and vests you have. But that's all."

Harry nodded and then pointed out an outfit. "I thought about this one. I really like it."

Draco cupped his chin and studied it, and then gave a nod. "Good choice. I must admit, you do look good in crimson."

Harry nodded and moved to take down the outfit while Draco left the wardrobe. Only to stop short at seeing the Dark Lord standing in the doorway, wand in hand. He looked very... irate.

"What, pray tell, do you think you are doing in here?" the Dark Lord asked quietly and he walked further in while Draco inched his way over to the pale and stiff looking twins. They knew what it meant to be caught in Harry's room at a time like this... i.e. Harry without any clothes on.

Before they could answer him, Harry waltzed out of the wardrobe with an outfit slung over his arm. Tom's eyes widened upon seeing Harry. Then they swiveled around after a moment and narrowed upon the three who had already begun to edge around him while his gaze was on Harry. Then they sprinted towards the door once they'd passed him. The Dark Lord spun around, his wand aimed at the three and an Unforgivable upon his lips. Not the deadliest, but certainly the most painful. A hand attached to his wrist and jerked, pulling Tom's aim down to the floor. Looking around, Tom narrowed his eyes upon Harry's grinning face.

"Not necessary," Harry replied before turning around to return to the wardrobe. Tom watched, seething, as the little minx disappeared into the wardrobe. He hadn't moved an inch by the time Harry reappeared holding a pair of dark crimson boots in hand. Harry lay them at the foot of the bed and the straightened and headed towards the large washroom for a shower. He thought Tom would simply linger only a moment to stare and then depart, so he was seriously shocked when he was suddenly pressed against the doorway and wary when he felt Tom's magic lashing out at him.

Tom had him by the arms, pinning them roughly against his sides as he was pressed against the doorframe by his husband's form. "Just what the *fuck* do you think you're doing walking around like this? Letting them see what's mine?" he asked in harsh whisper.

"I'm sorry," Harry whispered eyes wide on Tom's face. He wasn't afraid. He was thrilled; aroused beyond comprehension. He was always thrilled when Tom became insanely possessive.

"What were they doing here?" he asked lowly.

"You know Draco's my personal wardrobe consultant."

"And the twins?" Tom gritted out.

"They've just returned from the states and came with him...Tom?"

"What?"

"You're leaving bruises," he said lightly, a small smile curling his lips.

Tom jerked his hands away and watched, fascinated as the white prints his fingertips left behind began to turn red in color as the blood rushed back into place. He then reached out, completely enraptured, and ran the pad of this index finger against one mark, enjoying the feel of Harry's warm bare skin beneath his finger. It wasn't until Harry shivered did he remember what he was doing and why they were in that position in the first place.

Looking down at his husband's face, he was reminded how Harry enjoyed his violent tendencies when he became jealous and possessive.

Tom spun away, muttering under his breath. "Temple. Temple."

Harry watched him go with a little smile before going into the bathroom.

"That was a close one, Harry! We almost died!" George exclaimed when Harry found them at Malfoy Manor later that night and they had sequestered themselves off in the parlor. "You said he was in the office!"

"You didn't almost die," Harry replied with a laugh. "I'm sure he was only going to Crucio you."

"Oh, only a Crucio then," Fred said dryly.

"And how was I supposed to know he'd left the office?"

"Guess it doesn't matter now," George said. "We're still breathing... You look delectable. How did the husband take it?"

Harry glanced down at himself. His outfit was of the darkest crimson and when he turned just so, it looked like he was drenched in black instead of the darkest red. It was cut to fit his body perfectly, almost to the point of being too tight, though he could move around without feeling restricted. Again he wore a high collared shirt, and it was the only thing of his outfit that was actually black. It was long sleeved and the cuffs ended in a v fashion at his wrists. His trousers were actually leather while his boots were a soft suede. And around his shoulder

hung a hoodless cloak attached by a black onyx broach at the base of his neck. "I think he drooled a little and then as soon as we got here he ran away."

Draco smirked also. "He's been doing that a lot lately."

Harry grinned. "So, where's Parkinson?"

"She'll probably be down soon. She's nervous since the Dark Lord's going to be here, even though she'll try to hide it. And we didn't tell her about you two, by the way."

Harry shrugged. "Tom won't mind. Especially not since we're coming out tomorrow at the executions."

No sooner had he said this then the door opened and Pansy appeared. She was smiling but even Harry could see the tension on her face and the set of her shoulders as she took a look around the room before entering further with an imperceptible sigh of relief. Her gaze flicked over the twins with a small glare, moved on to Draco where she smiled fondly and then moved over to Harry and back to Draco. She then did a double take and stood there, gaping at Harry.

"P-Potter?" she stuttered, looking him up and down with predatory eyes, which in turn had him shivering and for once in a long time, thanking Merlin he hadn't gone to Slytherin. He'd heard stories about Slytherin girls from Draco and not one of them were good for the poor defenseless Slytherin boys said girls took a liking to.

"It's good to see you again, Parkinson."

"Ooh, what happened to you?" she asked as she came closer. "You look delicious."

Harry inched his way over until he was half standing behind Draco. "She does remember I'm gay, right?" he whispered into the blond's ear.

"Sometimes that doesn't even matter. I'm just relieved she finally started to think of me as a poncy brother instead of husband material."

"Um, right. You might want to explain to her about what happens to people who look at me like that around Tom."

Draco snickered. "You sound so scared." Harry shoved him a little. "Harry here is strictly gay and completely off limits, Pansy. You'll catch your death disregarding my words."

Pansy looked taken a back for a moment, and then she narrowed her eyes. "Did you just threaten me, Draco Malfoy?" she asked in a voice that made all four boys shiver.

"No!" they each exclaimed and Draco went on, "no, I only meant Harry's-"

A house elf popped in then and exclaimed Dinner was ready to be served and guests should be going to the dining room. Harry scampered away quickly with the twins close behind him. Draco rocked on his heels and smiled innocently at Pansy before holding out his arm to her. She immediately accepted it with a glare. As they left the parlor, Draco thought he and Harry

should probably make sure Pansy and Hermione never became friends. They'd be terrors then.

Pansy took deep breaths as they walked on towards the dining room, wondering what she was missing. Wondering about this secret Narcissa didn't want Draco to tell her, and she was trying to fight down the terror threatening to overwhelm her at the knowledge that the Dark Lord was here at this moment and she would be sitting at the same table as him in only moments.

"Pansy, you'll be fine. No need to be afraid," Draco promised, seeing the tension lines around her lightly painted mouth. "Look, there's your parents."

Pansy nodded, but she didn't say anything. Instead gave a smile to her parents, whom she'd already greeted quite enthusiastically right before going to find Draco. So she could afford to pass up her parents for a short time and watch as Potter waltzed up to another man whose back was turned to them. The wizard stiffened just an instant before Potter lay a hand on the man's shoulder, but then an arm was instantly offered and Potter latched onto it before rising up on his toes to kiss the wizard's cheek. The man turned a fraction to face Potter and Pansy caught a tight smile that seemed kind of cold to her.

"Is that Potter's husband? He's a yummy eyeful. Draco, who is he?" Pansy asked as Potter and the wizard disappeared into the Dining room.

"The Dark Lord."

Pansy froze. "Excuse me?"

Draco nodded and then smiled. "He married the Dark Lord. That's what I was going to tell you. Don't flirt with Harry unless you are prepared to die."

Pansy kind of fell into a shocked stupor after that and allowed Draco to lead her into the dining room, around the table, and into a seat which was beside him, while the twins took up seats on his right, closest to the seat Potter had taken at the head of the table along with the Dark Lord.

Throughout dinner Pansy tried to keep from staring... in an obvious way. But it was difficult. She couldn't understand it. Potter was sitting there smiling and laughing, talking with the twins and Draco while the Dark Lord sat straight and stiff beside him and looked as if he'd rather be anywhere else. She couldn't discern anything from the looks he occasionally sent his husband, and Pansy was flummoxed. Why would Potter marry the Dark Lord? Potter didn't seem the type of person to allow himself trapped into a cold and potentially violent marriage. But if it were a cold marriage, then why the bloody hell was Potter looking so happy? He was almost glowing, for Merlin's sake!

And then as dinner progressed there was talk of babies! Of twins! And Potter would get this dreamy smile on his face as he looked at the Dark Lord at those times, and the Dark Lord would stare back intensely, a flicker of emotion gleaming in his own eyes, but still Pansy couldn't tell what kind of emotion—and Salazar, the Dark Lord was handsome! Even when he looked so cold.

Pansy reigned in her thoughts just as dessert was being served. Her lips parted slightly in awe and from beside her, Draco smiled smugly.

"I think you may have gone overboard," the Dark Lord muttered. Pansy looked over just in time to see Potter look around quizzically.

"Really? I only thought... I remember everyone's favorite dishes and thought I'd make one of everything."

Pansy's gaze whipped back to Draco, who was currently snickering and looking across the table to where his father and Severus were sitting. Lucius was smirking at a scowling Severus and she caught Narcissa rolling her eyes. "Potter made all this?" she asked.

Draco nodded and then spoke quietly. "You'll want to start calling him Harry or Riddle. He doesn't go by Potter anymore."

"Alright, but... I thought he only made fudge."

"Clearly not. No. We sell a variety of things now. Here, try this," Draco said, pulling a dish of chocolate cream pie over and setting it in front of Pansy. "It's to die for."

Pansy took a bite and nearly collapsed into a pile of goo in her chair. She didn't realize she'd moaned aloud until Draco cleared his throat. Pansy opened her eyes and was dismayed to find *everyone* staring at her. She felt her face turning hot as she looked around the table, noticing most everyone looked amused. Even the Dark Lord. Her father was kind of gaping at her. Her mother was giving her a look, the same look Narcissa had on her face. It was a look of understanding; as if they'd been there before.

"Don't worry," Harry said, laughing. "Severus did the same thing the first time he tried it."

"Two extra feet on your next essay," sneered Severus. "And I'll have you know I did not moan in such a way."

"Not verbally. I'm sure it was mental."

"Lucius," Severus hissed.

"I don't want two extra feet!" Harry whined.

"Three."

"No! I retract my statement! You didn't moan as if Lucius were sucking your cock right then and there!"

Pansy's eyes widened when the Dark Lord barked out a laugh, Lucius smirked, Narcissa giggled, and Severus scowled. Pansy noticed her parents were trying valiantly to keep from showing their amusement. The Lestrage brothers weren't even trying.

She turned to Draco with wide eyes. He was laughing. "It's a common occurrence. Harry doesn't seem to have a filter between his mind and his mouth."

"That reminds us," one of the twins said and then they were both staring at Severus, who immediately took to glaring harshly at his lover. Pansy was beyond caring about them at this point as she had just seen the Dark Lord flash an honest to Merlin grin at Harry. The Dark wizard didn't seem cold anymore; in fact she was quite sure the Dark Lord had relaxed immeasurably. She wondered why he had been stiff before then.

"I feel faint," she whispered.

Draco pat her hand in understanding. "You'll get used to it."

Pansy didn't think so but she was looking forward to when she could get some proper answers, and that happened soon after Harry's lovely desserts had been consumed. She was pulled from the dining room while the elder witches and wizards lingered to discuss politics.

"Were you forced?" she immediately asked Harry.

He grinned in a way that said he'd been asked that before. Probably multiple times. "Do I act as if I married under duress?"

"No, but... he seems cold to you. He acted as if he didn't want to touch you, or even sit next to you... well, up until the end there. And even if I don't know you all that well, I still can't see you in a loveless marriage."

Draco snickered. "There's a perfectly reasonable explanation for the Dark Lord's apparent discomfort."

Harry flashed another grin, this one smug.

Fred came over and draped an arm around Harry's shoulders. "And it's definitely not loveless."

Draco tapped a finger against his chin before coming to a decision. "I think we should let her in on the Silent Seduction."

Pansy eyed him. "Did you just say that with capital letters?"

Draco nodded solemnly and then went on to explain the situation. By the time he was done, Pansy smirked. "Temple, you say? I have a little idea. By the way, Potter. Bravo," she said, again giving him the once over.

Why is this so hard? Tom had been asking himself this repeatedly over the hour as his eyes slid back over to Harry yet again. *I have restraint. This is ridicu—Where the bloody hell did his cloak go?*

Tom hissed under his breath when Harry bent over the back of Draco's chair to point something out in the book the blond was showing to him and the twins. The cloak was gone, thus giving Tom an exquisite tempting view. He wrenched his eyes away and pinched the bridge of his nose, willing the arousal that had suddenly sprung up to vanish. He was so hard

he didn't think he could move right now without causing himself pain. Add to the fact he'd been aroused until dinner was nearly over... *this is ridiculous*, he thought again.

"Where's this again?" one of the twins asked, drawing his attention.

"Greece. Have you ever been there?" the two and Harry shook their heads. "Pansy and I went the summer after our fourth year. The things we saw, things we learned... it was really fascinating. Did you know in ancient times the wizards worshiped the same gods muggles did... but of course in those times, muggles knew about magic. Anyway, wizards and muggles would enter these temples to worship and show respect to their chosen gods."

"The temples were open to the public?" Harry asked.

"Yeah. All day and night. It was considered bad luck should someone not go and show respect at least once a day. So the people would go whenever they could manage."

Tom narrowed his eyes when he caught the side look Harry quickly threw his way. Upon the narrowing of his eyes, Harry straightened and rounded Draco's chair until he was sitting next to Pansy. Tom turned away with a wince and tried to listen to what Severus was saying about Hogwarts instead of envisioning Harry sprawled on top of an altar, begging to be worshiped. "Bloody hell," he hissed under his breath.

"My lord?" Lucius said, eyes gone a bit wide.

"I need a drink, Lucius. A tall stiff drink."

"Of course, my Lord."

Harry watched Tom for a moment and didn't move until his husband started talking to Severus as Lucius hurried away. Harry then let out a soft hiss, which halted Draco in his rambling about temples.

"Did he hear?" the blond asked softly.

Harry nodded with a frown while Pansy laughed softly under her breath. "I think he was too busy staring at your arse to have heard anything, Potter."

"Riddle," Harry corrected absently, rubbing at his scar. "Actually, I think... I think he caught on. I think we might have been a bit too blunt."

"Nonsense, Ri... I'm going to call you Harry. Is that alright?"

"Can I call you Pansy?"

"Of course."

"Then yes."

Pansy smiled. "Anyway, look at him. I think it worked perfectly."

Harry looked back to find his husband staring off into space with a glazed look in his eyes as he shifted uncomfortably on his feet. "Brilliant."

Pansy went on to stare at the Dark wizard before turning back to Harry. "Are you sure he's the Dark Lord?"

"You can test him, but I wouldn't suggest it."

"Remus, you're a werewolf."

Remus looked up from his book, surprised at Fenrir's tone. He sounded confused. "Well spotted," he replied with grin.

Fenrir was frowning. He'd been frowning a lot lately. Probably due to Remus being on the fence about making their relationship official and everlasting. Remus usually took no note of it. Fenrir was impatient but he also didn't want to pressure Remus and was fairly supportive... sort of. At least they both knew eventually Remus would get over his reluctance. And probably soon.

Remus' grin dropped to a soft smile as he stood, inching his way towards his Alpha. Fenrir was suddenly on his feet, standing right in front of him. Remus lifted a hand to press against Fenrir's shoulder and he leaned in, clearly intending to kiss the wizard. But Fenrir grabbed his wrist and stepped back slightly. Remus sighed. Apparently Fenrir had things he wanted to say.

"Go on then," he said patiently.

"You're a werewolf," Fenrir went on with a narrowed look, "and yet it seems you know only the basics about our kind. Only what was barely taught at Hogwarts. I find this hard to believe since you are fairly scholarly."

Remus' amusement died to leave him feeling guilty and sheepish. He dropped his gaze down to the hand lightly grasping his wrist. "I hadn't ever wanted to know about our kind, Fenrir. Remember? I hated my existence... until you. I didn't want to know more."

Fenrir sighed. "Well at least you admit it. But... there's more you should learn apparently."

Remus perked up. He had to admit he was fairly curious now. And he thought it was about time he learned all he could about his kind. Especially since he would be teaching children of the Wizarding werewolf variety until a system could be implemented at Hogwarts to include werewolves and born vampires at the school. He wasn't sure when that would happen, but Harry said it was on the Dark Lord's agenda.

"Such as?" he asked.

Fenrir suddenly looked uncomfortable. He scratched the back of his head in an uncharacteristic manner, causing Remus to raise his brows in curiosity and maybe a little in worry. "I think we should pay a visit to Mother."

Still curious, Remus nodded and went to collect his traveling cloak.

A half hour later, within Mattie's home, Remus gasped and dropped the hand printed book onto the table. His eyes zoomed across the table to Mattie. "It's really possible?" he breathed in shock. In shock and a budding elation.

Mattie smiled softly. "In magic, all things are possible. And the ability was kept from the former Ministry. If they'd known, no doubt werewolves would have been hunted again as we once were and with more voracity. If we are as civilized as you've begun to see, do you think there would be so many werewolves just from being bitten when most of us do not go around purposely infecting people. True, some are made in such a way, but many are born."

"I don't understand. The Ministry was aware a werewolf could reproduce with a regular witch or wizard. How can the Ministry not know about *this*?"

"We didn't want them to know."

"B-but..."

"Now on to other things," she frowned here and Remus got the impression she'd also become worried, the way she was looking at him. Perhaps worried about his reaction? It was the same look Fenrir had given him at the cottage just before they left it. "In case you missed it, in order to become mates for life, said mates must couple in wolf form. And once you've gained a life mate, you'll finally be eligible for mating season. Which means you'll go into heat three times a year. You'll be human for that or there will be no cubs..."

"What?" Remus cried in slight horror. Mating in wolf form? Going into heat in human form? Okay, now Remus knew why Fenrir made the excuse of checking over the rest of the camp and made a mad dash as soon as he saw Remus on Mattie's doorstep. He was being a coward. "He's not coming back, is he?"

"Most likely not," Mattie said with an amused smile. "He'll hide until you calm down."

Remus glared at the young man sitting across from him who had his hands raised over his mouth, obscuring the huge fucking smile he knew to be there. But Harry couldn't hide the laughter in his eyes. "It's not funny, Harry."

Harry shook his head in agreement and yet the hands didn't come down nor did the laughter leave his eyes. In fact the young wizard's shoulders began shaking with suppressed laughter. Remus looked away for a moment, his eyes darting around the library. Harry said the Dark Lord wouldn't mind his presence in their home, so he wasn't worried about that. He was worried because he had a feeling the Dark Lord was lurking around the library, listening to every word.

He went searching for Harry straight after leaving Mattie's and had been lucky enough to arrive directly after Harry and his husband returned home from dinner with the Malfoys. In fact Harry was still dressed in crimson; the outfit making Remus' eyes widen a bit the first time he saw it. He just wasn't used to seeing Harry in clothes like that.

Finally Harry's hands came down and he cleared his throat. "No," he said thickly, his voice trembling. "You're right. It's not funny."

Remus glared. Harry was still laughing silently. His glare only managed to make Harry break down into snickers.

"And Fenrir... Fenrir ran away! Leaving me there with his mother and the shock of a lifetime! Bloody coward!"

Harry's hands slowly rose again to cover his mouth to try and keep in the laughter that wanted to burst out. Aside from the occasional glare, Remus hadn't lost the wide eyed look since he'd come visiting. He looked permanently shocked as he'd relayed the in-heat thing, and Harry had been immensely amused by this. More so because of Remus' indignation at the thought.

"I don't know why you're so bothered. It's the wolf's instincts right. You'll be a wolf when-" Remus' eyes drifted away and Harry's eyes widened. "Oh. Oooh..." his hands didn't make it in time to stop the laughter.

"I'm glad you're amused," Remus replied dryly. Harry nodded rapidly. Remus sighed then and dropped his head into his hands. "At least Bill and Charlie aren't here."

"Yeah, see! Look on the bright side, Remus!"

At Remus' answering glare, Harry once more broke down laughing. "Again, you are not helping."

"That seems to be his forte," a voice drawled. "Not helping."

Remus immediately stood. He didn't whether he should bow or kneel, but since he didn't feel like kneeling, he ended up bowing. Apparently this was alright for the Dark Lord waved him to return to his seat, an amused glint in his eyes. *Brilliant*, Remus thought, *he heard everything*.

"I help!" Harry cried with a mock glare at the man who sat next to him. "I help spread laughter around."

"Annoyance and insanity as well," the Dark Lord replied with amusement as he tugged on a lock of black hair before slipping all his fingers into Harry's hair. "Also sugar highs."

Harry smiled quite brightly at that. He then straightened from his slouch and crossed his leather clad legs, a smirk suddenly appearing on his lips while the Dark Lord watched him from the corner of his eye.

Remus watched them warily, feeling at once uncomfortable. Mostly because of the Dark Lord's presence but also from the fact that he was certain something was happening between the two. He wasn't certain what it was, but he could literally feel the tension.

"You can relax," Harry said finally.

"Right, relax," he parroted. "After everything I found out today? Not likely... how did I never know any of this?" he burst out.

"Probably because you've always been a lone wolf and didn't care to know. I never knew any of this either. They don't teach this stuff at Hogwarts."

"As a werewolf," the Dark Lord began and mostly for Harry's benefit since Remus had been sparse with the information, "one would need to mate for life before being affected by the mating cycles, and in wolf form. Werewolves can copulate with anyone before mating as a wolf and it would mean nothing if they are still in human form. But once they've mated as a wolf, that would be that. And as for werewolf offspring, a werewolf would need to be in human form to conceive cubs, which is why they go into heat before the full moon."

Tom said this all in lecture mode and Harry just barely kept from laughing hysterically at Remus' gob smacked expression when Tom said 'go into heat'. Tom didn't seem to think any of this discussion was weird because he went on as if lecturing a student at Hogwarts.

"Reproduction between a werewolf and a human is known to the Ministry, and it was only allowed because it is rare for the werewolf parent to pass on the lycanthropy to the child. There have been a few rare cases where the child in question was born with lycanthropy, and in those instances, the Ministry would dispose of the baby before it had lived a day." Harry gasped at this. The Dark Lord nodded with a grim expression. "But this is why werewolves keep the fact they can reproduce with each other a highly guarded secret... My administration will be aware of this, but the public will not know for some time, and by then, I hope my plans have been set in stone and werewolves will no longer be ostracized."

Remus gaze dropped down to the hands in his lap. "Thank you," he said in a thick voice, his thanks going for so many things. He never thought he'd be thanking Voldemort for anything, but how could he not when the wizard was doing so much for his kind. He didn't know if the Dark Lord cared for his thanks, but he was going to get it nonetheless.

"What are you going to do, Remus?" questioned Harry softly, moving a hand over to grasp one of the Dark Lord's hands. The older wizard instantly entwined their fingers, thumb brushing back and forth across Harry's knuckles.

Remus took a deep breath before looking at him. "I'm going to find that coward mate of mine and have words about his utter lack of support," he said firmly while standing. Harry's pensive expression evaporated, leaving him smiling and looking amused once more. "Honestly, making his mother tell me everything." Remus snorted. "Alpha my arse!"

This had Harry going back to being entirely too amused, and he didn't say any of the inappropriate things he was thinking as he didn't think Remus had meant to add a pun there, but Harry heard it anyway. Harry stood, saying he'd see Remus to the Floo room, while the Dark Lord shifted into a more comfortable position and snatched the book off the table beside the lounge. Remus saw it was a book on male pregnancy. He watched the Dark Lord from over his shoulder in bewilderment and then turned to Harry after they'd left the library.

"He seems less formal than what I expected within my presence. In fact, I'm surprised he gave me permission to come here when I like at all."

Harry shrugged. "He's gotten used to the idea that I will have my friends over no matter how much it annoys him. And now that he's actually the victor of the war, he's not such a tight arse about it."

Remus quickly looked back over his shoulder, just to make sure the Dark Lord wasn't trailing them and had heard that.

"Also it helps that I'm pregnant. Tom would rather have my friends come here than to let me go off somewhere else all the time. And most of my best friends already live here," Harry ended.

He waved to Remus when the werewolf stepped into the fire. Remus gave him a tight smile before calling out his home address. Once he was whisked away, Harry turned and left the Floo room, laughing under his breath. As he moved through the castle, he stopped by the library to let Tom know he was going to the kitchen. Tom raised a hand in response without pulling his eyes away from the book. Harry smiled as he went on, thinking about the various orders he needed to complete for the week. He wouldn't do any baking that night, so he only ended up going through the order forms, setting aside his recipes, and arranging everything so that it would be ready to use as soon as he came in the next day.

When Tom finally left the library, Harry was already sleeping. Tom slipped into bed and doused the light and then, as he usually did, propped himself up on an elbow to stare down at his husband's sleeping face. After a moment, he placed his fingers upon Harry's t-shirt covered chest and trailed down until his palm was pressed against his abdomen. Closing his eyes, Tom concentrated and after a moment he could distinctly feel two new magical auras. It was faint, but still there.

He moved his hand further and slipped it beneath the t-shirt so that his hand rested on warm skin. The feel of the auras grew and Tom started smirking before he even knew it. Though he caught himself and cleared his throat. He let his hand drift up, pushing Harry's shirt up as well, and leaned over to kiss his chest. Harry whimpered in his sleep and the little minx's nipples hardened before his very eyes. Tom trailed a hot open mouth kiss over to one before sucking it into his mouth and Harry unconsciously arched into him.

Tom growled low in his throat. His husband always tasted so good, smelled delectable. The heat of his flesh always ensnared him. He had just moved his hand down to touch Harry's rapidly swelling cock, a reflection his own, when he remembered.

With great difficulty, Tom pulled away. As he was rubbing his hands over his eyes in annoyance, Harry murmured in his sleep and twisted around to plaster himself against Tom's side. The Dark Lord grit his teeth. Harry's arousal was snug against his thigh. How was he supposed to sleep like this? Though to be fair, this was his entire fault for not being able to keep his hands off. Harry was asleep and couldn't help his body's reaction.

Tom hadn't really considered before now how hard this would be and he wondered if it were even worth it. And though Harry hadn't said anything, Tom knew it as fact his little love was annoyed at him for this new rule. Tom frowned. A rule, a tradition that was very old fashioned and really didn't mean all that much in the long run. Did it? Tom growled in annoyance. He didn't like second guessing himself. He'd done this for Harry. To show his

respect, his love. But it just seemed hollow, this attempt at showing the extent of his affection. There were better ways, more fulfilling ways in order to show his love.

As the night wore on, Tom twisted and turned and flopped onto his back, scowling at the dark ceiling. He growled and sat up before twisting around again. He even resorted to punching his pillow several times in frustration before flopping back down again. This sort of thing went on all night until it was nearly dawn and he'd hardly had any sleep at all.

He was about to give sleep up as a lost cause when Harry rolled over again, fitting snugly against him. Again, Harry was hard. Tom hissed under his breath. And then he went completely still when Harry started to rock against him.

"Mmm, Tomm... right there," the brat moaned and it was completely obvious to Tom that Harry was still asleep and was now apparently dreaming.

Tom cursed lowly and jerked away. He rolled right out of bed- nearly falling to the floor in his haste to get away- and hurried to the bathroom, intent on freezing himself.

Harry's eyes fluttered open after he heard the bathroom slam shut and a smug smirk curled his lips. He then closed his eyes and hoped to return to that very nice wet dream of his husband. He was sure Tom wasn't going to return for half the day once he was done with his cold shower.

"What's wrong?" Draco demanded later that morning.

Harry looked up from his mixing bowl. His eyes looked glassy. "Tom... Tom has said that I should return and sleep in my old room. He kicked me out of our room. Out of our bed!"

"Harry, it's okay," Draco said and hurriedly moved to wrap his friend in an embrace.

"No it's not!" Harry moaned against Draco's neck.

Draco pulled back a little so that they were eye to eye. "Listen, Harry. It's not that he doesn't want you. It's the other way around—LISTEN!" Draco shouted when he saw Harry wasn't going to. "You're too much of a temptation. Don't you understand? We can move on to the next phase! He's breaking faster than I ever expected! It'll be over soon."

Harry was silent a moment, sniffed, and then nodded, the determination refilling his eyes.

"Good. Now listen, this is important. When he gave you the news, how did you act? You didn't go all blubbery on him like you just did with me, did you? Please tell me you didn't."

The brunet scowled. "Of course not! I asked him why and he gave me some convoluted answer that did nothing but confuse me. I started to complain, but he kept interrupting me, and finally I said 'if that's what you want Tom', and then he looked relieved and left me here, saying he'd see me later before the executions."

Draco smirked and started rubbing his hands together. "This is working out better than I'd planned!"

Harry couldn't help but snicker. "It's like it's you that's not getting any."

Draco waved that away. "What did you do to inspire this? You must have done something."

Harry shifted and looked embarrassed. He turned away and cleaned his hands of flour with a hand towel. "Err... I might have had a dream last night... about Tom. And I might have woken up in the middle of it. And then I might have realized Tom was awake and so then pretended I was still asleep and was still having the dream and kind of rubbed against him and moaned his name... I might have done that. Don't get mad, Drake. For a long time afterwards, I was so hard that it hurt, so that should be enough punishment."

"Mad? Harry, that was brilliant!"

"But you said no rubbing."

Draco waved that away with a grin. "We've clearly moved on to the next phase. What did he do?"

Harry chuckled. "I've never seen someone run for a cold shower as fast as he did."

The blond frowned. "Are you sure it was a cold shower? Because if he wanks, that could set us back."

"No, I don't think he does." Harry looked up, his gaze going hazy as he thought about Tom touching himself. "I don't think he does that," he snickered then. "Maybe that was half his problem when he was a teenager. I mean, if he has this notion about no sex during pregnancy, maybe he believed that crap about going blind if you touch yourself. If he never wanked, kind of explains the insanity. Kind of explains the frustration and his need to see the world in pain."

They had a good laugh over that.

Harry paused just before he would turn a corner that would lead out into the open courtyard where the executions would be taking place. He took a deep breath to try and control the giddiness he felt threatening to explode out of him. He was prepared for the backlash. Prepared for the glares, the looks of betrayal, the name calling. The hatred and the wrong assumptions. He was prepared for anything because honestly he didn't give a rat's arse about any of that. He was right where he wanted to be, he didn't feel guilty, so none of their opinions mattered to him at all. No, it just seemed like he'd been waiting for this moment forever.

"Nervous?"

Harry looked to his side and grinned at Trent. "Not really." He paused, raised his eyes to the tall ceiling to think a moment, and then turned back to his vampire enforcer. "Is it weird that I feel excited about this?"

"As I've grown to know a bit about your true character, I'm assuming you're talking about coming out and not about the executions. No, I don't think it is weird. You are a stone bridge your husband walks upon. You are his solid support and you take pride in knowing it. It is not so strange that you would want the world to know."

"I've never been compared to a bridge before."

"Even though you have stayed away from most of it and are still active in only a neutral capacity, there is no question the Dark Lord's victory would not have been so smooth without you. It is obvious he took your opinions and your feelings into account this time around when he decided on how he wanted to proceed with the war. And his followers, once they learned you were completely on his side, didn't put up any type of objections which gave the Dark Lord fewer complications."

"How do you know so much?" Harry asked curiously as he peered around the corner into the courtyard to see that it was almost filled with those summoned for this execution.

Trent smiled sharply. "Vampires live in the shadows. When it's spoken about walls having ears, that's us. I'll let you in on a secret." Harry pulled his gaze away from the courtyard to give his full attention to Trent. "The vampires have always wanted to align with the Dark, but back when the war first started, the Dark Lord was not moving in the way our Lord agreed with. This was the only thing keeping us from joining. Your husband wasn't sane; he wasn't being logical and we could foresee nothing good happening for us in the long wrong. We could only see ourselves being used in the wrong way, and then in the end, being cast aside without gaining anything."

Harry's eyes widened. "So you weren't ever thinking of joining the Light?"

Trent snorted. "No. We're Dark creatures, Harry. Joining the light would have been stifling and hypocritical. They would never have given us what we wanted, no matter what they promised. It's been promised before and the Light never came through. Because then they would be hypocritical to their own teachings. The Light would have done exactly what your husband would have done when he was insane. Used us and then throw us away."

"Yeah, suppose so."

"But we no longer need to worry about that. The Dark Lord will stay true to his word this time and we will remain faithful."

Harry nodded as he looked out again and finally spotted Draco out there with Lucius and Severus, all three without masks on. The Death Eaters were no longer in need of their masks unless they went out on raids, and so everyone was clear to everyone. Though most people still wouldn't know who was a Death Eater; they could only continue to speculate. The only ones who would be masked tonight were Fred and George, who would be donning the white Death Eater masks for the very first time. Harry was still a little ticked that Tom had stolen the twins, though the Dark Lord said he and Harry could share them. Fred and George certainly agreed with this. In fact they were over the moon.

Harry's smile broadened when he caught sight of Tom already out in the crowds. Mostly staying to himself or speaking to a few of his Inner Circle and ignoring the crowds for a moment. Rita Skeeter hovered around him like an insistent gnat and Harry saw she didn't have the nerve to approach Tom without him there. Many were watching Tom but probably only because he was glamoured to look as he looked in the *Prophet*. Most only recognized him as Harry Potter's husband and there was a sort of amused glint in Tom's eyes as he moved around. Molly and Arthur were watching him as well; Molly with narrowed eyes while Arthur stood by his wife, hand tight on her arm and trying to keep her from doing something dangerously stupid.

Harry and Trent finally moved out into the courtyard and most stilted conversations stopped. Harry may have been dressed in his best, but he was still recognized, and no one had ever thought to see him at the executions. So the silence was mostly due to shock.

Immediately he was approached by Skeeter; she was one of the few reporters allowed at the execution. She looked like she didn't know how to be at the moment. Frightened, excited, wary, downright terrified, honored... Harry was sure she felt all these things, but as she quickly approached him, he could see she was mostly excited for the next juicy bit of news.

"Harry, dear! Whatever are you doing here?"

Harry glanced around him, noticing everyone now was watching and listening. He shrugged off the attention and turned back to Skeeter. "Why wouldn't I be? Anyone who's anyone is here tonight, right?"

"You did say you were neutral," Skeeter prompted, her eyes moving away to land on Tom.

"Yes, I am and will continue to be, but my husband is not."

Skeeter's eyes gleamed. "Oh?"

"He's very much in the Dark."

"Is this why you don't fear You-Know-Who's reaction to you being here?"

"Why would I be afraid? I'm not after him, and therefore, he's not after me. We're... comfortable with each other," he ended with a grin.

"Harry, can you tell me what you think about all the changes being made to our government now that You-Know-Who has declared himself ruler."

Harry took a moment and pretended to think about it. "I can honestly say I'm pleased. The changes being made are good changes. This reform should have happened a long time ago. I'm also pleased by the low death count, as everyone else should be. I think our nation should stop and think about that before they turn their noses up just because the Dark has come out the victor. They should consider what exactly is being done and come up with *logical* reasons to despise the new government. I'd be interested to see if any logical reasons do arise."

Skeeter nodded and then turned, staring off at the dais with the two chairs before turning to Harry. She peered at him with curiosity and a bit of knowing. "You know why there are two chairs there... do you know if it's true that the Dark Lord has a partner? That he has in fact married?"

Harry grinned and rocked back and forth on his heels. "I'm sure you'll be finding out in short time."

"Do you know who Belial is?"

Harry laughed this time. "You'll be finding that out soon enough as well. This has been fun, Rita. Maybe I'll drop by your office next week for some tea."

"That would be lovely, Harry."

"We'll see if you feel the same way after the executions. Please excuse me," he said as he turned away. He paused after a moment and turned back to her. "One more thing. I want to make it abundantly clear to the world..." he waited until she nodded, knowing he wanted his words printed verbatim. "No matter what happens here and what is to be revealed, no matter what I do, I want it to be known who I am. I am and always will be neutral." With this said he turned away and immediately headed over to Draco, who gave him a smirk.

"Nicely done."

"I thought so."

"The fiends' parents have been glaring at me the entire time."

"They probably think you've corrupted their sons," Harry replied with his own smirk. "Those types of thoughts aren't going to get better after tonight."

"I don't think they told anyone about you being married to the Dark Lord," Draco whispered. "No one looks like they know why you are here. They look surprised to see you, actually." The blond then snickered. "It's so funny how no one has the nerve to approach you when it's clear they want to."

"Skeeter came to me."

"She doesn't count. Why did you stress the neutral part, Harry?"

"It'll serve me better in the long run. It'll help me and Tom in the long run. Those who might be reluctant to deal with Tom may not be so reluctant to deal with me. But... only time will tell if this will make a difference."

"Clever, Harry. I knew you had a mind in there somewhere."

"Git."

They then turned until facing the majority of the summoned crowds. Harry gazed out upon all the faces, his lopsided grin not diminishing in the slightest. There were some glares,

obviously for his 'betrayal'. There were also looks of hope, which had him mentally snickering. Then there were a few friendly faces. Luna and her father and the rest of his Silvers, including the enforcers.

Neville was here too and so was his grandmother. She had been summoned and didn't look happy about it. Neville was cringing as he stood beside her. Harry thought it wasn't voluntary as his grandmother has her fingers digging into his forearm like talons. Harry sneered. She was solely responsible for Neville's lack of backbone in most instances. Always going on about how he wasn't worth much and about how he didn't do his poor parents proud. Harry thought it was disgusting how she treated her only grandchild. On another note, Harry spotted Nathan standing not too far away from Neville, and the vampire was staring down at Augusta Longbottom's fingers digging into her grandson's arm. The vampire was frowning in such a way that it looked like snarl.

He turned back to Draco. "Well I'm ready for this to start."

"I'll be sure to observe reactions. We'll have a good laugh about it in a Pensieve."

Harry walked leisurely out into the center of the courtyard and seeing as it was empty, everyone quieted when he stepped there and watched him with a mixture of wariness and curiosity. Harry smirked and spun on his heel, making a sharp left where he was then facing a raised slab of stone upon which Voldemort and Belial's chairs were perched. He strode straight for the dais and stepped upon it.

As he heard murmurs spread around, he studied the two chairs and moved to place a hand on Voldemort's throne and looked over his shoulder, grinning and instantly found his husband staring back at him. Tom narrowed his eyes in answer. Harry huffed and moved over to his own chair and gracefully sat down. There were then some voices asking if he were crazy, which only made Harry's smile grow.

Harry started tapping his fingers and smiling brightly at all the wide-eyed stares before his gaze went back to Tom as he crossed his legs. The direction of his gaze drew the crowds and they followed his eyes until most everyone was staring at Tom, who had been slowly and wandlessly doing away with his glammers. It wasn't until his light brown eyes morphed into red did people start and back away from him and in such a hurry that some people almost took tumbles. Harry cackled loudly at this.

Voldemort was surely amused by this as well, but he didn't show it as he began to make his way across the courtyard towards him, eyes cold and face blank of any expression. Now that the lowly Death Eaters realized Harry Potter's husband was actually their lord, they stopped looking as if they'd swallowed something sour as realization dawned. Harry Potter was in actuality Belial. It was only the Death Eaters who turned and began to lowly discuss it, while the rest who had been 'forced' to the function continued to stare blankly.

Harry continued to look around and raised an amused brow at a slack jawed Rita Skeeter. She snapped her mouth shut and gave him a tiny jerky nod. Tea was still on apparently. Harry then caught the eyes a squat toad looking woman dressed in pink. She was staring at him with a mixture of hate and horror. Umbridge may have people believe she was behind the Dark Lord, but Harry had no doubt that the witch was completely against giving creature beings

any rights whatsoever. Harry's smile turned into a malevolent smirk. He didn't want to bring his babies into a world with people like her still in it. Maybe she caught the message in his eyes, because suddenly she was pale and instead of hate, all her expression morphed into intense fear. At least she was intelligent enough to understand. *You are going to regret ever being born.*

A long finger caressed the underside of his chin, drawing his gaze away from Umbridge. Harry allowed that finger to turn his head and he found his husband already sitting beside him. Harry smiled as Voldemort added a bit more pressure and he leaned over, obeying the silent command. He lifted his hand to loosely clasp the fingers over his jaw while pressing their lips together. When he pulled back after the chaste kiss, Voldemort's fingers curled around even more, only allowing a small breath between them. The Dark Lord narrowed his eyes.

"They will understand, little minx."

Harry's brows furrowed in confusion for a second before understanding dawned. "But... I told you-"

"I want everyone to know. To fully understand. There will be no mistakes when it comes to us."

Harry's expression softened and he laughed. "I suppose I can't resist that."

The snake's strike grin appeared quickly on Voldemort's face. "Resistance is futile."

Harry laughed again before he allowed his husband to draw him closer once more.

Draco narrowed his eyes when the kiss went on longer than a few seconds. Harry had said the Dark Lord would purposely show his affection in public so that there wouldn't be any mistake as to why Harry was sitting beside him, but Harry had also assured Draco it would only be touches or probably very chaste kisses. Yes there was touching and the kiss was chaste, but as the seconds passed the chasteness of it disappeared and he was close enough to the dais to have heard the low moan issuing from Harry's throat as the Dark Lord pressed further, caressing his jaw and it quickly escalated into a passionate kiss that left many of the public gaping at the display.

He would have been steaming mad at Harry if he hadn't heard the Dark Lord's frustrated growl right before he pulled away, tugging Harry's bottom lip between his teeth as he did so. And then there he was, the Dark Lord, staring into Harry's dazed eyes and looking at his swollen smiling mouth, and Draco was amazed he could actually see his Lord breaking. Right there. Right in front of him. In front of everyone. Though he was sure only a handful of people could see what he was seeing. Only those who knew what was going on with the Silent Seduction. And then Harry made it twenty times better when he actually started to blush- from below his high collar to the tips of his ears- and dropped his eyes coyly to the stone floor. One couldn't fake a blush like that.

Harry then stiffened and in the blink of an eye, his wand was in hand and shot over to the side of the dais. A flash of red light escaped his wand not a second later as he sent a silent stupefy.

He slowly stood as the crowds backed away from a slumped figure with unmistakable red hair.

"Shall we make it three executions then?" Voldemort inquired loud enough for the entire assembly to hear. There was a cry of denial from Molly Weasley, because even from where she was standing, she could see the culprit was her youngest son.

"No, I don't think so," Harry said as he stepped off the dais, fingering his wand as Draco came to stand beside him, an eager grin on his face. He then began to walk towards Ron's body, wondering why the bleeding hell Ron thought it would be intelligent to come here and sneak around. And he noticed Ron had his wand in hand. What was he preparing to do? "I want to have a chat with him."

"Very well," said the Dark Lord, shifting slightly and waving his hand, wherein a couple of wizards appeared and levitated Ron's body.

"Lock him up tight but don't be rough," Harry instructed firmly as they began to leave the courtyard and the two nodded with short jerky bows. Once they were gone, Harry turned back to the crowds, searching. "Charlie," he called.

Charlie disengaged from the enraptured crowd and strode to the dais, reaching it just as Harry unceremoniously plopped down on his husband's lap. Said husband didn't so much as bat an eye.

"I had no idea he was here," Charlie instantly began when Harry raised a brow. "He never mentioned anything about returning to England in his last post to me. In fact he mentioned he probably wouldn't return for some time."

"A smoke screen," Harry murmured.

"He probably sort of lost it when he got here and realized you were actually married to the Dark Lord... I hope he wasn't going to do something reckless."

"His wand was out. Apparently he was. He was inching his way over. Alright, we'll talk more about this later."

Charlie nodded, bowed to the Dark Lord, and then went to return to his place beside Bill, Oliver, most of the other unmasked Silvers and Remus. When a hand dropped onto his hip, Harry shifted until his legs were hanging over the side of Tom's chair, which put them face to face. Harry smiled and then slowly pointed out into the crowd; pointing to one person in particular.

"Do you see the toad woman?"

"Hard to miss. I think I'll make pink illegal."

Harry forced himself not to snicker. "I don't like her." He pulled his arm back and stuffed his hand in front of Voldemort's face, rubbing several times until the faded words were highlighted as the blood rushed back to his hand.

Voldemort's eyes widened and then narrowed to slits. He'd never seen that particular scar and wondered how he could have missed it. "Were you hiding that?"

"I... don't like it and it is a reminder of a very bad year of my life. Also, she does not believe in some of the changes you are making, regardless of her stated loyalties. She *loathes* creatures of any kind, she's a monster to children, and she hates me."

"Fenrir!" Voldemort snapped.

The werewolf extracted from the crowd and strode forward, stopping at the dais and bowing lowly. "My Lord?"

"You and your mate will keep an eye on Dolores Umbridge throughout the execution. And after, you will take her in hand. Is this understood?"

"Yes, my Lord." Fenrir bowed again before spinning around, catching Remus' eye before he moved directly over to Umbridge, who by this point was pale and trembling and still shooting glares at Harry.

Harry was ignoring her now in favor of watching Remus, who had moved to join Fenrir. They locked eyes and Remus smiled faintly at him, his cheeks darkened incredibly. Harry sighed and leaned his head back against Voldemort's shoulder. Harry wondered if Remus had found Fenrir last night and if they'd finally done something naughty.

"How is it that you've inadvertently made all our lives better?" Harry asked softly.

"Do you really want to get into such a discussion at a time like this?"

"I feel like I should thank you," Harry whispered.

Voldemort was silent for a moment and then his fingers were brushing against the part of Harry's throat that was not hidden from him by the blasted high collar. "The feeling is mutual, brat."

"Love you."

"And I, you."

Harry smiled widely. "...is that your wand or you just happy to feel me?" Voldemort cleared his throat and shifted slightly, which really only made it worse for him. "I should return to my not wanted chair," he finally murmured, though he didn't move a muscle and even if he'd planned to, Voldemort's arm quickly encircled his waist, a hand planted over his abdomen, keeping Harry plastered against his chest. He had his answer then.

"Lucius," the Dark Lord hissed and then quieter to Harry as Lucius stepped forth to address the crowd, "they had better not disappoint me. I'm allowing this to be quick only for you."

"They won't disappoint," Harry replied, nodding his thanks because Voldemort had wanted to burn Tonks and Kingsley and Harry thought that was rather... unnecessary. Death was death. No need to make them suffer in such a horrible way before the end. Though Voldemort

promised if he had more problems with rebellions, he wouldn't stand to let the executions go on to be quick and painless. Points were being made here. If he were tested after this, Voldemort would make sure everyone knew what kind of horrible mistake that would be.

Lucius stepped back after he ended his little speech about why everyone was called to watch this execution and to explain exactly why it was going on. He moved to retake his place near Voldemort's chair, alongside Severus while Voldemort and Harry spent a moment watching everyone's reactions to the charges of treason, murder, and attempted murder. They were also told just who had been the prisoner's targets the night they were apprehended. Harry's eyes sought out the Weasley couple and they were staring back. Arthur with a blank pale expression- it hadn't changed much since the beginning of this thing- while Molly looked livid, her lips pinched into thin lines. Harry was quite sure she was still mad at him, but also he knew her anger also had to do with the fact Tonks and Kingsley had used her in order to get to her sons.

When the two ex Aurors were dragged out by a masked Fred and George, chained and in the same clothes they had been apprehended in, the courtyard remained quiet. Voldemort's lips thinned into a malicious smile upon the shock appearing on most faces when they saw exactly who it was to be executed.

"Traitor!" Tonks shouted at Harry.

Harry lifted his head off his husband's shoulder and cocked a brow. "This again? I've already told you I didn't do anything to aid Voldemort in his victory. I did what I promised I would when I first stepped back from the war. I stayed away from it all. I don't see how that makes me a traitor. I was never asked if I wanted to be on either side of the war. I was forced into it as a child. Can you blame me for wanting to step back from a faction who would willingly use a child as a weapon of war? Can any of you?"

Tonks narrowed her eyes as she and the one-armed Kingsley were chained to the central point of the courtyard. She spat on the ground. "A curse on you, Harry Potter! You deserve to lose those brats you're carrying," she growled.

Harry went rigid in his husband's arms while several people gasped. Narcissa and Pansy, Molly, most of his close friends, and even Augusta Longbottom pulled in a sharp breath. Saying such a thing was low. Children were considered blessings, no matter who was carrying and to say such a thing to someone expectant and so early in the pregnancy was dangerous and close enough to being taboo.

Before anything else could be said or done, Harry jerked out of Voldemort's embrace and stood, eyes pinned on Tonks while everyone watched with bated breath. Voldemort stood as well and decided to see what his husband would do before he retaliated himself. But he knew his husband well, and knew this was one time Harry would not stand by and do nothing. Neutrality only went so far and it wasn't a safety net for those who dared to threaten Harry, his friends, or his family. So Voldemort simply watched as he languidly moved to stand in between his Lieutenants.

The two masked Death Eaters nearby suddenly jabbed Draco lightly in his sides and hissed, 'that's it! That's the psycho look we saw when he was burning down that camp!' And hearing

this, Severus, Lucius, and Voldemort shifted and took note of Harry's eyes. A moment ago those eyes had been shuttered, but now they were aflame with an unhinged light. Harry also had a smile on his face that Voldemort would consider creepy. It was all very arousing.

"Did you just try and instate a curse upon my babies?" Harry asked softly as he approached the two. His head was down, chin nearly to his chest, but his eyes were up and spearing Tonks into place with the color of Avada Kedavra.

Tonks could only stand to look into his penetrating gaze for a second before she dropped her own to the ground in real fear. She took in deep breaths before rising her head again, determination on her face, and it was obvious she was going to repeat what she said. Harry's wand was up and moving before she could open her mouth, and then he stood there with insanity playing in his eyes and watched as her head rolled off her shoulders to land upon a trembling Kingsley's foot. Two seconds later her body followed suit.

Draco shivered and averted his eyes away from Harry. His best mate was bloody scary sometimes. He looked to his side to find Pansy's mouth hanging wide open in shock. He discretely shut it for her while Voldemort raised his wand and shot a cleansing spell at Harry to vanish the blood which had splattered upon him. The brunet hadn't noticed any of this.

Harry stepped back and those eyes passed over the speechless crowd. "Does anyone else have anything to say about my babies?" he made a show of inspecting every area of the courtyard and when no one said a thing, Harry's attention turned to Kingsley. The wizard was shaking horribly and staring down at Tonk's head. He was breathing rapidly and looked as if he were barely able to contain what little food he'd been given in the dungeons. He was clinging on to the shoulder of his severed arm as if it were a life line.

Harry poked his wand under Kingsley's chin and forced him to look up. "You?"

Kingsley didn't say anything about that, but it was clear he wanted to. Harry's fingers tightened around his wand; he looked straight into Kingsley's eyes and whispered with furious calm, "*Avada Kedavra*."

"Way to steal the show, Harry," Fred said as he, Draco, and George settled down onto a settee across from him. The execution had ended some twenty minutes ago, but those invited had had to remain behind to hear Voldemort speak. It was only five minutes ago when everyone left save for a few; those who left the courtyard to retreat into the building the courtyard was attached to.

Here was where many of the Death Eaters came for meetings, where they started and ended raids, and they also used to use the compound as a safe house. It was a fairly large estate and had been unplotable up until recently. Voldemort planned to use this place for future 'gatherings' for the public.

Harry shrugged. "I was so angry with Tonks and then when she was dead... I had to take care of the rest of my anger somehow *since I've been left without an outlet!*"

Draco sighed, since that last bit had been said loudly and obviously aimed at the Dark Lord, who was across the room speaking to Severus and his father. It was clear the Dark Lord heard him as he paused in his speaking, cocked a brow at Harry for half a minute, before returning to his discussion.

"Harry..." said wizard glared at the floor, so Draco decided not to bring up The Plan.

"Merlin, you certainly gave everyone a show though."

Harry's head suddenly popped up and he was grinning childishly like he was wont to do. "I did! Yeah! Skeeter is probably drooling over the article she's no doubt writing this very moment."

"I wonder if anyone will really blame you for what you did," George said thoughtfully.

"Some people are bound to. I killed two people."

"Yeah, but it was kind of expected after what Tonks said..."

Harry pulled in a breath. "She managed to frighten me for a moment and I can admit I'm still a bit shaken, but... what she did was stupid! If something happens to the twins, Tom will go ballistic and I know he'll go after Tonk's immediate family. She should have thought of that before opening her mouth. Tom will kill her parents without a second thought. She was already going to die. No need to drag the rest of her family down with her... how'd she know about my pregnancy anyway?"

"Some of the guards must have talked about Harry Potter's pregnancy when they were on duty," Draco said with a shrug. "Kind of big news."

"Harry, mate? You do realize you're kind of insane, right?" George asked, wanting to change the subject since they could all see the fear in Harry's eyes. Harry perked up and nodded, his patented lopsided grin back in place. The copperhead laughed. "Alright then, just so you know."

Harry bounced to his feet. "I think it's time I go have a chat with Ron."

"I'm coming with you. I want to laugh at his stupidity and then I think I'll pummel him with my fists for a while," Draco returned and Harry only nodded having expected this. He glanced at the twins and they were staring in a besotted manner at their lover. Apparently Ron wasn't going to get help from the twins. The blond turned to them. "That's alright, isn't it?"

The two nodded rapidly and Harry laughed as he led the way out of the room and was unsurprised the twins were joining them. The dungeons in this compound were like any other dungeons. There were single cells and then large holding cells, and it was to one of those the four young wizards walked to, knowing which one by the two guards standing outside of the door.

Harry gave them a nod of thanks when one unlocked the door and then stepped aside.

"Get me out of here!" Ron screamed the moment they came in. "Get me away from her!"

Ron was chained to the back wall. His chains weren't very constricting. They allowed him to stand or to sit, but he couldn't move more than five feet forward or to the sides. But his chains were pulled tight from where he was sitting since he'd tried to move as far away as possible from the prisoner who was sharing the cell and chained very near to him. Harry took a step towards Ron before an annoying sound made him stop.

"Hem, hem." Harry turned and glowered at Umbridge. She gave him a simpering smile. "I would like to have an audience with your master."

"Are you speaking to me?" Harry inquired lowly.

"I am looking right at you, Mr. Potter. An audience," she prompted. "With your master."

"My... master?" he asked in confusion. Harry turned to look at his friends. The twins were glaring at Umbridge while Draco only smirked and angled his chin to the woman, in a hurry to see how Harry would handle this. Harry turned back to her. "I don't have a master, Umbridge. And my name is not Potter anymore. It's Riddle."

She ignored him. "Mr. Malfoy, I would also like to speak with your father."

"Hold on, let's go back to this master thing," he told her.

"You-Know-Who," she clarified.

Draco turned and grabbed Harry's wrists, flicking up the dark green material to reveal Harry's bare skin to her. "Nope. No mark here."

Harry sneered at her. "You're delusional if you think Voldemort would lower himself into marrying a follower. I have no master, Umbridge. I do, however, have a husband. A partner in equal standing. So then, whatever you need to say to him, you can easily say to me. I'll stand here, pretend to listen to you, and then blow you off. And afterwards my friends here might want to torture you. I'll leave it up to them to decide."

Harry turned away from her and returned his attention to Ron, who had been sitting there still and pale, looking as if he were completely lost. As usual. "What are you doing, Ron? Have you lost your mind coming here?"

Ron opened his mouth but found himself interrupted by another, "hem, hem."

Harry spun around. "SHUT UP! Did you miss the part where I decapitated that ex-Auror?" he spat. "If you interrupt me one more bloody time, I swear I'll-"

"Harry, love. Calm down. You mustn't do anything to her," Voldemort said as he, Lucius, and Severus entered the room. "I cannot allow you to take away all my fun."

Harry huffed and crossed his arms over his chest. He didn't say anything until his husband turned him and he found himself in a warm embrace. Harry tipped his head back to look into amused red eyes. "I hate her. Almost as much as Marge."

Voldemort nodded, dropped a kiss to his forehead, and turned to Lucius and Severus. The two moved forward on an unspoken command and released Umbridge from the chains before marching her to the door where they paused and waited. The Dark Lord took up Harry's hand in a firm grip before motioning the twins over. When Fred and George were beside them, Voldemort harshly rubbed Harry's hand, ignoring the hissed curses and the tugging, and then showed them the scar of 'I must not tell lies'.

"Have you ever seen this?" he asked them, while Harry was glaring murder at his husband.

The two narrowed their eyes and shook their heads. And then Fred's eyes widened on Harry. "Did Umbitch do that to you?" he demanded. Draco snorted out a laugh, which drew the twins attention. "You were on her Inquisitorial Squad."

"I was a stupid brat back then," Draco defended, eyes dropping to the floor in shame.

"Did you know about this, Draco?" Voldemort asked him.

Harry jerked his hand away with an annoyed hiss. "That was years ago, and no, he didn't know. No one did. I told you, I don't go around advertising my shameful scars!"

Voldemort frowned and flicked his wrist. Fred, George, and Draco took the hint and stepped back while the Dark Lord gathered Harry in his arms and began walking him back until he had the little minx pressed into a corner and the only thing those in the dungeon could see was Voldemort's back and Harry's hands fist into the fabric there.

Draco watched, a small smile on his face when he heard the Dark Lord hiss, "shameful? Nothing about you is shameful, Harry." And then nothing else was said, but it was entirely clear to all that the Dark Lord then went on to snog the remainder of Harry's irritation away.

When Voldemort pulled back, he left Harry leaning into the corner; dazed, happy, and quite deliriously hot. The Dark Lord smirked as he turned away and headed for the door, pausing in front of the twins. "Would you like to... help?"

"Very much so, sir."

"Good. I'll teach you a few things."

The twins hurried after him as he headed to the door. Umbridge shrank away as far as she could when he passed her, though she couldn't move all that far since Lucius and Severus still had her shoulders in a vice grip and she was soon shoved out of the room after Voldemort.

Harry was brought out of his giddy thoughts by the loud clearing of a throat, though luckily it didn't sound anything like Umbridge's. He looked over to find Draco there. The blond looked uncertain as he gestured to a still gaping Ron. Harry pushed off the wall and walked to Draco to lay a hand on his shoulder, leaning forward to whisper in his ear.

"It was a long time ago, Drake. I don't have any hard feelings."

"My fiends..."

"If they are angry with you, then they'll get over it quickly. But I don't really think they're angry. Anyway, it's time to talk to Ron."

Draco nodded and then they turned back to the redhead, who'd managed to snap his mouth shut by this time. Draco stepped forward, pointed at him, and burst out laughing, causing Harry to snicker at the immature and promised move.

"Do you know why he's laughing, Ron?"

Ron swallowed a couple of times before he could speak. "He's a slimy git."

"No. It's because you were stupid enough to come here. You were stupid enough to try and sneak up on me. On Voldemort... you get points for being so recklessly brave though."

"What were you planning to do, Weasley?" Draco demanded in a suddenly cold tone; his face showing nothing of the amusement he'd felt a minute before.

Once again Ron opened his mouth, and once again he was interrupted, though the following sounds didn't annoy Harry so much. Draco and Harry turned to the door when they heard a faint squealing sound, as if Umbridge had been cursed. Her squealing tapered off after only a few seconds.

In the silence of their cell, they heard the Dark Lord. "No, not that way. More feeling. How do you expect to make that muggle woman suffer if you can't even-"

"*CRUCIO!*"

Several seconds went by, during which the faint squeal turned into a full out scream. After a minute the screaming stopped, and then, "yes, that's better. Your turn, George."

Harry rolled his eyes and turned back to Ron. "W-was that one of my brothers?" he asked, eyes gone wide at the opened doorway.

Draco flicked his wand and shut the door. "Never mind that, Weasley. I believe I asked you a question."

"Fuck off, Malfoy."

"This seems so familiar. Déjà vu," the blond said, tapping a finger against his chin. "Only... our roles were reversed."

"Give me a minute," Harry said to the blond, who nodded and retreated back a few steps. Harry moved to sit a few feet away from Ron, facing the redhead. "Why did you come here?" Ron didn't say anything. He settled for looking off and glaring at Draco. "Were you planning on attacking me?" again he had no answers. Harry shrugged and stood. "Fine. Maybe you need some time to formulate answers. I'll leave Draco here to help you out."

Draco grinned like a Cheshire cat.

Harry was nearing the door when Ron finally spoke. "Too cowardly to torture me yourself, Harry?"

"Actually," Harry said as he turned to face him. "Torture isn't really my thing. And... I'm pretty sure that if I start to, I'll enjoy it too much and won't ever stop. That's a floodgate I don't intend to open." He shrugged then. "Besides, Draco is owed and you know it."

He left to the sound of a fist hitting flesh and quietly shut the door behind him. As he walked down the corridor, he heard his husband hiss in annoyance.

"Someone do something about that awful color! I can hardly think!" Voldemort snapped just as Harry approached the room Umbridge was apparently in. He stopped and poked his head in, grinning when he saw Severus wave his wand and Umbridge's pink sweater turned into a puke green.

"That's not much better," Fred whispered to his brother and Harry turned his attentions to them. They were slightly trembling, but not like they had been cursed. More like they'd had too much caffeine and were hyped up. Their eyes were also wide open with the pupils blown. Harry knew that happened to witches and wizards who were suited for Dark magic and had used it for the first time. It had happened to him a time or two when he practiced some of the spells Tom taught him during their exercise duels.

"Again," Voldemort said to them and waved towards the cowering whimpering witch. "Another round for you two and then it's my turn."

"Voldemort," he called, and when he had the wizard's attention, Harry narrowed his eyes. "Don't send."

"Why ever not, Harry?"

"You know why. It would be completely unfair of you."

Voldemort smirked. "I'm not a very fair person."

Harry glowered before ducking back out in the hall. He stopped by Ron's room, and peeked in. "Anything yet?"

Draco stepped back, rubbing his hand, which had started to hurt after having collided with Weasley's thick skull several times already. Draco took on a look of innocence. "Oh, was I supposed to be asking him things?"

Harry narrowed his eyes. "No more than you're owed, Draco."

Draco frowned and looked as if he wanted to disagree. But then he sighed and nodded. "Fine, Pot Head."

"Great. After you're done, we might have time to go flying... also, you should probably rennervate him."

Draco looked down to find Weasley had passed out. Then he shrugged and started for the door. "I'll come back tomorrow then. You sure you're up for flying?"

Harry nodded as they left the room and locked the door. "Yeah. Stomach's been settled all day."

On their way to the Floo, the two young wizards ran into a harassed looking Remus. "Have you seen that arse?" he immediately inquired.

Draco rose a confused brow while Harry grinned. "Is he still hiding from you?"

Remus growled softly. "Last night after I left you, I went straight home. The cottage was locked up tight and the lights doused. He didn't return all night. I didn't see him again until the executions and of course we didn't have any time to speak then. After escorting Umbridge to the cells, Fenrir took off as soon as my back was turned!"

Harry frowned. "What is he so scared of? Certainly not about the yelling you're going to do... you don't yell anyway. And I think he might like it when you get angry."

Remus wanted to refute that but he couldn't because what Harry said was true. So that begs the question, why was Fenrir avoiding this? He wouldn't if he knew Remus wasn't upset at all about the news itself and was instead upset that he'd made Mattie tell it to him. He was shocked, yes, but not upset. "Maybe he's avoiding me because he thinks this might make me reject him," he mused aloud, no longer looking irate.

"Ahhh..." Harry cooed. "The big bad Alpha is afraid of rejection."

Draco snickered and Remus laughed under his breath.

"So then you just need to go find him and make it abundantly clear you have no intention of rejecting him. For example, jumping him. That would be a nice-" Harry stopped and laughed at Remus' blush. "Honestly, Remus. One would think you're still a virgin."

"It's been a long time, Harry."

"It's like riding a broom," said Draco. "You never forget."

Remus shook his head. "I cannot believe I'm having this conversation with wizards I once taught."

Harry waved that away. "So once you 'jump him' and that's been sorted out, then you can yell at him, and then hopefully for you, that'll start up another round of 'not rejecting him'."

Draco snickered. "I really love your way with words."

Remus shook his head, smiling at the two. "I suppose... your plan is a good one."

"Of course it is! My plans are always good."

"Sometimes they're mental—in a good way!" Draco was quick to say.

"Well then I must be off. I've been ordered to return Ginny to her parents."

Harry stopped smiling. "Make sure they know why she's scarred. Make sure they understand. Don't let her lie to them."

"Don't worry. I'll make her tell them."

Soon Remus was gone, heading back to Hogwarts and Draco and Harry were preparing to Floo. "Your place or mine?" Draco asked.

Harry was about to tell him it didn't matter when he suddenly doubled over with a hiss, hand shooting out to hold onto the mantle to keep from collapsing completely. "Bloody bastard," he hissed.

"Harry, what's wrong?"

Harry gritted his teeth as Draco helped him straighten. He touched his scar. It didn't hurt. It only did that when Voldemort was extremely pissed. But it did tingle pleasantly, and that was only a fraction of what he was feeling from their bond. In this case, Voldemort was having an extremely good time; the euphoria he felt slamming into Harry from all angles, and he could barely keep his eyes from rolling to the back of his head in bliss.

But as soon as it came, the feelings vanished and Harry knew Voldemort had blocked the link. He probably hadn't realized he'd lost control of it. Typical. "I'm alright, Drake. Just Voldemort having too much fun."

"You sure? Sure you're not in pain?"

Harry laughed lowly. "Complete opposite actually. I told him not to send!"

Draco mulled over what he'd been told. "I've seen him torture before. The times when it's very clear he's having way too much fun..." he cringed then. "Not a first session I would have had the twins watch."

Harry made a sound of agreement, but unfortunately there was nothing to do about it now. Eventually the twins would have witnessed it at some point. So the two put that out of their minds, travelled back to the Dark Lord's castle by Floo, and went flying as they planned. For Harry, it felt good to be up in the air again, as he hadn't had much time in the recent months to enjoy flying, nor had he wanted to get up in the air with his stomach being so unreliable.

Draco and Harry played a few Seeker games before calling it quits and settled into Harry's study. It wasn't long after when Tom appeared, striding in like a dark avenging angel, covered in blood and with a maliciously pleased grin playing on his lips. He was followed in by Fred and George. Both their eyes still wide, but their faces were a bit green. Fred had his hand over his mouth, while George's lips were pinched tightly closed. They were staring after the Dark Lord with fear, terror, and no small amount of *awe*. Draco stood from the bench he and Harry were sharing and slowly approached the twins, reaching out a hand to touch one of his fiancé's arms. Immediately they latched onto him and started whispering things into his ears that had his face flushing and a small relieved smile appearing on his lips.

Tom ignored them all and headed straight for Harry, who was leaning back in his seat, half glaring, half pouting. And then he scrunched up his nose when the Dark Lord was hovering over him. There was a lot of blood on his husband's black robes. "You did that on purpose!" he accused.

"I did not, Harry! I swear! I... lost control again." The sheepish grin appearing on the Dark Lord's face had Harry instantly melting. Tom sometimes became like this after a very refreshing torture session or when he found a fascinating book he'd never read before. He was like a kid who'd had far too many sweets in a very short time. At times like this he resembled his charming teenage self. Still sadistic and happy with his powers, and yet not the insane megalomaniac he would one day turn into. Harry was supremely grateful Tom's insanity had taken a hike.

"Yes, I felt that," Harry said, trying to sound stern, but he only ended up smiling because Tom's sheepish grin was bloody cute. "It's completely apparent by your clothes and by the twins faces. You may have traumatized them you know," he said as he spelled Tom's robes clean.

"Traumatized? No," Tom said and then smirked. "They worship me now... Well if they didn't before, then they definitely do now. Very eager, those two."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Where are Lucius and Severus?"

Having heard this, the twins smirked. "They skipped off to an empty cell to snog. Slammed the door in our faces when it was getting good too!"

Draco scrunched up his nose. "Too much information... although I knew they liked to do... things in the dungeons after torture session with our Lord."

The twins eyes brightened as if they'd just been struck with a brilliant idea. Draco groaned. "No."

"One way or the other, we will have our answer, love. You might as well agree with us and get over it."

Harry snickered and turned back to Tom, who was glaring off at something over his shoulder. Harry turned and saw his husband was glaring at his and Draco's brooms where they'd rested them against the wall. "What?"

"You were out flying?"

"Yeah. We had a brilliant time..." he sighed when the evil glare appeared. "What now?"

"You shouldn't be flying in your condition."

"In my... Tom, I was perfectly safe. I can still do regular things up until a certain point. I wasn't about to get hurt. S'not like I'm an amateur at flying. I was, coincidentally, the youngest Seeker in a century—have you heard from Hermione?"

Tom snapped his mouth shut. Obviously he'd been prepared to argue the flying some more. "Yes. Her mission should be wrapping up and she'll return on Monday."

"Anything about her personal mission?"

Tom grimaced. "No, thank Salazar. And why would she write to me about that? She would know better."

"True. But I wonder how it's going."

"Stop twitching!"

"Then you stop eyeing me as if I were a slug!" Hermione screeched back. "A slug you want to disintegrate under your boot!"

Bella cackled gleefully at that. "Oh I like the imagery."

"You would."

"Your nerve is refreshing... but I wonder. Do you want to fight me, Granger? Do you think you have what it takes?"

"Lestranger, I would love nothing more than to duel you," Hermione replied, her hand tightening around the wand she had lying in her lap. Bellatrix's eyes narrowed then. "But I'm not stupid enough to think I could win against you. At this point you have more experience and know far more curses than I do."

"You admit it," Bellatrix said in a thoughtful manner, her glare disappearing.

"Yes, of course! I could probably hold my own for a while, but in the end I would be no match for you."

Bellatrix went back to staring at her again and Hermione wondered why in Hades she had to dine in a small room alone with the witch. In fact, she wondered why Bellatrix had been sent on this mission at all. She wasn't needed and she certainly hadn't done anything useful, aside from socializing with Nadia. Neither had Andy. They just stood back, while Hermione was engaged in conversation with the Lord of the Vampires and his court every night.

"Where's our dear Andrew?"

"How should I know?" Hermione grumbled.

"Aside from the fact he's been sniffing after your heels like a dog all week? The way he tries to talk to you and you act as if you've never met him before. The constant and unwavering 'we'll only ever be formal acquaintances, Auror Charleston' is succulent. He always leaves looking desolate! Very amusing, Granger." Hermione lifted her eyes from the table, a small smirk on her lips. Shockingly, Bellatrix seemed to be smiling sincerely at her. "But as much as I love to see people grovel, I think it's time you give him a little."

Hermione had begun to think the same, only Andrew wasn't acting as she expected he would, and it had begun to bother her. She didn't want to give in to this Andrew. "Lestrangle," she started slowly and cautiously because she couldn't believe she was about to discuss this with the mad witch, "you've known Andrew for a while, right?"

"Several years, yes."

"And during all that time, has he ever come across as timid?"

Bellatrix sat back. "No," she said after some time. "Ah, I see what you are thinking."

"I want him to do something bold. This timidity is annoying."

"Perhaps he doesn't believe this is the best of times to be bold."

Hermione cocked her head, watching Bellatrix, and then she seemed to understand what the elder witch was telling her. "You think... he doesn't want to distract me?"

"Could be. Andrew is a professional and should things go sour here for you, it will be bad for all of us." Bellatrix rolled her eyes. "The Dark Lord and our little lord did want us on our best behavior here."

Hermione relaxed in a way that told her she'd been unconsciously tense for a while. "I'd never thought of it that way."

"Of course not. Mudbloods rarely think things through."

Hermione hissed. "What utter rubbish!"

"You know, Granger... I think I'd like to teach you," Bellatrix finally replied, making Hermione's eyes widen. "Dueling and curses."

"And why would you want to do that?"

"So that when we do finally duel to the death, it will be a relatively fair duel. I will not end up thinking it was too easy and a waste of time then."

Hermione snorted, knowing full well they'd never get to that. A duel to the death. Not while Harry had Bellatrix wrapped around his pinky finger. "Alright then," she agreed, because she was sure that even though Lestrangle was crazy, she also knew a lot. Hermione wouldn't mind learning more.

"Very good! I want to see how far your little Gryffindor heart can go! How much you can stand..." she then went on to tell Hermione about several curses Hermione had never heard of and their uses, and Hermione made sure not to flinch and shiver when she would have done in someone else's presence at some of the descriptions.

Ten minutes later Andrew burst into the room, interrupting Bellatrix's unwavering descriptions. He had his wand in hand and a worried expression on his face as he took in the scene.

"Andrew! Nice of you to join us. We're almost finished with dinner," Bellatrix said, smirking at his expression. He looked like he had expected Bellatrix to be doing something horrid to Hermione by this time.

"Right," he said, still glaring at Bellatrix suspiciously. "Hermione, let me talk to you outside."

"Whatever for, Charleston? We're still eating."

"Please."

Hermione sighed and removed her napkin from her lap and set it on the table while Bellatrix sneered at his plead. "Fine," she said as she walked to the door. He stood back and allowed her into the hall before following her and closing the door behind him. They retreated several steps away before facing each other. Hermione with a raised brow. A look of impatience on her face.

Andrew took a deep breath while he pulled out a shrunken object from his robes. "I have something for you."

"Charleston, I don't think-" she stopped when he enlarged the book and passed the heavy thing into her hands. Hermione stared at the large tome, eyes widening as she recognized the coiled symbols around the edge. "Is this..." her breath caught as she opened the thing to reveal blank pages. "Is this the Book of Euvion?"

"Yeah."

Hermione closed the book before lifting it and hugging it to her chest, a hungry gleam in her eyes. This book was rare. There were only a few known to be in existence. The Book of Euvion was a gateway to any and all types of information. One had only to state the type of information wanted, and the book's pages would fill up with every word on the subject ever written. This book was a library in its own right. And now... Andrew was giving her a copy.

"Very unfair, Andy," she said and the Auror grinned, a spark of triumph in his eyes. "How did you even get this?"

"To tell you the truth, it kind of fell into our hands, Louie and me. A few shady dealings later, I had it. It wasn't doing the former owner any good anyway. Bastard didn't know what he had and the book was sitting behind other books, catching dust. It was disgraceful!"

Hermione shook her head in awe. Why would he give her something like this? Unless he really was serious about her. He wouldn't give a book this rare to a passing fancy. "Andrew-"

"There's something else. In the book."

"There's worlds in this book!"

"Yeah, but... just look through it," he said, waving towards the book.

Hermione pulled the book away from her chest and opened it. It fell open on a page about halfway through. Probably because there was an envelope tucked in between the pages.

Hermione cradled the large tome in one arm and plucked the envelope out, eyeing the Auror as she did so. Andrew cleared his throat and shifted on his feet. There was a bit of color on his cheeks as well, a sign of nervousness, which only made Hermione's curiosity peek. What could have him so nervous that it would show?

She closed the book and returned it to Andrew before opening the envelope, her breath held. There wasn't a letter or card inside, rather a gift voucher. Hermione turned it over and read the name of the shop the gift voucher was from and her cheeks reddened. Now *this* was a bold move! And she sort of loved it. He'd given her a gift voucher to her favorite lingerie store. It was worth three hundred Galleons.

Hermione peeked at him from under her eye lashes as she began to roll up the voucher. He eyed her warily since she hadn't yet slapped his face or smiled to let him know she liked it. Once the piece of parchment was rolled up tight, she slipped it down the front of her dress and into the tight bodice of her chemise. It wasn't pretty stones, as Luna had said, but it fit Hermione better than pretty stones. She wasn't one to wear a lot of jewelry. She was one to wear a lot of lingerie.

Seeing that she wasn't insulted in the least, Andrew was back to looking cocky. And then he turned confused after he tried to give the book back and she pressed it against his chest and shook her head. "There is no way I can accept that, Andy. That's... that's too much."

He tried to press it back. "I want you to have it, Hermione. You'll use it."

"But you use it. You found it. The Book is yours. I couldn't possibly take this from you!"

Andrew gaped at her. The thought that she would refuse the book had never crossed his mind. And now he didn't know what to do.

"Maybe," Hermione began softly and took a step closer, "I could come over sometime and borrow it?"

Andrew's eyes cleared of disappointment and he began nodding rapidly. And then when Hermione smiled, Andrew thought, *fuck it all!* He grabbed her hips and pressed her against the door and was immensely relieved when she immediately curled her arms around his neck. He hadn't wanted to be a severe distraction, but the mission was nearly over and he'd wanted to do this again since the last time they were able to snog.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty-Four

Remus tapped his fingers upon his arms as he waited impatiently for Ginny Weasley to be deposited to him. There were five other Death Eaters standing with him, also waiting for students whose parents had been scared into action after the execution. They'd given their loyalty and promised to return their children to school come September 1st, or they would face the consequences.

Most of the students previously released or being released tonight were half bloods. There were no pure-bloods in the school anymore as they'd been returned home soon after the Dark Lord took Hogwarts. Most of the remaining students were Muggleborn and Remus wondered if it had been put into consideration that the parents hadn't owled back because they were muggles and really didn't know what to do. Remus wondered how many of the muggle parents actually cared that their children were being held hostage at the school. He knew not every muggle was a reflection of Harry's relatives- the Grangers for instance- but he knew a fair few reacted the same way, or at least actively became disconnected from their Wizarding children once they found out of their children's abilities. And this also made him wonder just how many students had been hiding their suffering throughout the years.

Minerva appeared with eight students. Seven of them looked excited to be going home and they immediately walked over to the waiting Death Eaters without fuss. Ginny just looked dull and was dragging her feet. As was usual now days, her head was bent with her hair covering her face, but despite her attempts to hide it Remus could clearly make out the scar. The werewolf could admit it was a vicious looking mark and he felt a spark of pity for her... until she raised her eyes and glared scathingly at him. Her face flushed red in anger and this made the scar stand out even more. Draco certainly knew what he was doing by putting it where he did.

He smiled at her, totally unconcerned with her loathing. "Are we all ready? Good."

"Remus," Minerva started softly. "It's being said... many things are being said. About You-Know-Who and Harry. About this Belial character."

"What you've heard is probably the truth."

Minerva's lips pinched into thin lines. "Harry is truly Belial and he has willingly married You-Know-Who? He murdered Kingsley and Nymphadora?"

They both ignored Ginevra's gasp and rapidly shaking head.

"All true. Though Shacklebolt and Tonks were executed, Minerva. And at the start Harry was not the one who was supposed to carry out the executions but Tonks threatened his babies and so he took immediate action."

"I don't believe you." Both adults looked to Ginny, whose face was lifted, hands balled into fists. "I don't believe you. Harry would never betray us like that. Harry wouldn't..."

"Harry hasn't betrayed anyone," Remus murmured after sighing. "But he has married the Dark Lord. You best get over that and move on with your life. Dwelling on what will never be will lead you to nothing but more pain. He's happy where he is. Now, are we ready?"

"One more thing," Minerva went on, and again the two ignored Ginny.

"Yes," he asked a little impatiently.

"It's also being said that Ronald Weasley was captured earlier this evening. Is this true?"

Remus took a moment before answering to notice Ginny didn't seem the least bit concerned about her brother. How could she make such a fuss over Harry and yet seem not at all concerned for her own flesh and blood? "Yes. The young wizard was caught sneaking up on the Dark Lord and Harry- with his wand drawn- during the public gathering. Harry caught him and instructed he be locked up. He'll probably be released after Harry's had a talk with him. He's lucky Harry was there otherwise the Dark Lord would have made it three executions. Anything else, Minerva? I really must be getting on. I have an Alpha to catch and seduce, if you need a painted picture."

Remus kept the amusement to himself, but he'd never ever seen Minerva McGonagall sputter like that. He left her there with a gaping mouth and pushed and pulled Ginny Weasley to the doors and out, following other Death Eaters with students. The other students were following along without complaint while Ginny was being a stubborn pest. Remus also saw the other students studying their captors with thoughtful expressions. Some of the Death Eaters were even talking to their students and had the students talking back.

"Where's my wand?" Ginny demanded the moment they'd passed the school's wards.

"You'll get it back once you're home. I'll hand it over to your parents."

"I'm of age! And since we're no longer within Hogwarts grounds, I demand my wand back!"

"Ginny... I think I must remind you I am still a Death Eater, even if I am not currently wearing the mask. And to be frank, you are grating on my nerves. I'm sure this has been said to you a thousand times, but I'll say it again. Grow up."

He grabbed her arm and Apparated before she could say anything else. They reappeared just beyond the wards of the Burrow. Ginny jerked her arm away and ran towards the towering crooked house. Remus allowed it and followed at a more sedate pace. Just as Ginny reached the house, the front door was thrown open by Molly and the woman threw her arms out for her daughter. Remus was only half surprised when Ginny ignored Molly and brushed by her into the house. Even from where he was, Remus could hear her stomping up the stairs and then the slamming of a door. Apparently she wasn't going to grow up.

"I suppose you shouldn't have waited so long before making efforts to retrieve her from Hogwarts."

"What did you do to my daughter?" Molly demanded.

"And what might you be referring to," Remus questioned as he withdrew Ginny's wand and handed it over without hesitation. Molly looked surprised by this move, but she didn't say anything about it as she snatched it from his hand.

"My daughter would never have ignored me in such a way!"

Remus shook his head sadly. "I don't think you really know your daughter all that well."

"Of course I do!"

Once again Remus sighed. He had better things to do than this. So instead of answering her, Remus pushed by Molly to enter the Burrow and headed towards the stairs, looking for Arthur as he did so. "Where is your husband?"

"The Ministry. After that *gathering*, after Harry's horrid executions, Arthur and many more were summoned for some sort of meeting."

"Horrid?" Remus spun around to glare at Molly. "You heard what Tonks said to Harry."

"Under the circumstances, I think that she-" she cut off when Remus' wand was suddenly in her face.

"Do not go on with that thought, Molly. My cub deserves happiness."

Molly's eyes widened for a split second before they narrowed and her fists dropped to her hips. "Remus Lupin! How dare you think I would ever agree with what Tonks said! How could you think that of me? I was only going to say that under the circumstances, she was probably hysterical and didn't know what she was saying."

"She knew exactly what she was saying, Molly," Remus murmured as he turned to bang on the door leading into Ginny's room. His patience wearing thin. "I don't suppose you know what happened between Ron, Ginny, and Draco Malfoy?"

"You've brought my daughter home, Remus. I think it's time you left," she said in answer.

"There is one more thing I must do before I can leave. I was instructed by Harry to make sure you and Arthur had all the facts."

"The facts about what?"

"Draco's abduction and what happened to his kidnappers."

"What does this have to do with Ginny?"

"It has to do with both your youngest children, Molly."

The fact that she hadn't demanded to know what had become of her youngest son clued Remus into the fact that someone had already told her what was going on with him. Harry

probably sent word.

"Surely you aren't implying..." she trailed off with widening eyes. "They wouldn't!"

"Yes. Yes they would. They did. Now please have your daughter come out here."

Remus was really amazed at how quickly Molly managed to get the door opened and her daughter dragged out into the hall. Then again she probably had loads of practice. Molly then proceeded to demand answers from her daughter. Again Ginevra refused to meet their eyes and kept her own gaze downcast so that her hair was protecting her face from view.

"You are instructed to come clean to your mother about what you and your brother did to Draco Malfoy," Remus told her when she had been silent for too long.

"We only did what the Order and the Ministry were afraid to do," Ginny muttered.

When Molly gasped, Remus grabbed hold of Ginny's chin and jerked her face until she was looking at eyelevel with her mother. Molly gasped again.

Remus turned to her. "Ginny's punishment for..." and Remus went on to tell Molly exactly what had happened to Draco during his time being abducted.

Ten minutes later he was away from the Burrow, away from Molly and Ginny's shrieking at each other and back at the cottage where once again he found it void of an alpha. "Coward," Remus mumbled as he hung his traveling cloak on the rack just inside the door before moving into the kitchen to make a pot of tea. He would stay up all night if he had to. He knew eventually Fenrir would have to return, if only to change and bathe.

Two hours went by before Fenrir finally returned. He entered the cottage while muttering about mad females being unhelpful to their supposedly cherished sons. Fenrir paused just inside the door, eyes narrowed as he took in the darkened cottage. He could smell Remus was home, but it was late, so his cub had probably already gone to bed.

As he walked to his room, Fenrir wondered just how enraged Remus would be by this time. He wondered what Remus had chosen, how he really felt about the revelations his mother had imparted to the younger werewolf. His mother- blast her- hadn't said what Remus' initial reactions had been. She said her silence on that was his punishment for leaving his mate to deal with this news alone. And he did feel guilty for leaving Remus alone, but... he'd waited years to find his mate. To claim one. And Remus was so... complicated. He was so stubborn. And feisty.

Fenrir smirked then as he opened his bedroom door. He really loved feisty Remus. He then froze upon stepping past the threshold. Remus was sitting there in the dark; sitting on the edge of his bed with a massive scowl on his face.

The moment he saw Fenrir had spotted him, Remus bolted to his feet. "Finally back you massive coward," he spat as he reached for the buttons of his shirt to quickly unbutton it.

Fenrir's eyes widened on his fingers. "Remus-"

"Leaving me alone with *your mother* to deal with all that! Is that what Alphas do? Flee? IS THIS THE WAY MATES WORK, FENRIR?" he bellowed then, cutting off anything Fenrir could say. But Fenrir wouldn't have said anything by that point anyway as he was now panting as he eyed the skin Remus was quickly showing him. "If so then I want none of it!" Remus went on, seemingly ignorant to Fenrir's rising arousal. "And cubs? You can forget about having cubs if all you do is RUN AWAY! DO YOU HEAR ME, FENRIR?" he demanded just as his shirt hit the floor.

"Were you saying something, cub?" Fenrir inquired as he stared at Remus' bare torso. "I stopped listening the moment you started to take off your shirt."

The rage seemed to drain from Remus in an instant to be replaced by amusement. "Don't worry, Fenrir. I'll repeat everything I've just said in the morning. We'll be right here in this bed. Together."

"Oh good," the elder werewolf breathed just seconds before he attacked Remus, throwing his laughing cub onto the bed.

"Harry... surprises at every turn," Tom stated softly as he rimmed a glass of whiskey with the pad of his finger.

The vision of Harry performing the executions himself had not yet left Tom's mind, even days later. He couldn't seem to dispel the image of Harry decapitating that witch with barely a word and without a flicker of remorse as the blood splattered over him. But what was the most captivating was the way he'd performed the Killing Curse on Shackbolt. With such control while his eyes raged with fury. It had reminded Tom of the time he'd killed his own father. He'd been meaning to talk to Harry about it, but the brat had been in a bad mood lately and seemed always eager to fall into an argument. Tom had his suspicions as to exactly where Harry's bad moods were coming from and he didn't want to get into an argument about that.

"Yes, my Lord," Lucius replied and in complete agreement. Severus settled with a nod as he gazed out of the window.

Tom pulled his thoughts away from Harry to study the two in front of him. Lucius had his hand on Severus' thigh again. It was a usual thing, since they had been teens actually. Not once had he ever regretted choosing the two to become his lieutenants. He knew his decision had been secretly questioned by other Death Eaters back then, but even at such a young age, Tom had known they would be great wizards and would accomplish much for their goals. For him. And he'd been proven correct many times over.

He smirked as he thought about his recent meeting with Narcissa and her unusual request. He had agreed with her request, as well as stating his own thoughts and desires about the topic of conversation. Narcissa had left the meeting looking incredibly happy, and he couldn't really begrudge her the expression. Tom was looking forward to seeing Lucius and Severus' reactions after Narcissa told them. It was sure to be amusing.

Tom was pulled out of his thoughts when Severus did a quick double take, eyes going wide as he stared out of the window again. The Potions Master then turned to him, a blank

expression forming on his face.

"Severus?"

Said wizard inwardly cursed the momentary lapse of guarded reactions. He had seen his Lord's reactions to finding out Harry and Draco had been out flying after the executions and his reaction now wasn't likely to be any better. Severus didn't want to answer his Lord.

When he was quiet for too long, Tom stood with a narrowed expression and approached Severus and the window. "Severus?" he inquired again, this time in a low dangerous drawl as he came to stand in front of him.

Just as Severus was prepared to reply, an exalted whoop from outside derailed the Dark Lord's attention from him. Severus turned to Lucius just as the Dark Lord came to stand in front of the window. And just when Severus turned back, four figures blurred by the parlor's windows. Severus and Lucius stood and took up position in front of the second window, and after a minute, it became clear Harry, Draco, and the twins were having a race of some sort and after another minute, it also became clear the race wasn't straight forward or laps. Instead the race was filled with maneuvers at certain points along the manor and around the field behind. And it wasn't until the four started spinning tightly as they went on did the Dark Lord finally storm from his study with a murderous expression on his face.

Lucius and Severus remained where they were. "I think perhaps our Lord is overreacting," the blond drawled.

Severus watched the young wizards suddenly dive into Wronski Feints before answering and shook his head, "under the circumstances, I might have to agree with him... not that I care at all about that whelp."

Lucius smirked. "Of course not, love. No one would ever accuse you of caring about Harry Riddle."

Outside, Harry was the last to pull out of the dangerous dive just inches away from the ground and breathed in exhilaration as he flew back up to join the others.

"It's not fair you can do that so perfectly," Draco whined once Harry had rejoined him.

"It's not your fault, Drake. You couldn't see the ground properly."

Draco glared. "Don't patronize me. If the lights from the castle provide enough light for *you* to see, blind bat that you are, then I can definitely see the ground as well!"

"Why don't you complain to your father then? Father!" Harry went on, imitating Draco's whining voice. "Father, make Harry do the Feint wrong!"

"I do not sound like that!" Draco spat. "And obviously you cheated somehow!"

"I do not cheat!"

"Oi, you two! Are we getting on?"

"It's not over yet!"

Draco turned to the two hovering a few yards away and snarled, "quiet!"

Harry was ready to get into an argument about this with his mate because he was itching for a good row, but then he heard the sound of a door banging open. He looked over his shoulder and his eyes widened. On second thought, they had better get on with the race. He leaned over and tugged on Drake's sleeve. "Come on. Before the dictator locks me inside."

Draco looked over his shoulder, saw the death glare and at once raced away leaving Harry in his tail wind. Harry snorted and raced after, quickly catching up to his blond friend just as the three were crossing over a small lake on the Dark Lord's grounds.

Tom seethed. He knew Harry saw him. Knew Harry would know he wanted this to stop. But no! And now they were flying over a large pond which was not as innocent as it looked and Harry knew this too! Tom sighed as he watched Harry descend lower until he was very nearly skimming the surface of the water. He didn't need to see Harry's face to know his lips were pinched into thin lines and his eyes were narrowed; lost in angry thoughts.

Tom sneered when he realized Harry was going to pull the ignorance act again. He raised his wand and cast a powerful summoning charm. By the time he was up in the air on his own broom, the race had ended, with Harry coming out the victor. The other three saw the Dark Lord first and took off faster than they had when racing. Harry didn't notice because he was hovering in the air, thinking. Brows furrowed in annoyance for whatever reason.

"I told you no flying."

Harry spun around, eyes going wide as he took in the scene of Tom hovering near him on his own broom. Then he laughed with incredible delight. "You can fly!"

The elder wizard scowled. "I don't think I like your tone, Harry. It tells me you were under the assumption I was lacking a skill."

The little minx grinned, his previous troubled thoughts vanished. He then flew a circle around his husband, making sure he was in fact seeing Tom hovering on his own broom. "I've never seen you fly on a broom before. Ever!" He nudged his broom closer until they were side by side; thighs and shoulders pressed together. "Wanna race? Bet I would win."

"No I do not want to race," Tom replied succinctly with narrowed eyes as he shifted his broom, making to the handle fall beneath Harry's broom. He then reached out with one arm, snaked it around Harry's waist and jerked his young husband off his broom and onto his lap. He smirked at Harry's surprised and indignant yelp.

"My broom!" Harry's broom had dropped the moment Harry was off of it.

"Calm down. I've got it."

Harry had a good hold on Tom's shoulders as he leaned over to watch his broom's decent. Before it hit the ground the broom slowed until nearly completely stopped. Only then did he

sigh in relief. He then straightened and pressed closer to Tom's chest, draping arms around his annoyed husband's neck.

"This is kind of romantic, Tom. Didn't know you had a romantic bone in your body either."

Not to mention that it would take some strength to do what Tom did; grab him off his broom with one arm. And Tom had done it without hesitation, which meant he knew he was strong enough to pull off such a move without putting Harry in danger. Again, that was such a turn on. Harry was tempted to ask, as he slithered up on Tom's thighs, if the Dark Lord had ever thought about fucking on a broom.

"You're the Dark Lord Voldemort," he murmured more to himself as he peered down to the ground, "and I'm the Boy-Who-Lived... Sure if anyone can accomplish it, we can."

"What are you going on about now?"

Harry sagged against him, his somber mood returning. "Nothing," he mumbled.

"Harry? Will you tell me what's wrong?"

Anger flashed in his eyes for a split second before he hid the expression by pressing his face against Tom's neck. "Nothing. I'm just hungry and it's making me cranky."

Tom knew Harry was lying, but he let it go this time.

The following day found a group of wizards gathered around a table in a meeting room within the Dark Lord's castle, discussing the latest plans in regards to Harry's unworthy relatives. Severus would have been there as well, only he had a tutoring session with Harry at that moment and would be filled in just before Tom took some time to further Harry's study of Arithmancy and Ancient Runes.

"The Dursley spawn is hardly ever at home now days," Lucius said with a pleased smirk.

"And the woman has no idea what transpired that day at Grunnings," was Rodolphus' input. "She has no idea they were fired."

"Though she's not entirely clueless," Rabastan added, tapping his fingers upon the table. "She can sense the tension between her husband and son on the occasion they are all at home... And she's obviously distraught because of this."

"The son is gone mostly because he's managed to find a job," Lucius went on. "The husband has lied and leaves every morning as he usually did, this time to go and search for another job."

The Dark Lord turned his attention to the twins and Draco. "You three and Rodolphus will trail the son. I want you to get him fired, and Rodolphus, place a curse upon the boy. Make it impossible for him to find another. Lucius and Rabastan, you two will do the same to the father. Curse him. We want to keep their luck low, don't we?"

Those around the table grinned. "Yes, my Lord."

"I also want one of you to find some way to alert Harry's aunt of the fact her son and husband is jobless. It's sure to be quite distressing and embarrassing for her... As for Harry's birthday, I thought we might all enjoy a bonfire."

Again, everyone seemed pleased with this.

As they were in the midst of going over every minute detail, Severus was storming through the halls and he had a sneer of monumental proportions on his face when he finally entered the kitchen. He was even more enraged when he found Harry standing there in front of a counter just staring off at nothing, a hand limply holding on to a mixing spoon.

"You were supposed to be in the potions lab thirty minutes ago!"

Harry spun around and his eyes widened upon seeing Severus there. And then he remembered. "I swear I didn't mean to forget! I... I got caught up in this..." he waved to the two mixing bowls in front of him. "I'm really sorry! I swear, Severus. I don't... I don't want you to think I'm taking your tutoring for granted! I just thought I'd get a couple of orders done before our session started and time sort of got away from me-"

Severus raised a hand, quieting the incessant babbling and narrowed his eyes, studying Harry's face, looking for any deception. He'd come a long way already, coming to the conclusion Harry wasn't anything like his father. Which meant, unlike James Potter, who would have been so smug and purposely blown him off, Harry meant what he said and had genuinely forgotten. And the brat did look tired.

"Since you seem to be so busy," the Potions Master sneered, "we will stay here and I will question you while you 'work'. The potion I had planned for you to brew would have taken the full two hours."

"Okay, thank you sir."

"Did you not sleep well?"

Harry was surprised to hear the concerned tone, though he didn't let it show. "As well as can be expected under the circumstances."

"And the circumstances?"

Harry chose not to say and instead asked about the potion Severus had intended for him to make as he went on to pour his cake batter into the cake pans.

Tom strode into the kitchen some time later and stopped dead in his tracks. He then blinked several times, sure he must be hallucinating. Not only was Harry in the kitchen, but so was Severus. Both sitting at the kitchen island, sitting across from each other on tall stools. Several bowls and plates were spread between them and they both seemed to be sampling things. What was most surprising- aside from the fact that Harry was back in his muggle

clothes- Severus looked completely relaxed and had discarded his outer robe and it now lay over a chair in the corner.

"Well? What's your verdict?" Harry questioned after Severus chewed and then swallowed.

"I'm still certain you use magic."

Harry laughed. "I do not!" a small smirk drifted across the Potions Master's lips. "So what do you think?"

"This one," Severus pointed to a plate of small yellow cake squares, "too sweet. So sweet it makes me cringe. These," he pointed to a plate of brown flaky things, "I must admit taste... good."

"Which translates to wonderful! Brilliant! Amazing!"

"What do knotgrass, lacewing flies, and fluxweed have in common?"

Harry snorted and rolled his eyes. "Ingredients used in making Polyjuice. C'mon, Severus. You can do better."

"Name the rest of the ingredients then, impertinent whelp."

"Leeches, powdered bicorn horn, shredded boomslang skin, and," Harry scrunched up his nose, "a bit of someone you want to turn into. Not a very hard question, Severus. That's O.W.L level."

Severus sneered, though it held less of the voracity it one had. "I wish you were still a student."

"So you can deduct House points and assign detention?" Harry asked with a cheeky grin.

"Precisely," the wizard drawled before plucking a piece of white chocolate fudge out of a bowl.

A timer over by one of the ovens dinged. Harry popped off his seat and hurried over to the oven, leaving Severus alone at the table, staring at the bowl of white fudge as if it were a monster about to pounce on him. Finally after a moment his hand reached out to snatch another piece. Tom shook his head and returned his attention to Harry and that's when he noticed Harry's feet. The brat was bustling about bare foot. Internally he groaned. Merlin, but it was about the sexiest thing he'd ever seen. It wasn't fair! How could Harry be so attractive when he was dressed down? Dressed in muggle clothing. Tom was certain the world hated him.

He finally dragged his eyes away from his husband and approached Severus. "You too, Severus? I was sure you would hold out against him."

Severus scowled. "He puts something in this, my Lord," the man insisted. Then he looked at his Lord. "We're all going to be fat in a year."

Tom shook his head as he took Harry's seat, looking over his shoulder to watch his young husband pulling two cakes out of the oven. He then turned back to Severus and reached for a piece of fudge. "And yet you still eat it."

"Compulsion potion perhaps."

Tom frowned. He didn't exactly like the fact Severus continued to think Harry cheated in order to gain the popularity he had from his creations. "I've yet to see Harry use his wand when baking," he said and in such a tone Severus would understand he was not pleased.

"I meant no disrespect, my Lord."

Tom narrowed his eyes further, but before he could say anything else, two arms draped over his shoulders and a body pressed against his back. Harry's face appeared next to his, cheeks pressed together while Harry's chin dropped on Tom's shoulder.

"It's okay, Tom."

"No it is not."

"No, really it is. It would be weird if Severus started singing my praises."

"Never going to happen," Severus muttered under his breath.

Harry threw him a grin then turned back to Tom. "See. Perfect."

He laughed again, placed a lingering kiss on his husband's neck before spinning away to return to his cakes. Tom shifted in his seat and glared at Severus just for the hell of it. Harry was being overly affectionate again. Tom hadn't really realized that had stopped after they found out he was having twins. In fact Tom hadn't realized just how much he missed Harry's overly affectionate nature in regards to him.

"Why aren't you two in the potions labs?"

"He forgot about our session and by the time I found him, he was elbow deep in cake batter and it was too late to start the potion I had planned for him to prepare."

"So we stayed here and he threw out random questions while he became a taste tester," Harry called back, in the process of setting the cakes out to cool. "He's not a very good one. Keeps lying about how truly magnificent my creations are."

"There's such a thing as being too cocky, Riddle."

Harry stuck his tongue out at him.

"It's time for your Arithmancy tutoring," Tom announced as he stood.

Harry, whose back was to him, had just scrunched up his nose when Tally popped in beside him. "Young master!" she cried excitedly. "Young master, the candy makers be here!"

Harry gasped in excitement and not a second later, two more house elves appeared with five large boxes and deposited them at his feet before popping back out again. "Wicked!"

"Candy makers?" Tom questioned as he approached. Severus remained seated, but he did lean over a little bit so that he could see clearly. Harry looked as if he'd been given the key to a toy store. The wizard actually dropped to his knees and flung his arms around the nearest boxes, hugging them to his body.

Severus quietly snorted. "Mental," he murmured.

"Equipment I need to make my own chocolate and then the candies I have planned," Harry explained to Tom. "Also some cookbooks and molds for the candies. And then I bought a one hundred piece set of display dishes. Fondant and modeling tools, crimpers, embossers, and a few cake decorator turntables - for cake decoration since Drake went and volunteered my services for weddings. You know, and a lot more..."

Tom pinched the bridge of his nose. "And how much did this cost?"

"Err... Dunno. Wasn't paying attention to the prices," Harry replied absently as he caressed the boxes lovingly.

"You've been spending too much time with Draco."

At that moment, the two house elves popped back in with five more boxes and Tom groaned.

"Does master want us to unpack?" Tally asked with a bounce.

"No thanks, Tally. I'll do it," Harry replied as he revealed his wand, preparing to open the closest box. His eyes wide and excited.

Tom grabbed his wrist and dragged him to his feet. He knew if he allowed Harry to open the boxes, Harry would never get his studies done. He'd be in the kitchen all bloody day and night trying out his new toys. "Your studies first, Harry."

"But," Harry leaned forward and ran a hand up Tom's chest. "Tom..." his husband's name came out as a low moan. Harry thought he'd won when Tom's eyes darkened.

"Don't flutter your eyelashes at me, brat! Arithmancy and Ancient Runes first!" Tom snapped out, balling his hands into fists to keep from touching Harry.

Harry pulled back and huffed while Severus snorted again and covertly snatched another piece of fudge. He wondered if Lucius would still love him if he were fat.

Sugar quills were ingenious inventions created for the sole purpose of driving Dark Lord's mad. This was Tom's conclusion after an hour of study time with his husband. He lifted his eyes away from the rough drafts of certain laws he'd had Lucius draw up to peer across the table at his young husband yet again. Harry had an Arithmancy text book to one side and a sheet of parchment in front of him. A quill was poised over the parchment as Harry scanned the book.

Tom's eyes narrowed upon that quill. It was one of those multicolored sugar quills with each color representing a different flavor, and even now Harry's lips were wrapped around the tip while he reread a certain passage, his brows drawn together as if he didn't quite understand what he was reading. Harry was at the blue color, which had his lips, tongue, and probably his teeth blue. Did that turn Tom off? No. All he wanted to do now was to stand, lean over, and lick Harry's mouth clean.

"Your evil glare is distracting," Harry said without pulling his eyes away from the text. "What did I do now?"

Tom ripped his eyes away to look back at his own work and didn't bother correcting Harry. He wasn't glaring at Harry. He was glaring at that blasted quill which was lucky enough to have his husband's mouth sucking on it.

Jealous of a quill... pathetic. "Are you having difficulties with the current chapter?"

Harry lifted his eyes, the corner of his mouth lifting, amused by Tom's tone. Overly formal meant Tom was annoyed and Harry knew perfectly well why. "Yeah. Don't think I like this subject."

Tom shook his head as he stood to round the table. "No. It only needs to be explained in a different way. Most people do not process information in the same way. Sometimes it takes different methods."

"Or maybe I'm just no good at it. Not everyone can be a genius like you, Tom."

"Stop trying to get out of learning this subject," Tom murmured as he pulled out the chair beside him.

"But this is heavily tied into Divination and I don't bloody like Divination!"

"Arithmancy is proven whereas most Divination is not."

"And yet you fell for a stupid prophesy."

Tom glared at Harry's little smirk. "I said most. And I was only protecting myself!"

"Backfired, didn't it," Harry ended and then wrapped his lips around the quill again.

"Little cretin," the Dark Lord hissed.

Harry's eyes crinkled in amusement and he made a sound of agreement. Tom turned back to Harry's book and notes, a small smirk on his lips. Bloody brat. "Are you listening?" he turned back to Harry. "Focused?"

The sugar quill was *slowly* pulled out of Harry's mouth and he nodded dutifully. Tom was perfectly aware he was staring at Harry's lips. And then Harry cocked his head and Tom's gaze was drawn to the brat's neck which was bare today thanks to that t-shirt. Again he wondered how it was he found Harry more attractive in his everyday rumpled apparel. It was inconceivable and completely unfair.

"Tom? Are you focused?"

"Perfectly focused," he replied lowly.

"Let's start then! I want to get back to my new machines!"

Tom narrowed his eyes. "And how many of those machines are muggle?"

Harry flashed a blue smile before turning away and pointing at the book. "So what's this mean?"

Tom then managed to extricate his gaze away from Harry's face in order to read the passage Harry was talking about, and over the next hour he explained things differently than the way the book was trying to explain and by the time he was finished, Harry wasn't feeling so frustrated with the subject. And now Harry was scribbling away notes beside him while he once again tried to concentrate on his own work, when in actuality he spent most of the time watching that blasted quill! In, out. In, out. In, out... it was maddening!

His thoughts were interrupted when Harry was suddenly climbing into his lap.

"You really are brilliant, you know that?" Harry whispered as he dropped his head onto Tom's shoulder. Instinctively, he wrapped arms around the little minx's back.

"You want something. You're flattering me," he said through gritted teeth. Did Harry not feel the bulge beneath him? Why wasn't he saying anything about it? It was right there, twitching for Harry's attention.

"But it's so easy to do... Tom, I was wondering about our twins."

Tom leaned back until there was some space between them. Harry didn't seem to notice. The little minx was looking worried. "What is it?"

"Well you know... I was just wondering about their futures. About how they'll be treated."

Tom frowned. "They'll be treated with the utmost respect, as befitting their rank as our heirs."

"Yeah, but... I don't want them to feel like I did when I finally entered the Wizarding World. They'll be just as famous as me, as you. How will they know who's real to them? I'm lucky to have the friends I have... I don't want my babies being surrounded by people who are only there for the attention and then turn their backs on them when things get rough. You know?"

Tom smiled softly in understanding and passed his fingers over Harry's jaw soothingly. It didn't really surprise him Harry was already thinking and planning for things like that. It didn't surprise him because he was doing it as well. "You don't have to worry about that, love. I've already taken it into account."

Harry didn't even question him because he knew Tom meant what he said. Harry trusted him completely. So Harry gave him a relieved smile and leaned forward to tightly embrace him, his lips lying gently against his neck again.

Tom cleared his throat and tried not to move at all. But then after his thoughts this afternoon, and being teased beyond repair by Harry's mouth, Tom didn't think it wise to linger in such a position. He deftly stood and deposited Harry on the edge of the desk. "I have a meeting at the Ministry," he said in parting before turning away to head out of the library.

Harry remained seated on the top of the desk, legs purposely parted as he watched Tom walk briskly away. He started sucking on the quill again just as Tom turned to look over his shoulder. Draco had told him to subtly give signs but don't pressure. Harry's eyes said it all when their gazes met and Tom nearly walked straight into the door frame as a result. Harry snickered quietly when the Dark Lord scowled at the frame before rounding the corner. Once he was gone, Harry's impish smile disappeared and his eyes hardened. He'd spent one too many nights sleeping without his stubborn husband. It was time to fight really dirty now.

"Do we really have to go into this pigsty?" Draco whined the next day. He, the twins, and Rodolphus were currently standing across the street from what looked like a clean little restaurant where Dudley Dursley had been working for the last week. They managed to follow him yesterday to this spot.

"I concur with Draco," Rodolphus murmured.

George rolled his eyes and draped an arm around Draco's shoulders. "It's not really that bad of a place. I'm actually surprised he managed to find a place like this that would hire him."

"Hopefully we won't be in there long. Rodolphus, you wanna stay out here and wait for him to leave? Curse him as he leaves, yeah?"

"Good plan," the Death Eater announced as he slunk back into the shadows of the alley.

"I'll stay with Rodolphus," Draco said and tried to follow after, only George's arm tightened and Fred took his hand.

"He'll recognize you, Draco. It'll make all this much more fun."

"But he's disgusting! And he tried to-"

George's arm tightened around him while both twins stared off at the shop, fierce frowns on their faces. "He did, didn't he?"

"Think perhaps more than one curse is called for here today."

Draco's eyes widened in worry despite the fact he was pleased with them. "Don't do anything to anger our Lord."

"Never fear, Draco love. I'm sure the Dark Lord will find this funny. Ready? Let's go."

Draco was dragged across the street before he could whine out another protest and soon the three were entering the little restaurant, not concerned with sticking out since they'd gone muggle for this mission. There were a handful of customers in place at the moment, but the

three ignored them as they walked to a table. They had immediately caught sight of their target, just as he saw them walk in.

Dudley straightened from where he'd been slouched over with both elbows resting on the counter, eyes widening slightly when he recognized the blond in the group. He immediately bit down the urge to shout at the bloke and tell him to get the fuck out, since Spinks was mostly responsible for his father hating him now. But since he knew he would instantly be fired for saying anything like that- regardless of the owners desperation- Dudley kept his mouth closed and watched them with narrowed eyes. Vaguely he thought he also recognized the two identical blokes but he couldn't think of where he might have seen or met them. And it didn't really matter because they were obviously mates of Spinks so he automatically hated them.

The three chose a booth table and one of the twins slid in next to Spinks while the other twin went to sit across from the two. Dudley heard a throat clearing and he looked over his shoulder to find the manager watching him. She gestured to the menus and then to the table with the new customers. Dudley immediately grabbed three menus while gritting his teeth. Why was he the only server here again? Oh right. The owner had been desperate. The two servers before him had up and quit without a word, which was why the owner had hired him even though he really hadn't the right experience. It's not like it was a hard job though.

Draco studied Dursley as he slowly approached the table. Although the fat blob looked enraged to see him, the blond also noticed he looked reluctant to approach as well and this had the blond and the twins smirking since it seemed he was the only server on duty at the moment. Dursley had to interact with them.

From where they sat, the three could also see a woman standing off in the shadows near the kitchen door watching Dudley as if evaluating his work standards. At least that's what Draco assumed, since if it had been him, he would have kept a close watch on Dursley as well... then again, he would never hire someone who looked like Dudley Dursley anyway. Yes, he was superficial like that and he had never stated otherwise.

Dursley stopped at their table, dropped the menus onto it, and made to leave immediately. "Hold on," Fred, who was sitting across from his brother and Draco, hurried to say. Dursley obviously didn't want to hang around but he must have caught on that his boss was watching him so he stopped and turned back to them.

Draco quirked a brow. "Aren't you going to say hello? You couldn't have forgotten me already."

George grinned. "No one could forget you, love."

"You cost me and my father our jobs," Dursley spat under his breath.

Draco's responding smile was predatory. "That's what you get for touching me without permission. Tell me, what did your father do to you when you got home? Have you even been home since then?"

Dursley's hands clenched into fists and he spun away to return to where he'd started from, ignoring the narrowed look from his boss.

The bell above the door jingled and another bloke stumbled into the café, an apologetic smile on his face when he saw them. "I'm not late, am I?" he burst out as he came to stop at their table. Dursley froze when he heard the voice and spun around to stare.

Draco grinned. "Not at all, Harry. Haven't even ordered yet."

The fiends let their surprise at seeing Harry show for about a second before quickly masking it, while Draco took it all in stride, knowing what Harry's presence might mean for them as a group; in that it would probably push Dursley over the edge. Fred moved over to allow Harry to sit next to him.

The brunet grinned and turned back to his frozen cousin. "Oi! Another menu!" he called before turning back to his friends, hiding a smirk.

"What are you doing here?" Fred whispered.

Harry smirked. "I followed your traces once I overheard Tom talking about it with Lucius and Severus. I couldn't let you guys have all the fun."

"Does Sugar Daddy know you're here?"

Harry smiled innocently. "Yeah, course he knows. I left him a note."

The three groaned while Harry snickered before turning to look when a menu was slapped down in front of him.

"What are you doing here, freak? How do you know him?" Dudley asked, jabbing a pudgy finger towards Draco.

"He's my best mate. We know each other from school."

Dudley frowned. "The freak school?" Harry's grin broadened and his cousin's eyes widened. "You're a freak too!" he accused Draco loudly. "All of you..."

Internally Fred grinned maliciously at Dursley's fearful expression, though outwardly he frowned, looking insulted. "It's not very nice to call people freaks," he said loudly enough for his voice to carry. Several customers took notice as well as the woman watching Dursley's every move.

Again Dursley's hands balled into fists. "You are freaks," he hissed. "I bet that's what that was," he said, speaking to Draco. "A freaky trick. You made me do that stuff!"

Draco scrunched up his nose. "And why the hell would I trick you into touching me? Disgusting! No, don't flatter yourself."

He shuddered and leaned into George, who wrapped a tighter arm around him, ran his fingers through Draco's hair, and tenderly kissed his forehead. "It's alright, love. We won't let the

beastly muggle touch you ever again."

It was quite clear now that Draco and George were in a relationship. Dudley's lips curled in disgust and again he made to turn away, only to be stopped by Harry, who called out to him. "Aren't you going to take our orders?"

By now the manager was in clear view, standing out behind the counter and glaring at Dudley. She was also giving the four wizards suspicious glares so the four ordered without incident, making no more moves to keep Dudley at the table longer than necessary.

"How mad do you think our Lord will be when he finds your note?" Fred asked quietly as they watched Dursley stomp back to the kitchens with their orders.

"Actually I'm pretty sure he found it already. My head hurts a little," Harry answered with a grin.

They talked about others things for a bit until they saw Dudley returning with their orders. Harry then looked across the table at Draco with one black eyebrow rising in silent inquiry. Draco took a moment before he realized what Harry was asking and then he smirked, dipping his chin in permission. When Dudley was no more than two feet away from their table, Harry turned and pressed against Fred before leaning forward and pressing their lips together. If Fred was surprised by this move he didn't let it show, at least not to the muggle. Nor did he really react, and instead let Harry do whatever he was doing, which was a delicious sucking of his bottom lip.

"You fucking queer!" Dudley shouted, dropping the tray holding their plates onto their table; breaking and cracking the dishes and sending food flying. The café was completely silent now, staring at the waiter in shock. But Dudley didn't notice. He had someone to blame again for all the bad happening in his life at the moment. "YOU fucking did this! It's your fault!"

"What's your problem?" Harry exclaimed, clambering from his seat and wiping the food off his chest. "Is this how you treat all your customers?"

"Fuck you, faggot!"

"Mr. Dursley!"

Dudley cringed and turned to look at the woman who was rushing over, both looking enraged and apologetic. She reached their table just as Draco and the twins stood, standing close together with Harry.

"We're done here," Draco drawled, staring at the woman and grabbing Harry's elbow. "We're not coming back."

"I'm so very sorry—Dursley!" she yelled when Dudley tried attacking Harry, only to be efficiently blocked by the twins, who looked fit to murder him for trying such a thing.

"You don't want to do that again," Fred warned lowly; the look in his eyes instantly cooling Dudley's rage and effectively scaring him.

The four wizards left then and walked down the sidewalk a few feet to stop and wait at the corner. They were pleased when after only a few moments, most of the other customers left as well, looking bewildered, irritated, or disgusted.

Dudley trudged out of the restaurant some twenty minutes later with his head down and hands shoved deep in his pockets, eyes mostly down on the sidewalk as walked on. He'd been immediately fired, but before he could leave, he had to clean up the mess and pay for the broken dishes.

It wasn't until he'd come to the corner and heard someone clear their throat did he look up. There at the corner of the building stood Harry with the three others. Harry stood in front, the blond beside him, and the two identical boys standing behind them like guards. To Dudley's horror, all four had their wands out. Three were hanging limply in hand at their sides while Harry was staring at him with bright intense eyes and his wand was up near his chest. His freak cousin was caressing the wand with his free hand. It was then Dudley remembered Harry was of age and could do his freaky stuff outside of school. And he also remembered the freak had plenty of reason to get back at him.

"You have to pay, you know," one of the twins said. "For touching our fiancé."

"I have just the thing too!" The other twin laughed.

Spinks- or whatever his name was- continued to smirk and Harry only stared some more, his gaze becoming increasingly nerve wracking. It was then, as a wand was being raised towards him, Dudley realized he should run away. Only he didn't move fast enough and just as he spun around, a spell slammed into his back and he felt a very cold pain take hold of his genitals. In his rising panic, Dudley didn't watch where he was going and started to race across the street without looking for oncoming traffic.

The four young wizards flinched in real surprise when the next thing they knew, Dudley was thrown off his feet after being hit by a car.

"Well," Draco said after a moment as they watched Dursley's bloodied body rolling across the road. "Didn't see that coming."

"Do you think he's dead?" George asked, staring off at the obviously very broken body of Harry's cousin.

Draco shrugged and started walking away towards the alley with the fiends quickly following. But then Draco paused when he realized Harry wasn't with them. He turned back to find Harry hadn't moved an inch and was staring after his cousin as people started to crowd around the accident. Draco sidled up next to him and was relieved to see Harry didn't look particularly upset.

"If he is dead," Harry murmured, "then your impotence spell was wasted."

"Ah, good eye there, Harry!" Fred exclaimed.

Harry finally turned away from the scene and smirked. "You didn't think you were the only one Bella taught that spell to, did you?"

"You're not upset?" Draco ventured as they went into the alley, waiting for Rodolphus to join them. "I know you didn't want them to be killed."

"It was his fault for running across a busy intersection without looking both ways first. Besides... I'm glad I came today. I don't know why but I feel better somehow. I don't really care if he survives or not. Though I wouldn't want one of you to go out and shoot an AK at him or anything."

"It's not Harry we should be worried about anyway," Rodolphus said as he appeared, looking grave. "The Dark Lord said nothing about losing the muggle boy."

"Oh. Oh right," Fred whispered.

Harry rubbed his arm soothingly. "Remember to stay strong when you report back. Drake and I gotta go. Need to change and then we're going to go visit Ron."

"Hey! No fair!"

Both Harry and Draco smirked before raising their wands and Apparating away.

"I can't believe they left us! He'll murder us for sure without Harry there to protect us."

"Not necessarily," Rodolphus replied and edged out of the alley way to look out. "I suggest we linger and ascertain if the boy is really dead. Our Lord will want all the facts when we report back. It will be worse for us if he demands answers and we have none."

After an hour they had all the answers they were going to be able to get at the moment and were soon standing before the Dark Lord in his study and trying not to fidget. At least on the twins' parts. Rodolphus wasn't so uncouth as to show his nerves in such a way. He'd had years of practice in front of the Dark Lord.

They had just relayed what happened. The Dark Lord had already been furious upon hearing about Harry's visit, though he'd been that way because he had Harry's hastily scribbled note clutched in his hand when they arrived. When they came upon the part of Dursley getting hit by a car, the Dark Lord blinked several times before, "come again?"

"I guess we might have chased him out into the street," George began. "Some may see it like that, but we didn't physically run after him or anything. Only sent an impotence spell at him for touching our lovely darling Draco. The idiot ran away from us, right into oncoming traffic and was then hit by a car and was thrown halfway across the street. He was a right mess after that."

The Dark Lord raised a hand and pinched the bridge of his nose. Off to the side, Lucius snorted quietly.

Rodolphus cleared his throat. "My Lord?" Tom waved him to continue. "That part really was an accident."

"I will determine that for myself," the Dark Lord replied lowly as he beckoned Fred to stand directly in front of him. Fred immediately obeyed, though it was clear he was worried about what was about to happen to him. Fred had a hard time keeping his eyes on the Dark Lord, especially when those red eyes were narrowed dangerously. He flinched when the Dark Lord suddenly had a tight grip on his chin, forcing his eyes back up.

And then Fred winced again as he felt a forceful presence in his mind, but he didn't fight it. He knew that would mean more discomfort. Frankly he was surprised the Dark Lord hadn't caused him more pain upon his entrance, but Fred wasn't going to look a gift horse in the mouth. And then he thought about what Harry had done to get a violent reaction out of his cousin and he was suddenly terrified.

As for Tom, he was just coming to that part. To the part where Harry's mouth curved into a mischievous smile before turning to Fred, and without hesitation, leaned in to kiss the copperhead menace. *Don't kill me, don't kill me, don't kill me, please don't kill me*, Fred kept thinking over and over again as the Dark Lord watched this. *It was a trick, see? A trick! I didn't even get turned on... much.* He belatedly realized he shouldn't have thought that last bit, but he was terrified and he tended to babble when afraid. The grip on his chin tightened painfully until Fred thought his jaw might shatter. He tried not to think another word.

For his part, Tom watched Harry press in further against Fred, but he only went so far as to suck gently on Fred's bottom lip before pulling away, seemingly not seeing his cousin standing there with plates of food. Tom was surprised to see Draco smirking with definite mirth shining in his eyes as he watched the two separate.

Following that was the muggle boy's almost violent reaction and the name calling and tossed plates and his almost attack of Harry which then got him immediately sacked after Harry and the others departed. Tom watched the rest go on, watched the four wizards wait at the corner for the newly fired Dursley boy. He paid special attention to Harry and drowned in his chilling stare, adoring that look on his little minx.

He watched Fred send the impotence spell and he had to admit to being amused as the boy ran away and felt no small amount of satisfaction hearing the crunch of the car and the muggle's bones breaking as he was slammed into by the vehicle. The four wizards looked supremely surprised and shocked for only a moment. They truly hadn't seen that coming. And that's what made it so amusing. Tom wondered if it had been Rodolphus' curse that had helped that accident happen.

In the end Tom discovered the boy was barely alive by the time he was carted into an emergency vehicle. He heard the medics murmuring the doubts that he would make it to a hospital.

When he pulled from Fred's mind, the young wizard dropped to his knees and bowed his head. He didn't need to look to know the Dark Lord's wand was pointed at him. He was anticipating a crucio at the very least because he had been given the pleasure of a kiss from Harry despite the fact Harry had instigated it.

"Stand."

Fred's head shot up and he was surprised to see the Dark Lord's wand hanging at his side. "Err... aren't you going to punish me? You know, for that kiss?"

"I think I'll punish Harry instead," the Dark Lord murmured absently. "Or maybe... I should sear your lips off. Hmmm..."

Fred's eyes widened and he slapped hands over his mouth, shaking his head rapidly. "If you do that I'll never be able to kiss our darling Draco again!" he cried from behind his hands.

Tom hissed at him in annoyance before turning away to look at Lucius. "Has the father been located and cursed yet? Has the woman been made aware of his termination?"

"Not yet. We were waiting until he returned home this evening."

"This amusing tragedy could benefit the entire plan. Whether he dies or not. I want the boy located, Lucius and I want someone posted at the hospital he was taken to. I want a report of his condition and to be alerted immediately should he die if he hasn't already. His parents will be notified of the accident and no doubt they'll be on their way to the hospital. I think perhaps we won't need to alert the muggle woman. The hospital or the authorities will do it for us. Or even Grunnings if she tries to call to alert her husband of the fact their son has been in an accident."

Lucius gracefully stood. "It will be done, my Lord," the blond replied before sweeping away.

"As for you three," Tom said, turning back to the three standing still and silently, "very good work. You are dismissed for now."

The twins didn't stick around. Fred thought it was a miracle he hadn't been punished at all. But again, he wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

"How are you doing, Ron? Feeling good?" Harry asked as he and Draco entered the dungeon room. "Sorry about not coming before but truthfully we kind of forgot about you."

Draco snickered at the red head's indignant expression while Harry plopped down across from his former best mate. "Are you going to answer questions today? I really hope you will. I don't want you to be tortured like Umbridge was but my husband is not about to let you go without gaining answers. He says torture. What do you think I should do?"

"Torture."

"Draco," the brunet warned. Draco sneered at Ron, but remained quiet after that.

Ron slowly lifted his bruised face to Harry. "You're going to let me go?"

"That's my plan... though of course it depends on the answers you give me and your plans for the future. Are you going to answer me now?" Ron nodded. Harry leaned back, bracing himself with his palms. "Why did you come back to Britain? You would have remained safe in Romania."

"Someone had to do something."

"Do something about what, Ron? Surely you weren't about to attack Voldemort? You don't have the power it takes to bring someone like him down. No one does really. He's fantastic like that."

Ron's impassive face flamed and he snarled at Harry. "The only one who did have the power has gone and married him!"

Harry smirked. "You can see why, right? I've always been a sap for tall, dark, and handsome."

Ron gaped at him. "Are you kidding me? Don't you care about our world at all?"

"No," Harry said plainly. "I care about *my* world and right now my world consists of Voldemort. However, I think it should be said... Voldemort is way more powerful than I am. I really don't know how the Light expected me to beat him. Anything I did would have been suicide. I would also like to point out that Voldemort has made more good changes in the last month than the old Ministry has in twenty years..." He paused here and studied Ron flatly. "Are you going to let your old prejudices stand in the way of seeing the good being done? Anyway, moving on, why exactly were you at the executions?"

"Found out Mum and Dad were going to be there. I was afraid. Wanted to know what was going to happen. And then I saw you..."

"Don't stop now, Weasley. What were you going to do once you realized Harry was married to the Dark Lord?"

"I don't know! I don't know what I was going to do! I was just so... mad. Furious with you! How could you do that? How could you marry him? And you're having his babies? What the fuck, Harry!"

"I'd answer you, but it's fairly obvious and I'm tired of explaining it."

"Where's Hermione?" the redhead suddenly asked. "What did you let them do to her?"

Both Draco and Harry looked surprised, and then Draco snickered. "Do you still have that ridiculous crush on her? After everything?"

"What did you do to her?"

"Nothing," Harry answered with a shrug. "She's gone off on a mission now. Should be back soon. She's currently living with me and Voldemort." He grinned when Ron's eyes widened incredulously. "Know what else? Voldemort is thinking of making her the Head of a department at the Ministry. The youngest Head ever. Also, I'm pretty sure she's going to end up marrying an Auror if he grovels enough, so I'd get over your fancying her, Ron. She doesn't fancy you at all." He stood then and tossed a vial of Veritaserum to Draco. "I'm going to let Draco finish up here and then we'll see about getting you home. Maybe."

"Why are you letting me go?"

Ron sounded absurdly surprised. Harry laughed under his breath. "You're of no real threat, Ron. Not right now at least. And even if we're not best mates anymore, we still have a history. I don't want to see you killed..." He stopped and turned serious. "If you can't accept the way things are right now, you really should go back to Romania instead of trying to cause problems. There's only so much my husband will take. There's only so much I will take."

"I'm surprised he's still alive," Draco murmured. "It was obvious Weasley was going to attack you, and we all know how our Lord reacts when you're attacked."

"Hmm," Harry nodded. "You see, Ron. Voldemort knew about our once status as best mates, and he took that into account. Even though you basically turned your back on me, you still had the *fame*," here Harry sneered, "of being the best mate of the Boy-Who-Lived. So... I saved your life once again."

"Don't do me any favors," Ron grumbled.

Harry quirked a brow and then turned to his friend. "Draco, do whatever you want with him. Kill him for all I care—"

"No, wait!" Ron cried, seeing the look of indifference in Harry's eyes, and knowing Harry was absolutely serious; add to the fact Ron wasn't so certain Malfoy was incapable of murder anymore.

Harry crossed his arms over his chest. "Despite what you think, I don't sit around on my arse all day doing nothing. I'm busy, Ron, and so is Draco. After this I need to go visit Neville and make sure he's not letting a vampire seduce him to his grave."

"You sure you're not talking about Longbottom's grandmother?" Draco asked. "Did you see her at the executions? She looked like she wanted to murder Neville."

Harry nodded with a frown. "Something needs to be done about her since Neville won't do it. She's his only family. He's not going to stand up to her because of that; otherwise he would have done it already. I can understand that," he ended softly.

Draco scoffed. "He's the Longbottom heir and of age. Should he give an order, Augusta Longbottom must concede to his wishes."

"Maybe he doesn't know that," Harry replied thoughtfully. "Maybe she's kept that particular information from him."

"He's a pureblood! He should already know it."

"Yes, but Draco... Neville was in Gryffindor, and mostly within that House the students don't talk about things like that. It's not really that important—Yeah, I know, Draco," he went on with an eye roll at Draco's incredulous look.

Draco turned back to Ron. "Uneducated cretins!" he shouted at the red head. "I mean with you lot I can understand! You have no money and no political standings. But Longbottom does. He even has a seat with the House of Wizards. You as well, Harry!"

Harry blinked in surprise at that. "Do I?"

Draco slapped a hand over his face. "I'm surprised our Lord hasn't spoken to you about it."

Harry looked off, his brows furrowed. Why hadn't Tom mentioned that? It would be advantageous to have his spouse within the House of Wizards. Hmm, something to talk to Tom about later... when he was through turning Tom into an angry uncontrolled mess. "Alright, I'll leave you two here. No more beatings, Draco. Just questions." Draco nodded with a small pout. Harry laughed. "And don't release him. Come find me when you're through. I'll either be at home or at Neville's. Depends on how long you'll be."

Draco waved him off. "Away with you. Go rescue your pitiful Gryffindor friend before the vampire kills him."

Harry hummed quietly to himself as he passed through the dungeons, absently waving at the guards, all of who nodded back with grins, and then ascended onto the ground floor of the compound. Once on the ground floor Harry searched out an empty room and closed himself inside. He set in a chair and closed his eyes, taking deep breaths as he drew to the front of his mind the memory of his last time with his husband. Tom said the link could go both ways, indicating Harry could send as well if he wanted. Harry grinned. He planned to send a lot.

So he pressed a finger to his scar and tried to do just that as he replayed those times Tom had driven him crazy in bed; he pressed out against the link those feeling he felt by being filled by his husband, the craving he felt for Tom and the euphoria. The love and passion. He spent an hour in that position and was almost positive it worked when he felt an answering thrum through the link. Tom was decidedly frustrated to an almost violent degree. Harry was smirking as he left the room. He would be sure to do that once every few hours until Tom broke, and he would be certain not to give himself away.

Soon enough he was on the Longbottom Estate and heading across the grounds towards where Neville was setting up his greenhouses. Two had already been built and Harry saw the makings of one more. Neville had already told him he'd eventually have a grand total of eight. And if he needed more, he would build more.

Neville wasn't alone when Harry arrived, but it wasn't Nathan who was with him as Harry had first thought. It was Dean. Harry looked around, noticing the sun was only now setting. Still a little too bright for the vampire to venture outside safely. The moment Dean saw him, the wizard dropped whatever he was doing and watched him approach warily. Harry didn't much blame him this time around. Surely by now Dean knew everything there was to know about him and his husband in regards to their identities and what they had been doing in regards to the war.

"Dean," he greeted when he was close enough.

Dean took a moment before answering, swallowing hard as he did so before finally nodding. "Harry."

"How's Seamus? Baby here yet?"

"He's better. No, but she'll be here soon. We-we're having a girl..."

"Congratulations." Harry pat him on the shoulder and ignored the wince. It was again understandable.

"Err...yeah. You... too?"

Harry laughed. "Yes, definitely." He then turned to Neville.

"We're good for today, Dean. It'll be dark soon," Neville told his friend, who nodded and quickly walked back to Neville's two story manor. "What brings you here?"

"Truthfully, I wanted to make sure you're okay."

Neville blinked in confusion for a minute before he looked away. Harry strode forward and grabbed his friend's arm, instantly pressing up his sleeve to reveal five harsh bruises in the shape of fingertips. Harry could even see four crescent moon shapes that had actually managed to break the skin, despite the robes Neville had been wearing. She must have been pressing her nails against him with incredible force. It was no wonder Nathan had been snarling. He'd probably smelt the blood.

"This wouldn't have happened if you hadn't told her you were with me," he said quietly.

Neville pulled his arm away and pushed down his sleeve. "I did that once. Kept quiet. I won't do it again."

"What did Nathan say? I know he must have smelt the blood from the scratches," Harry said waving to the covered marks.

"What's he got to do with anything?" Neville muttered. "He's not my... he not my anything actually. He just stays here and sometimes talks to me and sometimes tries to make me uncomfortable. He hasn't any right to say anything to me about it."

"He doesn't like the way your grandmother treats you. No one does."

Neville lifted his eyes until they were staring at each other. "Harry," he said lowly, a bit of warning in his tone.

But Harry shook his head. "I know why you allow it, Neville. Everyone else may think you have no backbone, but I know differently."

"What am I supposed to do, Harry? I will not turn away from Gran."

"I didn't say you had to, but you need to make her understand. You aren't a little boy anymore to be pushed around."

Neville sighed and dropped down to the soft grass. Harry followed him. "I got a new wand a few weeks ago and it works so much better for me..." Harry nodded, having figured it would years ago. "She didn't like that. She didn't like that I would choose to set aside my father's

wand. She's... Gran's so angry that I haven't followed in my father's footsteps. That I don't want to. I don't want to be like him. I'm not."

"Hey," Harry said softly. "You know I understand. Understand the need to be who you are and not someone others expect you to be."

Neville nodded as he looked off across the ground. Then he heaved a great sigh and turned back to Harry. "So, the executions. Exciting, eh?"

"Guess so."

"Harry, you went mental."

"I think I acted accordingly," Harry replied flatly and Neville instantly raised his hands in a peace gesture.

"Not saying you didn't, mate. Just... it was surprising."

Before anything else could be said, a chill circled around the two, causing them to shiver. And then Neville jumped as that chill intensified and brushed against his skin.

"Hello, darling," a voice purred as a finger trailed against the nape of his neck. "Are you well this evening?"

"Nathan!" Neville's head twisted this way and that, noticing it still wasn't quiet dark out. "Are you supposed to be out already? Is it safe?"

Harry quietly snickered as the vampire dropped to sit beside them, assessing his wizard with a closed expression. "It's dark enough. I've been waiting in the shadows of the house for a while."

Harry narrowed his eyes. "Meaning you've been eavesdropping."

Nathan didn't even try to look guilty and Neville flushed in embarrassment. He didn't want the vampire to know about the ways of he and his grandmother. He didn't really know why he cared so much, but he felt ashamed. And it was made worse when Nathan only continued to stare at him flatly.

"Don't you need to go and hunt?" Neville asked suddenly, looking right at the vampire, brows drawn in consternation.

This seemed to draw Nathan out of his contemplations. The vampire nodded and turned away looking out across the lawn. "That I do. I am very hungry."

Harry noticed it when Neville shivered from the growl Nathan inflicted in his voice at the end there.

Nathan turned then and he breathed in deeply before suddenly grinning and leaning far too close to Neville. "But it would be so much better if I had a willing donor."

This time the vampire purred and Neville shivered again, which in turn had Nathan grinning a lethal grin and causing Harry to shake his head for his friend. Clearly Nathan wouldn't need to try all that hard if he really wanted to get Neville into bed. Neville must have sensed this too because he was quickly standing and telling Harry and Nathan he had work waiting for him in his study. He didn't even pause to say goodbye to Harry before he was striding across the lawn towards his house.

When he was gone, Harry turned to Nathan. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I think we've been over this."

"Yes, well... Neville isn't like that. If you're looking for a-"

"He's a grown boy, is he not? He can take care of himself... except when that awful woman is involved."

"I mean it. If you do something to hurt him, I'll hunt you down."

"You would need to catch me first."

"Don't test me," Harry replied flatly.

Nathan was back to grinning. "Oh no, Belial. I wouldn't dream of it."

"You better not," Harry said as he stood. "I'm not above telling on you either."

Nathan laughed as he too stood, and he nodded. "I understand you quite well. And I swear to watch myself. Besides, if I wanted to force him, I could have lured him to bed already."

Harry conceded that was true.

The vampire grinned a predatory grin. "The darling doesn't even ward his room against me at night."

Harry slapped his forehead with a hand and groaned. "Neville..."

"There is one thing, however," Nathan began, his tone dropping. Harry looked at him and waited. "My darling's grandmother. What would happen if I should make her disappear?"

Harry shook his head. "Don't do that. Believe me, sometimes I wish the same, and I agree he needs to get away from her, but she's his family and... just leave her be. Doing something to her isn't going to get him to like you in any way."

"I'll have you know she's growing senile in her old age. Sometimes the senile turn violent, become dangerous. She cut him..."

"Yeah, I know," Harry said, sighing.

"She does not like the man her grandson is becoming."

Harry cocked his head. "Do you think she might try to hurt him?"

"She has done that already, has she not? Mentally. She sees no point of him if he is not like his father."

Green eyes widened and Nathan nodded when he saw Harry understood what he was trying to say. Harry turned back to the manor, and his eyes narrowed when he saw someone peering at them from a window. Immediately he knew it wasn't Neville. And he also knew Augusta seeing him there on the property was going to make it worse for Neville. And then Nathan's words, his warning about Augusta...

"What to do?" he asked himself.

A hand dropped on his shoulder and he looked up to find Nathan staring at him. "I will protect him for you until you can think of something and I will try and convince him he needs to deal with her."

"Swear you'll keep him safe? It's not like he can't fight or anything, but against her he's utterly..."

"Useless. Yes, I've seen," he growled. Then he held out a hand to Harry. "I swear to protect him from her. It should be easy since she has yet to discover I live here for the time being."

Harry grasped his hand. "In a non lethal capacity."

Nathan heaved a sigh but eventually nodded and they shook on it.

When Harry returned home, he once again sought someplace private to work on the link. And again, by the time he was done, he could feel Tom's unrest and frustration. Harry hoped his husband would keep his temper in check since he knew his husband was at the Ministry at the moment.

Harry had only left his study when Draco was announced by a house elf. "It's about time you came to get me," he said when the blond appeared. "I hope you didn't kill him."

Draco shifted on the spot looking incredibly guilty. Harry's eyes had just begun to widen when he finally spoke. "No, but I... I had way too much fun with the Veritaserum."

"Oh." Harry blew out a relieved breath and then laughed.

"And it was so much fun rubbing in his face the fact that I'll eventually become his brother-in-law. He hated that! You should have seen him, Harry! He very nearly vomited. I'm sure he would have had he anything substantial in his stomach..." Draco's laughter abruptly ended when he glanced over Harry's shoulder. And then the blond aristocrat paled dramatically.

Crap. Tom wasn't at the Ministry anymore. The fear in Drake's eyes had Harry thinking his husband looked murderous. He might even have blood and entrails on him. Harry scrunched up his nose. He really hoped not. But from where he stood, beyond the anger, he could also

feel spikes of heat and desire hitting him from behind, and when he turned he caught Tom staring at his arse which was once again wrapped tightly in violet leather.

Harry turned to face Tom fully and the Dark Lord's eyes slowly traveled to his face. Harry pretended he didn't notice the intense perusal and instead plastered an innocent smile on his face. The innocent part was hard to do, but the smile was genuine because as he'd told Draco several times already, he was always happy to see his husband.

"Tom!" he greeted and immediately went to hug his stiff husband. When Tom just stood there, Harry pulled back staring up into Tom's face as his smile diminished and worry replaced his expression. "What's wrong?"

"What's wrong?" Tom asked flatly.

"Have I..." Harry started to pull away. "Did I do something wrong?"

That seemed to snap Tom out of his angry funk and his arms immediately wrapped around his young husband; hands trailing over his sides and down his hips before going around his back.

"That depends, Harry. What have you been doing today?" Tom asked, eyes narrowed on his husband's face and trying desperately to keep from being overly touchy.

Harry dropped his head against his shoulder. "Erm... well I went to lunch at a little restaurant. The service was horrible. And then Drake and I went to visit Ron, whom we had forgotten about. Surprised he hadn't frozen by then... and then I went off to visit Neville to make sure he was still human and not the undead. After that I came back here to wait for Drake. We were just about to go back to take Ron home... if he can walk."

"He can hobble, no problem," Draco said from behind them.

Harry snickered.

"Draco, go and wait for Harry in the Floo Room."

Draco bowed and immediately did as he ordered, walking away at a brisk pace. Tom waited until he couldn't hear his footsteps anymore before turning back to his husband.

"Tom? Why've you got ink on your fingers? Never mind, here," Harry said and in a flash his wand was out and he'd spelled Tom's right hand clean. Tom blinked at his now clean fingers. He hadn't noticed he'd gotten ink on his hand when that bloody quill snapped earlier at the Ministry. But of course by that time he'd been so out of sorts he hadn't noticed anything beyond the fact that he needed to return home before he started killing people left and right.

Harry rose on his toes at that point. "I missed you," he said before pressing their lips together. Despite his annoyance, Tom managed to smile against those lips.

"Hmm. And how are you feeling today?"

"Good, thanks," Harry answered with a bright smile. "Stomach's behaving."

"Very good... Harry, we need to speak about you going off without telling me. That was very reckless."

Tom ignored the oncoming pout. "But I told you!"

"In a bloody note," he growled. "Not to mention you put your lips on that blasted red head." Harry's eyes widened in worry at this. Tom rolled his eyes. "No, I did not hurt him; though I had a moment's thought of doing so." Tom reached out and grabbed Harry's chin, jerking his face up. "Unacceptable."

"It was only for a few seconds and bloody Dudley reacted just as we wanted."

Tom smirked. "Yes, I did see that, and everything after. By the way, Lucius has reported your cousin has fallen into a coma. He is also paralyzed from the waist down and it's uncertain if he'll ever walk again."

Harry frowned and wrapped arms around his back and pressed his face against his husband's chest. "What happens now?"

"We're going to burn that house down on your birthday."

Harry's head popped back up. "I want to be there."

"Perhaps you shouldn't, love," Tom murmured, brushing fingers across Harry's jaw.

"I want to see that house disintegrate. I want to watch it be wiped away, and my memory of those people and that place will be wiped away as well."

"Do you really think that will help you move on?"

"Yeah, think it might."

Tom still wasn't certain, but he nodded his approval anyway. Besides, even if he forbade the little minx from coming, Harry would still show up and watch.

"I better go before Draco becomes impatient and then I'll have to hear his whining for the next hour."

Harry raised his hands until he could play with the hair at the back of Tom's neck. The Dark Lord suppressed the shudder at the feel of those fingers on his skin. When Harry kissed him, Tom gripped his hips to pull him closer and cursed the outfit his lover was wearing. He wanted Harry back in those jeans and t-shirt, that way he could have already had his fingertips pressing against the warm flesh beneath Harry's shirt at his sides; he could already have his mouth on his neck instead of being hindered by the bloody high collar he was wearing now.

When Harry pulled away, Tom didn't want to let go. He actually moved forward a step until he realized what he was doing.

Harry turned to go, flashing a smile as he did so, and then went on his way to meet Draco.

"So?" Draco asked when Harry caught up with him. "How's it going?"

Harry licked his lips and gave that lopsided grin. "Perfect."

The two traveled back to the Death Eater compound to pick Ron up. Literally. They had to grab his arms and hoist him to his feet. Harry glared at Draco half heartedly as they did so.

"What?" the blond asked innocently. "He's still alive. He can walk... sort of."

Ron didn't say anything, he only shook their hands off him when he was on his feet and moved to stand a few feet away. Draco made a blatant point of spelling his hands clean before pointing his wand at Ron and gesturing to the door.

"Time to go home, Ron," Harry said as he led the way out of the dungeon room.

Soon they were away from the place and had Apparated to the field outside of the Burrow's wards.

"Come on, Weasley!" Draco whined and shoved the redhead towards the Burrow. "Pick up the pace. I do have other things to do. Like being fucked senseless by your brothers. They're taking me out tonight. I'm sure the evening will end with shagging. It always does."

Ron groaned in disgust and limped towards the Burrow. Harry rolled his eyes at the victory smile on Draco's face. After a few moments, Harry noticed Ron kept looking around him as if expecting to be ambushed. As if expecting all this had been a trap. He looked as if he expected they had lied to him; only led him to believe that they would really allow him to go home. Harry didn't know why Ron thought he could be that cruel.

When Ron stumbled and fell and then was only able to rise with his hands pressed against the damp ground, Harry squatted and grabbed one of his arms and slung it around his neck before helping Ron to his feet. When they were both standing, Harry didn't release his arm and continued to help Ron walk. Ron looked at him, eyes wide and shocked, but Harry ignored the look while Draco kept a keen eye on the red head in case he tried something funny with Harry.

"Wait for me," he told Draco just before crossing past the wards.

"Like hell, Harry. The Dark Lord would kill me. Not to mention the fact that I'm not about to let you go in there by yourself with that red headed bint in there. You know how obsessed she is with you."

"Nothing's going to happen to me, Drake. They can't do anything that I wouldn't know how to get out of. And as for Ginny, she's a fly."

"Ron!"

Molly Weasley had flung open the door as soon they crossed through the wards. "Bloody clock, I bet," Harry muttered as he helped Ron along until they were at the door and Molly took hold of her son to bring him inside.

Harry followed in after them. "Molly? Were you told? Remus was instructed to make sure you were made aware."

Harry heard the creaking of floor boards from above and mostly ignored it, knowing who it was and hoping to get out of there before a confrontation could start.

"Yes, dear," Molly murmured, staring at her son, who'd limped over to slump into the worn couch without a word or glance at anyone. He seemed to sag into the cushions in relief as he pulled the couch blanket over himself and Harry was willing to bet he'd be asleep in minutes. "Thank you for bringing him home. Although-"

"He had it coming," Harry said firmly. "And maybe he's learned a lesson. Don't mess with me. Leave me alone and I'll leave you alone. He was lucky, Molly. You might want to drill it into his head. The Dark Lord will not put up with people attacking me or even looking like they're attacking me."

"Harry?"

Said wizard scrunched up his nose while Molly started to look worried. She knew of her daughter's obsession, and at this point, she knew it was unhealthy. For so many reasons. Ginny appeared, climbing down the last of the stairs, eyes completely on Harry and he couldn't understand why she looked so hopeful and determined.

"Harry, what are you doing here?"

"I've brought Ron home."

"Thank you!" she came right up to him, obviously intending to hug him. Harry stepped away at the last moment.

"Don't touch me."

"Harry, thank Merlin you're here! Now that you're here we can-"

"What, Ginny? What? Now that I'm here you can 'fix' me?" he asked darkly. "Undo whatever it is the Dark Lord did? Annul my marriage, abort my babies? Marry me? Make me miserable? What, Ginny?"

"But we were supposed to be together!"

"Who put that idea into your head?" Harry snapped, looking to Molly for a moment. The elder witch had the decency to lower her eyes and blush. "How do you suppose that would work with me fancying men? I like cock, Ginny. That's never going to change. You," he began softly, looking her up and down before letting his gaze linger on that awful scar, "have nothing to offer me."

Ginny started shaking and her hands balled into fists. Now she looked angry. Furious. "You let Malfoy do this to me?" she hissed. "I remember. The wizard in the gold mask was standing there while that scum carved into my face. You didn't do anything but stand there and smirk."

Harry laughed coldly and stepped forward to trace the scar with a finger. "Draco did a good job," he murmured, again with that same soft voice. He was immensely pleased when her trembling grew. Not with anger, but with real fear since she was looking straight into his eyes, and his gaze now held a twisted intensity.

"You really have changed," she whispered brokenly.

Harry stepped back from Ginny. "Yeah, I suppose I have."

"You betrayed everything."

Harry gazed at Ginny for a moment, wondering if he should even bother. In the end he chose not to since he was starting to get hungry. "Good bye."

"Harry." Said wizard turned around, surprised to hear Ron call out to him. Ron took a few deep breaths and he looked pained. He didn't look like he wanted to talk at all. "T-thanks."

Harry's eyes widened slightly and he nodded, utterly shocked that Ron would thank him. Maybe Ron wasn't such a lost cause. He handed over Ron's wand to Molly with a nod before turning to leave.

"You betrayed everyone who loves you!" Ginny screamed as he left the house.

"Now that is definitely not true," he replied with a little laugh. When he was back with Draco, he grinned. "Well that's taken care of. Hopefully she hates me now."

"Great! Let's go."

Harry smirked and sat down right there in the field. "I need to tease Tom again. You can go."

Draco watched Harry with a confused smile; in no way prepared to leave Harry alone until they returned to the Dark Lord's castle. "Erm, how exactly are you going to tease him... here?"

"The link," Harry said simply. "It goes both ways."

Draco's confused expression vanished and he started grinning. "Brilliant, Harry."

Harry smirked. "I know."

Snap!

Lucius shifted uncomfortably after that, feeling the rising tension and he raised his eyes warily to the wizard across from him behind the desk. His Lord was eyeing the parchments in front of him, but his gaze was dazed and his lips were pinched into thin lines. The snapping sound had been the tip of the Dark Lord's quill breaking. Ink dribbled unheeded onto the parchment.

Lucius raised his wand and cleared the mess up. This had been the second time such an occurrence had happened while he'd been in his Lord's office. And in fact, right as he first arrived, he was sure his Lord had broken the tip of a quill right before he entered. Not to mention the occurrence had happened at the Ministry as well. His Lord had seemed both absentminded and murderous throughout the day. It was all very odd.

Worriedly, his Lord's knuckles were turning white now around the broken quill while a throbbing vein was clearly visible at his temple. Lucius had the understandable urge to flee as far and as quickly as possible.

Lucius shifted again when the Dark Lord's eyes shot to the open doorway just as they heard laughter. The blond looked over his shoulder in time to see his son and Harry pass by the open door. Harry paused, looked in and waved at his husband with bright smile before going on, continuing his conversation with Draco about the new designs for their business. Draco had been cackling and rubbing his hands together. Lucius smiled fondly. Draco was always up for profits being made.

"That is all, Lucius. We can finish this at tomorrow's meetings," the Dark Lord said, and he spoke so softly that Lucius barely heard him. "You may go. Be sure to collect your son on your way out."

Lucius stood and tried not to make it seem as if he were doing it in a hurry. "Yes, my Lord."

Tom left his office ten minutes after Lucius left, having dragged his son home with him. The Dark Lord traversed the halls quietly, face a mask of cold tranquility while inside his blood pumped furiously and emotions raged. He also had a hard on the size of Britain. He would have berated himself on the lack of restraint but at this point he couldn't think clearly. He could only think of Harry. Think of his young husband spread out on their bed. Think of the heat, sweat, and the arousing noises that left Harry's mouth when he was being taken. Tom could only think about what it felt like to have Harry in his arms. What it felt like to be inside his little love, connecting them as one and seeing the absolute adoration on the little minx's face as they rode together...

Tom paused right outside of Harry's study, making sure his husband couldn't sense him. He heard the brat hissing softly and Tom assumed Nagini was inside with him. Maybe he should get Harry a snake familiar of his own. Hm... maybe not. Nagini wouldn't like that. She was very possessive and protective of Harry. If a new snake appeared, Nagini would probably kill it.

Tom only entered the brat's study when he heard Harry ascending the stairs leading into his bedchamber and after a moment he silently followed with a quick whispered command at Nagini that she remain where she was.

"Here, scary arse. Take this straight to Iseut." Harry's words were immediately followed by a hiss Tom recognized belonging to Damas. "Yeah, hate you too," Harry replied with a laugh.

While Harry was at the window watching Damas fly away, Tom entered quietly and raised his wand to Harry's back and sent a silent stupefy. Harry spun around and away from the spell at the very last moment, instinctively calling out an expelliarmus which Tom easily side

stepped. Harry's eyes widened when he spotted him and his wand dropped only a fraction. Tom's blood started pounding in his ears and he grinned a vampire's grin. Harry immediately tensed in anticipation, raising his wand again, while his eyes brightened with excitement and anticipation.

What followed was an intense round of mild curses flying through his room. Harry was very careful with how he deflected curses and jinx's since he knew if Tom thought he was over exerting himself, the man would instantly stop the fun duel 'for his safety' and Harry didn't want that. For the past several days it had felt like he was trapped within his skin. He'd had a metaphorical kind of itching that had begun to get annoying.

Ten minutes later found Harry shivering and rubbing his tingling ear. Felt like pin needles stabbing the soft flesh. He didn't think it was a Crucio. Tom had yet to send any very harmful spells his way. He wouldn't. Not when Harry was pregnant. So in reality, Harry had an advantage. They had dueled before. Many times. Tom spending hours honing and adding to his husband's skills and Tom never took it easy on him during those times. He wanted to make Harry stronger, and Harry wanted to become stronger... but this was just for fun. To relieve stress, Harry suspected. To just be. And there wasn't really a time since Harry moved to the castle that they hadn't enjoyed dueling together. However, just because Tom was taking caution didn't mean Harry had to.

He smirked, dived towards the bed, and hissed out a spell. He was then immensely shocked when his spell hit and Tom doubled over with a grunt. The Dark wizard's fingers curled tightly into fists as he was wracked with mild pain until he could expel the effects. Tom was super powerful like that, the prat.

"Very well done, Harry," the Dark Lord praised before chuckling darkly as he righted himself, crimson eyes gleaming brightly; dangerously. "However, you are going to pay for that."

Harry didn't speak, only kept eyes on his husband. He was still crouched beside the bed while his muscles burned and sweat dripped down his back. He couldn't hide the accomplished grin on his face. This had been the first time he had ever been able to hit his husband with a spell. And not by luck either.

Tom spun and disappeared. Harry sucked in a breath, his gaze taking in the entire room all at once as he ducked further behind the bed. Tom could be anywhere.

"Cheater!" he called out.

"Dark Lord," a voice whispered and Tom's voice seemed to have come from everywhere.

"Heh," he chuckled, reaching a hand to the pouch hidden behind his belt buckle. "And I'm Belial."

Harry sensed movement behind him, and as quick as lightning, he erected a silent protego around himself and grabbed what was in belt pouch and threw it into the air. Harry grinned when he heard his husband curse as the Instant Darkness Powder blacked out the entire room.

Harry jumped and hopped onto the bed before scampering over it and then racing out of the room while thanking Merlin he was familiar with the area since he couldn't see.

He cast a quick look as well as a barrier over his shoulder as he ran down the hall. He didn't see his husband but he knew Tom was close by. Darkness wasn't going to stop him. And neither was that barrier. Harry skid to a halt when Tom materialized right in front of him with an evil smirk on his face. Harry made a sharp left and jumped into the room- which happened to be their shared quarters- just as a spell brushed past his ear.

"Exactly where I want you," Tom purred and sent another stunner just as Harry ducked behind the settee of their sitting room. The spell barely missed the top of his unruly hair.

"I am not a sheep!" Harry cried indignantly when he realized he'd been herded. He popped up from behind the settee, ready to cast *protego* in an instant, only to find he was seemingly alone in the room.

Harry pressed back against the wall and inched his way to the nearest doorway which happened to be the archway leading into their massive bedroom. He paused, trying to breathe quietly and ears straining to hear any sound. Bloody Dark Lord and his incredibly powerful Disillusionment charms! "Still say you're cheating," he whispered, and then cut off an excited giggle—er, laugh.

After a silent minute, Harry was absolutely certain Tom wasn't in the sitting room anymore. Harry trusted his senses on that, but he wondered what Tom was thinking now. Clutching tightly to his wand, Harry slowly leaned over to peer into the bedroom, eyes sweeping the room first before his gaze settled on the massive bed. The excitement in his eyes dimmed. He hadn't slept on that bed in over a week. He missed sleeping with Tom and the feeling had nothing to do with sex. It had to do with being wrapped up tight every night by arms he knew would protect him; arms belonging to the man he knew loved him unconditionally.

Before he realized it, Harry was standing beside the bed, staring at it mournfully. He lifted a hand and dashed it across his stinging eyes. Maybe he should stop with the Silent Seduction. Maybe if he did that, Tom wouldn't be so frustrated and then he could sleep with his husband again. He could deal with no sex. It wasn't that important anyway. He just wanted his husband back-

Harry cried out in shock when he was suddenly thrown onto the bed. He only had time to gasp before hands roughly grabbed his hips and pulled him over from his stomach onto his back and he soon had a strong warm body straddling his hips.

"Do you have any idea how many bloody quills I've broken today," Tom hissed from above him.

Harry could only stare wide eyed, still affected by the sudden attack from the fuming Dark wizard. Add to the fact Tom's eyes were dark with desire and he could clearly feel the physical representation of that desire pressing against his pelvis. It was lovely. Apparently his sending had worked. He really hadn't expected it to work this fast. And to think he'd actually been preparing to call off the Silent Seduction.

He tried lifting a hand to Tom's neck, because he wanted a kiss badly, but the Dark Lord was having none of it.

"Be still!" Tom shouted and grabbed both of Harry's hands, pulling and holding them over the young man's head. "Be still, love," he murmured more softly while wrapping one large hand around Harry's wrists to keep them in place.

Actually Harry wasn't sure what was happening now. First that spontaneous and admittedly fun duel, and now this. Whatever this was... "Tom?"

"And these bloody collars," Tom went on lowly and skimming a finger over the many buttons running from just below Harry's chin and all the way down to mid chest. "I *hate* these collars," he spat, inflicting so much loathing into the word that Harry shivered from the rawness of his voice.

Tom looked into his eyes, narrowing his gaze. "Be still."

When he nodded, Tom released his hands and Harry knew better than to move them from above his head right now. Tom glowered some more at the high collar before gripping each side and then ripping the collar open to expose Harry's throat and sending those buttons flying all over the place.

A mouth was suddenly on his neck, sucking and licking and murmuring things against the heat of his flesh and Harry moaned as he closed his eyes, tipping his head back further into the pillow. And oh, Merlin, lovely brilliant hands were moving over him; sliding down his sides, clutching his hips possessively and now Tom was *growling* against his throat and already Harry felt like his body would combust.

When he tried lifting his hips to seek some relief and Tom pulled away completely to stand beside the bed, Harry felt his hopes being dashed, fearing his husband hadn't actually changed his mind, he quickly became frustrated beyond reason. "Tom, no!" he shouted as he sat up.

"I SAID DON'T MOVE!" Harry dropped back down, startled. "Don't you bloody move, Harry," the man said lowly as he raised his hands to the clasp of his outer robe and was soon shrugging out of it.

Harry caught the look in his eyes and quickly started panting again in anticipation. It was clear Tom was not about to stop what he had started. Made clearer as Tom continued to take off his clothing piece by piece and by the time he was standing there in nothing, Harry was drooling and his eyes were fixated on Tom's hard member. Tom's cock was standing erect; swollen, flushed, and leaking at the tip. Harry moaned and licked his lips while he contemplated the distance between them. Tom had told him to stay still, but Harry figured Tom had been thinking of his mouth thanks to his quills. So all he had to do was be fast and once he got his lips around Tom he doubted very much a single complaint would be uttered. Because yeah, he was that good and he knew perfectly well how much the Dark Lord loved his mouth.

So when Tom moved, looking like he was going to lay over him, Harry struck out, wrapping arms around Tom and pulling until his husband was on his back and Harry was over him before he could blink.

"I told you not to-" his words ended in a hiss. Harry wasted no time wrapping his lips around his husband, tonguing the tip eagerly and lapping at the precum. He had one hand around Tom's cock while the other was desperately working on relieving himself of his shirt. Tom had helped a great deal by getting rid of the buttons. And Harry finally helped himself by spelling his clothes away.

He hummed a sound of appreciation when Tom's hands slid into his hair, tugging lightly on the inky strands and lifting his hips. Their eyes connected and remained locked as Harry enthusiastically twined his tongue around Tom and bobbed his head, and every groan escaping Tom's lips made Harry that much harder.

Tom allowed Harry his way until he started trembling and when it became obvious he was losing control of himself. And then he gritted his teeth and grabbed Harry's hair, pulling the little minx's sinful lips off him. It was harder ignoring Harry's pout when he did so. Harry so enjoyed sucking his cock.

Tom laughed as he fell over Harry, shaking his head. "Will you never obey?"

Harry wiggled underneath him in desperation for more touching. "No."

"You're always disrupting my plans."

"But you looked so good standing there. How was I supposed to control myself? I've wanted to suck your cock for ages! You taste sooooo good," he moaned. Tom ducked his head and Harry could hear him grinding his teeth, trying to keep his control, which in turn had Harry back to grinning.

Tom lifted his head and his eyes were narrowed. "I need to punish you, Harry. And I did say I would be getting you back for that spell."

"Punished for what?" he asked, now wary since his husband had that cruel look in his eyes.

"You kissed Fred. I don't care if it was a trick. You'll take what's coming to you or I will punish him. It will not be painless."

"What are you going to do to me?" Harry was kind of mortified when he heard excitement in his voice.

Tom grinned that snake's strike grin and stretched out a hand towards his bedside table. Harry looked just in time to see the drawer open. Something appeared from the drawer and glinted as it traveled to Tom's outstretched hand. He gasped and his eyes went wide when he saw what it was when Tom held it out for him to see. A silver cock ring. And knowing Tom, there were charms on it to torture him more with.

"Tom," he whined. "Nooooo."

"Yes," the evil wizard said firmly and he moved to slip the cock ring on around the base of Harry's engorged cock.

"What if I beg? Will you take it off if I beg? I know you love it when I beg," Harry whispered.

Tom moved over him, a strong palm wrapping around his cock. "You'll already be begging me by the time this is over."

"I refuse to beg then!" He then proceeded to whimper when Tom's hand tightened just enough to send pure jolts of pleasure throughout his body and he arched into Tom's hand for more of that. "M-more," he stuttered.

"That's begging."

"Wanker!"

Tom shifted his hand and pressed a thumb against the cock ring and relished in the following scream of pleasure that spilled from Harry's mouth.

"Wanker! Bastard! Evil, evil, wizard! I hope you go bald again!"

Tom obliged him by sending the same jolt of energy each time Harry tried to insult him. And then he kept his finger down at that last insult and Harry arched off the bed, crying out as his body was wracked with an enormous wave of pleasure. Almost too much for a body to withstand. Harry felt he was having a hundred orgasms at once but he could still feel that burn; the tightening of his balls and yet no release. It really was torture. When Tom finally released the cock ring, Harry went limp against the mattress while he panted harshly, trying to regain his breath. Tom, predictably, was going to allow him to do no such thing.

Harry both despaired and anticipated when his legs were suddenly bent and pressed forward against his chest. And soon his head was thrown back, whimpers escaping his mouth, and he had his hands in his hair, tugging fruitlessly as Tom's mouth tortured him. Tortured him into a mindless pleasurable mess. His hands were shaking, his thighs were shaking, burning... in fact he was pretty sure his entire body was trembling as Tom continued to taste him; tongue stroking and licking and impaling him- gods, he loved Tom's mouth just as much as Tom loved his- and every so often Tom would pause and pull his face away from between Harry's legs to stare at his face. He'd stare so intently with eyes full of pleasure and desire and then he would smirk and go on with his fucking blissful torture.

And then it was over and Harry thought he'd finally be given a chance to breathe, or at least die. Really, he should have known better. The look in Tom's eyes said as much as he rearranged Harry's legs to place them over his shoulders.

Once that was done, Tom guided his cock to his husband's twitching opening, and slowly, oh so slowly he entered him and Harry keened in both distress and pleasure. Tom grit his teeth to keep control, to keep from slamming inside Harry as he wanted. It wasn't time for that yet. It was still time to torture Harry until he wouldn't be able to think straight for days. When Tom

was fully sheathed, he pulled back only a little and started to fuck Harry with small thrusts, and he was pleased the tip of his cock continuously brushed Harry's prostate.

"Please, Tom!" Harry cried, arching off the bed. "Please, take it off! Please!"

"Not quite yet."

"B-but I've learned my lesson... whatever that was. Oh, Merlin. I'm gonna explode!"

"I don't think you've learned your lesson at all," Tom hissed as he grabbed Harry's cock, giving it a vicious tug.

"I HATE YOU!" Harry screamed as he tightened his legs, trying to propel closer to Tom's pelvis. Trying to drag Tom's cock in further, harder, faster! "Oh, Merlin—I fucking hate you!"

Tom shook his head. "That's not very nice. Besides, isn't this what you want, little minx?" he asked as he slowly pulled from Harry before going back in, but shallowly, never moving in beyond an inch. He was intent on giving back all the frustration he'd been subjected to the past week or so. He could see it was working wonderfully.

"Please," Harry whispered lowly, grabbing at the sheets with white knuckled fists and opening dazed eyes to stare into his husband's.

Tom grabbed his hips and slammed into him.

"Yeah! Just like that. Now take off the fucking ring!"

Tom lunged forward, sinking his teeth into Harry's neck and wrenched the cock ring off. And the following thrust found Harry going stiff in his arms. Tom hissed against his skin, feeling the muscles around him squeezing painfully, and then he uttered a soft cry. He didn't even need to move. Harry's explosive orgasm milked his own right out of him before he could move. It was really rather amazing, his release; but it was also a bit annoying. He hadn't been prepared for it. Would Harry ever stop surprising him?

Harry's eyes slowly opened, blinking blearily around the dark room and caught light coming from the connected sitting room. He stretched- enjoying the burn of everywhere- before sitting up, already knowing he was alone in bed. Harry padded over to the door and opened it, unsurprised to find Tom sitting on the lounge.

"Tom? What are you doing?"

Tom looked up finding Harry leaving the bedroom and his eyes immediately lit up with appreciation at the picture Harry made as he sauntered over in nothing but his skin, wild debauched hair, and drowsy eyes that seemed to glow in the dim candle light.

"How do you always know when I'm not in bed with you?" Tom asked as he set aside his work and inviting Harry into his lap.

"It's a talent," Harry murmured as he climbed onto him. "So?"

"I have a full day of meetings tomorrow, love. And you had distracted me-"

Harry laughed delightedly. "Typical of you, blaming me. You were the one to attack me!"

"Your behavior was unacceptable."

Harry smiled softly, running fingers through Tom's hair. "Sure, my behavior... just admit you were wrong about that stupid rule and you couldn't take it anymore."

"You weren't helping. You and your new wardrobe, those blasted sugar quills, and the cuddling... What? Did you think I didn't know what you were doing? Do you think I don't know you so well? Your silence on that particular topic was a dead giveaway. Clever using our link at the end there." Tom smiled and ran the pad of his finger against Harry's lips. "My cunning little minx."

"I was getting impatient," Harry muttered, very much surprised Tom had figured it out. More surprised still that Tom didn't seem the least bit upset by it.

"Admittedly, I didn't realize all that until about an hour ago when I'd had time to think."

"You're not mad at me?" he asked worriedly.

"Not particularly," Tom answered, running fingers down the curve of Harry's spine, watching his husband arch against the light touches. "I wanted to show you my respect. I wanted you to know how much I adore you, Harry. And I'd begun to realize I was going about it all wrong. You must forgive me, love. I'm still learning."

"T-Tom," Harry choked; struck with so much emotion and so deliriously happy that it made his eyes water.

Tom noticed and he leaned back against the lounge cushion, a bit of wariness creeping onto his face. He was reminded those hormones should be kicking in at any moment and he really didn't know how to deal with tears... that is, tears that belonged to Harry. Emotionally charged tears that could bring him to his knees as nothing else could.

Harry noticed his discomfort and laughed, knowing instantly what his husband was thinking. He leaned forward to kiss Tom.

"I should be angry with you for making me adore you so much," Tom muttered, truly exasperated by himself.

"You should stop bitching and take advantage of my need to please you in every way," Harry whispered softly, shifting forward even more until they were flush and the inside of his thighs were squeezing Tom's bare hips. He shifted until he could feel Tom's rising arousal nestled against his arse. He peered down into Tom's face and hitched his hips again.

Tom instantly reacted, lurching up to capture Harry in a passionate kiss while his hands roamed Harry's body possessively. Tom had been wearing a robe, but Harry quickly got it off

his husband and threw it away from the lounge. Tom's lips left his and trailed down his neck while Harry continued to rock, gasping with each lick and nibble of his husband's mouth, leaving him boiling with the need to be possessed. Last night he had enjoyed the cock ring, but it was different feeling the release coming; it was different when it was a slow eruption and not instantaneous.

Tom quickly arranged Harry and easily slid into his young husband. Harry then shifted over him, drawing him deeper and moaned in ecstasy. His breathing soon became soft pants and he dropped his forehead to rest on the top of Tom's head. One arm made its way around Tom's shoulders and around his back while the other was draped around Tom's head and his chest pressed against his lover's face. Tom didn't mind. It gave him the opportunity to lick Harry; gave him the opportunity to hold him closer.

Tom took a moment to contemplate this... relationship. He mentally shook his head then. Relationship seemed too tame a word for what he and Harry had. It was all about possession, feeling, and releasing control. Harry released himself completely every time to Tom. Did so willingly. Loved to do it and this made his experiences with Harry mean so much more because Harry was the only being he could do the same with. With Harry he didn't mind relinquishing control, he didn't mind knowing that Harry possessed his soul.

Yet again Tom was aware he didn't deserve the young man clinging and shaking against him, moaning into the air as Tom moved inside him. If there was ever such a thing as soul mates, Tom was fairly certain he'd found his.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Narcissa stepped into the room, eyes immediately going to the sleeping bodies curled around each other on the bed. She crossed the room, the light from the facing window washing over her as she approached the bed and eyed the naked backs of the two she considered brothers. “Good morning!” she cried as she threw open the curtains to reveal more light. It was well past sun up and she had been up for hours with Rabastan where they had been stationed at the hospital where Harry’s muggle cousin was being cared for. “First, the bad news.”

“Go away, Narci,” Lucius mumbled and tucked his face beneath Severus’ shoulder.

“The muggle boy has come out of his coma. The good news... he cannot remember anything of the time of his accident. He doesn’t remember ever seeing the boys.”

“Go away,” Severus hissed.

She refrained from rolling her eyes. Neither had ever been morning persons. “I cannot now. We have things to discuss and I refuse to wait even a minute.”

“Speak then and go away,” Severus muttered as he threw an arm over Lucius’ back and drew him closer.

“It’s been three years, Lucius. Three years since our dear Abraxas passed on. And now our son is grown and is about to be married in a few months so I really think it’s time we’ve moved on from this charade. We’re well past the point where this sort of scandal might cause a problem for our Lord’s campaign. Not that any of our circles will say anything about this anyway, because it is you two...”

“What are you on about?” Severus snapped as he twisted around to sit up and spare her a poisonous glare. Lucius sluggishly sat up, half behind and wrapping arms around Severus’ middle before pressing his lips to his shoulder. He raised a blond inquiring eyebrow at his wife.

“Lucius, I want a divorce.” The blond blinked a moment, still in the grasp of sleep. Severus lifted a brow this time. “I’m tired of being in a false marriage and I’m definitely ready for you two to be properly joined.”

“Alright then,” Lucius finally said, a bit blindsided, but pleased none the less. “I’ll have the papers drawn up today if our Lord agrees. You can have half the Malfoy fortune and Estates.”

Severus turned to him in surprise. “Are you even awake? Did you hear what you just said?”

Narcissa laughed. “Wonderful! Also, our Lord has decided he wants his children to be able to associate with progeny of the Snape-Malfoy variety. You should get right on that. You don’t want to disappoint him.”

Lucius started to laugh because surely she was joking. But his mouth snapped shut upon seeing the serious expression on her face. "But we're almost forty!"

"And you don't look a day over thirty, my dear."

"She does speak truthfully," Severus muttered, eyes turning to rake over his lover's face and down his naked chest and the desire always in his eyes seemed to burn twice as brightly.

Narcissa watched Lucius' cheeks and his chest flush right before their eyes. It was always so nice to see that the passion they had had as children could last through time. It had never faded. And it would never fade, she was sure.

"It does makes sense, dear," she went on. "Our Lord has you two, his most trusted. The little lord has Draco, Fred, George, and Hermione. It's only reasonable to assume he will want something like that for his heirs. You are not too old, Lucius. You know you aren't. It is well known you have two decades before age becomes an issue."

Lucius gaped at her.

"Go away," Severus hissed at a thoroughly amused Narcissa while he himself was bewildered beyond measure by her last bit of news. The moment she was gone, Severus rolled over onto Lucius, who looked to be in a shocked stupor.

"She was jesting," Lucius insisted.

"No. I don't think she was... we'll speak to our Lord about it."

Lucius soon got over his shock, only because he put Narcissa's words on offspring out of his head. "Care to marry me now, Sour Snape?"

"I was ready when we were seventeen," Severus replied roughly. "We're taking the Dark Lord's approach to a ceremony."

"Yes. One big wedding in my lifetime is enough. And the sooner the better, yes?"

"M-master?" a soft terrified voice penetrated Tom's light dozing.

He contemplated cursing the house elf but then he would probably disturb the body snuggled against his side by doing so and he didn't want to do that. Harry needed sleep. Not to mention the house elf quivering at the end of the bed happened to be Harry's favorite. "What is it, Tally?"

"Misters Snape and Malfoy be here, Master. They be... excited, Master. They does not care you are still sleeping. They want to wait."

An amused smirk appeared on his face. He was almost certain as to why they were there. After a moment though, Tom frowned. It must have been later than he thought. No matter how 'excited' the two were, they would never have appeared there if they thought it was too

early. But it didn't really matter anyway. He decided he was going to cancel the meetings he had today and spend it with Harry instead.

"Show them to my sitting room. Have tea ready. I'll be out in a moment."

The elf bowed lowly and popped out. Tom didn't move for a long time. Not until he was sure the two visiting had settled down in the room adjacent to the bedchamber. Then he eased himself up slowly and carefully while gliding a hand behind Harry's head since he'd been using Tom's chest as a pillow. Supporting his head, Tom grabbed his pillow and placed it beneath his head before lowering him down. Harry mumbled something and burrowed deeper under the covers.

Before leaving the bed, Tom ran a thumb across Harry's features and smiling like a simpleton until he realized what he was doing. "Absurd. Really it is," he muttered as he climbed from bed and caressed a sleeping Nagini's head where she was coiled at the end of the bed near Harry's feet.

Tom dressed himself in pants and threw on a robe before entering the sitting room, quietly shutting the bedroom door as he went. He studied the two visiting wizards carefully as he moved into the room to drop down on his settee. They were both sitting straight and tense and it was clear they were uncertain as to why he'd allowed them up to his personal sitting room. Tom had done that just to make them more uncomfortable, add to the fact he had no intention of moving that far away from Harry the entire day.

"I will assume you have something extremely important to speak about. Otherwise I cannot see why you would dare come here and wake me."

Neither spoke immediately. Nor did they look like they wanted to. They merely looked at the ground near his feet. He moved forward towards the table where a tea tray appeared and fixed a cup. As he did this, he caught their movements and saw them look at each other, saw Lucius reach out and drop a quick touch on Severus' thigh.

"My Lord," Severus finally began in a level voice and then he paused and cleared his throat.

Tom inwardly smirked and caught Severus' dark eyes. "Narcissa spoke to you then."

Lucius' eyes lit up in excitement for a split second before he masked the expression. Had they not believed her?

"She did, yes. This morning," Lucius spoke softly. "Narcissa said-" he went quiet when the bedroom door opened.

Tom turned. How did Harry always know? He was only grateful the minx had done the same as he and put pants on before coming out. "I hoped you would sleep more," he said.

"You weren't very nice last night," Harry said as he emerged. Unfortunately for him, he wasn't looking into the sitting room as he came out and instead was looking back into the bedroom as he continued to speak and the reason was made clear when Nagini appeared at

his feet. "I wanted to suck your cock until you ca—oh," he whispered after turning and finally seeing Tom wasn't alone. His face then went bright red.

Desire immediately tightened Tom's gut while Lucius flashed an amused grin. Severus settled for watching Nagini slither under the seat his Lord was sitting on. Harry then looked as if he were ready to escape back into the bedroom.

"Join us," Tom drawled with an amused smirk.

"Err... I think I'm going to go back to sleep," he mumbled, clearly embarrassed which was actually something that didn't happen now days. Severus found this amusing.

"I was just about to order breakfast."

Harry's shoulders dropped in defeat. He was bloody starving and now that Tom had mentioned food, there was no way he would be able to go back to bed. He'd first been distracted and then exhausted last night and had completely skipped out on dinner. Harry settled for looking at the floor as he shuffled his way over to the settee before sitting down beside his smirking husband. He could feel the amusement coming off the three elder wizards. He wasn't certain why he felt so embarrassed. Usually he could laugh off these things. It's not like they didn't already know he was basically a satyr concerning Tom.

Tom studied the flush on Harry's neck and face avidly for a moment before turning to their guests. "Have you two eaten yet?" he questioned.

The two shook their heads. Tom stood; this was convenient. "We will move this to the breakfast room and meet you there in short time."

Once they were gone, Tom grabbed Harry's arm, hoisted him off the couch and began to pull him back into the bedroom and to the bathroom. "Who am I to deny you anything," he said lowly. To which Harry stopped looking embarrassed and hurried on to the bathroom, reaching it first.

In the breakfast room, fifty minutes had come and gone and finally Lucius huffed. Severus smirked. "What did you think they were going to do once we left? Surely you didn't miss the gleam in our Lord's eyes."

Lucius was stopped from answering by Harry sprinting into the room. The young wizard hurried to a seat and flashed them a smile.

"And what has you throwing out decorum and running around like an imbecile?" Lucius questioned.

"I'm hungry!" Harry exclaimed. "I missed dinner last night."

Severus frowned. "You shouldn't skip meals, Harry. It's very important you get the proper amount of nutrition. Think I'll brew you some potions..."

Lucius hid his knowing smirk really well. Harry, though surprised by the use of his given name, also didn't let on that he'd heard the caring tone since he knew it would only annoy the

Potions Master. “Didn’t do it on purpose. It was Tom’s-”

“Do not blame it on me, brat,” the Dark Lord said as he strode into the room.

Harry grinned wickedly. “It’s not very fair, Tom. You got to eat last night and I didn’t. You are so selfish.”

“It that what you call that? Selfish? I suppose I won’t ever do it again.”

Harry pouted while Tom smirked and called for their breakfast. And then Harry lifted his eyes and they were full of mischief. “So, Lucius? Did Severus eat last night?”

Lucius smirked and prepared to answer- immediately catching the innuendo from the beginning- only to go quiet when he felt a fist around his hair. Severus answered for him. “That’s none of your business.”

Harry smiled widely when their food appeared. “Yes!” he took a few bites before looking back at Lucius. “Do you stay with Severus at the school now, Lucius? Or do you two go back and forth?”

“Again,” Severus began lowly. “That is none-”

“What kind of wicked snogging places did you two find when you went to school? I mean you’re Slytherins so you must have found the best places, right? Especially since you kept your relationship a secret. Did Severus even snog, Lucius? I can’t imagine him snogging. Not that I’m trying very hard to imagine that because... eww. But still.”

Severus and Lucius blinked at him in bewilderment while Tom shook his head, hiding a smirk behind his tea cup. Harry then turned to him. “Have you ever seen them snog?”

“Yes, actually. When they were teens.” He then looked at his two surprised Lieutenants and smirked. “They never even knew I was there. I heard quite the conversation as well... actually they were doing much more than snogging. It was after a particularly *fun* torture session.”

“Freaking pervert!” Harry laughed and laughed some more at Lucius and Severus’ faces. It was so much better when he wasn’t the one embarrassed.

“I only wanted to see if Lucius’ boasts about Severus were true,” Tom defended with a not quite straight face. “There was a time when all the younger Death Eaters were talking about it. Bella especially.”

Severus huffed and turned to Lucius. “It’s always you,” he hissed.

“I boast about having the best things in life, Severus. You know this. I’m a Malfoy and we always let the world know when we have something others should covet. Of course I was going to boast about having you!”

“That was sweet,” Harry whispered to nobody in particular.

“Sickening,” the man beside him muttered.

“Tom!” then he leaned closer and hissed, “don’t be a hypocrite!”

Tom dared Harry with his eyes to announce to the two just what kind of sappy things he’d told Harry over the months. Instead of grinning, as Tom thought he might, Harry frowned and he looked insulted.

“I would never do that to you,” Harry hissed. “I would never betray you like that! How could you even think that I would?”

Tom blinked at the sudden temperature drop. He then watched as Harry broke eye contact and glared at his plate while he dug back into his breakfast, stabbing at his eggs with his fork; eyebrows furrowed and lips pinched into thin lines. Tom sighed and dropped a hand to Harry’s thigh, only to have his hand slapped away. Tom then looked at Severus and raised a brow. Severus shrugged but Lucius lightly cleared his throat and then touched his stomach. Tom ignored the amusement in his gray eyes.

“My Lord,” Severus began. “About Narcissa’s declarations?”

“Yes. She did come to me and I do not see how this could cause anyone any problems. I rather think you two deserve it after so long.”

“And...” Lucius paused, eyes going wide and his voice sounded weird enough that Harry pulled his narrowed gaze from his plate to look at him. “About the... about Severus and I having children. As companions for your heirs?”

Harry gasped and looked at Tom, who was nodding. “Though not only for my heirs. We need more wizards like ourselves, Lucius. And I know for a fact twenty years ago Severus was convinced he would have been suitable. An exemplary stud for the Malfoy line.”

Harry gasped again, but this time with hysterics. “Merlin!” He laughed so hard he was afraid he’d be sick.

“I’ve always thought so too,” Lucius said, lifting his chin and looking at his lover appreciatively. “I wanted to have a child with him out of wedlock. Narcissa didn’t object to this and I didn’t care what Father thought but Severus said no.”

“The child would have been labeled a bastard and ostracized once entering society or it would have had to hide in plain sight. We agreed we didn’t want a child having to lead a life of lies,” Severus reminded, not knowing why they were bringing up this old argument, and watching as Harry had a convulsion. “Is that necessary?”

“A-a stud for the Malfoy line! Hilarious! I’m going to remember this conversation for the rest of my life! You and your horse metaphors, Tom!”

“He really is hung like one,” Tom said, flashing an evil grin at an embarrassed Severus. Lucius nodded solemnly, though a wicked gleam was also in his eyes.

“Oh gods!” Harry nearly fell out of his chair.

“Calm down before you hurt yourself!” Severus snapped at him. Harry tried to do what he said and ended up giggling madly behind his hands.

“I’d planned to go this morning and have the divorce papers drawn up,” Lucius said, trying to change the subject. Severus was getting that look in his eyes. The look that said he was going to regret the boasting. But usually he never did because Severus’ form of punishment was no such thing. Lucius had never once considered being fucked silly by his lover as punishment.

Tom nodded. “I’ve decided to cancel the meetings for today, Lucius, so you may take your time.”

Harry lowered his hands to look at the blond. “You’ll be going to the Alley then?”

Lucius nodded. “Yes. Thereabouts.”

“Do you mind if I tag along? Just until the *Prophet* offices. I promised to have tea with Rita Skeeter.”

“You cannot go places like that alone.”

“I know,” Harry replied and rolled his eyes. “That’s why I asked him. I asked him politely too. That’s something I know how to do... unlike some people.”

Lucius and Severus watched the two glare at each other and though they found it amusing, neither would outwardly show it. “Of course you may come with me,” Lucius answered.

Harry gave his husband one last glare before turning to Lucius. “Thanks.”

Tom frowned and started to tap his finger against the table. “You will also take your bunny,” he announced.

Harry’s head whipped around and a huge smile bloomed on his face. “Wicked!”

Lucius turned to Severus and mouthed, “bunny?” Severus shrugged.

Lucius walked beside the energetic young man, his head tilted slightly so he could study the bunny held in Harry’s arms. Harry had it up against his chest; he was cuddling the thing quite enthusiastically and not once had the happy smile left his face. And the bunny... the bunny was just laying comfortably in Harry’s arms, letting the wizard squeeze it to death.

“Is that a pet or a familiar?” he finally inquired.

Harry pulled his nose away from the bunny’s fur. “Um...a familiar?”

“Bunny’s aren’t normally adopted as familiars, Harry. Especially for powerful wizards and witches,” he began carefully. “How did you come across it?”

“Hopped his way into my life, actually. And yeah, you don’t really see any rabbit familiars but Lucifer is really very intelligent... and mean.”

“You do realize your image changes when you’re cuddling him. You look far too adorable. You’ve lost at least five years.”

“Thanks, Lucius! To the adorable part,” Harry replied sending him an impish grin. He then lifted Bunnymort up to nearly under the blond’s nose.”And what about Lucifer? Isn’t he cute?”

“Yes. I must admit...” Lucius lifted a finger to caress Bunnymort between his long fluffy ears. “He is rather. May I?”

Internally Harry cackled with glee and nodded. But first he brought the bunny back to him and whispered, “behave,” before carefully handing his husband over to his right hand wizard. Surprisingly Tom didn’t pitch a fit.

Lucius’ eyes widened the moment he had the bunny in his hands, automatically knowing this was a magical animal. He could feel the aura of it. “Yes. He really is a familiar.”

The blond held Bunnymort against his chest with one hand and continued to pet the bunny with the other as they walked companionably down the road. Harry couldn’t be blamed for his sporadic snickering. Lucius didn’t even seem to notice he never once stopped petting the bunny until they got to the *Prophet* office. Harry figured it was Tom’s magic. It was addictive and Lucius had been around it most of his life. So the bunny would have felt familiar to him even if he didn’t realize exactly why. Harry wondered what Tom was thinking as he allowed his Lieutenant and (Harry secretly believed) ‘friend’ to continuously pet him without even wrinkling his nose or twitching a whisker.

“Are you sure you want to go in there looking as you do?” Lucius questioned as they approached the correct building.

“What’s wrong with the way I look?”

Lucius eyes moved up and down his body, noting the scuffed trainers, jeans, and t-shirt partially hidden beneath his favorite informal crimson robe. “Nothing I suppose. This is part of you.”

Harry smiled, glad Lucius understood. “Sometimes formality is called for and I will dress accordingly. But that’s not what I’m going for right now.”

Lucius nodded, a small smirk on his face. “I’m constantly underestimating you.”

“I think I like being underestimated sometimes. It makes it so much better when I can surprise people.”

Lucius nodded and they lapsed into silence. Harry had about a thousand nosy questions he wanted to ask the blond but he managed to mind his own business for the moment, certain he'd eventually get his answers. Either from Lucius or from Tom later.

"Thanks for letting me tag along," Harry said once they'd reach his destination.

"It was my pleasure to escort you," Lucius replied with a slight incline of his head and he handed Bunnymort over with one last little caress of his ears. "You will take caution when leaving this place, Harry. Perhaps I'll find Draco or the twins and have them wait for you..."

Harry smiled. "That's not necessary, Lucius, but thank you for your concern."

The blond nodded and as he turned to leave, Harry saw the look in his eyes and knew to expect someone waiting for him by the time he was done with Rita. Harry sighed. "I can take care of myself, you know," he said to Bunnymort. The bunny nibbled lightly on his fingers. "I'm curious as to why you let him hold you and pet you for so long."

There was more nibbling, and Harry took that to mean they'd talk about it later. So Harry shrugged and pushed open the door which would lead him inside. Just like last time upon his entering the main office, there was nothing but silence. But unlike last time, that silence remained. All of the reporters and editors stared at him. No one having the nerve to approach or speak to him. All of them looked wary and seemed as if they didn't know what to do. They looked as if they expected the Dark Lord to appear behind him at any moment.

"I'm looking for Rita," he announced.

Hands instantly moved and twenty fingers were pointed at a closed door off to the side of the open office space. Harry turned and approached the door. From the corner of his eye, he saw a flash. He turned, flat eyes catching the photographer who had finally pulled up some nerve. He inwardly smirked when the wizard yelped and dropped the camera to the floor once he saw him staring at him.

Harry returned his attentions to the door and knocked. When he heard Rita call out to enter, Harry used his wand to open the door. He then waited a few seconds before coming up to the threshold, his smiling eyes scanning every inch of the relatively large office before he stepped in and shut the door behind him.

"I did promise to have tea with you. Is now alright?"

"Harry! Yes! Yes, of course!" Rita exclaimed as she stood, looking delighted at his presence. It was a relief that she didn't stare at him warily and didn't seem outwardly afraid of him. It was actually very refreshing and he found himself smiling genuinely at her. Who knew one day he would actually like Rita Skeeter? He certainly hadn't. "Please sit!" she said as she rounded the desk and waited for him to sit before she took up the chair next to his and turned it towards him. "Oh! And you brought Lucifer with you again. Aren't you just the cutest thing?"

Harry smiled. Impressed she actually remembered the name he had plucked quickly out of the air for Bunnymort. "You're not afraid of me?" he couldn't help but ask.

“Of course I am!” Rita said, laughing. “But I also know you wouldn’t hurt me unless I’ve done something to you. I will be on my best behavior, Harry, and hope to get a wonderful story out of you as well. I’m a journalist to my very core, Harry dear. It’s all about the scoop, and you being here without saying anything gives me so much to work with. We have a history, don’t we? I hope you will continue to come to me in the future also. Now how about I have the tea prepared and then I’ll let you talk while we have tea. Afterwards, if it’s alright with you, perhaps I can ask some questions if you haven’t already answered them.”

“I’d rather you ask the questions first so that I know exactly what you’re fishing for. You can ask me anything you want, but I do have the right to refuse to answer if I so wish.”

Rita gave him a cat like smile, pleased. “Wonderful!” She was on her way to the door- presumably to order tea from someone out on the main floor- when she suddenly stopped and spun around to face him. “Would you mind it if we popped down to the café at the corner, Harry? I think the atmosphere there would be better.”

“Not at all. I’m actually in need of food and Lucifer probably wants some chocolate? Do you think they have that at the café?”

Rita’s gaze dropped down to Bunnymort as he stood, looking quizzical. “Chocolate?”

“He’s partial to fudge. He’s a spoiled bunny.”

“Oh!” Rita lit up and bustled back to her desk. She bent down and Harry heard her open a drawer. Seconds later she popped back up with a small box clutched in her hand. The box had the unmistakable logo of MR’s on it. “Can I feed him a piece?”

Harry nodded and lifted the bunny in his arms to whisper something into his ear. And he also made a note to start paying attention to exactly who was ordering what. It may come in handy down the road in the meddling and controlling department should some people start doing things neither he nor Tom liked.

“Have you tried this fudge, Harry? It’s simply delicious, marvelous! I’ve never tasted anything better!” she gushed as she approached with the box. “I’ve been trying to contact the owner, but haven’t had any luck so far. No one knows who the person is!”

“Yeah, I’ve had it. Why do you want to talk to the creator?”

Rita stuck the box under his nose. “You’ve tasted it. That should be explanation enough.”

Harry took out a piece of fudge and popped it into his mouth while he watched Rita slowly approach Bunnymort with a piece, cooing to him. “Don’t bite,” Harry said firmly when he felt Tom was going to do just that. Bunnymort wiggled his nose before snatching the piece off Rita’s palm. Rita stood there with bright eyes watching Bunnymort consume the chocolate in no time.

“Harry Potter’s bunny likes MR’s Decadent Confections,” she murmured, eyes looking off and he had a feeling that piece of information was going into her next article.

“Um... it’s actually Harry Riddle now. Loving, loyal, and completely devoted husband to the Dark Lord of Britain—write that down exactly. Loving, Loyal, and Completely Devoted. Capital letters,” he said to the quick quotes quill that had already begun to take notes the moment he stepped in. Bunnymort shifted slightly and amusement flowed through the link.

“Of course, Harry. That’s certainly not a piece of information I’m likely ever to forget... so, the man you were speaking about the last time we spoke in the Editors office, the man who was courting you, the man you were with at St. Mungo’s? That was actually...”

“Yeah, the Dark Lord.”

“And he didn’t force...?”

“I fell in love with him the normal way. When it comes to our relationship, it happened quite naturally. No deceptions. I mean—” Harry paused to stare at the bunny in his arms, smiling softly. “We’d always had a connection, haven’t we? Our fates have really always been entwined—”

“Oh, this is so good,” Rita breathed and Harry looked up to find Rita staring at her notepad and quick quotes quill with rapture. “So romantic.”

Harry flushed in pleasure. “Yeah... but don’t let that fool you.” He grinned at her. “He’s still a sadistic evil bastard of the worst kind, Rita. Just not with me... unless we’re role playing. The Dark Lord is *amazing* in bed—be sure to write that down as well,” he said and quickly removed his fingers from the vicinity of Bunnymort’s snapping teeth.

Rita cleared her throat and flushed a little. “He did... he did look amazing, Harry.”

Harry nodded solemnly even as he knew he was going to pay for this later.

Rita waited until her quill stopped moving. Then she grabbed it and the floating notepad and stuffed them into the purse sitting on the desk. “Shall we?” she asked as she plucked her purse from the desk.

Harry nodded and gestured to the door. “After you.”

“Do you mind if we bring a photographer along?”

“Not at all. Can I pick the one?”

“Of course!”

“That one,” Harry said as soon as he left the office, pointing through the silent group of journalists to the wizard who’d snapped a picture earlier. He laughed when the photographer tried to duck out of sight. “Might as well come out and face the consequences!” When the bloke didn’t reappear, Harry huffed and put on his meanest face before storming through the room, not showing how amused he was when people hurried away from him, parting like the seas to allow him a clear path. “Do you want to piss me off? Do you want me to *report you to my husband?*”

“No!” the photographer popped up, clutching his camera to his chest and staring at Harry in terror.

Harry grinned his lopsided grin and pet his bunny. “Didn’t think so. Let’s go,” he replied, spinning around and lazily returning to Rita’s side with the photographer right behind him.

They stepped outside of the building and Harry immediately caught sight of three wizards who were trying to look inconspicuous and failing miserably. He mentally rolled his eyes. “I see you!” he snapped when the three tried ducking back behind the corner.

One of the twins popped back around and waved. “Look! It’s Harry! Hiya, Harry! Didn’t see you there! What are you doing here?”

“You are completely unbelievable right now.”

Harry heard an annoyed hiss and a moment later, Draco appeared. He elbowed his fiancé in the side and sneered. “Was that the best you could do?” he spat. “Honestly!”

“Next time try disillusionment charms,” Harry muttered.

The other twin appeared and slapped himself on the forehead. “That would have been the wise thing to do.”

Bunnymort’s annoyance came through the link and Harry had no doubt Tom was thinking something acerbic. “Draco, do you see?” he asked and lifted Bunnymort into clear sight. Draco laughed and then quickly covered his mouth, eyes going wide. “Right, so obviously your father worried for nothing. You three can go back to doing whatever it was you were doing.”

“We can go back to tying Draco up!”

Harry snickered when Rita’s eyes gleamed and her hand inched inside her bag for her quill. “Don’t you three have jobs?” he asked.

“We also have employees, Harry. And Draco here has been gagging to use the raspberry edible rope we found.”

“Shut up!” Draco screamed, face flushing and looking at Skeeter aghast.

“Harry dear,” Rita said sweetly, staring at the three. “Do you mind if they come along? I do have some questions for them and for the four of you together.”

“Err... okay, I guess. Do you three mind?”

The twins turned to Draco and he reluctantly nodded his assent. “Not at all,” George exclaimed after.

Harry snickered as they came up to them. “You two are totally whipped. You realize that right?”

“Absolutely!” they exclaimed happily and Draco managed to pull out of his embarrassment in order to smirk proudly.

They followed Rita down the road for about five minutes before arriving at their destination.

Just before they walked in, Harry leaned against Draco so that he could whisper in his ear. “The SS plan was a success.” It took the blond only a moment to understand what Harry was saying, and then he pulled back with a smug smile. Harry grinned. “Yes. You are a genius, Draco.” And then he said louder for the entire group to hear as they walked in, “Rita here has been trying to contact the owner of MR.’s. How about that?” he asked with a wide grin.

Draco narrowed his eyes suspiciously. “Why?”

“Because, Draco,” Rita began breezily, heading straight to a table without waiting for a host, “MR’s Decadent Confections is relatively new and yet outrageously popular and with good reason. It’s amazing how popular it has become in such a short time. Like a wild fire! People want to know more about the business and about the person or persons who makes such fine delicacies.”

“Must be the advertising,” Harry said with a look at Draco and they settled at a table on the veranda and the twins erected privacy shields around them. They could be seen but not heard. This pleased Rita since her photographer could snap photos without having to be near the table.

“Hmm, yes,” the blond said. “We’re going to enlist MR’s to do our wedding cake.”

Harry looked at him over his menu. “Are you?” he asked through gritted teeth.

Draco smiled innocently. “Of course! Nothing but the best for Malfoys. The cake is going to be six tiers.”

“Hmm,” Harry commented before snapping his menu back open and disappearing behind it.

Rita didn’t start her questions until after they’d ordered and began eating. Harry would have thought that strange if he hadn’t seen the way she was observing he and his friends every move and word during that time and the fact her notepad and quill were out the moment they sat down and was taking notes without her prompting.

Finally she dabbed her mouth with her napkin and turned a smile onto the twins and Draco; apparently going to start with them. Harry didn’t mind. It gave him a chance to watch and pet Bunnymort and force feed his husband the leafy greens he did not want.

“Have you three chosen a date for your nuptials?”

“Four months time. We’re having a Yule wedding.”

“Draco adores Yule,” Fred said, petting Draco’s blond locks fondly.

“We’re quite fond of it ourselves,” George went on.

Draco nodded and turned his entire attention to Skeeter and he got this calculating look in his eyes. “It’s a relief the old traditions and festivals are being reinstated at Hogwarts and around the British Wizarding community,” Draco said.

“Oh?” Rita prodded.

“That’s one of the things we were fighting for...” Draco paused and sneered. “Our traditions made muggleborns and their parents uncomfortable and in response, Dumbledore and other sympathizers replaced our traditions and celebrations for those of muggle tradition to make the muggleborns feel more welcome. Instead of Yuletide, it was Christmas. Instead of Samhain it was Halloween. Instead of Ostara, we are forced to call it Easter. And Beltane, a very important time, disappears altogether along with many other festivals! And what about us?” Draco snapped, banging a fist on the table. “What about us, wizard kind? Are we to feel wrong to want to keep our traditions?”

“No, love,” George soothed and Fred nodded, looking upset on Draco’s behalf.

“Soon our traditions were unlawful and almost all of them were categorized as Dark traditions and rituals, which was a load of bollocks!”

Rita blinked in surprise at Draco while Harry smiled softly at him. His friend was breathing slightly hard, and it was obvious this was a topic he was very passionate about. Tom had told him stories before of some of the ancient celebrations. Harry had never been able to attend any of the old traditions but he really wanted to. He’d been fascinated by what Tom had told him.

“It was also another way to control purebloods. And to control those with power. By limiting what they could do,” Fred murmured. “Those rituals and festivals allowed witches and wizards to celebrate their magic; it helped wizards and witches grow magically, strengthening their powers, especially when done in large groups. Our family still celebrated Beltane even though we always kept it quiet, which was hypocritical of us.”

George nodded. “Those celebrations are about the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars and essentially that is where our powers come from. No one ever thinks about that anymore; where the magic comes from. It should be celebrated. And those who are proud of their power want to show it... and then suddenly those celebrations were marked Dark and illegal. It is not fair and it certainly isn’t right. Our powers should never be taken for granted and yet it is.”

“Essentially, one of the reasons why the Dark began to hate muggleborns and muggles was because of these hampering laws,” Draco went on. “Perhaps we would have welcomed muggleborns had we not been oppressed by their growing numbers and the changes they were bringing with them; their closed mindedness. We, who had always been here, had to change for those who came from the muggle world. *We* had to change when it should have been the other way around. Muggleborns and half bloods should have been made to accept the way our world was. If they didn’t accept it, then they could leave. And the Dark became

angry and frustrated that this was not the case. When it was clear the discrimination would only continue to grow. Do you understand, Rita?”

The journalist nodded, watching Draco with a new light. She had probably thought what many thought. That Draco Malfoy was a shallow spineless git. Harry smiled. The blond was anything but. Bunnymort shifted and then hopped over onto Draco’s lap. Apparently he was pleased with his young minion. Harry hid a smile when Draco’s jaw dropped.

“He’s pleased with you,” Harry whispered to his friend behind a hand.

“Oh, err...”

Harry snickered. “Pet him.”

“Um...” Draco slowly and warily ran one finger down the length of Bunnymort’s back. That was about as far as he could make himself go in the petting department. Harry had the distinct impression Draco wanted to both laugh and throw the bunny back at him.

“Do you have a fear of bunnies?” George asked quietly while he and his brother watched their blond curiously, having no idea why Draco seemed very uncomfortable with the animal in his lap.

“Don’t be ridiculous. Who’d be afraid of a bunny?” *Unless it was the Dark Lord.*

“So,” Rita went on, “a Yule wedding then. Lovely. You’ll be fairly far along then, Harry, yes?”

“Yes. Seven months thereabout. I’m around three months now.”

“Merlin,” Fred laughed. “You’ll be huge!”

“And your sugar daddy’s going to be so overprotective it won’t even be funny.”

Draco made a choking sound while Harry burst out into peals of laughter. And then it got better.

“Sugar daddy?” Rita asked. It was clear she understood it was an inside joke and she wanted in on it.

“Don’t,” Draco hissed at the fiends, but they ignored that and smiled impishly. Draco impulsively pressed the ends of the bunny’s long ears into the hearing canal, which earned him a nip.

“That’s what we call the Dark Lord when referring to him as Harry’s husband. He’s Harry’s sugar daddy. You know, extremely rich and spoils Harry rotten; buys him whatever he wants and smothers him with affection and sex all the bloody time.”

Harry snatched Bunnymort out of Draco’s lap before he could pounce onto the closest twin and bite.

“You two are idiots,” the blond hissed, staring at the bunny in horror. He couldn’t tell them why of course. And then he glared at Harry because his prat best mate kept snickering.

“Harry, I wondered if we could speak about Belial for a moment,” Rita asked.

“Sure. But don’t expect to get a lot. Belial wants to retain his mysterious air. The Silvers aren’t looking for attention. They’re *secret*.”

“So what is your purpose?”

“Rita, darling,” Harry went on with a sweet smile that had a definite edge, “I just said. They are secret. Perhaps you can figure it out on your own.”

“But it was the Silvers who were responsible for shutting down the Veela sex slave operations?”

“Yes, that’s true.”

“And they are a completely neutral group.”

“Yes.”

“What do you plan to do next?”

“Belial and the Silvers are a vigilante group, Rita. When a problem arises, they will deal with it. Aurors and Hit wizards usually have to deal with a lot of politics and regulations, and their actions are stunted by this.” He gave her a razor sharp smile. “Belial doesn’t care for the rules of things. Let’s move on to another topic.”

“The executions.”

“Ah yes. The executions. What about it?”

“I wondered if you could let the readers know what was going on inside your head at the time.”

Harry didn’t answer right away and instead reached for his water to take a sip while trading looks with his friends. “Maybe you should be more specific, Rita.”

“There are several instances, but let’s start when you first arrived.”

Harry smiled. “I was excited, to be honest. Not about the executions themselves, but I was excited that the world was about to learn exactly who I am married to. Excited that we wouldn’t have to hide it anymore. Excited to see everyone’s reactions, even if they were negative reactions. I thought it hilarious many people looked at me as if they expected I was there to kill Lord Voldemort. I don’t know how many times I have to say I’m neutral.”

“And are you? Are you neutral even though you have married You-Know-Who?”

“I told you I was, didn’t I? I said no matter what happens, no matter what I do, it’ll always be in a neutral capacity. My husband is Dark but I am not.”

“But you killed-”

“Doesn’t make me Dark, Rita. Anyone is capable of killing and Nymphadora Tonks threatened my babies. There was no way I was going to stand back and let her get away with that. She should have kept her mouth shut.”

“And what happened to Dolores Umbridge? Why was she taken away at the end?”

“Oh, she died a horrible gruesome death. Didn’t she, guys?” Harry said, grinning at the twins.

Sinister smirks appeared on the twins’ faces and Rita gulped loudly. “Yep!” she exclaimed as one and then Fred leaned forward, that same smile on his face. “Umbridge was a very mean, very biased witch in regards to magical creatures of all types; she was a traitor and she was horrid to children. My brother and myself enjoyed helping the Dark Lord rid the world of her. By the time we were finished with her, there was so much blood in that cell that one could swim in it.”

The four wizards and the bunny watched the journalist’s face pale and then turn green and her eyes widened on all four of them. Harry grinned. “Yes, Rita. We are very dangerous in our own right. We don’t need the Dark Lord behind us to make it so. Though clearly Lord Voldemort still enjoys being sadistic to those who deserve it. The world should not forget that.”

Harry held her gaze and Rita couldn’t look away even if she wanted to. But that look alone conveyed everything else he wanted to say on the matter. Finally she recovered and cleared her throat. “W-what are you planning to do, Harry, now that your husband has rule over Britain- and let’s face it- most of Europe?”

Harry smiled at the change of topic. “I do have an endeavor that’s mostly full time. It’s secret so I won’t be telling you what it is. As for how I will make my place within my husband’s regime, I think I’ll take back the Potter spot in the House of Wizards once that reconvenes. There are so many things my husband is trying to accomplish that will be good for us. I will make certain these things come about. There are also certain things *I* want to happen... and as for in between, I will spend my time preparing for the arrival of Lord Riddle’s heirs.”

“Will there be more children after?”

Harry grinned. “You can bet on it.”

“I never agreed to that! I never agree to *more*! You must be out of your mind, Harry!”

“Well... yeah,” Harry answered with a look that said *duh*!

“More so than usual! Isn’t two enough? Two should be enough! Two at the same time! *More?* You’re mental!”

Harry leaned against the wall beside WWW, hiding a smirk as Tom paced up and down the short alleyway that had a strong Notice-Me-Not charm around it. Harry and his bunny had said goodbye to Draco and the twins a few minutes ago and Harry had left through the back door which led them into the alley. As soon as they had entered, Tom transformed and started his ranting. Which led them here. Tom had that definite panic look about him as he paced and it made him completely delicious looking. Harry loved it when Tom lost the formality of his Dark Lord persona.

Harry cocked his head, grinning. “Is that all you’re going to chastise me about?”

“What the blazing hell did you think you were doing putting our sex life on display like that?” Tom burst out, suddenly right in front of him.

“I didn’t really-”

“Role playing, Harry! Amazing in bed!”

“You really are.”

“That’s not anyone’s business but ours!”

Harry pouted. “What about the Loving, Loyal, and Completely Devoted Husband bit? Didn’t you like that?”

Tom stood there staring at his pout before lifting his eyes. “Don’t try to manipulate me with that pouty nonsense, brat! And yes,” he went on more softly, lifting a hand and burying his fingers into Harry’s hair. “Yes, I was extremely pleased with that bit.”

Harry perked up and grinned before wrapping his arm around Tom’s and tugging him out of the alleyway. Tom sighed and rolled his eyes before straightening and erecting that cold ‘I am the evil master of the world’ look.

Harry snickered. “It’s amazing the things I get to see that no one ever has or ever will.”

“You’re my husband,” was all Tom needed to say and of course that had Harry smiling brightly and it also had his green eyes tearing and Tom could kind of ignore this since they were obviously happy tears. Harry didn’t mind Tom was trying to ignore his overly emotional state. But then his husband surprised him by stopping in the middle of the street, turning to him, grasping his face gently and softly brushing their lips together.

“I love you,” Tom said quietly, “even if you are mental.”

Harry laughed happily. “If you took exception to that then you would be a complete hypocrite, wouldn’t you?”

Tom smirked. “Yes, I suppose so.” Then he pulled back. “She had better not paint me as some sappy idiot, Harry. Otherwise I’ll have her killed and you will be punished for giving

out that much personal information about me.”

“I’m fairly certain she knows better, and how are you going to threaten me?” Harry asked, grinning. “You know how much I enjoy your punishments.”

“Twisted, my love,” Tom murmured, wrapping an arm around Harry’s waist. “You are delightfully twisted.”

“So what do you want to do now?” Harry asked as they continued on down the road, ignoring the people staring at them with open curiosity and fear.

“Today is yours. You can decide.”

Tom immediately regretted his words when Harry’s smile turned smug. “Great! We can pay a visit to Remus!”

Tom stopped. “I do not do social calls, Harry.”

“But that’s what I want to do. I have to see if Remus and Fenrir made up!”

“No.”

“But you said!”

Tom stood there gritting his teeth and finally nodded. He was *not* persuaded due to Harry’s pout or the angry darkening of those green eyes. He was not.

When they arrived, Harry ran to the door and pounded on it while Tom scowled at his back before moving to stand beside the door, out of sight.

The door opened after a minute to Remus who was smiling as widely as Harry. His lips were swollen and his face was also flushed in a healthy glow. “You had sex!” Harry immediately exclaimed.

“Harry,” Remus hissed, looking over his shoulder back into the house. “Merlin,” he muttered turning back to his cub with an exasperated look.

“It’s true, isn’t it? Harry asked, bouncing on his toes. “You’ve done something naughty.”

Remus laughed. “Yes, it’s true. Your plan of ‘not rejecting him’ worked wonder-”

Tom chose then to reveal himself and he had to admit the look on the werewolf’s face was amusing. Remus Lupin looked like he wanted to both disappear and to throw up. He was actually surprised the werewolf hadn’t caught his scent before he showed himself.

“We dropped by to pay a friendly visit,” Harry said as if he couldn’t feel the rising tension and didn’t notice Remus’ frozen smile. “Are you busy now?”

“Err, no,” he murmured, drawing his eyes away from the scary wizard behind Harry who had raised an eyebrow in warning. Remus quickly backed up and held the door open for

them. "No. Come in, please."

Harry grinned, grabbed Tom's hand, and pulled the reluctant Dark Lord inside. Remus at least managed to bow as the Dark wizard passed him.

Five minutes later found Harry and Tom sitting on a love seat with Remus in a chair in front of Harry and leaving Fenrir sort of sulking in a chair off to the side near the large bay windows. Tom stared straight across from him at an overflowing book shelf- he was fairly certain all those books belonged to Lupin- while Fenrir stared out of the window. Remus had quickly and surprisingly got over his unease with the Dark Lord being in his home and was now in an enthusiastic discussion with Harry.

Tom looked at Harry from the corner of his eye and inwardly snarled. He was uncomfortable. He was uncomfortable and that was new. He shouldn't be. He was the bloody Dark Lord. And he was in the home of two of his minions. How in the blazes did it turn out like this where he was uncomfortable? What exactly was Harry doing to him?

At least he wasn't the only one uncomfortable. Fenrir was surely. "You look ridiculous frowning in such a way," he finally said.

"Forgive me, my Lord, but your arrival interrupted something important."

Several things happened at once. Remus flushed and kicked Fenrir's shin, Tom's eyes narrowed dangerously, and Harry quickly shifted to grab and entwine their fingers. Tom did not fail to notice how Lupin and Harry didn't even pause in their conversation when taking these actions.

"And what, pray tell, did I interrupt?" he asked, smirking when Lupin's flush darkened. Tom ignored the tightening of the fingers around his. If he had to be uncomfortable, he was going to make sure everyone else was too.

"If you must know, my Lord," Fenrir flashed a grin at his mate. "Remus' education in certain things is sadly and surprisingly lacking and I was about to instruct him on the finer points of-"

"TEA!" Remus shouted, quickly standing. "Forgive me, my Lord. You certainly should have tea! Where are my manners?" he shot a warning look at Fenrir before hurrying away and disappearing into the kitchen. "DEAD ALPHA!"

Fenrir cringed and a snort of laughter escaped Tom before he could stop it. Harry gave Tom his own warning look before following after Remus. He didn't plan to help with the tea, since he was an utter failure at it. Something that always amused Tom since Harry was a master at baking.

"I found out Lucius and Severus are going to finally be able to marry. Lucius and Narcissa are getting a divorce apparently."

Remus turned to him in surprise and then he smiled softly. "They've been together for so long... good for them."

Harry studied Remus' face. "You knew. You knew back when you all were in school."

Remus grinned then. "I am a werewolf. And Severus and I had conversed at times in our seventh year, studied at points in the library- much to Lucius' dismay. I could always smell Lucius on him and vice versa. They were very good at hiding their affections, but they couldn't hide the scent. And they could not hide the bond between them from a magical creature."

"You never told."

"It wasn't anyone's business."

"But... but that information in Dumbledore's hands could have turned tides of the war! He thought Severus was in love with Mum!"

"Yes and look how he tried to use that information. By trying to guilt Severus into remaining in the Order and at the school after she died. Dumbledore tried to trap him."

"Yeah, but he did stay."

"To keep tabs on the Light, Harry. I don't know if he knew the Dark Lord would come back then, but even if he didn't, the Dark supporters weren't just going to go away and forget about their Lord's campaign. They would have laid low and planned for something else."

"And as for Dumbledore, just imagine what might have happened if he'd had the truth. It's as I said, no one's business and I could see how that bond was deep and permanent. If I had told, it would have been a horrible disaster. I never liked the way people were manipulated with their emotions and love for others. It was worse on the Light side. I should know," he ended with a growl.

"*Crucio!*"

Harry spun around and ran back into the sitting room with Remus close behind him and they were unsurprised to find Fenrir under the Dark Lord's curse.

"Stop!" Harry cried as he rushed over and shook his husband's arm. Surprisingly the Dark Lord did stop and dropped his wand. He didn't look particularly angry either. Actually Remus thought he looked entertained. Harry huffed and planted his hands on his hips as he glared up at his husband. "I can't take you anywhere!"

Remus- after a quick look at his mate, who was leaning against his chair and looking amused- turned away to hide a grin.

"He was being completely disrespectful! As usual!"

"You have no manners!"

"Excuse me?"

Laughter was threatening to explode out of Remus so he quickly returned to the kitchen and soon Fenrir joined him.

Remus turned towards him when Fenrir leaned against the counter. "Are you alright?"

"Hmm, yes." Fenrir flashed a charming grin. "Wasn't under for long at all and Harry's current nagging of our Lord more than makes up for it."

"You shouldn't try to annoy him," Remus said quietly, looking at his mate knowingly.

Fenrir pressed in, nuzzling Remus' neck. "But he did interrupt us."

Remus fumbled with the kettle for a second before he gave it up and accepted the kiss Fenrir was trying lay on his lips. Fenrir, as Remus had found out, liked to bite. A lot. And he started now by nipping Remus' lips and every bite sent thrills of pleasure throughout his body, sending reminders of exactly where Fenrir had been biting him over the last week. Each nip sent other bite marks flaring up with pleasure.

"Fenrir..."

"YOU ARE IMPOSSIBLE!" Harry shouted.

"I'm the *Dark Lord*, Harry! And you're not exactly a walk in the park either!"

Fenrir pulled away from Remus when silence descended in the cottage. Remus looked at the doorway with trepidation.

"I did not mean it," they heard the Dark Lord murmur softly.

"Y-you did to!"

"Harry-"

"Don't touch me!"

Then the two in the kitchen heard sniffing and Fenrir grabbed Remus' arm before his cub could rush out to comfort his cub.

"Harry... don't do that, love. Don't—I promise to behave. I'll be... *friendly*." The Dark Lord obviously said this through gritted teeth. "Will this make you happy?"

The sniffing instantly stopped. "Yep!"

Remus snickered and then jumped when a voice bellowed, "WHERE'S MY TEA?"

"You did really well!" Harry exclaimed once he and his husband had returned home. "I think we might actually be invited back!"

Tom snarled as he ripped off his outer robe and flung it across the room. Harry only grinned at this, watching amused- and a little aroused- as his husband vented his frustration. Tom deserved this little angry tantrum. He really was a wonderful attentive husband.

“Is there anyone nearby I could torture?” Tom hissed as he finally threw himself back onto the sofa and glared at the ceiling.

“Afraid not.”

Tom’s gaze snapped to his face and he glared fiercely. Others might have been terrified from such a look- it really was terrifying- but Harry only laughed. “If circumstances were different right now I would torture you!”

“Lucky I’m pregnant then.”

Tom hissed at him before looking back up at the ceiling and peeling the paint off with his evil glare. Harry stifled a laugh as he walked around the room until he was standing behind Tom. He then settled hands on his husband’s tense shoulders and began to knead lightly. “C’mon. You can’t tell me you weren’t amused by their antics.”

Tom’s hand shot out and wrapped around his wrist to keep his hand still. It was a very firm grip and not overly painful, but it was clear Tom was in no mood to be mollified. Harry ignored it and continued to knead Tom’s shoulder with his free hand. He pressed his fingers into a particular tight spot and Tom relinquished his hold on Harry’s other hand with a groan. Harry smiled triumphantly and began to give him a proper massage.

“Fenrir will be cursed to within an inch of his life at the next Death Eater meeting,” Tom muttered.

Harry bit back a laugh and instead nodded even though Tom wasn’t looking at him. Fenrir had been toeing the line. Quite on purpose. Pressing the limits of his Lord. Remus had been shooting his mate annoyed and worried looks most of the evening and then looking at Tom apologetically before losing his temper and snapping at Fenrir. “I’m pretty sure he got an ear full from Remus when we left.”

Surprisingly Tom snorted. “Yes. And at least your werewolf isn’t so disrespectful. He’s intelligent whereas Fenrir has always been brawn.”

Harry leaned over the sofa, pressing their cheeks together. “Would you like a lap dance?”

Tom was instantly out of his seat and striding towards the door. Harry frowned. He hadn’t thought he would be turned down. And in such a way-

“A pole dance as well,” Tom said just before leaving the room. Harry laughed and raced after his husband.

Tom made Harry dance for what seemed like hours, though Harry really had no complaints. It was fun for him and he knew the Dark Lord enjoyed watching. Only problem was, by the time he was finished dancing, he could hardly move. But still that was okay, since Tom took it upon himself to lift and carry Harry to the raised bed and have his way with him,

allowing Harry just to lie there spread out and be ravished in a sinfully excellent manner without him having to move all that much.

"I'm dying," he gasped after, burying his face against Tom's chest and having only enough strength to toss a leg over Tom's hip. Really, he very might well be. They'd made love multiple times in the last twenty-four hours since Tom had caved under the Silent Seduction. "No more," he moaned. "I can't take anymore."

Tom smirked smugly before laying a soft kiss on his forehead. "I will give you a few days to recuperate."

Harry sighed in relief and relaxed in the afterglow. "Tom?"

"Hmm?"

Harry smiled against the Tom's chest when he felt fingers caressing his abdomen which had a slight bump now. "Why did you let Lucius hold you and pet you like that? You weren't annoyed at all."

Tom's fingers stopped moving for a moment and he went very still. Harry moved his face a fraction so that he could see the Dark Lord's face. Tom looked a bit uncomfortable for a moment before he sighed and relaxed.

"Do you know how many of my marked followers I've trusted absolutely throughout my campaign, Harry?" he began by asking and Harry shook his head. "Four. Four individuals. And three of whom I personally taught when they were young. Bellatrix, Lucius, Severus, and Barty. And I didn't quite trust Bella as much because she never had a firm grip on her mentality. She is a Black and they were all mostly unstable. Narcissa is the calmest of the lot."

"Yeah. Even Sirius had a bit of... offness about him at times, and he even told me that it really had nothing to do with his stint in Azkaban. Add to the fact he and Bella acted like it was a game when they were dueling each other..." Harry sobered, thinking about his association with both of them and how things had changed. He really did like Bella, despite the fact he had wanted to kill her at one point.

"That's why, Harry. Because of the trust I have with Lucius."

"Would you ever let Severus hold you?"

Tom snorted. "He wouldn't ever be caught dead holding such an animal."

Harry snickered. "I would pay to see that... Did you never once suspect Severus of double crossing you?"

"No. Many thought I should have. Especially after you destroyed my body as a baby and he went on to stay at Hogwarts and remain in the old man's good graces. Also from the fact that he made a personal vow to protect you as you grew and the fact he and Lucius never searched for me. But they truly had believed I was gone and Lucius spent much of the time

bribing and trying to keep himself out of prison. They didn't know until your fourth year and I became stronger. I was angry with them and I did punish them for thinking me not strong enough to ensure I would rise again, but I also knew they had been hit the hardest by my disappearance.

"By the end of your fourth year, Severus—he knew what was going to happen to you." Tom stopped and looked away from Harry. "He begged me to leave you alone and he paid for that."

"But he hates me. I don't understand why he protected me."

Tom turned and frowned at him. "You think that still?"

"Well, no... but I know he did then."

"Yes. But his vow had more to do with his estranged friendship with your mother, his involvement in her death, and the life debt he owed your father. And he thought he could get rid of that debt by protecting the son of the man he loathed. He did it until I reappeared. And then... he was secretly relieved and baffled when I called off my vendetta against you in your sixth year."

"Did he want to kill Dumbledore?"

"Yes. He wanted Dumbledore gone. He didn't hate the old man by that time, but he knew if we were ever going to win, Dumbledore must go. Harry, you must understand. Severus is insanely loyal and once he had a firm grasp of his beliefs, he never turned away. He wouldn't. He is also devoted to Lucius and he would never do anything to betray him. Which means—"

"He would never turn his back on the Dark, because Lucius is a Malfoy and Malfoy's have always been Dark."

"Exactly."

Harry snuggled closer, thinking about all he'd been told. "So when you said you would take care of it, of our children, that's what you meant? Breeding companions for our children."

Tom frowned, brushing fingers down Harry's back, over that long scar. "You don't have to make it sound so... wrong."

"You're the one who called Severus a stud for the Malfoy line!" Harry returned with a laugh. "And that's what you planned. You are forcing Lucius and Severus to reproduce... not that either of them looked like they were in any way against the idea, which is surprising because I always thought Severus loathed children. Also, Lucius' admittance that he'd wanted to have a child out of wedlock... that was really very shocking! I wonder if Drake knows about that."

Tom cleared his throat. "I distinctly remember someone telling me that if I didn't like the population ratio of muggles to wizards that I should stop bitching and reproduce. Since I

obviously followed that order, I don't see why they shouldn't either. It's a convenient coincidence Narcissa finally called for a divorce."

Harry snickered. "Do you want to know what I think?"

"No, not really."

The younger wizard jabbed a finger into his stomach. "I think you want to repay Lucius and Severus some way for their unwavering loyalty. They've basically given their lives to you. I think once you regained your sanity, you realized they were more than followers. More than minions. I think you feel they're your fr-

"Perhaps you should stop thinking," Tom snapped, clearly uncomfortable.

"It's the truth! You can have friends and still be the Dark Lord." When he saw Tom grimace, Harry smiled softly and lifted a hand, running fingertips along Tom's frowning lips. The frown slowly disappeared and Tom kissed his fingers before rolling on top of him and embracing him tightly.

"What do I do?" Tom asked softly against his neck and Harry took a moment to savor this moment; to savor the easiness in which Tom asked for his assistance without it seeming like a chore.

Harry caressed Tom's back. "I've noticed they sometimes forget themselves and speak to you with less formality. When they do it, stop chastising them- stop cursing them- as you usually do. That's a good place to start."

"People will start to think I've gone soft," Tom muttered. "Especially when that blasted article of Skeeter's comes out tomorrow."

"Maybe... but then it'll be so much more fun for you when they make you prove them wrong."

Tom pulled back slightly, his red eyes alight on Harry's face, and they gleamed with eager anticipation.

Harry snickered. "Sadistic bastard."

They were enjoying a quiet late dinner together and Tom spent most of his time studying his husband with a frown. Harry was being unusually quiet, obviously lost in thought. "What's wrong?"

"Neville," Harry answered before looking at him.

"The gullible Gryffindor?"

Harry cracked a grin. “Yeah. According to Nathan, Neville’s grandmother is... slipping in the mind, concerning him. She doesn’t like the wizard he’s becoming, doesn’t like the fact he’s stated loyalty to me, with me, and the fact he got his own wand in favor of using his father’s. She’s hurt him; mostly mentally, and just recently physically. Nathan is sure it’s going to escalate. I don’t know what to do. She’s got such a strong hold on him.”

He dropped his gaze to his plate. “I understand him, Tom. Because he’s trying to be his own person. Doing what I did. But she’s his only family, right? How’s he supposed to turn away from her? And she’s just so... so controlling.”

“You could always-”

Harry gave him a look. “Let’s try and keep murder out of this.”

“It’s a wonderful way of immediately solving problems,” Tom replied and gave a little smirk upon seeing the irritation lighting Harry’s eyes.

“Is this a lesson you’re going to teach our twins?” Harry said with almost a growl.

“Is that a lesson you would allow me to teach them?” Tom countered.

“As if I could stop you.”

“Too true.”

“Besides,” Harry went on, ignoring the smugness. “Neville has lost too many close to him by your side already. I’m surprised he sided with me in the first place, and stayed when he found out I married you.”

“I was a spirit at that time,” Tom reminded. “I had no control over what my Death Eaters would do then.”

“I wasn’t casting blame.”

“You were.”

“Whatever. Let’s move on. Neville?”

“He needs to stand up to her on his own, love.”

“That’s not helpful. I already knew that.”

“Keep him busy and away from her.”

“But how? How do I keep him away from her?” he muttered and tapped a finger on the table beside his plate. Tom remained quiet and watched his young husband rapidly thinking up and discarding ideas and then finally Harry perked up, struck with a brilliant idea. “Have him send her on a holiday! That way he could do things without her looming shadow, let him grow into himself and by the time she returns...”

“If he enjoys the wizard he has become, he will not allow her to ruin him,” Tom said with a nod. “Have him take up his position with the House of Wizards as well.”

Harry’s eyes brightened. “I meant to talk to him about that. Why didn’t you tell me I had a seat there as well?”

“It was not something you needed to rush in to. Eventually I would have broached the subject with you when things had died down. But if you want to take up the Potter mantle, I have no disagreements. You being in the House of Wizards would only help us.”

Harry nodded in agreement. “I’ll have a talk with Neville tomorrow.”

The Dark Lord frowned. “Tomorrow...”

“Yeah. It’s Neville’s birthday.”

“We have plans tomorrow and for the day after, which is your birthday.”

“I know when my birthday is, thanks,” Harry said with a frown. He looked down at his plate, desperately hoping there wouldn’t be a party. The burning of the Dursley house would be enough party for him. He hated birthdays. If he weren’t pregnant he knew he would have been spending the day after tomorrow down a bottle like he had for the past two years. “Surely that won’t last all day.”

“It depends. Lucius informed me earlier your cousin is being released some time on the 31st. Your aunt and uncle don’t want to keep him in the hospital. They plan to care for him at home and seek out physical therapy on their own.”

“How are they supposed to afford that?”

Tom shrugged. He didn’t care. He was actually annoyed the boy had come out of the coma. But at least the beastly little muggle didn’t remember what had happened that day. “Do you care?”

Harry didn’t answer right away, instead stared at his husband while twirling his fork round and round. “No,” he finally answered. “Not really. Is it wrong that I feel so indifferent about it?”

“You’re asking me?” the Dark wizard asked in amusement. Harry only shrugged. “That is what makes you the perfect Neutral, my love. Your indifference... stop frowning. There will be no party.”

Harry breathed out a relieved sigh and gave his husband a small smile.

“At least not a large one.”

The young brunet scowled which caused Tom to chuckle darkly. “Do you honestly think Narcissa and Bella will let the day pass without you having a little gathering so that they can lavish you with gifts? And let’s not forget about Draco and the twins. Hermione also... probably a few others.”

A groan escaped Harry.

Tom flashed an amused grin. "Have no worry. I won't let it get out of hand. You never know, you might actually enjoy yourself."

"Doubt it."

"Tomorrow I will escort you to the Longbottom estate," Tom decided, discarding the plans he'd made earlier. "I do think he should take control of his inheritance. He's of noble stock and should manage that responsibility as befits his title. You leave Augusta Longbottom to me."

"I didn't really want--"

"I know you would rather solve this problem on your own and in a way that it is really him solving the problem. We can do that, but we can help each other can we not? We can give him the chance and it will be his choice."

"I know you're only doing this for me," Harry said, smiling. "Thanks."

Tom scowled. "He's a pureblood with a legacy behind his name. He should put it to good use. No, I'm not doing it for you."

"Liar."

"Silence."

"You're cute, Tom. Really."

"I'm the Dark Lord," Tom hissed.

"Your point?"

"Promise not to kill her," Harry asked his husband after he, Tom, Lucius, and Severus appeared on the doorsteps of the Longbottom Estate. "Promise not to curse her either because I have a feeling she's not going to just stand there and listen and follow your orders without talking back."

Tom, from his position directly behind his husband, pulled his gaze away from Harry's tightly covered arse- why was he wearing these enticing outfits again?- to stare at the door. "If talking back is the only thing she does, then I can assure you nothing will happen to her. But I cannot be responsible if she goes farther than that, Harry."

"I can accept that," Harry said with a nod and then knocked firmly. The door wasn't opened as quickly as he thought it should be since he knew Neville had a house elf and house elves were supposed to open up immediately, though he didn't let the annoyance show on his face to the house elf looking up at him and his three companions.

“If you would announce me to Neville, that would be lovely,” Harry said with a bright smile at the gaping elf standing before them. The house elf’s eyes went from Harry to the three standing behind him, before going back to Harry.

“We’s... we’s not supposed to allow the Lords Riddle in the manor,” it squeaked, and then cringed when the wizard behind narrowed his crimson eyes. “Lady Longbottom says so!”

“Announce him now,” Lucius replied coolly. “You will tell the *Master of this House* Harry is here to see him and leave your mistress out of this.”

The elf squeaked and popped away without another word.

“How dare she?!” Tom hissed. Harry reached behind to bring Tom to his side, entwined their arms and then ran his hand up and down that arm trying to sooth the murderous fury away before they stepped in.

“I kind of figured she would do something like that after she saw me on the lawns with Nathan.”

The elf popped back in a moment later, waving its thin arms. “Come, come,” it squeaked, waving them inside and then scampered down the hall as the door shut behind them. They followed the elf down a dark hall and Harry couldn’t help but notice how dark the place was. All the windows had heavy curtains over them and all were closed. None of the dim lighting was due to the sun outside.

Harry slowed his walk when he heard soft voices belonging to someone who was just around the corner.

“You will listen to what your friend has to say.”

“But Gran-”

“She tried to curse you!” came the impatient barked reply. And then there was a sigh and Nathan spoke more calmly and softly. “She tried to put you under the Imperius curse, darling. You cannot let this go on.”

“I know.”

“Do you want to keep living like this?”

“No.”

“You must take charge of your life. You are nineteen today.”

“I don’t know how,” Neville admitted softly. “I’ve already stood up to her and told her what I want to do with my life. Told her where I stand... I thought that would be that, Nathan. I don’t know what else to do. She won’t listen!”

Harry and the others finally turned the corner to find Nathan and Neville. Nathan was leaning up against the wall next to an opened door where Harry could see a set of stairs.

Harry assumed this was one of the entrances down to the cellars. Neville was staring at the floor, hands balled into his fists at his sides while Nathan was watching Harry and the others approach because of course he had heard them coming.

“She tried to curse you?” Harry asked lowly.

Without looking at him, Neville nodded. “Tried the Imperius curse, but Nathan stopped her. She wants me to destroy my greenhouses and give up my business plans. She also wants me to cut ties with you or deceive you and join a rebellion. She wants me to become an Auror and work against the new Ministry from the inside,” he shook his head. “She wants me to be my father. She said... she said I should at least die honorably.”

“And why would she need to use Imperio on you?” Lucius asked.

Neville’s head finally snapped up and his eyes went horribly round to see Harry was not alone. He took a step closer to the vampire as he answered. “I- I... I don’t want to do any of that. I’m happy with the way things are turning out. E-Even if I don’t like some of the people responsible.”

“Where is your grandmother now?” the Dark Lord asked.

Harry was actually surprised when Neville managed to at least look in the Dark Lord’s direction and answer without stuttering. “In her rooms. Preparing to take me to some of her friends for an ‘intervention’.”

“Fuck that!” Harry spat causing Neville to smile. “Tom and Severus will take care of your Gran while we have a chat with Lucius here.”

Neville paled at this.

“Oh yes, Harry. Scare him to death,” Tom remarked, laughing under his breath. “And you say I’m bad.”

“Not like that and you so are! Neville, your grandmother will be okay. They only want to talk to her.”

Lucius stepped forward and waved the folders he had in hand down the hall. “Come along, Longbottom. Lead on to your study. We have much to discuss.”

“Err... about what?” Neville asked with a suspicious tone.

“About your duties. I have assumed your grandmother hasn’t told you anything about the Longbottom legacy. I will also assume you want to take up the mantle as Lord Longbottom and as such I have come to educate you.”

Though Lucius looked at Neville expectantly, Harry was pleased to note his tone had not been snide nor was it forceful, and it was clear Neville could say no if he wanted to. The choice was his to make.

And then Neville was nodding, a tentative smile on his lips. “Alright. Yes, thank you, Mr. Malfoy. Err... my study is this way.”

He moved around Harry with a slight smile, skirted around the Dark Lord and Severus with an indrawn breath, and quickly strode down the hall with a smirking Lucius right behind him. Harry turned to Nathan. “Is that all she’s tried to do?”

“She also talked about institutionalizing him. She says there must be something wrong with him since he continues to go against her wishes.”

Harry’s eyes darkened in rage. “What?” he hissed.

“I told you she was going senile. It got worse after she saw the two of us speaking out on the lawn. Admittedly, the darling has been very brave standing up against her demands, which is another reason why last night she tried to curse him.”

“That first option I gave you is sounding better and better,” Tom said.

Harry spun around. “We are not going to kill her!”

“It would solve everything,” Nathan put in and Tom nodded while Harry groaned and tugged at his hair. Severus just stood back and smirked at Harry’s frustration.

“Bloody Dark people,” Harry muttered. “No restraint at all.”

Tom was fully prepared to remind the little minx that he loved the fact Tom had no restraint... in bed. Harry speared him with a knowing look before turning back to Nathan. “I noticed the décor inside is a bit different than what I remember.”

“Yes,” Severus said; the first time he’d opened his mouth since entering as he looked around. “It’s darker than I imagined a herbology prodigy would allow his home to be. No sunlight at all.”

Harry smiled. “Did Neville do this?”

Nathan nodded with a small smile; his eyes were warm as he took in the darkness around him. “It’s actually what started last night’s argument. She wanted to know why he had blacked out most of the Estate. He eventually told her about me of course, because he is a sweet honest thing-” he stopped speaking, straightened and stared down the hall. “She’s coming down the stairs.”

Tom laid a hand on Harry’s shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze before he and Severus turned and strode away towards the foot of the stairs. Nathan followed after them, since he really did have a vested interest in all this and in Neville whether the darling wanted it or not. He wasn’t planning on going anywhere for a very long time.

As he watched them go, Harry hoped Augusta didn’t do anything stupid. He cringed when the first thing she did upon seeing the Dark Lord, Severus, and Nathan was shriek loudly and call them all manner of names. Severus quickly took care of it and cast a Silencio as well as an immobilizing spell.

“We’ll take this somewhere more comfortable,” Tom stated and then the three ascended up the stairs.

Harry sighed and walked along down to Neville’s study and let himself inside. Lucius impatiently waved him into the chair beside Neville. Not only was this a lesson for his friend, but also for himself as well. Harry smiled to himself as he caught the gleam off the ring on Lucius’ left hand ring finger. It was no longer a wedding ring; instead it was an engagement ring that would also become the ring that would finally legally bind him to Severus. The divorce wasn’t final yet but Severus, Lucius, nor Narcissa cared about the legalities.

Earlier Harry had heard Lucius tell Tom it was the best gift Severus has ever and could ever give him. Tom had looked surprised Lucius had said something like that to him, but it was clear Lucius was excited in his own quiet way. Harry had looked at Tom smugly because it was obvious Lucius and Severus felt their master was actually more than just their ‘master’. Really, the Dark wizard had been teaching them since they were sixteen. What did he expect? They had been devastated after Tom had apparently been defeated by a baby and they’d stuck with him even when it was clear Tom had lost his mind and become a raving snake-faced lunatic. Really, Tom was obtuse sometimes.

“Your first order of business should be a visit to Gringotts to meet with your family account manager. You need to be aware of where all your money is; you need to be fully aware of all your finances.”

“Why?”

“Even if you’ve been inactive in your role, the Longbottoms would have invested long ago. Those investments should still be there. You should take hold of it. Don’t let it lie around doing nothing. Once your finances are in order, you will then be able to determine what you want it to do for you in the future.”

Neville nodded that he understood. Lucius then turned to both young wizards and began to explain what it was the House of Wizards actually did. “It differs from the Wizengamot in that the House is not about the law in regards to passing judgment in association with crimes. The House centers around international Wizarding politics. In years passed, the meetings housed wizards and then witches also from all over the world. These gathering were once very useful to the ways of *all* Wizarding kind. In the last century the House has been allowed less and less chances to meet and the reason had to do because of those involved. Purebloods and half-bloods with outstanding political power, such as Harry here. Eventually the House of Wizards was pushed aside in favor of the Wizengamot having all of the power.”

“But why?” Neville inquired.

“Why do you think? Our traditions, our way of life. Some believed it was unfair that we could make decisions and not involve those of families who have only been in our world for one or two generations.”

Harry furrowed his brow. “But... that makes sense. What right do those people have to join the House if they hadn’t been living in the Wizarding World all that long? I mean, Tom told me the House of Wizards was established in secret sometime during Merlin’s era. I can

maybe see muggleborns being able to sit in on meetings, but why should they get a say in the actual proceedings when they hadn't lived here all that long? When those of the House had been around for generations and would know the history, would know how their rulings would affect the future."

"It wasn't just discrimination against old lines, was it?" Neville asked Lucius. "They tried to discriminate against affinities too."

"Yes and it was really rather ridiculous as half of the House wizards and witches were Light and Neutral. It is not as if the Dark had absolute power. In this we all banded together to make sure all our lives were better. However and unfortunately, those against us were victorious. The House of Wizards hasn't met in an official capacity in seventy years."

"It was all a stupid play on power then," Harry muttered.

"Very good, Harry. There were those muggleborns who did gain power in the Ministry and they gathered followers who felt the same."

"Doesn't make sense," Neville muttered.

"No it doesn't. I can understand if the House of Wizards actually made it a mission to harm, to discriminate... Peace is a hard thing to obtain and keep," Lucius ended softly.

"But you aren't exactly a... nice fellow," Neville managed boldly and Lucius smirked at him.

"We fight the way we know how, Longbottom. Vicious and dirty. Excuse us for actually enjoying how we do it."

Harry grinned at the blond.

"I... I read the paper this morning," Neville went on, shooting a quick smile at a grinning Harry before turning back to Lucius. "I read what your son said about traditions. I've always thought the same as him."

Lucius raised a brow. "Have you ever attended a seasonal festival?"

"No but my Great Aunt Enid had. She had a diary that I found in the library a few years back. She wrote about her experiences. I've wanted to participate in something like ever since I read it... Gran found me with the diary once and she took it. Burned it in the fireplace. How can—how can Gran be that way when she must have grown up with those traditions?"

"Ideals can change a person," Lucius replied softly as he looked off. Harry wondered what he was remembering and he would never know the blond was thinking of Severus' mother.

"So the House of Wizards will be reuniting properly?" Harry asked.

Lucius cleared his throat and turned back to them, nodding. "In three months time we'll have the first proper meeting in a century. And I do hope you will both take up your seats."

The two younger wizards nodded, and then Harry frowned. "But I've taken Tom's name. I've only now just thought of that. Can I still attend even if I'm Harry Riddle?"

"It does not matter what your name is now. You are the last Potter by blood and will hold that seat until you can name an heir as I've been told you plan to do, and really Harry. You are our Lord's husband. No one would dare keep you away from the Potter seat."

"Alright then."

Lucius then began to go into detail about the things the House of Wizards had done in the past and what they may expect to happen in future meetings. An hour passed before they knew it and they would have gone on if Tom and Severus hadn't picked then to walk in.

"Apparently Augusta Longbottom has decided to take a long holiday in Greece," Severus drawled.

Harry grinned wickedly. "Fancy that."

"She also told us to wish you a Happy Birthday," Severus went on to Neville. "And that she'll owl you."

"She's gone already?" Neville asked.

Both Severus and the Dark Lord nodded. Neville rose quickly, looking at Harry in a panic.

Harry was quick to lay a hand on his shoulder. "I swear she's safe."

"You might also like to know she hired a vampire hunter last night after she discovered the vampire here," Tom put in and no one missed the panicked look on Neville's face. He looked even more horrified by this news than he had about his grandmother suddenly taking a hike. The Dark Lord looked entirely too amused by his expression. "He'll be arriving in about three hours, just as the sun's setting in order to catch your vampire Casanova."

"That's not funny!" Harry snapped.

"Perhaps not funny but the situation is ideal. I can't very well have vampire hunters in my kingdom when we're trying to coexist with vampires, can I?"

"No, I guess not," Harry answered.

"W-where's Nathan?" demanded Neville in a high pitched panicked voice. "We have to warn him."

Harry placed a hand on his arm, squeezing. "What are you going to do?" he asked his husband.

"Catch the vampire hunter. Use extreme measures to get the answers I want. Use those answers to make sure I have either eliminated all vampire hunters, or at the very least, run them out of Britain."

“See, Neville. Nathan will be alright. That’s a great idea, Tom!”

“Course it is, love. I’m a genius.”

Harry leaned in to Neville. “You can see his head growing, can’t you? So,” he went on quickly when Tom’s gaze narrowed. “What are your plans for tonight? Going out?”

“Err... no. Why?”

“It’s your birthday,” Harry said slowly, looking at him strangely. Neville shrugged.

Tom turned to Severus. “Is that a Gryffindor thing?” he asked quietly. “Not caring about one’s birthday?”

“I am uncertain. But I don’t much care about my birthday either. Lucius always gets me ridiculously expensive-”

“I quite enjoy my birthdays,” Lucius replied.

“Yes we are all aware-”

“Not that I ever receive gifts from you,” the blond added with a sneer.

“I give you gifts!” Severus snapped back.

“I enjoy my birthday as well,” Tom put in. “I expect no less than a dozen people to be presented to me as gifts to be tortured and then ki-”

“Tom,” Harry ground out and he was spitting mad. And since Tom was genius he knew why. Talking about torture and murder in front of a boy whose parents had been tortured to insanity by his own minions wasn’t going to get him any points with his young recently emotional husband.

Tom cleared his throat and headed for the door. “Severus. Let us go and prepare. Lucius?”

“Yes, we’re done for now,” the blond said as he stood.

“Thank you, Mr. Malfoy. I’ll make an appointment at Gringotts tomorrow,” Neville was quick to say. Lucius gave him a nod before leaving the office.

When the three elder wizards were gone, Neville sank down into a chair and blew out a breath. “I don’t think I’ve ever imagined Lucius Malfoy that cordial. To me.”

“He’s been in a... rare mood. Suppose it has to do with his upcoming divorce and other things.”

Neville nodded absently. Harry didn’t think his friend had heard a word he said. “Nev, I swear your grandmother isn’t harmed. If they said she went to Greece on vacation, then they sent her on vacation... but, there is a chance they did it by way of the Imperius or

compulsion. Both are skilled at mind magic. And the end result? She'll probably end up enjoying the vacation immensely and you'll enjoy being able to do what you want without someone breathing down your neck."

Neville's lips twitched. "I'll still have someone breathing down my neck."

Harry leaned forward towards him. "Why'd you close up the manor, Nev? You made it to where he can walk around day and night now."

Neville shrugged. "Just thought he'd be more comfortable. Nathan doesn't always sleep the day away."

"What about your comfort?"

"What do you mean?"

"It's so dark!"

"Honestly I don't mind. There are still parts of the manor that I haven't closed up. Plenty of sunlight still."

Harry looked at him askance before smiling. "Nathan's a nice bloke though, isn't he?"

"Yeah, guess so," Neville whispered as he turned away, but not before Harry saw the flush on his friend's face.

"Do you fancy him?"

"Y-yeah, g-guess so." When he turned back it was to find Harry staring at him expectantly, Neville laughed a little and rolled his eyes. "Yeah," he said more firmly. "He's... he's so insistent on teasing, and yet he never really goes too far. He goes just far enough to get me bothered and then backs off completely with this annoying smirk that's dead sexy at the same time. But still, he's also very charming and it's amazing how he seems to get me..."

Harry snickered at the dreamy look on Neville's face. "So really, you have no plans for your birthday?"

"Do you?" Harry frowned. "That's what I thought. Besides, I couldn't even if I wanted. Gran was set on getting me 'help' so it's too late to make plans now."

Harry decided they would talk about something else, so they turned to business and began to talk about that. Neville talking about how the starting up of his business and research was going and then Harry going on about his and Drake's business and by the time they knew it, two hours had come and gone.

"It's so funny. Gran loves MR's Decadent Confections. Wonder what she would do if she knew what the MR actually stood for?"

The door opened and Severus walked in a few steps. "The Dark Lord would like you two to leave. But since he knows you'll demand to stay," he said this with a flat look at Harry,

“then he is prepared to let you remain here as long as you stay out of the way. Vampire hunters are tricky business especially since sometimes they’re not all human. If any trouble arises, you are to use the Portkey immediately and you are allowed to bring Longbottom with you.”

Harry nodded even as his hand lifted to the necklace around his throat. The dagger necklace he never left home without. Severus gave one last curt nod before leaving.

“What do you suppose is going to happen?”

“Haven’t a clue.”

“Where... do you think we’re safe in here?”

“We should be. Clearly we aren’t vampires, so even if the hunter comes in here...” Harry trailed off and shrugged. “We’ve trained with and fought vampires before, Neville. It’s not like we can’t take on a vampire hunter.”

“But where did Nathan go? Do you think *he*’ll be safe? He’s only been a vampire for a decade. I heard younger vampires were easier to kill.”

“They are, but Nathan is capable. Besides, Tom’s on this. He’s not going to let anything happen.”

“Um. To you. He’s not going to let anything happen to you.”

“Yeah, but Nathan’s on Tom’s pay roll, so to speak, and he volunteered to be a Silver enforcer. Tom knows I’d be really upset if something happened to him.”

“Which means...?”

His friend rolled his eyes. “Which means Nathan will be fine.”

Or at least that’s what he had thought.

After two hours, it was apparent a battle of some sort was going on outside of the study, and when they heard snarls and a man’s shouts, the two finally couldn’t contain their curiosity and cautiously left the study to investigate the goings on. Harry was fairly thrumming with curiosity since he knew Tom shouldn’t have a problem with one little vampire hunter. Especially since he had Lucius and Severus with him. The fight shouldn’t have lasted more than a moment.

“We’re going to get in trouble,” Neville whispered as he and Harry crept out into the hall, both with their wands clutched in hand. They both wore matching grins.

“Most likely.” But Harry didn’t think it would be serious trouble, otherwise he wouldn’t have ever set foot outside of the room. He did have his babies to think about now.

They were carefully traversing the corridor that would leave them at the bottom of the staircase when they heard a chilling hiss from above- “that’s Nathan,” Neville whispered- and

something broken and shattering. Neville cringed and Harry figured he was guessing at what could have been broken up there on the landing. He hoped it wasn't some priceless Longbottom antique.

The two wizards turned the corner just in time to see Nathan drop from the top of the landing. He landed without sound in a crouch. His eyes wheeled around quickly as he stood and soon he spotted them and his gaze lingered on Neville. In that quick moment of distraction a woman seemed to materialize beside him, seemingly out of nowhere, and stabbed Nathan in the heart.

"Not so quick, now are we, vampire?" she asked sweetly.

Neville's heart stopped. "NATHAN!"

The vampire immediately burst into flames and quickly disintegrated into ashes.

"No!" Neville screamed as he dropped to his knees and then promptly burst into tears, staring at that pile of ash. "No."

"Longbottom, look at me!" Severus barked, materializing where he'd been hidden by a disillusionment charm near the stairs and he quickly started to make way for the very distraught wizard. The vampire hunter's eyes widened in surprise upon seeing the wizard, but she found she couldn't move when she tried to raise her dagger in a defensive stance.

Ignoring him, ignoring the fact Severus could have prevented Nathan's destruction, Harry snarled and ran for the woman, his wand clutched into his hand.

"Harry, stop!"

Harry ignored his husband- who he hadn't even known was in the corridor along with Lucius too- and ignored Severus, who tried to block him. He wrenched away from the Potions' Master and slashed his wand in the air, sending a vortex of wind and fire at the surprised hunter, hitting her squarely and sending her flying. Her head hit the wall with a sickening thunk and she slumped lifeless to the floor. Blood flowing freely down her burning face.

Tom sighed and crossed his arms, looking at the smoking woman and shaking his head while Lucius stared at Harry, who rounded on them both. "Y-you just stood there!" he screamed. "You stood there and let her!"

Harry spun away to go back to Neville, who was still crying his eyes out.

"You do not understand!" Tom whispered harshly and grabbed his arm before he could move further.

Harry tried to wrench his arm free as he watched Neville stand on shaky legs and then race down the corridor. "Neville!"

"He isn't dead. It's an illusion," Tom stated, waving his wand and Harry quickly turned to watch as that pile of ash drifted up and then reconstructed to a figure of Nathan standing

there. The vampire grinned and winked at him. “There were actually three hunters. We needed to set traps. Most always hunt in groups.”

Harry’s eyes widened and he whipped around. “Neville wait!”

But Neville was already gone, disappeared somewhere. Harry gave his husband one look of apology for screaming at him before he tore after his friend.

Tom pinched the bridge of his nose. “One of you go and retrieve the vampire.”

“Well this is certainly a birthday he’s never going to forget,” Lucius drawled.

Severus spun on the spot and Apparated away to the Dark Lord’s castle where Nathan had been taken. “A problem has arisen?” he said immediately after walking into the parlor and spying the vampire lounging on a settee as if he owned the place. Upon his words, Nathan gracefully stood, eyes narrowing.

“My darling is unharmed, yes?” he requested lowly, aggression clear in his eyes. “I only agreed to leave-”

“He believes he witnessed your destruction,” Severus cut in. “He saw a hunter stake one of your golems and then ran off before we were able to explain you are still alive. The other hunters have been caught...”

Nathan misted out of the Dark Lord’s parlor before Severus had even finished speaking and appeared back in the entrance Hall of the Longbottom estate.

“The point me spell isn’t working,” Harry yelled just as Nathan appeared behind him.

“He must have blocked it. That’s surprising, for Longbottom,” Lucius replied.

“You can block the point me spell?”

Lucius stared blankly at Harry for a moment before turning to his lord. “I thought you were supposed to have been teaching him things.”

“You go too far, Lucius,” the Dark Lord returned lowly.

Lucius flushed and bowed his head. “Forgive me, my Lord.”

“Yes, well... *Crucio*,” Tom hissed furiously.

“Tom!”

Tom whipped his wand up and away from Lucius with a sneer. “I was not about to let him get away with *that*, Harry!”

Harry ignored him since it was then he spotted Nathan. “He thinks you’re dead and I haven’t been able to find him. He didn’t... He took it-”

“Horribly,” the Dark Lord put in just as Severus managed to catch up. “You had best go find him before he does something foolish.”

“Gryffindors don’t kill themselves just because they’ve lost a lover,” Harry spat.

“You’re a bunch of bleeding hearts,” Severus said with a sneer that he didn’t really mean, though Harry didn’t notice this because he was already in a huff about poor Neville thinking Nathan was nothing but a pile of ash now.

Harry prowled forward until he was directly in front of the Potions Master, his green eyes darkened with fury and malice and Severus’ eyes narrowed in defense at seeing that particular look, which only pissed Harry off further. But before he could open his mouth to say the words sprung up by frustrated anger, his arm was caught in a vice grip and he was pulled away from Severus.

“Do not say something you will both regret,” Tom said, looking at Harry and Severus. “This situation is unfortunate, but it will be taken care of. Fortunately you only killed this one and we have two hunters still alive.” He then turned to Nathan, who had been watching all this in amusement. “You should go and find your gullible Gryffindor.”

Nathan looked around with a thoughtful expression, though his calm exterior was belied by the tight balling of his fists at his sides. Knowing Neville, and Nathan liked to think he knew him very well now, he knew Neville wouldn’t have remained in the house. He would have gone somewhere that would give the most comfort. His refuge.

He didn’t say this to the waiting wizards and instead misted out onto the lawns where he could see three greenhouses side by side, nestled in the rising fog of the evening. He chose the furthest one away because it was the greenhouse that was less humid and where Neville usually did his book research. Neville had a long table in that greenhouse, and if there weren’t cuttings of plants on it, then there were herbology texts and research papers spread over it. Here is where he found Neville. Sitting in a chair, head on desk with his hands on top of his head. He was shaking with silent sobs and if Nathan had had a working heart, it would have stopped working right then. He had known he’d gotten to the young man finally, but he hadn’t realized just how much.

In two strides he was beside the chair and pulling the young wizard into his arms. Neville went stiff in surprise and tipped his head back to look at Nathan’s face. Only then he gasped and wrenched away and in the process hit the chair and nearly fell backwards. But Nathan, being incredible fast, caught him, making quiet soothing noises because Neville’s mouth was gaping in fear and disbelief and clearly he thought he was looking at a ghost or some horrible prank.

“G-get away!”

“You must calm down.”

“You’re d-dead!”

“Yes,” Nathan replied as he smoothly captured the skittish wizard in his arms again. “I have been for a decade. But that hunter did not turn me into a pile of ash just now. That was a golem.”

Neville shook his head. He was afraid to believe. But the body against his was cold, like Nathan’s and the breath against his cheek was warm, like Nathan’s. And there was that look in his eyes whenever he looked at him nowadays. That dead serious look that had replaced the teasing gleam in his dark eyes.

“Nathan,” he whispered and the vampire nodded, a small amused smirk on his mouth.

Neville’s eyes widened in anger and he started pummeling Nathan’s chest with his fists, shouting out in anger and relief and completely exhausting himself. Nathan bore it, since a human’s fists weren’t really going to do him any harm, and he understood why the darling was so angry. When Neville’s energy was completely gone, his legs collapsed and Nathan easily caught him, scooping him up bridal style and misted them back into the manor proper. Neville was even too tired to protest being carried in such a way.

When he found himself in the Entrance Hall of the manor and seeing Harry was still there with the Dark Lord, Malfoy, and Snape, Neville groaned and turned in, pressing his face against Nathan’s cold neck and hoping the hair at the back of his neck hid his embarrassed blush. He was going to pretend to be unconscious and hope for the best.

“Nev? You okay?”

Neville nodded before he could stop himself, but he couldn’t help it because Harry sounded so worried. And Nathan unhelpfully supplied, “We’ll be having our own little birthday celebration now.”

The vampire ignored Neville’s appalled exclamation and his futile wiggling to get free and grinned at the wizards. “Thank you for your assistance,” he ended before misting away upstairs.

Harry turned to his husband. “Should I be worried still?”

The Dark Lord stared back blankly. He didn’t care one way or the other.

A few hours later found Tom and Harry back home with Harry pacing back and forth in their private parlor while Tom sat comfortably and continued on his study of male pregnancy. He spent a few moments staring at his husband, trying to envision his little minx with a distended tummy and was having trouble imagining it. Tom had never really been into contact with someone pregnant, and if he had, obviously he hadn’t paid too much attention to it. Narcissa had of course been pregnant with Draco, but he had been gone much of that year and hadn’t really seen her until after she’d given birth to the whiny brat.

“Pacing isn’t going to make them return any sooner, Harry. Perhaps you should go and lie down. You’ll see Hermione in the morning.”

“I’m not tired.”

Tom sighed and returned to his book, trying to ignore the annoying back and forth action going on a few paces in front of him.

“I wonder if Andrew will come back with bruises and bandages,” Harry murmured and then snickered at the thought. “That would be too funny.”

Tom ignored that since he really didn't care and he'd just read something about the increase of major complications with male pregnancies as opposed to female pregnancies due to stress. These complications became more probable with multiple pregnancies.

“Harry, from now on you are going to have a personal healer on call and you will no longer go to St. Mungo's. You'll give birth here or at the villa and it would be best for you to go to the villa at four months instead of five. You can, of course, return here when there are functions we must attend.”

“Alright,” Harry replied.

Tom narrowed his eyes. Easy acquiescence was something to be suspicious about. But before he could demand to know what Harry was up to, the wards trembled and shifted, allowing the arrival of two witches and a wizard into the Entrance Hall. Harry shot out of the room with a grin while Tom followed at a more reasonable pace and came out into the hall just in time to see Bellatrix rushing away from Andrew and Hermione towards the Floo room without a backward glance. She looked disgusted and hassled, but there was a fresh blush on Hermione's face while Andrew was smirking at the quickly retreating Bella. Harry supposed they had been doing lovey dovey things in front of Bellatrix for a while to make her look like that and make her pass by her Lord without so much as a glance.

“What? Hermione? You forgave him already?” Harry asked laughing as he came to stand by them and embraced her.

“He doesn't play fair, Harry!” she exclaimed against his neck. “He bribed me with fantastic presents! It was very clever of him actually.”

Harry turned to Andrew. “What did you get?”

“Things...”

“Well the only things that would actually move her would be-”

“Yes, yes, those things,” Hermione interrupted with a fresh blush, not looking at either of the two smirking wizards.

“So how did the trip go?”

“It was brilliant, Harry! The vampires were ever so nice! The Lord of the Vampires especially. He isn't anything like his first born daughter. And they are all excited about the peace treaty.” She turned to the Dark Lord then as he came to stand beside his husband, looking expectant. “Nothing needs to be changed, sir. They couldn't be happier with the way things are progressing.”

“Very good. Now I suggest you get some sleep. We have a mission tomorrow before noon.” He then turned to Andrew. “You may stay as well. Only for tonight.”

“Thank you, my Lord.”

Harry grinned at them. “Make sure they are a floor apart. We can’t have Hermione’s virtue compromised.”

Hermione narrowed her eyes and made a sort of growling sound that had Harry gasping and running away. Andrew and the Dark Lord turned and watched as Hermione raced after him and up the grand staircase.

“Merlin, we’ve been waiting for this!” one of the twins whispered excitedly as they and the semi-large group they were with walked lazily down a side walk. It was early afternoon, not even twelve yet, but there weren’t any Muggles to be seen at the moment.

“Keep your voices down—is that popcorn?” Severus asked incredulously, seeing the bag in one of the twin’s hands.

“Yep! We also brought fudge, butterbeer, and lawn chairs. Want one?”

Draco snickered at the look on his godfather’s face.

“He’ll want some of the fudge,” Lucius answered with a quirk of his lips and almost everyone laughed.

The group was twelve large at the moment, with the Dark Lord leading them down the sidewalk with an unusually quiet Harry held tightly against his side. Following them were Lucius, Severus, Narcissa, and Bellatrix; both of who refused to be left out of this since they cared for the little lord and had been horrified of Harry’s treatment as a child. Trailing those four were the twins, Draco, and Pansy, whom Draco had dragged along. Hermione was also present and had brought Andrew along because he insisted and Andy was calling this a ‘date’ no matter how much Hermione disagreed. She made it plain she didn’t think this sort of outing was appropriate to be called a date and Andrew only smiled and nodded and tagged along as her date anyway. The entire group was under a strong Disillusionment Charm cast by the Dark Lord.

“Positions,” Voldemort instructed lowly without taking his eyes off his husband as they came to stand across the street from the Dursley home.

Several of their members separated. Bella pranced across the street with the twins and they made their way to the back yard. After a moment of internal debate, Hermione followed after them. Her love for Harry making her want to take part in this. To be a part of breaking down this house and these people who were a travesty of a happy family.

Before taking their own positions, Lucius and Severus turned to Harry. The blond rose a brow. “Is there anything you want us to save before we continue?”

Harry's brows furrowed. "I'm pretty sure I grabbed all my stuff when I walked out for the last time. It wasn't much anyway... I don't know," he shrugged.

"We'll make sure. We'll summon anything that belongs to you."

"Right, thanks," Harry murmured, forcing a smile.

Finally Severus and Lucius crossed the road and stood in the front lawns, casting muggle-repelling charms around the property. When they finished the charms, the two broke into the house and from there they would wait until they had word from the Lestrage brothers who were currently posted at the hospital.

Tom moved to press against Harry's back, wrapping him up tightly in his arms. He didn't like this silent somber Harry at all. He knew he should have forbidden Harry from coming. "You can return home, love. No one would think any less of you."

"No. I want to be here. I want to see this. I want to see Aunt Petunia's face when she sees she's lost her home as well," Harry returned firmly.

"Harry-"

"Stop worrying about me," Harry interrupted, turning in Tom's arms to look up into his face. "I'm fine. Promise."

Within the house, Severus and Lucius took a tour through it; Severus looking for the best place to 'start' the fire. He wanted to make it seem to the muggles like the fire had been started by the Dursley's carelessness. The kitchen seemed the best place to do such a thing. As he passed through the living room into the hall, he heard Lucius mutter in disgust.

"Not one picture of Harry. They're all pictures of that obscene boy."

Severus paused in the hall when his attention was caught by the small door under the stairs. His breath caught at seeing how small it was. "Merlin," he breathed in trepidation. "Lucius."

The blond appeared at his shoulder a moment later, looking curious. Severus gestured to the door. Seeing his lover was rooted to the spot, Lucius moved forward and reached out to open the door, noticing the locks upon it. When the door was opened, Lucius' eyes hardened further and narrowed to slits as he took in the space within. He moved back a step, grabbed Severus' arm and dragged him forward so that he could see inside. So that Severus could see the small cot, along with a few shelves that took up much of the space and the light socket over head that was without a light. The space looked like it hadn't been touched in years as if after Harry they stayed away from it, not even using it for storage, which meant Severus and Lucius were seeing it just as Harry had been forced to see it.

An odd strangled sound escaped Severus' throat. "For ten years... how could he allow this!"

Lucius knew Severus was referring to Dumbledore. “The twins are correct. It is no wonder Harry is the size he is...”

“Time to start the bonfire,” a voice said from behind them. “The muggles return as we speak.”

The two turned to find Rabastan and Rodolphus standing there. The brothers took a look at the other two wizards’ faces and then leaned around to see what they had found. Rabastan’s eyes widened. “Surely this isn’t where-”

“It is,” Severus said and spun away towards the kitchen. “Let’s start.”

“Let me see if Harry has any possessions still within this... house.”

Severus’ tense shoulders relaxed minutely and a small smirk lifted his lips. “You wanted to say shack.”

Lucius lifted his chin and didn’t deign with a response to that. He then went about seeing if Harry had any more possessions hidden away in the house. After a moment and nothing responded to his summons, he assumed he didn’t and the house was safe to burn. Lucius then turned to the cupboard under the stairs, sneered, and spat, “*incendio!*”

Around him he heard several of the same spells cast out, and even from the backyard as well. Lucius watched the cupboard fill with fire and then calmly shut the door before going back to stand on the threshold of the front door, waiting for the others. Severus appeared soon after, along with Rodolphus and Rabastan and soon the four were leaving the house as they heard the snap, crackle, and pop of the flames as it ate away at the house behind them.

After ten minutes the house was engulfed and the witches and wizards dispersed with the muggle repelling charms, after which it was like moths being drawn to flames. Soon muggles from every direction left their homes. A woman rushed out of the house directly beside the Dursley home, screaming for the fire brigade while she dragged a cloth bag behind her. The muggles’ reactions to a burning house very near them were almost as funny as the house itself burning.

“How selfish are these people?” Hermione asked with a disgusted look on her face. Not one person tried to get close enough to see if any of the Dursleys were at home, and most of them were just standing on the side walk and in the street staring as if they were studying a painting.

“They’re muggles,” Bellatrix drawled as if that explained everything. Hermione pressed her lips together to keep from snapping back. “And what did you expect, Granger? Did these... insects ever tell anyone how our dear little lord was being treated by his relatives? No! And surely they must have seen something wasn’t right! Two of those muggles are obese and while the woman is thin, it’s clear she gets enough to eat. You can’t tell me no one saw Harry working around the garden and didn’t think he was too thin! A little boy, for Salazar’s sake! The entire street should be obliterated!”

Agreeing murmurs spread all around, but before they could discuss it further, they were interrupted by a whispered hiss. “Enough.” Everyone turned to Harry. His eyes were riveted on the burning house. “We’re here to have fun and watch it burn. Not to talk about what went on in the past. You’re making too much out of this. It’s not like they beat me.”

The twins frowned and one opened his mouth to object that, but he was silenced by one look from the Dark Lord. The group remained silent for a short time until a car turned the corner. It slowed down to nearly a stop and then put on a burst of speed and raced down the street towards the burning house.

Harry perked up, pulling out of Tom’s arms and started rubbing his hands together. “This is going to be great—Merlin, look how pretty it is,” he whispered, staring entranced at the flames.

Vernon skid the car to a stop just in front of the neighbor’s house, right up on the curb and almost knocked over several people in the process. He shot out of the car as fast as his heavy bulk would allow and he stood there by his opened car door just staring. Petunia’s door slowly opened and she emerged from it, already shaky, a hand over her heart, and her mouth agape in horror at the image of her lovely home already half burned to a crisp.

At the look on his aunt’s face, Harry burst out in gleeful laughter as the flames cast an orange glow over all their faces. Tom quickly cast a silencing bubble around their group, but Harry didn’t notice it. “Look at her face!” he cried between the laughter.

When he first laughed several of the crowd of muggles had turned to see who would be cruel enough to laugh, including his aunt; eyes darting this way and that, furious that someone could be laughing at a time like this. Harry doubled over when he spotted his uncle again. Vernon looked in an apoplectic state.

“Who did that?” he bellowed. “Who dared laughed?”

Harry straightened and raised his hand, though none of the muggles could see him.

“Vernon, please,” Petunia cried, clutching at his arm. “Don’t make a scene.”

Harry continued to laugh at that, since clearly there was already a scene.

“Vernon, what are we going to do?” she cried over the sound of approaching sirens. “What are we going to do with Dudley?”

Harry noticed Dudley had remained in the back seat of the car and hadn’t moved at all. He was probably heavily medicated and unconscious. He then turned to Tom, who spent equal amounts of time between watching Harry laugh insanely and watching the fire quickly making its way through the house. His gaze was currently on the house so Harry tugged on his robe sleeve.

“Flatten it,” Harry said with a wave towards the house. “Before the fire brigade arrives. Flatten it.”

The Dark Lord nodded and then removed himself a little away from the main group so that he would have a clear view of the house. Finally he raised his wand and Harry could see his lips moving, though he didn't see any sort of spell shoot from the tip of his wand. But he clearly felt his husband's power surge and then dissipate and seconds later the roof caved in with a great loud 'crack', and then the top floor caved in onto the bottom floor, sending sparks flying and the flames shot up into the smoke filled sky. Petunia and Vernon's pained wails echoed beautifully in Harry's ears and his laughter renewed.

Harry's laughter didn't taper off once while they could hear his aunt weeping loudly and Vernon shouting "someone do something!" over and over again. Harry wrapped arms around Tom's neck and giggled against his husband's neck. "Best birthday ever! The fire is wicked!"

Draco leaned against his fiends. "I never knew Harry was so into fire."

"Neither did we," Fred answered, watching their friend with a grin; watching Harry cackling madly against his amused husband's neck.

"Harry's a pyro!"

Tom turned to them with a raised brow. "You really didn't see that coming? Did you never wonder why he had the fires going in the fireplaces, even when it's the warmer months? He loves watching the flames. Did you never notice four out of five times, his offensive battle spells include some form of fire?"

"Well sure, he's accidentally lit his summer homework on fire before and other little things, like Ron's Quidditch action figures, but we always thought that was an accident..." their eyes widened on Harry, and he did nothing but snicker against Tom's neck.

Chapter Twenty-Six

“Really wish you’d tell me what’s going on,” Harry muttered as he paced back and forth within Tom’s office. Being in Tom’s office wasn’t unusual for him. He had his own chair in there after all, placed by Tom and at Tom’s insistence. But what was unusual was the fact that Tom was sitting on his half-chaise, leaning back with one ankle perched on the opposite knee and a book open in hand. And his mouth had been firmly shut for the last half hour. Since they’d come home from watching the Dursley house burn to the ground. “HELLO?”

“No need to shout.”

Harry scowled. “What’s going on? Why can’t I leave this room?”

“Because then you would run and hide and my good mood would be ruined by having to go and locate you,” Tom replied as he finished reading one page and turned to another.

“Why would I run and hide?”

“You know perfectly well why.”

“You enjoy tormenting me.”

Finally Tom pulled his eyes from his book. “As much as you enjoy tormenting me. Yes.”

Harry sulked off to slouch against the desk. “I’m going to find the holiday you appreciate least and I will then decorate this castle to the fullest of my abilities—Yule! Yule and your birthday! This Dark domain is going to *twinkle*! Ha!”

When Tom remained quiet, not jumping to the bait, and quite clearly ignoring him again, Harry scowled and released a lot of vulgar words into the air. Tom raised one eyebrow but he didn’t pull his eyes away from his book.

After what seemed like eternity to Harry- the standing there and scowling and being ignored- Tom finally produced his wand and cast tempus. “It’s time.”

“Yaaay.”

Tom shook his head as he stowed his wand away and stood up. “If you are so committed to not enjoying yourself, you will not enjoy the evening. And I promise it’s not going to be a horrible affair. It’s only a dinner party, Harry. It isn’t as if you’re going to be around strangers.”

Harry looked at him in suspicion. “Dinner party? I thought you said there wouldn’t be that many people.”

“I may have understated the truth,” Tom said as he rounded his desk to rummage through the top drawer. Back beside Harry, he held out the ornamental key for Harry to touch.

Harry perked up a little. "We're going to the villa?"

"Yes."

Mood instantly lightened, Harry flashed a grin and reached for the Portkey. Quite soon he was walking along with Tom through the garden, enjoying the warm breeze which brought the scents of the ocean up to their bit of paradise. Even from where they strolled along the cliff's wall, the farthest spot from the villa, Harry could hear voices. Many. At least whomever was here seemed to be in a cheery mood.

"The birthday boy is here!" Fred called out as soon as Harry and Tom appeared from garden shadows and stepped onto the back patio which was made for outdoor dinners.

"He's hardly a boy," Draco drawled disdainfully.

"Draco, love..." George murmured lowly and soothingly too as if he'd done something wrong and wanted to keep Draco's anger at bay.

Draco turned cold blue eyes on the twins. "As if I'm not good enough anymore."

"Draco, no!" the fiends hissed passionately.

Draco scowled for half a second before looking at Harry, suddenly looking relaxed and smirking. Harry smiled back even though he wanted to ask what that was about and would as soon as possible. The twins sat on both sides of Draco, completely stiff and looking worried. They weren't even touching Draco; seemed afraid to.

Harry sat down at the head of the table where Tom ushered him, unable to keep a smile off his face as he noticed everyone who had been to Privet Drive were now here, plus a few who weren't. And despite so many people meeting here for his birthday, Harry was in fact enjoying this. At least this portion anyway. Sitting down to dinner on the outdoor patio with his husband and friends. It was actually very nice. Peaceful and enjoyable. Everyone was relaxed- except for the twins, but Harry had a feeling they'd be feeling alright by the end of the night. He hadn't noticed this behavior from them when they'd all been on Privet Drive, but then again Harry supposed he really hadn't been paying too much attention to anything beyond his aunt's house burning down.

As Harry scanned the faces of those around him, his eyes widened in pleasure at spotting the Veela couple sitting down the way between Narcissa and Bellatrix. He was very touched Tom had thought to invite Iseut and Diandre as he really did enjoy spending time with them. They took great care of Draco and himself when they stayed with them in Paris. Some of the Silvers were there as well, he was pleased to note. Bill, Charlie, and Luna. Harry wasn't surprised Tom did not have any of the Enforcers invited but he was disappointed to learn Neville sent apologies after receiving an invite. And Tom had also invited Remus and Fenrir, which kind of made Harry's eyes water but he made sure not to let Tom see his visible mushy emotions. Remus saw it though from his seat down the table and gave Harry a happy soft smile.

Harry turned to Tom, and looked at his shoulder. "You... you didn't have to," he whispered thickly.

A hand cupped his face. "I wanted to." Harry nodded and blinked rapidly. "Now stop crying and enjoy yourself."

"I'm not crying."

Tom's eyes softened and he caressed the stretch of jaw under his thumb. "You're about to," he replied softly. "And you know what that does to me. Your tears are my Achilles' heel."

Harry gave a trembling laugh. "How is that supposed to calm my emotions?"

Tom moved his hand and rubbed the back of Harry's flushed neck. "It's time for dinner."

Harry turned back to the table at large just as dinner appeared; plates loaded with food. With Harry's favorite meats and soups and salads also. Harry was immediately distracted by the wonderful scents wafting around.

"This is a lovely place," Luna said to him halfway through dinner.

"Thanks. It'll be nice when I can work on turning it into a home."

"You'll have plenty of time for that in a couple of months," Tom said from his seat at Harry's left.

Harry nodded and then smiled, thinking of it. "Yeah."

When dinner ended, Harry was treated to a birthday cake. The sheet of cake was massive, but it would provide a piece plus some for all of his guests. Harry shifted forward in his seat, staring down at the cake and the candles. He heard a couple of people snicker under their breath. Lifting his eyes, he grinned at Hermione and Draco. He made this cake. And in fact at the time of the cake's conception, Harry had spent some time figuratively drooling over it, wishing he could have a piece.

"For a little old witch giving her spinster daughter a lovely birthday... Clever," he remarked dryly, a half smile curving his lips as he looked at Draco.

"We couldn't very well have gone to some other baker! Not when we all know it's not the best," Draco replied with a wink. "And I couldn't have told you the truth about where this cake was going and you kept asking!"

"Only because this cake was sinful to make and I wanted to eat it!"

"You can eat it now, prat!"

"I will!" Harry sat back, his smile broadening. "Thank you."

And so the cake eating went well too. Except for the obvious lack of twin pranks or flinging icing- which most everyone around the table expected of Fred and George. But those two behaved themselves. Almost too much. Even Tom had given them a funny look when they all moved from the outside patio into the drawing room.

And then Harry's good mood drastically plummeted when he saw one of the small sofas had been moved by the fire and the table sitting beside the sofa loaded with presents. "Oh, Tom, nooo," he begged quietly. "It's really too much."

"They wanted to, Harry. Now be polite, sit down, and accept your gifts with a grace I know you have buried very deeply inside."

Harry rolled his eyes at the shallow barb and then turned to him as everyone gathered near; either sitting in the other antique chairs and couches strategically placed around or standing nearby. "Did you get me something?"

"Don't be coy. Of course I did. You'll get it when we retire tonight... it's not sex," Tom said when Harry's eyes brightened. And then they immediately dulled and Tom rolled his eyes. "But then of course *after* my gift giving I have plans to tie you down and ride you into the headboard again. No need for that pouty nonsense, brat."

Harry smiled and gripped Tom's bicep; squeezing and then moving his fingers across to his chest. **You know how much I love being your whore.**

He moved away towards his birthday seat then, leaving Tom to turn away from everyone, stare down at the floor and pinch the bridge of his nose; he stood that way for a full five minutes before he thought he could move without alerting everyone to the arousal Harry had suddenly buried him under.

The moment Harry sat down, Narcissa and Bellatrix appeared out of nowhere and slid in next to him. Squeezing him in between them. They both wore the Black smiles; one a psychotic lovable smile, the other a serene showing of teeth, and both frightening smiles in Harry's opinion. He barely had time to blink before Bella thrust the first gift into his hands. Harry looked to Iseut for help but she only smiled softly at him. She also seemed a bit wary of the sisters. Harry really didn't blame her for wanting to keep some distance when they were smiling like they were at the moment.

Harry was nearly done with his presents and he was not amused. Not in the slightest. And he made that abundantly clear to his husband, whom was standing not far away, smirking at him. Harry glared at the Dark bastard while Bella continued to pet his hair and Narcissa went on and on about some of the presents they'd gotten him for his birthday. Most of Bella and Narcissa's gifts- and they were half the large bundle of presents- consisted of maternity clothes he probably wouldn't ever wear.

It's not that he wasn't grateful; it was just that he really *really* did not like his birthday and he didn't feel comfortable getting loads of gifts like this. But he did like the smiles being aimed his way. He did like the laughter that filled up the drawing room. And he especially like that Tom seemed relaxed enough; standing there and talking with Lucius, Severus, and the LeStrange brothers while he was bombarded by gifts.

Harry laughed as he opened the last gift. A present from Pansy. He raised the two identical baby rattles and shook them a bit. "I thought this was my birthday." He shook the rattles a little more and a soft smile crossed his features as he looked at the witch. "Thanks, Pansy."

A little later Harry and the guests congregated to different places around the drawing room to relax and mingle for the rest of the evening. After a time, Bill nudged Charlie and tipped his head to the side with a quick glance in the direction he wanted his brother to look. Charlie turned partially to see what had Bill's attention. Harry was making his way across the room and settled himself down beside the Dark Lord, rattles still in hand. After a moment the Dark wizard wrapped an arm around Harry's waist and pulled until Harry was resettled in his lap.

Voldemort then ignored those sitting around and nuzzled Harry's neck as he fingered the rattles Harry didn't seem to want to give up. But then Harry dropped the rattles into his lap before he threaded fingers into his husband's hair and started to rub their cheeks together, talking softly into the ear very close to his lips. The Dark Lord suddenly moved. His action took less than a second but in that time he had Harry's mouth under his in a clear all consuming assault. Arms wrapped around Harry, a hand digging into Harry's hair; his complete attention on his young husband and apparently ignoring everyone else around them. Harry reciprocated and he definitely looked as if the world had disappeared.

Bill turned to Charlie with a shocked and amused expression on his face. Charlie just looked shocked as he stared back at his brother. True, they witnessed the two kiss at the executions but that display had clearly been a statement. And they had seen pictures in the *Prophet*, but it was completely different seeing it in a relaxed setting like this. Maybe a little offsetting too. Because, well... it was still You-Know-Who. Never mind he had his human features back. The Dark wizard still struck fear in them and anyone else who was within ten feet of him. Bill cleared his throat and he and his brother turned back, only to visibly jump when they found the Dark Lord was staring right at them.

"Merlin," Bill whispered as he turned completely away from them. "His eyes are bloody scary."

Charlie gave a jerky nod. After another moment he laughed under his breath. "That was a bloody snog. The Dark Lord snogs."

Bill threw an arm around his neck and jerked him away. "C'mon, idiot. Don't want you to die for laughing at the Dark Lord."

"I wasn't laughing at him!"

"Look. What do you suppose that's about," Bill asked, jerking his arm around so Charlie was facing the wanted direction where their brothers and Draco were standing and talking with Parkinson, Hermione, Andy, and Luna. Almost immediately Charlie knew what Bill was talking about. The twins were just standing there. Stiff and silent. So silent for them. That was when it was clear they were afraid of something. It had to be a terrible fear too.

"Have no idea. Did they row?" Clearly, because Draco was standing there speaking animatedly with those before him and yet he oozed 'displeased'.

“Looks bad.”

Charlie nodded and then shrugged out from under Bill’s heavy arm and turned back to where Harry sat, noting Harry was now sitting on his own and speaking to the two Veela. “This new project of Harry’s. Sounds fun, yeah?”

“Yes. Definitely. Can’t wait to get started, actually.”

Harry got up then and started walking over. He paused beside them and gestured with his rattles to Draco and the twins. “Do you see this?”

“Yes!” Bill hissed quietly. “Thank you. It’s starting to get annoying. They haven’t pet his hair once this whole time we’ve been here!”

“Weird, right?” Harry went on with a nod. Charlie and Bill returned his nod with their own.

“I’m thinking the twins did something very wrong,” Charlie said. “The way they’re acting. Guilty and terrified. And then Draco is being himself, except there is this vibe…”

“He’s got them on a fishhook,” Harry announced. They turned to him in question. Harry shrugged. “They did something wrong, obviously. But they think Draco’s angrier than he really is. He’s playing with them now and they haven’t figured that out yet.”

Harry smiled, shook the little rattles he couldn’t seem to put down, and approached the group. Charlie and Bill coming with him. Everyone turned to them and Hermione laughed. “Harry, are you going to walk around with those all night?”

“I really like them.”

“You’ll be such a wonderful papa,” Luna breathed, smiling dazedly at him.

Harry smiled back and then looked at the rattles. “I can hit Tom with these and pretend it was an accident.”

“If you feel that’s wise,” Pansy answered, eyeing him and the rattles warily.

Harry gave her an odd look and Draco snorted. “Of course it’s not wise. Otherwise he wouldn’t bother.”

“They have a twisted relationship,” one of the twins said, drawing Draco’s narrowed gaze on both his fiends.

“He’s not the only one, is he?” Draco murmured lowly.

The twins’ expressions were pained and at once they reached for him. But the blond shrugged their hands off with a hiss. Draco then excused himself from Harry, completely bypassed the twins, and headed out of the main den and towards the stairs leading to the guest rooms. The twins were after him like a shot. The expression on his face never changed as he walked up the stairs and down the hall.

“Are you sure it’s a fish hook?” Bill asked in concern.

Harry laughed. “Yeah. Draco’s very excited.”

“I didn’t see that.”

“If he doesn’t want you to see it, you won’t. He is a Malfoy, after all. Besides, if Drake were really very upset everyone would know it. Narcissa would be up in arms by now. She would already have the twins gagged and roped with her wand and a dagger at their throats.”

Bill and Charlie conceded that were true and relaxed and the three of them went back to talking with the others, enjoying Harry’s birthday party. Meanwhile Draco was stalking down the hall with two terrified copper-heads trailing after him. Draco entered their provided room for the night and immediately crossed the suite towards the bedroom without a word or glance to the two following him.

“Draco, listen! We can explain!” Fred expressed as George shut the door behind them. They quickly followed him to the bedroom when it was apparent he wasn’t going to listen.

“Here us out, Draco! *Please!*”

Draco strode straight for bathroom and disappeared inside. When a pair of expensive handmade boots sailed out moments later to smash against the far wall, the twins winced. That was a clear indication of how enraged Draco was. He would never treat his expensive attire in such a way otherwise.

Fred cupped the back of head with his hands and started pacing, while George dropped onto the edge of the bed and flopped onto his back with a tortured moan. They knew they had truly messed up this time. It was a mistake... they should have told him before he witnessed it. But they hadn’t thought about it. It hadn’t ever been brought up and it was only a mutual wank. It wasn’t as if they had been replacing Draco. On the contrary. It had been because of Draco that they couldn’t stop from doing what they did. But that didn’t matter because they very well may have just lost their fiancé. It was a painful thought. Fear and panic pounded away in their chests.

“I can’t believe you kept this secret!” Draco suddenly shouted from within the bathroom. “Or that you thought it was okay to do it without me! The least you could do is let me watch, wankers!”

Fred instantly stopped pacing and faced the doorway while George’s head popped up, his eyes widening. “What?” he croaked. “What did you say, Draco love?”

Draco appeared in the doorway; bare foot and bare-chested. His shirt balled within hand. Draco walked to Fred, shook his shirt under the twin’s nose and then got in his face. “Bloody fiend! No common courtesy at all!” He spun around on George. “The least you could have done was ask me. Me! Your fiancé, twats!”

Fred was inexplicable aware of Draco’s half dressed state, as was George, and Fred found himself leaning down so that he could have Draco’s face in his again. “Asked you what?” he

asked.

“What do you think?” Draco snapped and twisted away to storm back into the bathroom.

George looked at Fred. “I’m confused.”

Fred nodded.

Draco came back out in only boxers this time. He looked at Fred and pointed a rigid finger at the bed. When both twins were sitting there, the blond started pacing back and forth in front of them. “You were fucking each other.”

Instead of answering, Fred reached out a hand to touch Draco’s bare hip as he passed in front of them. George grabbed his wrist and pulled it back down to their sides, shaking his head.

“You were fucking each other!”

George cleared his throat. “Not exactly fucking, not yet—we were gonna tell you, we just—we don’t think about it!” he hurriedly went on when Draco paused and glared coldly at him. “And we hadn’t thought about it since before we met you and then it kind of just happened.”

“So you’re bored already?” Draco demanded.

“No!” they both yelled, quickly rising to their feet and reaching out for the body that had been pacing in front of them and teasing them. “No! It just sort of happened! We started thinking of you and talking about you and you were really busy here setting up Harry’s party... and we had worked ourselves up to a Draco state.”

Draco pulled himself away and scowled. “I understand this is something that you did way before you met me, but you could have at least told me! I tell you my secrets!”

“But, Draco love! It didn’t even register. We would have told you if we’d thought about it. If you hadn’t walked in on us, we would have told you after being reminded.”

“You could have at least asked me if I wanted to watch before you started that!”

That stopped them short and for a moment they blinked blankly at him. A smirk appeared on Draco’s face as comprehension slowly lit there face. When they realized Draco wasn’t disgusted or had no plans of severing their marriage contract. When Draco was really just angry he missed a free show.

Fred and George than turned to each other. “He’s perfect,” they breathed.

“I am, yes,” Draco replied dismissively. “But you’re still in trouble.”

Draco stepped back and then stepped out of his boxers. He let them hang from a finger as he waited for two pair of blue eyes to meet his. He let the boxers drop before returning to the bathroom. The moment he disappeared, the twins were a whirlwind of movement; mainly

stripping out of their clothes as fast as possible and by the time Draco returned from the bathroom, wand in hand, the twins sat side by side on the edge of the bed, waiting.

Draco was silent as he stood in front of them and swished his wand towards the wardrobe. He watched their swelling cocks as they watched his. And then a bag came sailing out of the wardrobe and into Draco's waiting hand. Draco walked over to the vanity where he set his wand, and then he walked back and dropped the bag onto the twins' thighs.

"Am I going to have to worry about you two suddenly realizing you don't need anyone but each other?"

George shot out a hand and grabbed Draco's wrist. They stared at him intently. "Draco. We're brothers, not lovers."

"What I witnessed is usually what goes on between lovers."

"It's only ever been for release!" Fred answered. "We love you and we'll never do it again if it bothers you."

Draco's gaze dropped to the ground. "It's not that it bothered me. Not really. You two were bloody hot, in fact..." He wasn't really mad at them, and he wasn't really that surprised either. Because he did know them intimately and it hadn't come as much of a shock to find them nude and lip locked in the shower. And in actuality, this would ease things up in bed for him when he needed it. They were monsters sometimes; lovely gorgeous monsters who adored his pale arse. Both of them. And there were times when he had the itch that could only be scratched by having both their cocks in his arse. Like right now. But not all the time. Beyond all that, and aside from the fact he wasn't really angry, he was worried.

"No, Draco. Don't get that look." Fred was on his feet and gathering the blond into his arms, squeezing him tightly. "We may be a bit selfish and impatient but you're our world, okay? And we're sorry. We're so sorry for ever making you doubt that."

It took a moment, but Draco finally stopped looking at Fred's shoulder and met his eyes before nodding. Then George was behind him, petting his hair and kissing his neck and snuggling against the back of him and Draco smiled in relief when Fred started to kiss him and he had to very interested cocks pressing against his body. And then he jumped and quickly pulled away after feeling George prodding his arse open with a couple of fingers.

"Fiend!" he shouted.

"Draco," said fiend replied lowly. "We've been thinking about you all bloody day! And then you took off here right after the Dursley house, leaving us by our lonesome at the manor and how were we supposed to ask you if you wanted to watch if you were gone? Aside for that, I really really want your arse right now."

Draco shuddered at both their stare. "Sit back down."

The twins instantly did what he said. Draco once again dropped the bag onto their legs and gestured to it. The fiends immediately dug into the bag and were soon pulling out a paddle

and rope. "Very nice," Fred stated, looking up at Draco.

Draco's smirk morphed into a wide smile. "Which one of you started it?"

Two hands shot in the air. "I did!" was the enthusiastic reply. Then they turned to each other, frowning.

"No you didn't," George said.

"Yes I did. I'm the one who jumped in the shower with you!"

"I started by wanking in front of you! And then I moaned Draco's name, and once I did that, you were all over me. I started it!"

Fred's eyes brightened. "I started it by intentionally talking about the luscious body of our lovely Draco." He then nodded as if that were that.

Draco looked at George. "Did you intentionally start to wank to entice your brother?"

"Yep."

Fred was shaking his head. "No way! He was wanking thinking about you. He didn't know what he was doing!"

Draco had to continuously bite back a smile. "George wins I think," he said and handed the paddle and rope to Fred, who was soon grinning when he realized what Draco was about.

"Wait, what? If I win why does he get the paddle and the rope?"

Draco backed away, matching Fred's grin. "You didn't really win, did you?"

Fred nodded along. "Yes, most definitely. It was George's fault. He enticed me. Yes. And now he should be tied up and be our plaything."

"Oh wait, hold on!" George quickly got to his feet and began backing away from his brother and their lovely.

Draco leaned over to Fred and said softly, "there's a cock ring in that bag as well."

Fred dove for the bag while George tried diving over the bed to get away from Draco who had immediately moved to tackle George as soon as Fred moved.

"No fair! No fair! No fair!" George cried as he wrestled with Draco on the bed.

"Shut up!" Draco hissed. "You know you want this!"

George kind of melted against the mattress and stared at Draco over his shoulder with adoration.

"Git!" Draco laughed. "Back in the game!"

George blinked and then his eyes cleared. "Right, yeah. No fair!" he mock cried again and tried, not very hard, to get out of Draco's clutches and his brother's as well when Fred jumped in to help Draco restrain him.

Soon they had George tied to the bed. He was on his knees with his arse sticking up in the air. Fred handed the paddle to Draco and then crawled onto the bed, grabbing the back of his brother's head and forcing George's mouth on his engorged cock.

"Not fast enough," Fred hissed.

Draco moved behind George and paddled him. And paddled him every time he didn't follow Fred's every direction. Though George's disobedience was only pretend because he clearly liked what was happening. And when Fred made a pleased sound when his brother started deep throat him, Draco moved and draped himself on the corner of the bed; in prime position to see both his fiends and for them to see him as he slowly took his own erection in hand.

It was brilliant watching them watch him as he slowly wanked to them. They never looked at each other. They were always looking at him when their eyes weren't closed. And then it became quite clear when they lost complete interest in each other and were only concerned with watching Draco wank.

"Why've you stopped?" he questioned, pulling his hands away and rearranging until he was on his knees.

Fred backed up a step. "This will work better if you stand here."

"You only want to fuck me."

"Yes. Yes, I do."

"And I want to suck your cock so bad," George put in.

Draco took up Fred's position. Fred reached around him, grabbing his brother's chin and a handful of hair and jerked George's face up before pressing against Draco and urging the blond's hips forward. Draco extended a hand, grabbing the back of George's neck; his fingers sliding against and over Fred's.

Draco's mouth fell open in a soundless gasp and his head dropped limply back onto Fred's shoulder. George was more eager and far more responsive with Draco's cock than he had been with Fred. In fact it was less mechanical now and more sensual as his lips slid against Draco's cock, his tongue sliding and wrapping around him slowly in a burning torture.

And Fred continued to stand behind him, plastered against his body. Copper hair fell into his eyes as Fred dipping his head, mouthing Draco's exposed neck. Fred released his hands from George's hair and face and at first dropped his hands to Draco's hips. He continuously pushed his hips forward against Draco's backside; but it was a gentle movement. All their movements were slow; this wasn't just a release.

Draco choked on a gasp when George lunged forward as far as he could go; taking Draco's entire length into his mouth and it was then when he felt probing fingers and a slow gentle burn where Fred was working a slick finger inside him. Soon Fred had him doubled over George, his cock tucked fully inside him. Fred wrapped arms around Draco and started to pick up the pace. Draco noticed George trying valiantly to free his hands and he was also wiggling around, trying to press his erection against the bed to relieve pressure. It wouldn't work anyway since he still had that cock ring on.

He vaguely thought, as Fred pushed into him faster and harder, thus making him fuck George's mouth faster and harder, that George's jaw was probably aching something awful. But his wonderful fiend didn't seem to mind in the least. His mouth around Draco's cock never stopped sucking, never relented and his tongue never stopped doing sinful things to his shaft until Fred pulled out and pulled him away from George's mouth.

George stretched his jaw as he looked up at a cloudy eyed Draco with darkened eyes. "What do you want now?" he asked hoarsely.

Draco moaned and fell back against Fred's chest. "Both of you."

George's swollen mouth twisted into a wicked grin. "One of you release me right this fucking second."

Draco raised a hand towards him and the rope quickly unraveled. Once his hands were free, George raised up on his knees and lunged forward, grabbing the back of Draco's head and slammed their mouths together; pulling Draco until his lovely blond was straddling his lap and over his pulsing cock. Draco draped one arm around his neck and yanked the cock ring off before quickly moving and slamming himself down onto George's huge dripping cock. The tortured moan leaving George's mouth was well worth the pain he caused himself.

George dropped his head back against the pillow, grabbing Draco's hips as the blond started to move. George moved within him quickly, eager since the two prats had been ignoring his cock the entire time, and tried not to come immediately from feeling Draco's trembling walls squeezing tight around him.

They'd been in this position before, but they'd always gone slow at first because neither wanted to hurt Draco, despite the fact Draco eagerly took anything they wanted to give. So Fred placed himself against Draco's entrance and sliding along his brother's cock already tucked inside their beautiful smart wicked lover. Draco pressed himself against George's chest, breathing through his nose, trying to stay relaxed and ignore the pain while listening to both the fiends murmuring about how good it felt.

Once Fred was completely sheathed, Draco remained relaxed and passive and let the fiends take over movement. They had no problem with this. Fred was bent over him, chin dipped to his chest, mouth slightly parted and fingers digging into Draco's slender shoulders while George continued on with up thrusts that soon turned erratic in pattern. Only at the last moment before he came did he release Draco's hip to grab the blond's erection.

Draco gasped and threw his head back. That one touch was all he needed before he was coming in George's hand and George followed him shortly after. Fred wasn't far behind and

soon he collapsed on top of them, causing both George and Draco to groan.

“Get off you great big lug!” George shouted. “You’re squishing Draco!”

“Can’t move,” Fred slurred against the back of Draco’s neck, though he had enough energy to move a hand and start petting the blond hair spread over his face.

Draco smiled contentedly against George’s sweaty chest and closed his eyes. He may be a little squished, yes, but he was also exactly where he wanted to be.

“This is nice.”

“Nice and open,” George agreed.

“No neighbors,” they said together. “For miles.”

Walking through a field of tall reeds, the twins walked with about a dozen other Death Eaters and the Dark Lord. All the Death Eaters, themselves included, dressed in complete DE garb; all prepared and some more than eager for what was about to happen here.

They walked through a field towards Marjorie Dursley’s country home where she bred mean dogs and drank far too much. The closest neighbor, a muggle by the name of Fubster, definitely wouldn’t have heard her since he was already incapacitated.

The first dog came, curious and growling, and Severus silenced it with a cutting hex to the throat. “Got it.”

Lucius sneered slightly. “Show off.”

Severus turned and smirked. “It was moving too.”

“Rather ugly things to keep as pets,” Lucius said as he toed the dying creature in the side.

“Easy to kill.”

“Yes.”

Draco blinked at them. They were rather more chatty than usual when on a Death Eater hunt. They sounded like they were on a mate outing instead. Perhaps because nothing was riding on this mission except revenge and a little muggle killing fun. A muggle who deserved what was about to happen since she dared treat a Wizarding child the way she had. Things were less tense because of that and the fact they didn’t have to worry about being attacked back.

“What if it were bunnies?” George suddenly asked, looking at his brother.

Draco tripped a step.

“Yeah, bunnies,” Fred said, nodding. “Could we do it if it were a bunny farm she had here?”

“If they were cute and cuddly instead of loud and obnoxious and just plain annoying bulldogs?”

Voldemort suddenly swooped in on them, stopping the twins in their tracks and Draco by default. A few more Death Eaters also paused and lingered around. Draco grabbed the back of his lovers’ robes and squeezed his eyes closed, hoping the idiots would keep quiet.

“What are you blathering on about?” Voldemort snapped. “Bunnies?”

“Yeah, bunnies, my lord? Like Harry’s bunny. Cute little bugger it is,” George answered.

Voldemort’s gaze snapped over to Draco, who took a step back and began shaking his head rapidly. The Dark Lord did not miss the amused and knowing look passing between his Lieutenants.

“Would you order us to kill bunnies, sir?”

Someone giggled behind them. The giggle dissolved into laughter and quickly turned into delighted cackles.

“Bella?”

“I’m truly sorry, my Lord, but the thought of you ordering us to destroy a bunny farm is rather amusing. Delightfully amusing. Could we do so? Bunnies are really too cute, aren’t they?”

Voldemort turned, looking off towards the muggle woman’s house. “I happen to think the creatures do the world no disservice,” he blandly replied; speaking as if he would of the weather.

When Bella cocked her head and kind of gaped with incomprehension at the Dark Lord, Draco had to duck his head and bite his lip hard to keep from laughing. Voldemort noticed Bella’s idiotic stare and paused to turn to her. “Is something the matter, Bellatrix? Do you not agree?”

With the way he was staring at her, Bellatrix composed herself rather quickly. “Yes! Of course I do agree with you, my Lord.”

Voldemort turned back to the twins. “Stop talking about bunnies!” he hissed and turned to Draco, who jumped back in surprise at the sharp look. “You had better make sure they cease with the bunny talk, Draco.”

“Yes, my Lord.” Draco gave a jerky bow and then rounded on the twins.

Soon they were walking on and Voldemort fell back to walk with Lucius and Severus. He glanced sideways at the Potions Master. “And how did you find out?”

“We figured it out together, my Lord,” Severus responded with little emotion. “Lucius was uncertain about his attraction to the animal’s aura when he held you—it...the animal.”

“We spoke about it,” Lucius went on with a glance at tongue tripping lover, “and he put instances together.”

“It is to stay a secret,” Voldemort ordered.

“Of course, my Lord.”

In no time at all, two Death Eaters had gone into Marge’s country estate to apprehend her while others of their group went around, capturing the rest of her ruddy dogs. Someone had the foresight to silence the muggle, for it was quite clear she was trying to yell things at the top of her lungs as she was being carted out into the open field behind her house. But no one had thought to silence the dogs when they were rounded up. Voldemort quickly had the barking mutts stunned until he had use for them.

Marge was released in the center of a wizard and witch made circle; she teetered on her feet in clear terror of the situation. Any bravery she might have had against intruders was clearly chased away by the black cloaks and white masks of those standing around her. And the fact she was severely outnumbered.

Voldemort stepped forward, studying her with disdain before he finally spoke. Soft and deadly. “I wonder if you know who we are?” he asked himself, still circling. Marge looked lost between wanting to follow his movements, the obvious leader, and keeping her eyes on the Death Eaters in front of her. “Your brother and his wife surely do. Does she?” he asked, turning to two of the Death Eaters.

“Don’t think so, my Lord,” one answered.

“He said she was obliterated after that blowing up episode.”

Voldemort smiled frigidly and turned back to her. “Ah, so that gives me the pleasure of explaining it to you... or perhaps, a simple reminder will do.” In the blink of an eye Voldemort had a picture in his hand and he moved forward until he stood only a few feet away from her. “Surely you recognize who this is lounging beside me,” he said, turning the picture and casting a lumos so she could see the image clearly.

The muggle clearly sucked in a breath even if they couldn’t hear it. And of course she would know whom he was referring to in the photo which had been taken earlier that day. It was a moving picture of course and part of her shock had to do with that and the light glowing from the tip of his wand. The other though... Harry and he were sitting on their thrones upon the dais. Harry had a leg thrown over one of the arm rests, smiling widely at camera. In one hand he held a sign that read *RIP Aunt Marge (evil bint!)* while he waved his other hand in the air, flicking the camera off in a clear fuck you.

“By the way,” Voldemort went on, enjoying the way her eyes started to bug out of her head, “he wanted me to tell you the RIP stands for ‘rest in purgatory’. In case you draw the wrong conclusions thinking he wanted you to have peace in any way. He does not.”

The woman continued to stare at the photo. Clearly blindsided though Voldemort could now see a spark of anger and disgust in her eyes as she studied Harry on his not-wanted-chair. The little minx was dressed in his finest clothes with his deep dark purple cloak spread out beneath him and hanging off the chair to brush against the ground. Voldemort rather liked this picture. It expressed everything it was supposed to. It expressed Harry's good health, his wealth, and his power. And most importantly, Harry's happiness. That was clear as day in his bright emerald eyes.

He pulled the picture away from her gaze and tucked it back inside his robes. "Let's begin, shall we." Voldemort turned and beckoned Severus forward. "You like torturing creatures smaller than you... though, most things are smaller than you, aren't they?" he stated with a nasty curl of his lip as he studied her. He nodded when Severus stopped beside him. "I'm sure your animals feel left out. It's time to rectify that."

As he relieved her of the Silencio, Severus tossed a dull knife down at her feet.

Marjorie Dursley was a sputtering mess of nonsense at this point, staring down at the knife and making no move to grab it. Voldemort half turned, pointed his wand at one of the dogs and levitated it over and dropped it also at her feet. "Pick up the knife, Miss Dursley," he ordered and in such a voice she didn't even need to be Imperiused to do so. Though when she snatched the knife up, she wield it in front of her as if that would protect her.

"W-what are you?" she shrieked, staring around and mostly at his wand. "What do you want?"

"You know all you need to know about us."

"I knew he was a ruffian!" she spat, seeming to gain some bravery when none of the Death Eaters made a move. She sounded not unlike her dogs. "A bad egg, that Potter! Poison is what he is!"

"*Crucio*," Voldemort hissed. "He is known as Harry Riddle now, my husband, and I will allow no one to speak about him in such a way."

Marjorie Dursley was too busy lying on the ground, writhing and screaming to reply to that announcement. Most watched the muggle with smirks on their faces. Bella was back to cackling happily. When the Dark Lord released the curse, the muggle woman remained on her back, her eyes tightly closed as she whimpered and continued to tremble.

"It's a miracle he wasn't poisoned by you and your family," Voldemort sneered down at her. "Just remember, what happens here tonight is brought upon by your actions in regards to Harry. You've brought this on yourself for abusing a *child*."

"I never touched the freak!"

Voldemort beckoned with his hand and several people moved forward at once. Bella reached the muggle first. She skipped forward eagerly and shouted, "*CRUCIO!*"

After that round was over, Voldemort shook his head. “We’re getting off topic. You know what you’ve done and we know what you’ve done. There is no need to rehash what we all know. We’ve come here to pay you back and now it shall begin. The torture of your *precious* animals.”

Dursley stared down at the unconscious dog beside her, “N-no, p-please! Not my Annabelle!”

“Annabelle? Really?” someone whispered loudly. Voldemort recognized the voice belonging to one of the twins.

“Such a pretty name for an ugly dog! How dare she use such a pretty name!” The two then broke down into snickers. They didn’t stop until the Death Eater between them smacked the backs of their heads.

The Dark Lord pointed his wand at the muggle’s face. “*Imperio*. Sit up and take the knife.” She did so immediately, looking dazed and daft and holding the knife out in front of her, clearly having no idea how to wield it properly. Voldemort had to push down the urge to tell her to shove the knife into her neck and be done with it. And then at that mental picture, he bit back a demented laugh and instead started to give her a set of instructions; reviving the dog before she got started. Reviving it, but making sure it couldn’t move all that much. Voldemort wanted the muggle to hear its painful whines and vicious snarls as it tried but failed to get away from that blade.

Marjorie Dursley was made to torture half her bulldog population. She had thirteen in total. After each one, the Imperius curse was lifted and she was left there to mourn the dog and build on the guilt, horror, and shock of doing what she was just made to do. By the end, by the time she’d tortured and killed six of her dogs, Marjorie was just a whimpering and sick wide eyed mess as she stared at the dogs and over herself, drenched in her dogs’ blood and guts. It was a delightfully dreadful sight.

Voldemort moved away and his Death Eaters approached, tightening the circle. “You may do what you wish, but do not kill her just yet.”

The ones who felt especially connected to this went first. The twins and Draco and also Bella. She only jumped in the first group because she’d become impatient to cast some pain. Through the duration of the torture, Voldemort stood back or circled the woman, taunting her and smirking at her pleas, but he did not throw a single curse. He was content to watch the show and watch Bella and the younger Death Eaters. He did have his doubts about the twins; doubting if they could really get down and dirty with the torture, and though they had no finesse with it, they did not disappoint him. They dived in and seemed especially excited to do so. He wondered how long they’d been harboring the desire to torture this particular muggle.

Bella suddenly shrieked in agony, making everyone freeze and turn to her. She then huffed, twitched, and glided herself over to the twins. She snatched their wands and started beating them over the head with them. “No, no, no!” she shrieked. “You are not making sandwiches! This is an art form!”

She turned sharply on her heel and stalked passed each of them and paused beside Draco. Flashing him a disbelieving look, Bella slapped the fiends' wands into his hand.

"What's that even mean, Auntie Bella?" one of the twins whined.

"There's a certain finesse to torture that you two haven't developed yet," Draco responded with a little smile at his upset aunt.

"Well excuuuuse us! It's not like-" that twin ducked quickly when Bellatrix sent a crucio his way. "Okay! We'll try to be... more graceful? No need for violence, Auntie Bella!"

Voldemort chuckled darkly under his breath and after another minute, he called a halt to the cursing. He beckoned Severus to come forward to administer healing potions. Once the muggle was mostly healed, Voldemort stepped back and allowed Severus, Lucius, and the LeStrange brothers their turn to her while he still remained an observer. She wasn't worth getting his hands dirty. This time around the watching would be more enjoyable. Watching his followers get back at the muggle for Harry.

After nearly an hour, Voldemort called a halt to the torture and had her healed again, as much as she could be healed. Dursley was coherent enough to understand pain and the coming of more of it. She was good for nothing beyond screams and whimpers at this point. And any coherent words coming from her mouth were pleads and apologies. Apologies Voldemort knew weren't real, so he took no notice of it. He wouldn't have anyway, even if they had been sincere.

Voldemort circled her once more, smirking at the state of her. "Perhaps I should be merciful this once," he said as he moved and then looked around at his followers. Most were smirking back at him, knowing what their Lord was getting at. "Perhaps I'll give you a chance to flee. To save yourself. Would you like that, muggle?"

All she did was cry and choke on her own tears and saliva as she lay on her back, staring blankly up at the dark sky. Voldemort turned and gestured and six Death Eaters came forward. The Dark Lord stood over one of the remaining six dogs and conjured a leash and his Death Eaters did the same with the rest of the dogs. Voldemort gripped the leash tightly, revived the dog and then started whispering words under his breath. With each passing second the newly awakened bulldog became more aggressive until it was a mindless feral animal; snarling and snapping its jaws in Dursley's direction. The other dogs being conditioned in the same way.

An eerie anticipatory smile appeared on Voldemort's face as he faced the woman again. "I suggest you run now. You'll have thirty seconds before we release your dogs."

It took 'Aunt Marge' a full minute to even get up off her back. She started crawling away, not even bothering to climb to her feet. Despite the animals being her beloveds, she knew it wasn't them anymore. She could see it in their eyes. They wanted to rip her to shreds. Whatever the freakish men had done, they'd already taken her lovelies from her.

It wasn't a long show. Marge hardly got anywhere before the dogs were on her. Voldemort had the dogs released twenty seconds after she started crawling away. They may have been

smallish dogs, but they were vicious and intended to kill. They swarmed over her and three immediately went for her throat, wherein her shrieks turned into hauntingly sweet gurgling gasps. The dogs ripped at her flesh for minutes on end, still eating away at her even when she went limp in death. Voldemort's eyes gleamed with pleasure as he watched all this, watched the muggle bitch die by the things she held most dear.

Finally he turned away, a satisfied smirk on his lips. "Kill them," he ordered. Several Death Eaters moved closer to the animals; the dogs were still intent on their victim and didn't notice their approach nor the flashes of green light that instantly administered death. The twins moved up after the other Death Eaters had backed away. The two stood over the mangled body of Marjorie Dursley, and as one, they spat on her shredded corpse.

When they returned to Draco's side, the blond looked at them. "Well?"

"That was rather exciting. Should've bet on the winning dog."

"Typical."

"And the fat cow got what she deserved...who's that?"

Several people turned to see two bright lights approaching from the road in front of the house. Voldemort moved forward until he could see the vehicle clearly. And when he did, when he realized who it was, he threw his head back and laughed.

When Tom returned home, he immediately went in search of Harry, knowing he would find the brat in the kitchen, even at this late hour, though it wasn't really Harry's fault since he'd been transmitting through link the entire time with the muggle. Harry wouldn't have been able to sleep through that. He travelled down the hallway that would lead to the kitchens and slowed a few feet away from the door when he heard voices. He wasn't suspicious, merely curious, for it seemed Hermione was with Harry and they were obviously having a serious discussion about something.

"He won't let you."

"Hermione, something has to be done. And he may. This will help Tom to."

"It's a huge project, Harry."

"You've told me this a thousand times already. I know. I'm prepared. Are you?"

"Of course, Harry. I only want to make sure. Once we start, we have to keep going. The things we'll see there! If you thought the Veela slave trade was bad..."

"I know," Harry answered in a hard tone. "I know. That's one reason why we're doing this. I want to run it, Hermione. It will be under Silver control. Nothing will happen without us knowing about it. Nothing happens without our say so."

Hermione giggled. "Kind of like the mafia."

“Yeah. Pretty much. The magical mafia...” Harry trailed off and Tom didn’t need to look in the kitchen to know Harry was grinning excitedly. “Except we have bloody morals. By the time we’re done with the Magical Black Market, no one will dare cross the Silvers. Ever. If I have to live in this world, there’s certain things I’ll no longer abide by. And if I can help destroy these things and fix other aspects that need fixing, then I bloody well will! Besides, we already have an opening. Charlie knows some people and the twins sure as hell do. They have excellent places to start.”

“But, Harry... Voldemort-”

“I just have to get all the facts, make a wicked plan of attack, lay the plans out to him, and then silver tongue may way through convincing him.”

“You cannot charm a professional charmer.”

“Very helpful, Hermione.”

“It’s true. You can’t sugar coat this. All he’s going to see is parts of our plans mean you going out frequently throughout the next months.”

“For the time being all we’re going to be doing is observing. We won’t really attack until after the New Year sometime. After the twins are born for sure. And that’s if we have enough information by then.”

“I just don’t think you should get so excited about this so soon. You don’t know what his final word will be.”

“I’m not excited,” Harry mumbled.

Hermione laughed. “Yes you are! You live for this, don’t try to deny it! The adrenaline rush. The excitement. The *danger*. You can’t sit still for any length of time, Harry. You never have.”

“Whatever. This will work.”

“I agree. Our plans are very well thought out. But that’s not the problem. For this, the Silvers will need their leader. And that’s the problem. The Dark Lord won’t allow this right now.”

“I’ll talk to him. We’ll get as much done as we can before I get too big to move.”

Hermione laughed at that. Tom smirked as he turned around and headed back down the hallway. Once back at the end, he let his magic slip passed his control, let his aura slip through their link and then walked back towards the kitchen. Since he did that, Harry knew he was close by, so Tom wasn’t surprise to find the talking had stopped. Hermione was sitting at the kitchen island, scratching out on parchment with a quill while Harry sat across from her, slowly mixing something in a bowl. Both looked to him when he entered and both tried especially hard for innocent looks. It might have worked had Tom not heard what they’d been talking about a minute before.

Tom studied his husband as he took one of the empty stools. Harry reached out and brushed a few strands of brown hair away from Tom's face. His fingers lingered on Tom's neck, just below his ear. "Is that her blood?" he asked softly, tapping the spot.

Tom only just became aware of the feeling of dried blood there and he nodded. Harry's fingers remained there for a moment more before pulling away. "What happened to her?"

"Dogs turned on her. Killed by the little beasts she adored so much."

It didn't surprise Tom when Harry's lips peeled back to reveal a sharp malicious grin. "Fitting."

"I thought you would think so." Then they went back to studying each other. Tom finally turned to study Hermione, but she was keeping her gaze strictly on the parchment. When he turned back to Harry, it was to find his husband half glaring at him.

"You were eavesdropping. You heard us, didn't you?"

Tom heard Hermione suck in a breath, but he ignored her for the time being and concentrated on Harry. "Now would be as good a time as any to pitch this project of yours to me."

"What exactly did you hear... you eavesdropping wanker!"

The Dark Lord smirked. "The Magical Mafia. Silvers controlling the Magical Black Market... now does this involve all of Europe or strictly Britain?" he asked in genuine interest.

"Britain for now," Hermione answered before Harry could. She shrugged when Harry turned to give her a little glare. "He heard, Harry. Might as well be now."

Harry huffed. "I wasn't ready," he whined. "Besides, you've already made up your mind so tell me your answer first and then I'll throw a fit."

"No. I haven't decided... the idea is a good one, a challenging one also, but one I know you can accomplish. However, your condition... explain what you will be doing in the next few months and then we can talk about it more."

"First it's going to be trips into one of the physical markets. Disguised and mainly invisible. We keep our heads down and watch *everything* and *everyone*. We'll become familiarized with all that goes on there and with everyone who is a regular. It's the regulars we want to keep tally of. It's pretty much information gathering, Tom. We want to know every last detail before we make a huge move in taking over. We'll have to do it slowly and carefully so as not to draw attention. We'll have to do it long enough that by the time we're ready for the next part of our plan, our disguised selves will be a permanent trust worthy feature of the market. The twins even thought to set up an illegal gambling ring with Lee Jordan as a cover."

Harry tried not to hold his breath as Tom processed all of this. Looking over, Harry could see Hermione did have her breath held. After an excruciating five minutes of Tom being indrawn with thoughts; his genius brain going over everything he'd heard and been told, finally he sat back and nodded. "You will always have someone with you and as you said, you will stop when you've become too big to move."

"Really?" Harry gasped, a huge smile spreading on his face.

"Yes. Now it's time for bed."

Tom stood up and looked at Harry expectantly.

"But I've got..." Harry trailed off and dropped the hand he'd been waving towards the counter. "Things I can finish tomorrow, I suppose," he ended weakly, knowing the look he was receiving was the end of the line look. Harry figured he shouldn't press his luck.

Harry passed on his bowl to Tally, who was always standing close by, waiting for an order. The little house elf took the bowl and went to put it away. Harry knew she would also put a charm on it to keep the mixture fresh until he could get back to it. While he was doing that, Hermione was gathering up her parchments. She paused, remembering something and then she dipped down to pick up the bag she'd placed under her stool.

"Sir," she said to Tom as she rummaged through the bag. "I have that catalogue you wanted. I apologize for the time it took to get it to you."

Her cheeks were already red, and Harry's did the same when she delivered the magazine into Tom's outstretched hand.

"Since you were gone on a mission, I can let it go this time," the Dark Lord murmured distractedly as he paged through the thick catalogue, eyebrows rising further with each page looked at. Several times he paused in his study of the magazine to give Harry the once over, his eyes darkening with each imagined outfit on his young husband. Somewhere along the way Hermione snuck out of the kitchen.

"Are you honestly going to purchase something from that?" Harry asked as he grabbed the distracted Dark Lord's arm and began dragging him out of the kitchen. Tom followed along, but most of his attention was still on the open catalogue in his hands.

"Some of these things are really very tasteful, Harry."

Harry leaned against Tom's side and looked at the lingerie catalogue. His ears started burning. "And some of those things are really very see-through," he whispered.

Tom finally closed the catalogue and tucked it under an arm. "It's amusing," he murmured, wrapping the other arm around Harry's shoulders.

"What is?"

"Your embarrassment. You're usually never embarrassed. Must be a pregnancy thing. This is one aspect I enjoy."

“Psychotic git.”

Tom looked down at him with a small sexy smirk. “Is that the best you can do?”

Harry lifted his face, meeting Tom’s eyes. Finally he grinned. “You had a fun time didn’t you?”

“Yes. It was quite enjoyable. Especially when I told her exactly why we were there and what she could have done to avoid her painful demise. She was begging for forgiveness by the time we were done with her.”

Harry was silent a minute while Tom continued to lead them up the stairs towards their bedroom. “What about that spike of absolute bliss I felt half an hour ago?” he asked. “I’ll have you know that dropped me to the ground for a minute.” When Tom stopped dead in his tracks, Harry rolled his eyes and grabbed Tom’s hand to keep him going. “I’m okay, obviously. So what happened?”

Tom didn’t answer until they were in their bedroom. When beside the bed, they immediately set to undressing each other. “As we were leaving,” the Dark Lord murmured lowly, in that rich smooth voice that always sent Harry’s pulse jumping, “the muggle woman received visitors. Oh I laughed, Harry. I laughed and laughed.”

Harry managed to smile just before Tom started kissing him; stealing his breath and his own laugh. As he was kissed, Tom pushed Harry’s shirt off his shoulders and stripped it from his arms before tossing it somewhere and then went on to finish with Harry’s pants while Harry was able to get Tom’s tunic off. But he didn’t go for his husband’s pants and instead happily occupied his hands by running them across Tom’s chest, down his stomach, and then back up over his shoulders.

He jerked his head back when they both needed air. Tom didn’t pay attention to things like that. Especially not now when he was in one of his moods. But it was a lovely mood so Harry wasn’t really complaining. “Y-you were s-saying,” he began breathlessly, and then had to take a deep breath because Tom’s mouth was working on his neck and he could hardly think. “A-about the visitors?”

Tom wrapped an arm around his waist and grabbed the back of his head, pulling Harry as he backed up towards the bed. When Tom lay on his back, Harry immediately crawled on top of him, straddling his husband. He wasted no time in leaning down and swiping his tongue against Tom’s nipple, moaning from the salty taste and the musky scent of his husband.

Tom settled a light hand on the back of Harry’s neck. “Your relatives arrived.”

He frowned when that tongue disappeared from his chest and Harry’s face popped up to stare at him with wide eyes. “Was that your doing?”

“No. Purely coincidence. Apparently after hearing about your cousin and then their house burning, Miss Dursley invited them to stay with her until something could be sorted. They were of course subtly led to the scene of Marjorie Dursley’s demise. Oh, the anguish, Harry.”

Harry took a moment to process this before that blinding smile lit up his face. “Brilliant.”

Tom started laughing again. That wonderful laugh Harry prayed he would hear for the rest of his life. And he laughed along with his husband as Tom flipped them around and pressed over him, resuming their earlier activity and ceased Harry’s need for talking.

Two weeks after Marge’s demise Harry would still break out into a vindictive smile every so often. And this was the smile that was on his face as he grabbed his notes and order forms before leaving his study. In contemplative silence, he traveled through the manor until he found his husband in the library with the single candle lit. Upon entering he waved his wand, lighting a few more. Tom frowned in annoyance, shifted in his seat, and continued reading.

“You’ll hurt your back sitting like that all the time.”

“I will have no comments like that from you. Slouch king that you are.”

Harry set his papers down and took the seat opposite Tom. “Slouch Emperor,” he corrected, “and I’ll thank you never to forget it.”

Tom looked up sharply and laughed. “Very true,” he said, half standing and leaning over; reaching a hand up to cup Harry’s neck and drag his husband into a kiss. “Cheeky.”

Harry pulled back with a hum, smiling that lop sided grin. “Since you don’t seem so busy right now and appear to be in a fantastic mood, I’ll now lay this on you and hope for the best.” He slapped the papers down in front of Tom over his book. “Dates I’ll need to be away for business.”

Tom immediately frowned and started reading over the papers. “No... No...Perhaps... No...Definitely not. ...No... I approve of this one.”

“One out of seven? Tom!”

“Three of these events will need to see Belial as a guest.”

Harry sat back. “Oh.” Then he leaned forward quickly. “Really?”

“Yes. Two of your jobs happen at two of these events, while the third is unrelated.”

“And the other four?” Harry demanded, jabbing a finger in the parchments direction.

“You cannot go. That is the end of it.”

“That’s not the end! The least you could do is tell me why!”

“You’ll be too far along and you’ve already promised not to go against me on this. I don’t even know why you thought you could slip this in here.”

Harry relaxed back in his chair and rolled his head back. “Never hurts to try. What about the ‘perhaps’ one?”

“That depends entirely on how well you feel during your Silver business.”

Harry said nothing to this. He still couldn't believe Tom had agreed to the black market project. Without any nagging on Harry's part. So he was going to keep quiet now because he didn't want to press his luck.

Tom leaned back in his chair, took a deep breath, and then released it; all the while smiling as if he knew what Harry was thinking.

“Yes?” Harry inquired while glaring.

“I was only enjoying the peaceful silence.”

“Yeah,” Harry said, standing and nodding. “Enjoy the silence, Tom. *Enjoy it.*”

Tom straightened and eyed him suspiciously. Harry caught his narrowed look and laughed. He laughed and waved and walked out of the library.

“Just what do you mean by that? Harry!”

Harry snickered and kept walking.

That evening Harry stumbled out of the Floo into Grimmauld Place and began to wipe the soot off his robe as he caught himself and then started his way out of the kitchen. As soon as he crossed into the hallway, he was accosted by Hermione.

“You're late!”

“Not on purpose. Is Neville here yet?”

“No. In fact it's you, Neville, and Nathan we're all waiting on. Why?” she asked when Harry frowned.

“I've been trying to get a hold of him but haven't been able to. I only know that he's been in contact with Lucius several times over the last couple of weeks.”

“I'm sure he'll be here tonight. It's a full meeting,” Hermione said as they walked into the meeting room where most of the Silvers, human and vampire, were congregated. As Hermione said, Neville and Nathan were still absent.

He hadn't been seated a minute when he felt the wards around Grimmauld shift and expand, allowing pre keyed-in wizards or witches through. From the magical shift, Harry recognized it to be Tom, Severus, and Lucius. It wasn't unusual for those three to pop up during a meeting- they were never seen- so Harry pushed them to the back of his mind and concentrated on those who were in the room with him.

Harry and the others turned to the door when the second to last Silver joined the meeting. There was a general call out of “Neville!” throughout the room, but soon everyone went quiet when Neville kept his gaze mostly on the floor and shuffled around the table to a free seat, giving only a half hearted wave in an absent direction.

“Neville?” Harry asked quietly.

“Neville, what’s wrong?” Hermione asked when Harry didn’t get an answer.

“Nothing.”

“Where’s Nathan?” Harry questioned. He figured he’d ask since Nathan was the only Silver missing and as far as he knew Nathan was still living with Neville.

“Don’t know where he is. Not surprised he’s not here,” Neville finally answered in a bitter tone.

Harry waited for more but when it was apparent Neville had nothing more to say, he spoke again. “Neville?” he prodded, feeling there was much more going on here.

Neville swallowed thickly and raised his face to look at Harry with blood shot eyes. “H- Harry... can I speak with you alone?”

Harry nodded and was instantly up. He then led Neville out of the room, quickly down the hall and into the library. There was a table in the middle of the room. The two wizards moved there and set in the chairs. Harry sat back and Neville didn’t need any prodding to explain.

“That night... my birthday... I let him-I wanted it, you know?” Neville whispered and Harry nodded, knowing what it was Nathan and Neville had done that night. He’d been wondering about that. “It was amazing, Harry. He took really good care of me. Made me feel... but I guess it was all a joke,” he ground out, dropping his eyes to the table and balling his hands into fists. “I haven’t seen him since then. I woke up and he was gone the next morning. He finally got what he wanted and had no reason to stick around I guess. Three weeks and I haven’t seen or heard from him. Suppose it’s my fault. Falling for it. For him. It’s just, I thought... I felt-” he cut off and shook his head.

First Harry’s eyes had widened, but when the rest of his friend’s words sank in, he narrowed them. Anger quickly rising within and making him ball his hands until his nails were cutting into his skin.

Before he could say anything, Neville started to laugh. A low dry not-amused laugh. “That’s not the worst of it.”

Harry was almost afraid to ask, but he did anyway. “And...what’s the worst of it?”

Neville laughed again, this time hysterically. “I’m up the duff with a vampire’s baby.”

Harry sat back heavily, rubbing his neck and completely astonished.

“I’ve been feeling sick for a bit now,” Neville went on quietly. “At first I thought it was because... because I felt abandoned and betrayed. I... I don’t know how it happened, but I fell in love with him. I love him so much, Harry and I thought it was heartbreak at first that was making me so sick, but it’s not. I went to St. Mungo’s this morning...”

Harry slowly stood then, reaching out to squeeze his friend’s shoulder once. “I’ll be right back,” he said softly.

He turned away after Neville dropped his head to the table. Harry strode from the room and then stopped in shock when he found his husband, Severus, and Lucius standing just outside the door. It was quite clear they had heard everything. Harry started moving again; glaring at them as he passed and headed straight back to the meeting room.

“Trent,” he began in a level voice once he’d entered the room. “Perhaps you could go and locate our missing vampire for me?” it was clearly an order posed as a polite question.

Trent studied Harry’s stiff posture and angry eyes before he nodded and looked at two others. Then the three vampires stood and left the room.

“Harry, what is it?” Hermione asked. “Is Neville alright?”

“No, he’s not.”

All of the Weasleys stiffened; their faces losing all trace of joviality. It was Fred who spoke for all of them. “What happened?”

Harry shook his head. It wasn’t his story to tell. Neville would do that if he wanted. “He’s not... he’ll be alright eventually, and we’ll all help him through this.”

“Whatever it is, of course we will,” Bill answered and he was backed by firm nods from everyone.

Harry nodded before leaving to return to Neville. He shook his head on the way, wishing Neville had come to him when he realized Nathan wasn’t coming back. His friend had spent three weeks alone, depressed and doubting himself. No wonder Neville hadn’t returned any of his owls. Harry had known Neville was corresponding with Lucius and so had assumed his friend was alright and only too busy currently to answer his owls. They hadn’t been urgent owls anyway.

Harry paused mid step when he found Tom, Lucius, and Severus still standing outside of the library, all three discussing something under their breath. Mostly it was Tom saying something while the others nodded.

“This is fortunate,” Lucius said just before he noticed Harry watching them with narrowed eyes. “In the long run, certainly.”

“Yes. Very fortunate,” Tom murmured as he turned to face Harry, not the least bit surprised to see him standing there.

“Why would you even think it was okay to eavesdrop?” Harry asked lowly.

“You’ve done it before,” Severus was quick to answer with a raised challenging brow.

“Well I-” yeah, he had. “But this... you shouldn’t have heard this. The last thing he needs is for people to laugh at him behind his back.”

“Do we look amused?” Lucius asked.

“Aside from that, you should have put up wards against eavesdropping. I assume you’ve gone to order Nathan’s capture.”

Harry scratched the back of his neck. “Not in so many words, but yeah.” His hand dropped heavily to his side. “He has a lot to answer for. I warned him... and this is much worse.”

Harry walked by them and entered the room, closing the door with a snap and erecting those privacy barriers. Harry could see this hurting Neville in a lot of ways. Ways beyond Nathan leaving and breaking Neville’s heart. For starters, Nathan leaving before Neville had even woken up after them finally shagging would have carved out a huge hole in his friend’s self-esteem, especially when to Neville, it hadn’t been just a shag. Not to mention the fact that now he was pregnant. So now Neville was going to think he was the little boy his Gran had kept saying he was. He was going to think he couldn’t do anything right. That he always needed to be watched over and told what to do, or mistakes like this would happen... although Harry really didn’t think of it as a mistake, aside from the fact Neville was unmarried. That was another point that would get to Neville. He was Lord Longbottom. And now he was a pregnant unmarried Lord Longbottom.

Harry sat beside Neville, peering at his bowed head. “What do you want to do?”

“Forget him,” Neville immediately answered as if he’d been praying for that very thing for days. “Forget this.”

Harry glared at the table. “He should have known better!” he hissed.

Neville shook his head. “It was my responsibility too. I knew... I had known it was possible. We all know there are half vampires out there. I just-I wasn’t thinking then. At first, when he took me to my room and we left you downstairs, I managed to get away from him. But I wanted him then anyway. He was going to back off like he always does. He just wanted to get me in bed to sleep.” Neville turned, looking at Harry, a blush on his face. “I started it. I practically begged him. Wouldn’t take no for an answer,” he whispered. “Maybe if I hadn’t...”

“I’m not making excuses for him, but... at this point it’s fairly certain he doesn’t know about the baby and we don’t know why he left, Neville.”

“Even if he tried to come back to the manor... I warded my estate against Vampires two weeks ago. I was so very angry at that point.”

“It’s understandable.”

“Do you think he has somewhere safe to go during the days?” Harry couldn’t help but smile at that. “Wonder how many other little Nathans are running around out there?” Neville muttered bitterly.

Harry grabbed his wrist and shook him. “You don’t know why he left. *We* don’t. So we shouldn’t jump to conclusions. When we get him, then we’ll ask, and then we’ll stake his nonexistent heart— Not really, Neville!” he exclaimed when that last statement seemed to

cause Neville to panic. “But he won’t get away with this if he left just because all he wanted was a shag from you, understand? He knew better. Now... what about the baby? What do you want to do?”

“Do?” Neville blinked at him. “I... don’t know. Just found out today. Mind’s been kind of blank all day, Harry. I don’t know what to do.”

Harry pulled in a breath and rubbed his own stomach. He had to ask the question even if it pained him. He wanted to help Neville as much as he could and no matter Neville’s decision, he would stand beside him for support the whole way. “Do you want to keep it?”

“Dunno.”

“When was the last time you slept?”

Neville reached up to rub a spot on the side of his neck as if hypnotized. “Dunno that either,” he whispered.

Watching him rub his neck, Harry thought of another question. “Did he bite you?”

That seemed to pull Neville out of his momentary funk and his face flushed. “Yeah. I gave him permission. Wanted to be his donor. It hurt at first, Harry. It hurt an awful lot and then it was brilliant and then he kind of... he kind of freaked out, apologized, and then got back to doing incredible things- which had nothing to do with my neck- and we both kind of forgot about his biting and his behavior. Or at least I did, but now that I remember, as I was falling asleep he was lying there staring at my neck. He looked sort of... troubled. Never had a chance to ask him about it though, obviously. Wanker.”

Harry’s brows lowered in confusion. “Why would he be upset when you gave him permission to bite you? That doesn’t make sense. Maybe... maybe that’s what ran him off, whatever was bothering him. I hate to think Nathan was a monumental bastard this whole time.”

“I know. But why would he stay after getting what he’d wanted?”

Harry understood this was Neville’s mentality right now and his opinion on the matter wasn’t going to change until he heard from Nathan again. Harry couldn’t imagine... well maybe he could. He could imagine sitting there, being pregnant with his twins. He tried imagining Tom had left him... Hadn’t he been afraid that first time he and Tom had made love? He had been so afraid it was all a game to Tom. He’d been so scared and panicky. He’d been sick with the thought. Even now, just the thought of not having Tom... and Neville was sitting beside him going through it for real.

“Will you let me help you?”

Neville lifted his eyes to his and nodded.

“Okay, first before we do anything, I have to tell you... um, try not to get really mad. Try to keep calm-”

“Oh, Merlin.”

“Right. Um... Tom, Severus, and Lucius eavesdropped earlier. When you told me about being up the duff. They heard that.”

Neville’s forehead hit the table with a loud thunk.

Harry nodded, agreeing. “Yeah. Slimy Slytherins, eh?”

Neville moaned. “I’m ruined... even more!”

After ten minutes, Harry managed to get Neville to lift his head from the table. His friend was being stubbornly stubborn about it. “It’ll be alright, Nev. I promise. Tonight, you can kip at my place. I think you should. You really need some sleep. Let me take care of you for a couple of days. You can relax and think about things for a time and make your decisions in a few days.”

“Okay, Harry.”

Neville’s agreement just like that surprised Harry and he frowned when he realized Neville really had no idea what he was suggesting. But that was okay. Harry wasn’t going to explain it in detail to him.

“Do you feel like going back to the meeting?”

“Are the vampires still there?”

“Most of them. Trent went off with two others.”

“To find Nathan?” Harry nodded as they both stood. “I don’t want to see him.”

“No,” Harry agreed. “You need some peace right now.”

Neville didn’t say anything to that, keeping his face purposely blank as he followed Harry through the house back to the meeting room. Harry noticed Lucius and Severus had left, but he could still feel his husband was still somewhere within the house. Probably lurking in the library, where they had just come from. Or at least that’s what he thought until he walked in and saw Bunnymort sitting regally on Hermione’s lap. Hermione was talking with the vampire sitting next to her and scratching Bunnymort behind his ears. The bunny’s nose twitching every once in a while.

“Oi, Harry! Why won’t your bunny let us pet him?” George demanded the moment he and Neville were spotted. Clearly everyone wanted to know what was going on with Neville but they were going to pretend nothing was wrong until Neville seemed to want questions.

“He doesn’t like people,” Harry said, accepting Bunnymort when Hermione gently handed him over. He fell in love all over again when the bunny snuggled against his chest without any prompting.

Harry cut a glance at Neville, who was staring at the table and trying to ignore the vampire sitting beside him, Wills. Wills, Harry knew, was a friend of Nathan's. They'd been turned the same year and had connected soon after becoming vampires when they joined the same coven.

"Why didn't you go help find him?" Harry asked lowly. Too low for the others at the other end of the table to hear. Wills looked over and noticed Harry was staring at him. "You would know where to look."

"And so does Trent." Wills looked at Neville, concern in his eyes. "What did he do?"

Everyone heard that and the room went quiet. Neville looked at Harry, who shrugged. A silent message that said it was his decision if he wanted to tell. Neville looked back down at his hands, seemingly very concerned with a bit of dirt under one of his nails.

"I'm... going to have a baby."

Harry was very relieved the twins didn't jump in with any of their usual comments. He completely expected them to take the piss out of Neville. And even if it would have only been in good fun, it wouldn't have been appreciated at the moment. But everyone sat there, and everyone's eyes were narrowing.

"Nathan's?" asked Wills softly.

"Yeah. He doesn't know. Haven't seen him in three weeks."

Wills gave a jerky nod and his eyes narrowed in anger.

Luna peered at him curiously. "How far along are you?"

"Three weeks."

"That bastard!" the twins exclaimed.

"Can we talk about something else?" Neville murmured.

"Yes, and we're all going to keep this to ourselves, right?" Harry asked, looking around the table, getting nods from everyone. "Good. Now today's order of business is our next project, which will be a long one. Long but fun, I should think. Dangerous too, just in case any of you are wondering," Harry said, grinning excitedly. Many of those around the table matched his grin, and Harry was pleased to see Neville was one of those.

"So what's this new fun mission going to be?" Angelina inquired.

"The magical Black Market," Harry declared with a little smirk, eyes taking in every member.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't we already cross that with the Veela?"

"That was only a fraction of what goes on," Hermione replied to Parvati.

Harry cleared his throat. "To make it simple, I want the black market under our control. There are things going on there that need to stop. Not everything, just some things. We will take it, clean it, and keep it under our control. Essentially, and this is Hermione's wording, we are to become the Wizarding mafia. By the way, if we end up doing this right, everyone in here who wants to participate in this stands to make a fortune. Hermione," he ended, handing the floor to her and snickered at the gleam in the twins' eyes.

Hermione nodded and opened the folder containing her notes and she began to talk about the plans they had made to infiltrate the black market under disguise at first. There would be dozens and dozens of stake outs before they would make their first obvious strikes. The Silvers were handed individual packets of information, they chose partners and groups for locations and times and by the time the meeting was coming to a close, almost everyone looked excited with this new venture. It would be exciting, no doubt about that.

"You two," Harry said to the twins, who tried smiling innocently. Harry shook his head. "You play for two sides. But this is strictly a Silver affair. The Death Eaters get enough fun as it is. You're only allowed to tell one person about this outside of this room, understand?"

"Sure thing, Harry."

"Alright, everyone's dismissed. We'll meet back here in three days to begin operation black market."

George sighed and Fred shook his head.

"What?" Harry asked after seeing their expressions.

"That's a horrible name for a super wicked classy spying operation such as this one," Fred announced. "We're disappointed in you, Harry."

"Fine. You two come up with a better name."

"Wicked! We'll get right on that and report back later."

Harry smiled and nodded and watched the twins and the rest of the Silvers leave. He remained seated with the only ones left in the room; Hermione and Neville.

"It'll be alright, Neville."

Neville looked across the table to Hermione and he blinked tiredly at her. She smiled encouragingly at him.

"Nev needs rest."

Hermione nodded and stood, leaning over the table to pat Neville's hand. She looked at Harry. "Going with you?" Harry nodded. "Good. We'll talk later then, Neville. Get some rest."

And then she was gone, most likely on a 'research session' with Andrew. Harry stood, clutching Bunnymort against his chest, and waited for Neville to get up. Once that was done,

he lured Neville into the hall and pulled out his dagger necklace. Before Neville could understand what was happening, Harry grabbed his friend's arm and activated the Portkey.

The moment they landed within the master bedroom, Harry released Bunnymort and watched his husband hop out of the room. He only laughed a little before turning to find Neville staring at him with wide slightly fearful eyes.

"Are we- are we... is this?"

"You're safe here, Neville. No need to panic," Harry assured as he turned and headed towards the dresser where he kept his sleep attire.

"Is that your *bed*?" Neville asked incredulously. Harry looked over his shoulder and laughed, seeing the gaping mouth look as his friend studied the humongous bed. "Is there an actual need for such a bed? Do you even touch?"

Harry laughed again and started rummaging through his drawer. "If you think that's bad, you should see the bathroom. Though to be fair, it's really easy to get used to."

The only response he got was a squeak. It sounded as if Neville had tried to speak and his voice got caught in some emotion. Harry already knew Tom had entered the room by the time he turned around. What he did not expect was to see Tom grabbing Neville's elbow and dragging his friend to the bathroom. It was only a moment before Harry heard the sound of retching.

Tom came back out with a scowl. "I don't believe I've ever had someone look at me and then immediately have the need to vomit. Cry, yes. Scream in terror, certainly. Faint even. But vomit? No."

Harry snickered slightly. "It was very nice of you to direct him to the bathroom."

Tom narrowed his eyes. "You are completely responsible for him."

Harry nodded slowly, waiting for more. Waiting for Tom to tell him Neville was only allowed to stay the night. Waiting for Tom to spout off insensitive things about Neville's current predicament. Waiting for the lecture about inviting someone over without talking to him about it... Harry admitted he should have talked to Tom first. But Tom said only that one thing and left, most likely to his office or personal study. Which was very odd. Tom hadn't even complained about Neville being in their private bedchambers. Tom was up to something.

Harry was pulled from his thoughts when he heard a choked off sob. "Tally," he called softly. When Tally immediately arrived, Harry handed over the sleep clothes he'd found for Neville to use that night. "Prepare a guest room... I think the blue one down the hall will do. I want a mild dreamless sleep draught to be waiting by the bed as well. Thank you."

Tally popped away after bowing and Harry then went into the bathroom, finding Neville sitting near the toilet; knees drawn to his chest and face hidden against them. Harry crouched down, placing a hand on his shoulder and squeezed. "It'll be alright, Neville."

He was only speaking about the baby. He couldn't give reassurances about anything else, about Nathan, which was a shame because Harry was absolutely certain this sadness, the depression was because of the vampire. Neville really must have loved him.

"H-he d-didn't kill me," Neville whispered in shock.

"Nope."

Neville pulled in a deep breath and then looked at his friend with wide disbelieving eyes. "I threw up in You-Know-Who's lavatory!"

Harry laughed and helped his friend off the floor. "Just call him Voldemort, Lord Riddle, or sir. Don't go on with that you-know-who business while you stay here."

Soon Harry saw Neville to his room and into bed after he'd changed his clothes. Neville seemed relieved the bed wasn't an absurdly large one. Harry then made Neville take the dreamless sleep potion knowing it wouldn't hurt the baby since Severus had given him the same potion a few times already.

"Call for Tally if you need anything when you wake up tomorrow," Harry told him as he headed for the door after seeing Neville safe in bed and under the covers.

"Thanks, Harry," whispered Neville as his eyes closed for much needed sleep.

Harry only nodded as he turned and shut the door. He then stood there, pressing his forehead against the cool wood, his composed expressions morphing into ones of worry and pain. He pulled in a shuddering breath and turned to head back to his own room.

It was hours later, a couple after Tom had come to bed, but Harry wasn't asleep. He hadn't been able to keep his eyes closed for more than five minutes and after what seemed like an eternity lying still and stiff in bed, he'd gotten up and was now sitting on the edge of their bed, staring off at the wall. He wasn't really seeing anything and wasn't really surprised he couldn't sleep. He was too worried about Neville and the circumstances surrounding Neville's current depression.

Harry still couldn't believe Nathan had taken off just like that. And then the fact that the other vampires couldn't find Nathan, or at least they hadn't found him yet which made Harry think Nathan was no longer in the country. He'd been so certain Nathan wasn't being a wanker; leading Neville on. Neville must have thought so too. Neville would never have lain with Nathan unless he'd been sure, and yet here they were with Nathan missing.

Do you really know a person? It was a frightening thought, Harry surmised as he drew in a shuddering breath and bit his bottom lip. He started rubbing a palm over the blossoming bump of his abdomen, a sense of panic washing through him. What would he do if Tom left him? How would he survive?

A hand touched his hip and Harry jerked in surprise. "Harry?"

"Tom," he whispered back.

“Come back to bed.”

“You won’t leave me will you, Tom?” he whispered, not moving an inch. “You won’t leave us?”

The following silence was heavy and encompassing. So much so that Harry began to breathe faster with each second that passed when Tom didn’t answer. Why wasn’t Tom answering? Maybe he didn’t want to. Maybe he didn’t want to tell the truth. If Harry had turned and looked, he would have seen Tom staring at him; eyes narrowed in worry and contemplation. But Harry didn’t look because he was too afraid. He was trapped in his panic.

Tom’s lips thinned as he realized what was going on and why Harry was using that soft small voice again and asking questions he knew the answers to. Tom inwardly snarled; mentally cursing that damned impregnating vampire. He slid out of bed and rounded it to kneel in front of Harry, whose gaze seemed to be plastered to a spot over his shoulder. “We’ve been over-”

“Don’t leave me. Don’t leave me. Never leave me.”

Tom slid a hand to Harry’s knee and squeezed gently. “Harry, stop this-”

Harry’s eyes finally dropped to Tom’s face. Fury and panic and power lit those green eyes in a vicious way. “I won’t let you!” he shouted. “I won’t let you leave me! I will never let you leave me!”

This was better. The rage and possessiveness. And although Harry was having a bit of a mental breakdown at the moment, Tom couldn’t help but appreciate the fire burning in Harry’s eyes. The little minx meant every word he said and Tom found he didn’t mind it. “That’s right, Harry. You would rather see me dead before-”

Harry gasped, eyes going wide in horror and he shook his head rapidly. “No! You can’t die! I don’t want you to die!” he exclaimed before bursting into tears.

“Don’t cry!” Tom exclaimed in horror, quickly standing. “Harry, don’t cry! You know I can’t-”

“Please,” Harry whispered brokenly. “Please don’t ever.”

Tom reached down, grabbed Harry by the elbows and pulled his shaking body to him. “I will not,” Tom said more softly, running a trembling hand through his young husband’s hair. “I swear on all that I am. I swear on my magic. I will never leave you. Calm down now. Come back to bed,” he coaxed; using the soft voice he sometimes did when trying to calm one of his wild spooked horses.

When he had Harry finally lying down, Tom hovered over him. “Do not cry,” he ordered roughly.

Harry managed a shaky nod as he wiped the tears off his face with the edge of the sheet. “Sorry.”

“Bloody vampire,” Tom muttered, pressing his face against Harry’s bare chest.

“I’m sorry,” Harry whispered again as he dropped his fingers into Tom’s thick hair.

“You will cease with that ridiculous insecure tone.”

Harry pressed his lips together, trying to keep them from trembling and trying to blank his mind from everything except the soft loving kisses Tom was bestowing upon his chest and lower down to his stomach.

Tom went down until he came to the small bump. He dropped a kiss there too. “I wanted a baby for you,” he began softly, nuzzling that bump. “That was my first thought. I wanted to give you back a family. It’s what you’ve always wanted. But do you know what you’ve done?” He lifted his face and Harry shook his head. “There is a part of me, a part of me deep deep down that has always wanted the same. And you’ve provided that—Harry, if you repeat this to anyone I swear to give you a punishment you will not enjoy.”

Finally a smile curved the little minx’s mouth. “Promise.”

Tom nodded firmly. “Right. Where was I?” he asked just before dropping another kiss to Harry’s stomach.

Harry started to happily fondle Tom’s hair. “A part of you deep deep down that wanted the same and I provided it.”

“Hm, yes... did you get the message?”

“No. I think you need to be more elaborate.” Harry laughed when Tom scowled at him. “I can have tea fetched if you like?”

Tom dropped his nose back to Harry’s stomach, and only then did he roll his eyes in exasperation. He supposed- and was hoping- that it was only the emotional upheaval due to the pregnancy that had caused this little meltdown. He sincerely hoped it was that and not Harry actually really believing these things again. And yet even though he felt a relief that it was probably only pregnancy hormones, it was also worrying for Tom since apparently, according to the books and Narcissa, this was only the tip of the iceberg and Harry had always been emotional before anyway. And those tears! Those tears had been horrible! Harry’s tears made him panic. Made him feel destructible. Made him feel as if he weren’t actually capable of taking on anything.

“You’ve... brought me family too, Harry,” he finally whispered after a time. “And I don’t think I can express what that means to me.”

“You can express it by getting me some of that rainbow sherbet dessert I made this morning.”

Tom lifted his face, peering at Harry with a cocked brow. “Sherbet?”

Harry squirmed under his not quite so patient stare. “I’m hungry.”

“Sherbet at this hour?”

“Or something! I’m starving!”

“And you want me to... fetch it for you? Is that it?” Tom asked, watching his young husband dubiously. Harry grinned and nodded. Tom frowned. “You want me, *the Dark Lord*, to fetch you food?”

Harry matched his frown. “You are not the Dark Lord when in our bed, Tom.”

The older wizard smirked and slithered up his body. “Am I not?”

Harry valiantly tried to fight off his bodily reaction to having Tom purring in his ear with that low seductive voice that drove him mad.

“Is that not a part of me? Is that not a part of why I can make you spread your legs with one look?”

Harry bit his lip and tried to not look into the eyes staring at him. And he tried to keep from squirming and spreading his legs because hands started groping him. And it really wasn’t fair because Tom was completely right.

“Changed my mind. Don’t want sherbet.”

Tom smirked down at him. “Not hungry anymore?”

“No, you smirking asshole. I want some of you instead.”

Chapter Twenty-Seven

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty-Seven

"I kind of went mental on Tom last night."

Draco studied him, blue eyes narrowed slightly in thought. "Because of this Longbottom thing. The vampire's sudden departure," he said with some certainty.

Nodding, Harry turned back to the counter. He wasn't surprised Draco figured it out without him having to say anything. And he wasn't surprised Draco knew about Neville. He hadn't told him but he knew either Lucius or the twins would have.

"And so," Draco narrated with a smirk, "Pot Head became super emotional and cried all over our Lord like a baby and by doing so probably traumatized our Lord- which is a funny thought, by the way- and then by the end he soothed you and then shagged you to sleep so that you wouldn't cry on him again."

Harry turned to face him, his expression somewhat embarrassed. "Were you hiding in our room last night?"

"No. I just know how you two function and as soon as I heard what happened I knew this was going to make you think nonproductive thoughts. I very nearly came over last night to make sure you didn't start your depressive shite again, but the fiends said our Lord was well equipped to handle your hormones and insecurities."

"It's not that I actually believe Tom would ever leave me... I just-"

"I know, Harry." The blond's facial expression softened. "Of course I know."

"Draco... I really love you," Harry replied to him after a moment of silence filled with understanding looks between them.

Draco quickly twisted around on his stool, eyes zooming around the kitchen looking for the Dark Lord. In relief, he saw there was only the three house elves Harry had helping him with his baking. When he turned back, Harry was grinning in amusement.

"It's a purely brotherly love, I assure you."

Draco pressed a hand against his chest, taking in a deep breath and trying to expel the fright he'd felt. If his Lord had heard that... "You're a massive prat."

"You know I would never say anything like that in front of Tom. I don't want you hurt or dead."

Draco shook his head, looking back down at the parchments spread out over the table and then two went on with their prospective jobs; Harry practicing cake decorating while Draco went back to working on the business side of the venture. After half an hour he pushed back and stood. "We need employees, Harry. Real employees. We can't cater to all this by ourselves. Especially since you're unable to attend some of these functions. We can afford it," he assured when Harry turned to look at him.

"Yeah, I know that, but... I don't want anyone to know it's us. Not yet, at least."

"Neither do I. But you don't have to worry. I'll disguise myself and hold interviews. I'll take care of all that, Harry. The only thing you'll need to do is meet with the ones I think are acceptable and see if you agree to hire them. At that time you can be glamourised also."

"How many, do you think?"

"I'd say five at the moment."

Harry nodded. "Need help getting that started?"

"No. Like I said, I'll take care of it. You just concentrate on your delicious recipes and your Silver affairs."

Harry stalled in responding when Tally suddenly popped out of the kitchen. It wasn't a minute later when she returned with Neville in tow.

"Hey Neville."

"Hi."

"Longbottom."

"Hello, Malfoy."

"Do you want to take a seat?" Draco asked, waving to the stools around the table. Neville blinked at that and then eyed the blond warily as if expecting a trap from all the civility.

"Err... thanks." He moved closer and took up one of the stools, still eyeing him. "So you know then?"

Draco sniffed. "Of course. By three sources."

"Splendid," Neville remarked dryly, turning his attention to Harry.

"I'm not one of those sources."

"You know what the best and worst way to get back at the vampire would be? Tear him limb from limb and then set his arms and legs on fire. His cock too. That would serve him right."

"Draco," Harry warned as Neville's face went kind of green.

"What? You aren't actually going to let him get away with it?"

"Of course not," Harry said as he moved down the counter to grab one of the covered bowls. He took it and walked back to the table and sat beside Neville. "But it's not something we need to discuss right at this moment."

"I get a say in this, right?" Neville asked, peering into the bowl when Harry pushed it in front of him. Immediately his hand went in to grab some fudge. Draco lunged half over the table to grab his own handful of square fudge pieces. This made Neville laugh quietly.

"Of course you do. You get to say how and when he's destroyed in the most vicious of ways for what he's done."

"Draco! Why are you being so..."

"Sadistic," Neville supplied before nibbling on his fudge.

"Yes, exactly," Harry said with a nod to him.

"Well obviously this situation warrants it. Anyone with any honor would not have-"

"He doesn't know, Malfoy," Neville murmured. "He doesn't know about the baby."

"Or maybe that's his plan. Fill the world with half vamps. Like that sexy singer Lorcan d'Eath. Wouldn't mind a world full of him."

"He is rather fit," Harry agreed with a firm nod. "But aside from that, shut your trap, wanker!"

Neville snorted in amusement. "It's fine, Harry."

Harry half glared at Draco and the blond merely shrugged. Neville took that moment to finally look around the kitchen. "So this is where you work."

"Yep. Fudge is always being made... that's what the elves are doing. I usually do everything else, unless I'm completely swamped and then Tally will help me sometimes. Right now I'm practicing on candies and decorating wedding cakes since this wanker volunteered my services and now I have several orders for weddings."

"And let's not forget how much these people are paying you for that."

"It's always money with you."

"I'm a Malfoy," Draco said as if that explained everything. He then produced his wand to check the time. "And it's time for me to go. I'm having a meeting with the twins," he said with a smirk as he gathered up his parchments to take back to his own office. "If I'm late, they'll start without me because they are impatient horny prats."

"What do you mean they'll start without you? How can they start without you?"

Draco paused and turned back, looking at Harry curiously. And then he grinned in delight. "You mean you don't know? You've been with them before and you never knew?"

Harry frowned when Draco started to cackle like a mad twat. "Draco!"

"Each other, Harry," the blond managed around his laughter. "They like to play with each other!" Draco nodded, looking up a bit, lost in thought with a smile on his lips. "I have to admit I'm happy you didn't know that part about them. They are completely forgiven now," he said softly. When the silence went on he looked back and snickered at the Gryffindors' expressions. "Do you want details? This time I think I'll make them-"

"No!" Neville cried, slapping hands over his ears.

Draco snickered again, gave a little salute, and sauntered out of the kitchen.

"I'm... I'm not sure I wanted to know that," Neville finally said.

Harry laughed and hopped off his stool. "I have to admit to being shocked right now."

Neville shook his head and watched Harry move back to the ovens when a timer went off. Harry and one of the house elves retrieved several trays from two of the ovens. The trays were lined with some kind of flaky pastry. Neville inhaled; whatever it was smelled brilliant. It didn't even upset his stomach. He moved closer when Harry uncovered a medium sized sauce pan that had been simmering on the stove.

"You can stay here as long as you want, Nev, okay?" Harry said as he dipped a honey covered wooden spoon into the sauce pan which Neville saw was full of melted chocolate.

"No, that's not... I couldn't really."

"Nothing bad will happen to you here."

Neville watched Harry swirl the spoon round and round, mixing lazy streams of honey with the chocolate. "It's okay, Harry. I still need to work on my greenhouses... and I have a project I want to start. Gonna take lots of research. Not to mention the Silver business."

"Stay for a couple of days... at least until Tom and I return from our trips."

"Harry, really. This is You-Know-Who's residence!"

"It's mine too and he doesn't mind."

"Do I not?"

Harry didn't bother turning to look. Instead he grinned and began to dribble chocolate and honey designs over the top of the pastries. Neville squeezed up tight against his left side.

"Enough of that," Tom drawled to Neville in irritation. "You're going to make yourself sick again."

"Not in my bloody kitchen," Harry muttered, eying Neville warily.

"I...I-I..."

"Salazar's sake," Tom muttered as he approached and came to stop on Harry's right, next to the cooling pastries.

"That's what you get for being a monster," Harry said as he put the spoon back into the sauce pan and grabbed the first pastry he'd put the topping on. He handed it to Tom. "Everyone is afraid of you."

Tom frowned and then immediately did as Harry wanted and tasted the pastry.

Neville watched them both and especially the Dark Lord in a sort of sick fascination. You-Know-Who taste testing?

"Very good, Harry. What's on the top? What kind of chocolate is this?"

"Swiss chocolate and honey."

Tom raised a brow and leaned over against him a bit to look into the saucepan. A small smirk drifted across his otherwise expressionless face. "Save some."

Neville watched his friend blush. "Y-yeah, alright, Tom."

That being all he could stand, Neville stuttered out a goodbye and quickly left the kitchen. Harry watched him go before snickering. "He's going to get lost."

"More than likely."

Harry sent a sideways glance at his husband as he continued on with lacing the pastries with the chocolate sauce. Tom was standing there trying to look as innocent as a Dark Lord could while he tasted a second pastry. Harry wished he had a camera.

"What are you up to?" he finally asked.

Tom turned, brown hazel eyes peering at him, an amused smirk on his lips. Harry's eyes were full of guarded suspicion. "I am always up to something."

Harry's lip quirked. "I meant now. With Neville. You were being too nice. Last night, too! I expected you to complain about having two pregnant blokes living here. You didn't blow up. I was totally anticipating another of your tantrums."

"Brat."

"Well?" Harry prodded as he switched out trays to start on the other batch of pastries.

"It is unfortunate the vampire left your friend. However, having a half vampire brat in his stomach is not unfortunate. I will make it to where it makes no difference whether he is married or not."

"Please don't call it a half vampire brat. Baby is fine."

"And I never said he was allowed to live here. If that is your thought you had better begin to think differently. I most certainly *will not* have two pregnant Gryffindors living within ten miles of myself!"

Harry relaxed a bit. That was better. "But really, what plans?"

"Figure it out."

"But that means I have to think." Tom gave him a blank stare. Harry sighed. "Alright, um. Longbottom. Pureblood. Young," Harry listed off; naming possibilities of Tom's scheming involving Neville. Things that Tom would find important. "You could make something of him with those things alone. But if that was your initial intention, you wouldn't have waited so long, so why now... He's going to have a half vampire and some of your policies involve integrating some magical beings! Werewolves and Vampires being the hardest to integrate..." Harry looked up sharply. "You're going to make Neville a poster boy?"

"In a manner of speaking. Yes." Harry's eyes narrowed. "This isn't going to ruin him, Harry. And we have no intention of tarnishing his name. And it isn't as if we'll have control over him. He can continue to do as he's been doing... as long as he continues to build up the Longbottom name. Another supporter. All we are going to do is boost his status, make him popular, make his pregnancy popular."

"The first part, fine. Okay. But that last, no. You can't do that. He doesn't even know if he wants to keep it."

"Longbottom will keep it."

"You can't force-"

"We have no intention of doing such a thing. No, Longbottom will choose to keep the baby, and you know it too. You know him, do you not? It's clear he will keep it. For many reasons. But one of the major reasons is the fact it's that vampire's baby. And whether the vampire felt it or not, the gullible Gryffindor feels a connection. He'll not give that up by giving up the baby."

Harry was silent a moment, going on with his pastries until finally he stepped back and smiled at his husband. "Love seems to have made you more sensitive to how the heart works, Tom."

Tom pointed a sharp finger at him and he couldn't quite keep the disgusted look off his face. Harry laughed at the Dark Lord's back as the wizard strode from the kitchen, muttering darkly under his breath.

Neville seemed to have gotten used to staying at the Dark Lord's castle. But Harry supposed he had to since he had begged Neville to stay there while he and Tom were away touring Europe to make sure they wouldn't have any immediate problems with the other European nations. He would feel better knowing Neville was in such a protected place and Hermione and the twins were there, and even when they were gone, Draco had reluctantly promised to stop by from time to time when he wasn't busy with MR's and the other businesses he tended to with his father. Neville went home every morning to work on his greenhouses, but he always returned to the Dark Lord's castle just before the sun set.

The night before Harry and Tom were to leave for Spain, Harry went in search of his friend and found Neville in one of the smaller studies, sitting on a rug with his workbooks and notes spread out around him. Harry sank down beside him with his homework and they worked quietly together. After a time Harry set aside his Magical Theory text and watched Neville for a bit. Neville was hunched over his book and parchment and was quickly scribbling out notes.

"What're you working on?" he asked curiously.

Neville didn't answer until he'd finished jotting down a line of notes. "I found this flower," he finally said, straightening to face Harry. "I... I was going to develop a potion or a salve."

"For what?"

"To allow vampires to live in the daylight. This flower, it's really rare. But I found two. Cost me a fortune. Started breeding them..." Neville trailed off in thought, staring down at his lap. He pulled in a breath after a time. "Nathan said once he didn't want to grow ugly... for me. He said he missed feeling the sun on his face... Um, I tested the properties of the flower with vampire blood and skin samples. The samples didn't immediately burst into flames."

"How did you even think about it? Think about it in regards to vampires?"

"The flower is said to have amazing healing abilities, especially in regards to burns to the skin. And in an ancient floral text I found it said in old times the flowers milk was used to develop salve to protect from sunburn. It still needs a lot of work of course, but I'm sure it could be done, fixed for vampires... I don't know why no one has thought to come up a solution for the vampires. I'm still going to do it. They don't like not being able to go into the sun, despite popular belief."

"I guess no one came up with it yet because no one really cared enough about vampires beyond other vampires."

Neville's face turned a bit frightened. He swallowed thickly. "I have to ask a Potions' Master for help in this."

Harry chuckled and started rubbing his shoulder. "Severus would probably jump at the chance to help you. Tom also. It's a fantastic idea and it will also help along Vampire integration if they're able to go around like non vampires. You'll be a vampire hero if you pull this off, Neville."

Neville nodded and smiled a little. But after a time Harry noticed Neville's hands began to shake. That wasn't something new. Neville always started shaking when he thought about Nathan. It happened frequently. Harry had hoped Neville would get better, but apparently not. And then fat silent tears started falling down his cheeks and dropping onto the book in his lap.

Harry quickly removed his book and Neville's and scooted over. Neville turned to him and Harry caged him in between his legs, throwing arms around his mate and pulling him into a tight comforting embrace. One in which Neville returned. He dropped his face to Harry's shoulder and cried harder. Harry was uncertain as to how much time passed; he didn't really care. But at one point Tom entered the study. He paused on the threshold and stared at their positions. Watched Harry stroking Neville's hair and raised a brow. The Dark Lord then grimaced when Neville released a particularly anguished sob. He shook his head and quickly departed with a murmured, "bloody vampire."

"I-it's not getting any b-better," Neville whispered brokenly. "I can't stop thinking about him. I can't stop wanting him. Can't stop thinking what I could have done-"

"It's not your fault!" Harry snapped against his hair. "It's not your fault, Nev. You didn't do anything wrong."

"It was wrong to love him. To still love him. I did something stupid again."

"No. Neville, he's in the wrong. Of taking advantage. He doesn't know what he's missing. He'll suffer when he does realize."

"Why would he want me? I kept asking myself that. Why would *he* want *me*?"

Harry hated how Neville made the idea sound so ridiculous. "You're brilliant, Nev. You're a lovely person. There are a thousand reasons why anyone would want you."

"But he doesn't. In the end. He didn't want me," Neville returned flatly against his shoulder.

Harry grit his teeth and continued to rub Neville's back. He didn't know what else to say. And he knew whatever he tried to say, Neville wouldn't believe him.

"Severus, is there a reason why you have been ignoring me?"

Severus sneered down at his paperwork and contemplated sending fiendfyre at the portrait. Why had his Lord wanted to keep Dumbledore up on the wall? To torture him probably. "There are several reasons," he finally answered. "One of them being the fact we have never been conversationalists, Dumbledore. I've only ever spoken to you because I had to. I am no longer obligated."

From his portrait, Albus smiled at Severus' snide tone. "And the others?"

"Harry's relatives are being punished. As they rightly deserve," Severus answered after another lengthy pause and he set his quill aside and stood. He then moved from behind his desk to stand before the blasted portrait, crossing his arms over his chest. "Why did you never save Tom Riddle from that muggle orphanage, Dumbledore? You must have known something was wrong with him even then. Considering the time and place as well as many other factors... you left my Lord in a hell hole time and time again. You left a young wizard to rot in the middle of a muggle war.

"And why," he went on with an acid tone before Dumbledore could speak, "in the ten years Harry remained with his relatives before Hogwarts did you never go and check up on your supposed Savior? Had you never seen the miniscule space he'd been forced to live in for ten years? The space under the stairs? Did you never see that there was nothing within the Dursley home to show there was in fact *two* boys growing up there?"

Dumbledore seemed at a loss for words for once. He just sat in his chair and watched Severus, who sneered and turned away, happy for a distraction when someone knocked on his door.

"Enter!"

The door opened and Severus was surprised to see Harry waltz in, the trademark grin on his face. Harry came in waving three small pieces of paper. Severus narrowed his eyes. It wasn't parchment paper. Too flimsy.

"Severus, look! Pictures of the babies! I had my three month checkup today!" Harry paused and laughed. "Tom wasn't very pleased with our twins. They were hiding the sex from us." Harry leaned closer and whispered, "if you ask me, I think he's hoping for one of each. A boy and girl."

A small barely noticeable smile curved Severus' lips. "Let's see then."

"They're really really small, but you can still see them. Their little tiny forms." Harry hugged the sonogram pictures against his chest for a brief moment before excitedly passing them over. As Severus took them, he noticed the Dark Lord walk into the office. Severus gave him a nod, thinking he could get away with not bowing at this particular time since Harry hovered right next to him, eagerly pointing things out. They were miniscule, the babies, but still they were clearly babies and the smile currently on Harry's face was very touching and infectious.

Harry took one of the pictures back. He then summoned a chair, placed it below Dumbledore's portrait and then climbed to stand on it. He then held the picture up for the dead Headmaster to see.

Severus turned to find the Dark Lord watching his husband with a blank expression. "Why does he do that? Why does he act-"

"It is not an act," Tom replied softly, turning his attention to Severus. "He really does still appreciate Dumbledore. Treasures the moments they speak together."

"I can't help but ask why. I thought we've long since decided Potter is not an idiot," Severus said dryly. "Perhaps we are mistaken?"

Tom shook his head slightly, feeling both amused and exasperated. Severus couldn't help himself. "Partly because he wants to; partly because he did respect the old man to a certain degree, regardless of his blasted manipulations..." the Dark Lord paused and smirked at his husband's back. "And partly to show off; to get back at Dumbledore for those manipulations despite his like for the old man. I'd wager he's getting back at Dumbledore for me as well. Despite Dumbledore's mistakes, we're still thriving."

Severus stared at Harry and the portrait. It made sense. And perhaps he could respect Harry a little more too, especially if he really were doing it partly to shove it all in Dumbledore's face. Dumbledore had made all their lives harder than need be, even if he was only doing it for the Greater Good, which was a load of bollocks in his opinion. Severus wondered if Dumbledore realized what Harry was doing. He wondered if it bothered the old dead wizard. If it did, if he did realize, Dumbledore wasn't showing it. Instead he was relaxed in his portrait, talking happily with Harry and studying the picture of the twins Harry was showing off. That stupid twinkle was even in his eyes.

And with that line of thinking, showing off their victory in Dumbledore's face, it became better when Lucius appeared. Only Severus and Tom could see he was highly excited. "The divorce is final."

"Took their bloody time," Severus muttered to cover up his own sudden excitement.

Lucius ignored the snarky tone and smirked. "A great deal of paperwork had to be seen to since Narcissa and I married under a contract."

"It is a shame Hogwarts will be reopening soon. Otherwise I would send you two on a holiday."

Severus raised a surprised brow while Lucius looked his fiancé up and down before sighing. "Yes, a holiday would have been nice."

"Oh!" The three turned to see Harry jump off the chair. He ignored Tom's glare for doing such a thing and rushed over to them. "Appoint someone as temporary Headmaster and send them on a honeymoon!"

"A... *honeymoon*?" Severus inquired with a grimace. He'd said the word as if it were the most disgusting ridiculous thing he'd ever heard.

"Holiday, honeymoon, whatever."

Severus shook his head. "I don't do holidays."

"Neither do you do gifts."

Tom and Harry turned away from the two at that time, one smirking and the other silently laughing when Severus took the bait and the two began to quietly bicker; throwing barbs

back and forth; both obviously enjoying it.

And then Lucius made a sharp comment and strode quickly out of the room. However he didn't leave the way he came. Instead he disappeared up the passage leading the Severus' sleeping quarters. Severus was five seconds behind him.

Harry snickered. "Sure. Let's pretend to fight when all we really want to do is have a celebratory shag."

Tom sighed and shook his head.

"When did that begin?" Dumbledore questioned.

"They've been together since school," Harry answered lightly, passing over one of the pictures when Tom held out a hand for it.

"It happened right under your nose," replied Tom as he tucked one of the pictures of the twins into the inside pocket of his robes where it would remain there until a new batch of photos were given to him.

"All this time..."

"Seems you've missed quite a few things, Dumbledore," Tom stated as he grabbed Harry's hand and began pulling him out of the office, since it was clear he wouldn't be able to speak to Severus as he'd planned.

Harry laughed as he bounced down the stairs, following after his husband. "That felt good, didn't it?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

"You were saving that up. Admit it."

Tom cut a glance at his husband before returning his gaze forward. "Perhaps."

"I have this incredible urge to see you stand in front of his portrait and laugh your arse off. You know the laugh. The high evil insane cackle? That laugh."

"Perhaps when our twins are born." Harry laughed in glee, rubbing his hands together. Tom shook his head. "You are a mean shite sometimes, love."

"You called me a mean shite!" the laughter continued.

"You are," Tom went on as they stepped off the stairs and finally faced his currently deranged husband. "Maliciously so."

Harry slithered up until he was pressed against Tom's chest. "Call me a mean shite again."

Tom studied his young husband's face. Harry's cheeks were flushed, mouth parted slightly, and his eyes dark. The Dark Lord smirked and leaned down to whisper in the younger

wizard's ear; calling Harry all sorts of vile things. After nearly a minute, Harry shivered and jerked back, mock glaring.

"Oi! Mean shite is fine!"

Tom chuckled and slipped fingers into Harry's hair; dragging Harry's face back and brining Harry's lips within reach. Harry was just melting against him, mouth opening and impertinent hands moving to grasp his backside, when they were jolted back to the present by a cough and then a quick shuffling of feet.

The two quickly looked to find Barty spinning on the spot to go back the way he'd come. "Hello Barty!" Harry called, freezing the retreating Death Eater's movements.

Barty turned back around, stiffly and looking like he'd rather not, and bowed. "My Lord. Riddle," he murmured before going back to studying Harry with an odd expression. Tom watched him do this. Knowing Barty very well, he allowed the inspection. Allowed Barty to study Harry, who kept himself plastered against him and kept his hands against Tom's arse. Barty must have noticed this for he cocked his head to the side, followed Harry's arms with his eyes and raised a brow. He then started grinning.

"Barty," he warned. Barty released an amused snort before coughing to cover it up. "What is it you need?"

"My Lord..." Barty paused and returned the grin Harry was sending his way. "I wanted to speak to Severus about my lesson plans."

"Severus is indisposed at the moment," Tom answered.

"He's with Lucius," Harry elaborated, his grin turning into a leering smirk. "The divorce is final."

"Ah. Well then I shall return to my classroom. My Lord, Riddle," he ended, bowing.

"You can call me Harry, you know. You did try to kill me at one point."

Barty actually flushed, his eyes widening and shooting the Tom. The Dark Lord smirked. "It's not as if I've never tried to kill him."

Barty gave a jerky nod, looking kind of bowled over now. He then made an escape shaking his head.

Harry laughed. "I love it when we shock and confuse people with our relationship. These outings we're about to go on are going to be fun."

Tom didn't reply verbally, but he mentally agreed. "We did come here for a reason. I needed to speak with Severus."

"Give them a break. The divorce is final which means they can finally get married."

"They've already been married in all but name for years."

"It's different. You know it's different. Otherwise you would have planned to keep me around as a boy toy instead of planning on marrying me. Bonding with me was not necessary."

"Hm," Tom replied as he disengaged Harry's hands from his backside and prodded his husband down the corridor along with him. They were on a time schedule, and since Severus was indisposed, they would need to return home and prepare to leave for Spain without speaking to him first. He could Floo Severus later.

"When did you plan all this anyway?"

"Plan what exactly?"

"This. Us. Our 'togetherness'," he ended with air quotes.

Tom cracked a small smile. "I suppose I made the final decisions at the end of your Sixth year."

"And why did it take you so long to make a move?"

"Obviously because I had to make sure you were ready for me. I had to make sure which direction you were going. I had to make sure you were old enough. And... I had to make sure I was ready."

Harry grinned. "And were you ready for me when you appeared at my flat that one time?"

"I'm never ready for you. No one is. You were you and yet not and you baffled me at our first meeting. I was baffled but no less pleased with you. Perhaps I was more pleased after that. And more determined. Come," he said before Harry could ask more uncomfortable questions. "It's time to prepare for our trip."

"We're already packed."

"I'm not letting you go anywhere without the necessary precautions."

Harry's smile slowly faded, knowing instantly what his husband was planning. "Tom. Please, *please* don't go overboard."

"No need to worry, Harry. Only a few spells."

An hour later the two had returned home where Harry was then subjected to all sorts of charms and spells of protection. "Only a few spells?" Harry asked at the end, teetering back and forth on his feet. "I can hardly move."

"Nonsense."

"It's heavy, Tom! I don't need all this protection."

"If you don't want to stay at home locked in a room, you will deal with this."

"I will not," Harry said firmly. "This is ridiculous. I can protect myself." He twitched. The magic was so tight and heavy; cast like a metal cloak around him. Stifling his movements. "It's oppressive, Tom! I can't possibly function like this!"

"We'll be meeting with the Spanish Minister and his politicians first today, and we're taking no chances in a hostile atmosphere like that. Especially when Spain continues to be difficult in the way things should be. Montague is a strong wizard, a strong politician. This is why he needs extra persuasion. I'd hate to... well, no. I wouldn't mind at all murdering him. I think I will regardless if he goes about how he generally does at today's gathering. I want international trading back to normal... I wouldn't put it past him to set some sort of trap, especially for you since it's quite obvious how dear you are to me."

"This is why an attack on me would be suicide." Tom had nothing to say to this and Harry huffed. "Can we compromise?"

"That depends."

"I'll wear these bloody protective spells to the meeting if I can go to the party tonight without most of it. Tom, I'm not a child and I do know how to protect myself."

"I know you are not a child," Tom replied. "But you are *with* child. Children. Mine." Harry said nothing; just stood there watching him and waiting. Finally the Dark Lord sighed and nodded. "I agree with your compromise."

Once that was settled, Tom had their luggage taken to the Villa by one of the House Elves and then they too traveled to their vacation home by Portkey. It wasn't long after that the two were joined by the Lestrage brothers, Parkinson, Bellatrix, Hermione, and the twins and the entourage travelled to the Spanish Ministry.

The place was not unlike the British Ministry of Magic. And as they travelled through it, Harry couldn't help but notice the quiet tense atmosphere and he knew it was because of their presence, or at least his husband's presence. No one was unaware of Voldemort's dislike and increasing impatience with the Spanish Minister. Harry wondered if the Spanish Ministry already had a list of witches and wizards lined up as candidates for the Minister position. There were rumors the Minister's son was more than likely to take up the position.

The meeting was being held in a large conference room. The room was larger than needed and this annoyed Tom. There were only twenty people in attendance. As soon as they arrived, the Minister's son, Javier, approached Harry and his own little entourage directly after respectfully greeting the Dark Lord. Javier looked nothing but curious and delighted to make Harry's acquaintance. Harry didn't see any deception, but that didn't mean it wasn't there. Hermione immediately made to stand beside Harry while the twins flanked them.

Javier looked nothing like his father so Harry assumed the wizard took most of his looks and his stature from his mother. Where Montague was short and stocky, Javier was tall and thin, but not on the unhealthy side. He was handsome too with a clean shaved face whereas his father had a bushy beard and a goatee that wasn't flattering at all. Javier also looked much younger than most of the Spanish witches and wizards in attendance at this meeting.

"Harry Riddle. It's so nice to finally meet you!" Javier exclaimed in a heavy accent; immediately grasping Harry's hand and giving it a warm shake. Harry couldn't help but smile back. Especially when the wizard said his name so easily without thought. His married name. Most tended to have trouble remembering that.

Half the Spaniards seemed to concur with Javier's words, while the others stood back with the Minister; tight lipped and flat faced. Harry saw a sort of coup forming, or perhaps it had been forming for a while. Javier wasn't exactly without wizard power. In fact he was high up in the Ministry himself, and from what Harry had previously learned, more popular than his father nowadays. Harry was willing to bet Montague was not pleased by that.

"Come. Come sit, Lord Riddle. We must get you off your feet."

Javier tried to take Harry's elbow to lead him to his seat, but Fred stepped forward and shook his head. Fred was still smiling. It was only a friendly reminder and Javier accepted the message with a nod at the copper head. He didn't seem insulted in the slightest. In fact he continued to smile and turned to lead Harry to his seat. As they followed him, Harry turned to look at Hermione to see what she thought of the Minister's son. Hermione was watching Javier with a closed off expression and that meant she hadn't decided yet.

The fact that he seemed nice enough put Harry on edge. It was hard to trust politicians who were outwardly nice. Especially high up politicians. And Harry knew Javier couldn't have gotten the position he currently held by being nice and he certainly hoped Javier hadn't gotten his position only because of his father. There wasn't much respect to be gained that way. But Harry was going to hold judgment upon that area until later. What he really wanted to know was if Javier were trying to kiss his arse just because of who his husband was.

One thing made him relax though and that was Fred and George's reactions to him. Especially Fred's reaction when Javier tried to touch him beyond the hand shaking. Fred hadn't reacted coldly and that made Harry think Javier really was a nice bloke. The twins may be jokers and a lot of other things- rarely serious- but they had the uncanny ability to judge a person's character at a glance; especially in tense situations like this. If Fred had sensed something not right with Javier, he would have done more than just step up with a smile.

"And Miss Granger. Very nice to make your acquaintance. I've heard many good things!" Javier went on, pulling a seat out for both Harry and Hermione while the twins took seats on either side of them and Tom taking a seat at the corner by the head of the table. "I've been looking forward to conversing with a brilliant witch such as yourself."

Hermione flushed prettily. "Oh, well I... It's nice to meet you as well. I've enjoyed reading up on your policies. Very fascinating work," she said with a smile as she sat down. Harry quirked a brow. Apparently Hermione knew more about Javier than he did.

"If you like, we can discuss our work tonight at the gala? I'm eager to learn about your work with the vampires and perhaps go over your future plans for integrating both vampires and werewolves."

Hermione smiled a little brighter. "That would be lovely."

A throat clearing had Javier looking across the table and his smile disappeared to be replaced by nothing as he looked at his father. A complete poker face. Javier straightened and turned back to Harry and the others to give them nods before moving around the table to sit on the Spaniard side. He sat well away from his father. Not a lot of love there, Harry thought as he studied them.

As the meeting commenced and went on, Harry listened carefully to everything that was being said, but he was way more attentive to what wasn't being said. Early on it was apparent Javier and Montague were not on the same page. Not in the least. Javier really did want to agree to Tom's 'terms' and Harry didn't think it had anything to do with placating the Dark Lord. At least that wasn't his main reasons. And apparently Javier wasn't all icing, thankfully. Harry had caught Javier with a sharp almost dangerous look in his eyes quite often as the meeting went on. And most of those looks were aimed at his father. Harry caught Tom studying Javier with his own sharp look throughout the meeting. But the study was mostly thoughtful.

And it was also clear the Minister was being stubborn on mere principal. Javier gave proof by polls that most magical Spaniards had no problems with reinstating trading with Britain, nor did they have a problem with integrating some magical beings and creatures. But when Javier tried to give the numbers and percentages, his father or one of his father's lackeys continuously interrupted him.

"Excuse me," Harry said, finally having had enough. "Do you mind letting him finish, please? Stop being so fucking rude. Is this how you usually conduct such meetings? Minister, you want to impress us here. You aren't doing a good job of it."

"You," Montague stated with a barely hidden sneer, "are only here-"

"Do not forget whose presence you are in, Minister," Harry returned darkly, half standing and planting his palms on the table. "You really aren't this stupid, are you? Do you actually think my husband has curbed any of his tendencies when he doesn't get what he wants? This is merely a courtesy call, Minister. You would do well to remember this. Do you honestly think all these protective spells you have on yourself and around the room will protect you should you go too far?"

Harry watched the Spaniards' attention turn to the Dark Lord. Tom sat there looking completely relaxed in his chair. He was staring hard at the Minister, whom gulped and turned back to Harry quickly. Harry went on, "the war in Britain is over, but it could easily be started again somewhere else. Do you have the power to fight the Dark Lord, Minister? No, you do not. Now how about you shut your mouth and let your son speak. I'd stop looking at me like that too otherwise I will not be held responsible for my following actions."

"Are you ever?" one brave soul muttered in Spanish.

Harry's sharp green eyes moved to him and he grinned that lopsided grin which surprised and made the Spaniards wary. "No, of course not. I am perfectly aware being married to the Dark Lord allows me to get away with things normal people cannot. He's a bad influence." He turned to Tom. "Aren't you, darling?" he asked in a far too sweet voice. Beside him Fred ducked his head, casting a shielding hand over his smiling face. The LeStrange brothers

looked off, their lips twitching. Bellatrix was staring straight at the offender who spoke, and Tom... well Tom shot one small glare at the little minx before turning back to the Minister.

"Perhaps to a small degree," Tom answered levelly and Harry nodded, smirking.

The Minister's face turned a dark shade of red then and he reminded Harry of his uncle so much that he stiffened and balled his hands on his knees beneath the table in a sudden flash of anger. Tom, though he wasn't sitting next to his husband, must have sensed this. He tilted his chin down, piercing Montague with a colder look. "Javier will speak."

And Javier did just that, sending a subtle smile Harry's way before going on. By the time he was done and the meeting came to a close, Harry was thinking he would work with Javier and his people from here on out. He wanted nothing to do with Montague as the Minister wasn't being helpful anyway. He refused to budge on his policies. The entire meeting seemed to have been for nothing. He was one brave soul, Harry had to give him that; standing up to the Dark Lord. But it was a reckless and unneeded bravery. One that would most certainly lead to his death. Harry wasn't really too upset about that. The wizard was a complete wanker and reminded him too much of Fudge. Useless.

"I must thank you for your support," Javier told him at the end once Montague and his entourage left the room.

Harry shrugged. "You were speaking sensibly. Your father was making no sense at all, he was pissing me off, and I started to get hungry. That's never a good combination."

Javier smiled a wide smile at that before his gaze swept around the room and he took a few steps forward until they were standing very close together. Out of nowhere Tom was standing behind his young husband, red eyes narrowed. Javier quickly raised his hands in peace, though he didn't back away. "Many here feel my father remains in the past," he whispered so that only Harry and the Dark Lord could hear. "It is a new era in the Wizarding World, yes? You have my support wholeheartedly."

"What support can you give us?" Tom asked lowly. And though his tone was a bit unkind, Harry also heard curiosity. Truthfully Harry felt the same.

A small barely there smirk appeared on the Spaniard's face. "Some feel my father has overstayed his welcome... in many capacities."

"Some equals you, correct?" Harry replied.

"Myself and others."

"Can you not do your own dirty work?" Tom asked.

Javier was quiet for a short time, but it was quite clear he was thinking over his words carefully before he spoke them. "Forgive me, Lord Riddle, but my father took precautions to ensure that should I personally make such a move, my own life is immediately forfeit. However, should I be left out of this particular thing..."

Tom was silent a moment. He dropped a hand to Harry's shoulder, kneading softly and continuing his study of Javier. "Why are you so accommodating?"

An emotion passed through the Spaniard's eyes and Harry recognized it as a deep pain. "Many factors. But my main driving force... my young brother is a werewolf sympathizer. He aided werewolves in need whenever he could; feeding them, hiding them, clothing them... our father," he whispered that last word with utter hate, "had Rafael captured and imprisoned. He was barely seventeen at the time. I haven't seen or spoken to him since—I don't even know if he still breathes. All captured sympathizers along with any werewolves found in Spain are treated the same and they are taken away to never be seen again. Even I do not know where this prison is. Things must *change*," he said harshly, "and I am determined to see it done." Javier paused and looked deeply at Harry. "He was-*is* very much like you, I think."

Harry tried to smile, but failed. That would explain the instant warmth from Javier. Harry reminded the Spaniard somewhat of his little brother. "How long?" he asked softly.

"Two years. May I seek another audience with you two?"

"You may. We will speak more tonight."

Javier seemed to relax slightly at Tom's agreement. "Thank you, Lord Riddle."

"I do not do anything without return."

Javier bowed. "Of course, My Lord. You have only to ask."

"You may regret those words," Tom replied lowly.

Javier met the Dark Lord's gaze and after a moment, shook his head. "No. I do not think this is so." And with that said, he exited the room.

Harry watched him go, pity and righteous anger swelling in his chest over the circumstances surrounding Javier's hate of his father.

"Oh stop, Harry. Don't get so emotional about it."

"But he's my age... if he's still alive. Will we liberate them? Please?"

"Of course, my love. Anything for you." *If any are still alive*, Tom thought to himself.

Being one who enjoyed being malicious and liked torture, he could well imagine what went on in prisons such as that one. A plethora of bad scenarios crossed his mind. One such scenario involved werewolves and werewolf supporters in the same place. If the prisoners weren't killed immediately, those in charge could have easily found amusement in torture. Those in charge could have held the non werewolves in with the werewolves during the full moon... it really all depended on how far the Spanish Minister's dislike for the creatures extended.

Aside from that, Tom had to admit to being impressed by the Minister's son. He was driven, there was no doubt about that. He wasn't quite thirty and yet he'd risen to the top of the Ministry on his own and in such a quick time and he had most of Wizarding Spain behind him. What mattered most to Tom was the fact Javier wasn't only driven by his brother's abduction and incarceration. He had gotten hold of copies of several of the young Spaniard's policies; policies that his father had thrown out before even a vote could be taken. Those policies would do well for Spain, and in association, Britain.

That night they attended a fundraising gala. Harry and Hermione spent a great deal of time speaking with Javier, and others of Javier's supporters while Tom went around with the Lestranges, doing what he did best; observing, gathering information, and scaring the hell out of everyone he laid eyes on even as he charmed them with that infamous silver tongue. Soon Javier and Hermione became engrossed in a discussion about Vampires and after ten minutes of standing there and having nothing to contribute to the conversation, Harry excused himself politely and made his way through the crowds to where he could see his husband.

He was nearly there when he was suddenly accosted by the Minister. Montague didn't dare touch him but he blocked Harry's way, glowering at him. Harry mentally sighed and raised his hand to the two wizards hovering near him like ghosts to keep them where they were. He could take care of this wizard himself.

Harry arched a brow. "Yes?"

"I am uncertain as to how you do things in Britain-"

"Quite well actually."

The man's face colored again, he opened his mouth, and Harry put metaphysical cotton in his ears. He let the wizard go on and on for a near ten minutes. Every time the Minister stopped talking, Harry opened his mouth to say something, only to be interrupted and the wizard would go off again. Finally it seemed Montague was finished with his lecture on how things were done in Spain and his subtle barbs that Harry would be better off minding his own business and to keep away from Javier as his son knew next to nothing about politics, which Harry knew was obviously not true.

"Are you done?" Harry asked. "Really truly done this time?"

Montague adopted a superior curl of his lips and tried to look down on him, though that didn't work out too well since Harry was taller. "Of course I wouldn't expect *you* to understand any of this. Your involvement here clearly has nothing to do with intelligent input."

"Right, yeah." Harry turned his head, eyes seeking and locating his husband's. He widened his eyes in a silent message as if to say, 'I can't believe this wanker.' When Tom turned wordlessly from the group he was among and started approaching, Harry turned back to the unwise wizard and smirked. He then walked away to find someone better to talk to.

Many of those around had taken notice of what went on between the Minister and Harry. They noticed the young Lord Riddle's annoyance with the Minister, the significant look to his husband, and now they watched eagerly as the Dark Lord strode after his young husband. As

he passed the Minister, many saw the Minister's fear when the Dark Lord turned his head a fraction to stare at him. The Dark Lord then dropped a hand onto the Minister's shoulder for one fraction of a second before moving on.

It would only take two days before that story circulated. Harry and Tom were made into a new pair. Harry was said to have the 'look of death' while his husband had the 'touch of death'. Harry had laughed his arse off after reading one particular article. Tom wasn't amused.

"He ended up dead before the morning," Harry replied several evenings later when they were lying in bed within a very expensive hotel suite. They had moved on to Germany that day. "What did you expect to come from that?"

"I do not like your name involved in things such as these."

A bubble of laughter escaped Harry. "There's no use in you trying to protect my reputation. Besides, that's exactly what happened. I gave you the look and you killed him."

"It wasn't as if he wasn't going to end up dead anyway. Aside from that, I was not unaware of what he was saying to you and I was not going to allow him to get away with it, regardless of the alliance we made with his son beforehand."

Harry sat up and turned to stare down at him. "I knew you had an eavesdropping spell on me! Urg, you evil cretin!"

Tom threw an arm around Harry's waist and dragged him back down to his side. "It's merely for your protection."

"My protection? Bah!"

Tom chuckled in amusement despite the simmering annoyance he'd been fighting for days now. He remained quiet as Harry settled back down, eyes drifting shut. Tom knew he wouldn't be able to stay awake long. They'd had a fairly busy week. That first meeting and then the gala, and then meeting with Javier and his supporters for much of the following days. And that included finding and releasing the werewolves and supporters.

Tom discovered the location from the Minister himself before he killed Montague. The former Minister put to good use the muggle underground tunnels and dungeons beneath the city of Granada. Javier's brother was still alive when they found him. Alive, unbitten, a bit worse for wear, but alive. Tom had been relieved for Harry, since his husband would have been pained otherwise. And because of his young brother's survival and rescue, Tom knew Javier would be a supporter for life. Harry had been correct about what would happen after the Minister's death. Javier had been made acting Minister immediately upon the news of Montague's demise.

It didn't hurt that Javier seemed to genuinely like Harry. And Tom could see why. Javier had spoken truthfully. His young brother was a lot like Harry. In regards to doing what was right for people who needed help, having such a compassionate heart, not caring about rules when it meant protecting people; as well as being an adrenaline junkie. Tom had been in Rafael's

presence for half a day and already he could tell. Harry and Rafael had immediately taken a liking to each other.

And Tom would never admit it aloud, but he had felt something akin to relief when they found the young wizard alive and fairly well, and the two brothers had been reunited. Rafael going on about how he knew Javier would come to the rescue. Proclaiming this with a boyish smile on his tired and grimy face as his brother embraced him tightly. He didn't even sneer all that much when silent tears dropped from Javier's eyes at the time. Tom resigned himself to the fact he would probably be seeing much of Rafael thanks to his and Harry's instant friendship. He worried over the trouble they might get in to. Harry didn't need any more encouragement to be reckless.

Aside from the entire Spain situation, Tom had other matters on his mind. He was both annoyed and impressed. When he wasn't being a little shite, Harry was very engaging at these affairs. Perhaps too engaging, though it wasn't the little minx's fault. He didn't even realize what was going on. Harry had tunnel vision in this case. But Tom didn't and he could see everything, especially the amount of improper attention his husband caught and it was starting to make him furious. It didn't matter though because he now had a plan. Tom moved to grasp one of Harry's hands; he fingered the wedding band as a smug smirk crossed his face.

"What the—what's this? Where's my wedding ring?" Harry demanded, sitting up in bed the next morning and staring at the new ring on his finger in horror. "Tom!"

"That would be your wedding ring," came the calm reply from beside him.

"No. This is... ugh. Look at it!" Harry thrust his hand out to Tom. The diamonds and emeralds and rubies twinkling brilliantly. "What the fuck?"

Tom took his hand and raised it, studying to huge fucking gems on his ring. "No one will miss this."

Harry stared incredulously. "Of course not! It bloody blinds!"

"It will capture attention and people won't be so quick to push the meaning of the ring to the back of their minds when they are speaking to you. You grab attention. You grab too much attention when you're not even trying, blast you, Harry. I won't stand another night of it."

Tom delivered this all in a flat voice and never looked Harry in the eye. Harry's lips parted in comprehension. "You're truly very jealous. I thought... well I knew you were getting overly possessive again, but I never imagined you'd feel true jealousy!"

Tom narrowed his eyes, finally looking up to meet Harry's. The brat was grinning. Tom released his hand and slid away off the bed. "There's nothing to be jealous about."

"Exactly! Which makes this twice as amusing! But Tom, this ring needs to go."

Tom spun away with a snarl, fingers brushing stray hair out of his face. "They follow you everywhere, Harry. Wherever you go, their eyes and ears and legs follow. And when they talk to you it only takes moments before they are under your spell and completely forget YOU BELONG TO ME!"

"I don't even like rubies," Harry commented as if he hadn't heard a word.

Are you listening to me? Tom hissed in rage, spinning around to stare.

Harry was in fact, and he was enjoying Tom's rant, but not an ounce of that was written on his face. Instead he continued to sneer at his ring. "And these diamonds are much too big, Tom."

"I should make you wear a jeweled collar!" Tom snapped.

Harry finally looked up, staring at him. He blinked once in interest. Just like he would when he was a cat. "Kinky. With a leash too, right?"

"Harry."

"What? I like it. S'not like it'll degrade me. I'd be a *very* willing participant. I'd even crawl into your lap and purr while you stroke me like a pet. Really we should-"

"Harry!" this time Tom called his name while laughing and Harry smiled back. "You really always have one avenue of thought."

"Considering the way you've been marking me over the last couple of days-I am not complaining here," he replied, whipping the covers off to reveal his nude and marked up form. Tom's fingertips could be seen everywhere. His bites as well and the sucking... There was a complete visible trail from Harry's neck all the way down to his cock where Tom had spent an ingenious amount of time sucking on his skin two nights ago. "Of course I'm going to always think about it. I can always feel it whenever I move."

Tom straightened; his intense eyes feasting on Harry's body and the marks left behind.

"Not to mention the fact I read in some book that when you're pregnant you tend to want sex more. I feel that's true," Harry added with a smirk. "Hard, hot, and mindless sex preferably. A lot of hair pulling and name calling. No control whatsoever on your part. Some of those erotic pain and shock spells you like to use.... Yeah," he breathed, remembering past instances.

Harry sat there serenely, watching as the front of his husband's sleep pants swelled under his eyes and Tom's breathing picked up a bit. His eyes darkened considerably and faded from hazel to the deep dark red. Tom's fingers flexed and the curled into fists.

"It's a shame we have to leave now, isn't it?" Harry asked innocently as he finally moved to leave the bed. "What time is our appointment again?"

All the knick knacks strategically placed around the Hotel suite began to rattle. Harry walked into the bathroom, his laughing voice clearly heard. "And stop acting as if I'm the only one

with the one particular 'avenue of thought'. If you don't stop, I'll call you a hypocrite."

"Bloody teasing brat," Tom hissed and willed his body back under control.

"Come fix my ring, Tom. This is..." Harry then made a gagging noise.

"Not the least bit attractive. Thank you," Tom drawled as he went in to fix the ring, knowing he had to. Harry wouldn't leave the room otherwise.

Harry grinned cheekily. "My pleasure."

Tom grabbed his hand and gently tugged the gaudy ring off. He slid it into a pocket, rummaged around, and produced the simple gold ring that they both preferred. "Collar," he stated, sliding the ring on.

Harry met his gaze and flashed a wide smile. "Yes."

They made a grand entrance at that night's party. Perhaps more grand because of the jeweled collar Harry sported and the silver leash clutched in the Dark Lord's hand. Everyone went silent upon their entrance into the room. But of course the couple acted as if nothing were out of the ordinary. As usual, after a time, Tom and Harry split up. Though this time Harry couldn't go too far because Tom never once released the leash, which meant many people had to watch where they were going when moving about the two. It was inconvenient for the other guests, and this seemed to lighten Tom's mood further.

As soon as they semi-separated, Harry was approached by an elderly dame. She asked for a moment of his time and started off by talking about the state of affairs in Britain. Harry knew this wasn't the real reason why she'd approached, but he decided to go along with it and wait for her to come out with it. He did get the smug satisfaction of surprising her by answering all of her questions about Britain's politics without missing a beat. He had a ready and detailed answer for every question. He was really very proud of himself. He never knew so much about politics before moving in with Tom.

Finally the old witch asked what she wanted to from the very beginning. "And, if I may, what is this, Lord Riddle?" she waved a gloved hand at the silver collar decorated with amethysts and its accompanying leash. The witch wrinkled her nose slightly and studied Harry with a disdainful air.

"It's one of our games."

"*Excuse me?*"

The young wizard nodded, caressing the collar. Many eyes followed that movement. "We play games.... You didn't actually think this was for real? As if I were really his slave?" *you did think that, didn't you?*

"A game?" she whispered faintly.

Harry winked at her and at those obviously eavesdropping behind her, and then turned, following his leash back to his husband's side.

Tom smirked and leaned down slightly, pressing lips against Harry's temple. "You make things delightfully interesting," he whispered.

Harry turned, smiling at him. "That's why you love me."

"One of the reasons."

Harry entwined their arms and looked away; lifting on his toes to scan over heads. His eyes lit up. "Tom, can we go that way? Right now?"

Tom turned to look where Harry was looking. And since he was taller, he didn't need to rise on his toes to see. A touch of a smile flitted across his face when he saw what had Harry so excited. "Yes. Of course."

Wrapping the leash loosely around his free arm so that it wouldn't get tangled, the two walked arm and arm through the crowds until they came upon a long table with desserts of every kind spread about. And that table was being manned by three waiters and a waitress. One of the waiters lifted a dark brow at Harry- or specifically at the leash and collar- when they arrived. He then bowed to both of them, a small smirk on his slightly pointed face. Tom disengaged and walked down the table, in no mood to hear the two gossip.

"That color looks better on me," Harry said to his mate.

"Push off, twat," Draco laughed quietly.

The waitress gasped and edged closer to Draco, who rolled his eyes at her.

"Feed me. I'm hungry."

"What do you want then?"

"One of everything."

Draco wrinkled his nose. "Just because you're having two babies doesn't mean you can let yourself go-"

The waitress grabbed Draco's arm and shook it a little. "Don't you know who you're talking to like that?" she hissed, wide scared eyes more on Tom than on Harry.

"Get off!" Draco snapped, wrenching his arm free. "Course I know. The boy who lived to let himself go and get fat!"

"Oh my Merlin," the waitress whispered and staggered away to the other end of the table, looking entirely too pale.

"Think you broke her."

"It's fun," Draco responded and they smirked at each other.

"So how are these three working out then?" Harry asked a little more quietly, accepting the huge helping of treacle tart Draco passed over.

"The bloke there. The one at the very end. He's okay. Flirts on the job a lot with the customers, but I haven't seen him make any mistakes worthy of my foot in his arse. And he hasn't annoyed me completely either. The other bloke," Draco gestured to the opposite end. "He's quiet. Almost too quiet. And the witch is... clingy. I don't like her."

"She looks okay."

"You'll see when you work with her."

Harry nodded and smiled when Tom filled his vision with sparkling pumpkin juice. Harry put his plate down and grabbed the goblet. "Thanks." Then he turned back to Draco. "When are your parents getting here?" he asked before downing half the goblet. He didn't worry about their words being overheard because most of the guests had backed far off, making a half circle. People were still wary of the Riddle duo. Especially since his little comment about it being a game had already circulated. No one knew what to think or how to react and this suited Harry quite well.

"You know my parents. Mother and Father enjoy making late entries whenever they can and Severus drags his feet on principle." Draco paused and smirked. "They're making a silent announcement tonight."

Harry's eyes brightened. "It's publicly official now?" Draco nodded and then scowled when a piece of black hair fell into his eyes. "It definitely fits me better."

"Whatever, tosser. Care to explain the leash and collar...?"

The Dark Lord had previously had his back to the two, as he knew he'd be ignored anyway- they chatted like girls sometimes- and he was content to stand and study the guests. Having heard that particular question, however, he turned back. Draco caught his movement and remembered he was there, trailing off in embarrassment more than anything. Annoying.

Harry shrugged, drawing Draco's attention back. The blond- now- brunet smirked. "It's the shock factor isn't it? You can't help yourself."

Harry smiled innocently. "Don't know what you're talking about." Draco snorted in disbelief. "These people want to talk so I'll give them something to talk about. They think they know everything... Also, it really is a statement. Isn't it, Tom?"

Tom gently yanked on the chain and gave him a warning look and Harry just gave him a hot look in return before turning back to Draco, who shooed him away. "You're scaring our business," he whispered.

Harry refocused around them and remembered the half circle of guests keeping well away from the Dark Lord and his mad Riddle. "Oh. Next time then, yeah?"

Draco smirked and gave him a small bow. Harry scrunched up his nose at this action and turned away, grabbing the section of chain connected to the collar and pulling Tom after him. And again, this action had some people murmuring, which only made Harry snicker and Tom mentally rolling his eyes.

More guests were announced then and Harry eagerly turned to the doors. Tom maneuvered them through the guests until Harry could see the two couples advancing into the room. Lucius and Severus striding in, side by side. Lucius with a very pleased smirk on his face while Severus looked annoyed. Behind them, Narcissa glided in on the arm of Rabastan Lestranger. The witch was practically glowing. The silent announcement was pretty clear.

Severus was the first to catch sight of them in the crowd. He paused in his strides, lay a hand on the small of Lucius' back, and guided the blond their way. When they paused in front of them, Lucius eyed Harry's collar in fascination.

"Comfortable, Harry?"

"Yes, very. This collar is wicked," he replied and then slipped a finger beneath the collar. "It's lined by very soft leather. You should get one, Lucius."

Lucius lifted a hand as if hypnotized to one of the amethyst jewels. "Yes," he whispered absently.

The Dark Lord shifted and cleared his throat. Severus pulled Lucius' caressing hand away. Harry smirked and turned to his husband. "He likes my jewels."

"Hypothetically speaking," Lucius went on, "where might I go to get something like this?"

Harry blinked and turned to Severus, who surprisingly had nothing to say to this. He was watching Harry as if he wanted an answer as well. "It's a gift from Tom. Not sure where he got it."

The two Lieutenants immediately turned to look at their Lord. They did it in unison and Harry stifled a laugh. Tom cleared his throat and looked at the length of the chain he had in his hands. The links of the chain were carved in such a way that it made the polished silver sparkle like gems too.

The Dark Lord pulled his eyes away from the chain and raised a finger to caress Harry's neck. "I may have had help from Hermione. Seems she frequents very expensive stores. I had not expected this until she brought me the catalog I asked for. I may have found the leash and collar in the catalog."

"Miss Granger?" Severus asked incredulously.

"I told you she has a problem," Harry returned. "She would go hungry buying expensive lingerie all the time. Its books and lingerie! And the best of both!"

"It wasn't the hole in the wall I had assumed," Tom remarked.

"She's a hypocrite," Harry went on with a narrowed look at his husband. "Always getting on to me. 'Don't forget to eat, Harry. You better have eaten, Harry. Honestly, it's like you want to starve yourself, Harry!' When all that time she's spending her grocery money on books and lingerie. Hypocrite!"

There was a round of mumbling; three statements of indiscernible consensus, and Harry looked at the three elder wizards with widening eyes. It was Severus who broke first under his stare. "It's the truth, Harry. You don't eat enough. Not even now with twins on the way."

Harry pulled in a breath and looked from Lucius to Tom; both of them were nodding. Tom disapprovingly. He glared at them. "My healer says I'm fine! I eat enough!" He turned to Tom. "Didn't you see me? I was stuffing my face with treacle tart over at the MR tables! And it's not my fault I've never had much of an appetite!"

Lucius opened his mouth to further the argument, but the Dark Lord shifted and they all fell silent. Tom looked first at Severus and then down at Harry. "We are not going to have this discussion right now," he stated, having no wish for this to go where he saw it going. He didn't want Harry thinking about his relatives at the moment.

Harry let the matter settle without fuss, only murmuring, "I eat enough," as the last say before the subject was changed. He turned into his husband, pressing himself against the Dark Lord's side until his husband got the message and Tom easily enfolded him within his robes and squeezed him to his Dark Lord person.

"News of the werewolf liberation in Spain has travelled quickly through Britain, my Lord," Lucius started, "and the fact you two had a major part to play, finding this secret prison."

"And the general consensus?"

"There are those who could care less about the werewolves, though they seemed sympathetic to the sympathizers. But there are far more who seem pleased with your actions in Spain. In regards to the werewolves. Was it an easy victory?"

"Yes."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Most of the guards fled immediately. They'd already known about Montague's death. And then once the rest knew exactly who was underground with them," Harry paused to smirk up at Tom, "the rest surrendered. They didn't want to end up like the former Minister. And!" Harry bounced on his toes, "I've recruited another Silver!"

"Going international already?"

"He was easily recruited," Tom replied for Harry. "And I suspect he'll find more recruits and help Harry and the Silvers with their next endeavor, which you plan to start next week, yes?" he said to Harry, who perked up and grinned with excitement.

"Don't get too excited," Severus intoned with an eye roll, knowing exactly what the young wizard was thinking. "It's not likely to be very rewarding at the beginning."

"No way, Severus! It's going to be loads of fun."

The three elder wizards snorted.

"This is boring," Rudra declared before dropping his head to the table in a pretend drunken stupor.

"It is, yeah," Belial agreed quietly, dropping his chin in a single nod as his glamourised gaze traveled around the seedy pub. "We knew it was going to take us a lot of observing missions before we have enough information to move forward, but I didn't think it would be *this* boring... bloody Severus. He jinxed us."

"Hopefully one of the other teams will hear something significant tonight," Agni said. "We've been at this a week already."

Belial nodded and continued his subtle people watching. As he watched, he let his mind drift a bit, thinking about things. About Rafael, hoping he was recovering all right. Hoping Javier didn't allow him to do too much, because it was clear Rafael hadn't wanted to take any time at all to recover from his long stay underneath the Spanish city. And then Belial thought about Neville and Nathan. Nathan... that bastard had completely disappeared. Not even Trent could find him. Despite that, Neville was doing loads better. He hardly got that far away look in his eyes anymore, and of course as Tom predicted, Neville planned to keep his baby. He seemed almost excited about it now and was even convinced his grandmother, when she returned, would actually find the idea of a baby Longbottom appealing. Even if he weren't married. Belial had his doubts, but Neville did know her better and he hoped his friend was right about that.

Rudra staggered to his feet. "Let's go for a walk, blokes."

They spent an hour walking around, discreetly looking and memorizing things and pretending to be interested in the wares being pawned at some of the vendors along this particular road. Belial had just leaned down with Rudra to inspect a really cool looking artifact when a scream wrenched their attentions back to the street.

Four kids were being dragged down the road. From Belial's perspective, their ages ranged from twelve to fifteen. Three girls and one boy. They were dirty, too thin, and wearing rags; tear tracks stained their faces as well. The children were trying to pull away from the restraining arms of their six captors. If he had to guess, Belial would say these were muggles. Muggle children were easier to take and keep. No one came looking for them in the Wizarding world, especially not if they had been orphans living on the street. Unfortunately that happened a lot.

"What the bloody fuck is this?" Agni hissed.

"One of the worst things going on here," Rudra whispered darkly. "Illegal child labor... of many sorts. We came here already knowing this," he said to his brother and Belial. "We can't

break our covers now."

"These kids disappear," Belial murmured, stepping out onto the road, watching as the children were being pushed around a corner. No one but he and the twins were paying any attention to what was going on. As if it was a common occurrence. It probably was. "Never to be seen again."

"Belial..."

"C'mon!" he hissed and he took off running. "We can't lose sight of them. We need to find out where they're being taken."

"Wait!" he heard from behind, but Belial was already sprinting down the road away from the twins; eyes trained on the corner.

He was only a few feet from the corner when a large shadow swooped around him, blocking his vision to the outside world. He felt a biting cold before a body pressed behind him. Belial tried to break free and go for his wand, but his hands were locked to his sides.

"Get off me!" he shouted, trying to wiggle free from a strength that was far more superior to his. He started building up his magic, preparing for a wandless assault. However the fight and magical focus left him suddenly after being overcome by fear when he felt something intrusive being purposely pressed against swollen stomach. That one second of fear gave his assailant the time to focus and disappear, with Belial in tow.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty-Eight

The twins skidded to a halt at the exact spot Harry disappeared into thin air after clearly being accosted by some unseen force.

"Shite!"

"Fuck! What do we do?" Agni whispered quickly, twisting around, studying everyone and everything within the alley. "He won't want us kicking up a fuss. We'll lose all the leads we've made the last few weeks if we bring in a load of Death Eaters. This part of the market will disappear. Those kids will disappear."

"We get the Dark Lord."

"He's going to kill us, bro. Belial was right in front of us!"

"We can't not tell him! It'll hurt more if we don't tell him... you go on and follow the lead Belial was going after. I'll go notify the Dark Lord." Rudra Apparated away before Agni could refuse to let him go and face Voldemort by himself.

He appeared at the Ministry, dispelled his glamours, and rushed inside. Quickly and easily making his way through security- he had clearance, after all- George raced to the Dark Lord's office. He knew the Dark Lord had a tracking charm on his husband, so he wasn't too worried they wouldn't find Harry. But he was still fearful for his friend and he was more than fearful for his and his brother's lives. They'd let Harry be taken right in front of them. But beyond that, he wouldn't hesitate to tell the Dark Lord. Whoever had taken Harry was clearly skilled to have completely blindsided them like that and to have been able to get away before Harry could react.

He raced down the corridors, pushing people out of the way, ignoring their indignant shouts. Some saw him coming and were wise enough to move out of the way. Some were even wise enough to recognize who he was in regards to the Dark Lord and Belial. They got out of his way and watched with curiosity, wondering what had happened. He hardly paid them any attention and was soon bursting through the doors into the ante chamber of the Dark Lord's offices.

"Sir, you can't go in there!" The secretary cried when George headed straight for the inner office where the Dark Lord would be found. "Sir, he's in a meeting! It's very important! P-please," she whimpered, no doubt afraid for her life if she couldn't stop him from barging in.

George ignored her. She would be okay. He flung open the doors and stumbled into the very large room. The Dark Lord was sitting behind his desk. Three men sat facing him while

nearly a dozen others stood back near the walls. Javier the Spanish Minister, the German Minister, and surprisingly, the American Speaker were sitting at the desk.

The Dark Lord stood just as six of the unknown wizards against the wall lunged for George.

"Leave him," the Dark Lord ordered. "He is not a danger." He turned to George with narrowed eyes while the redhead pulled away from two of the wizards and brushed down his wrinkled robes, half glaring at them for attacking him without reason. Bloody yanks. "You had better have a good reason for this intrusion..." he noticed the silver earring. "George."

George took a moment to mentally pout. Of course the Dark Lord would have figured it out eventually. Nothing gets by him. "Harry's been abducted! Right off the street! Something, someone grabbed him and they just disappeared into thin air! No Apparition!"

Everyone backed up a step when the Dark Lord's eyes widened and bled from hazel to a dark blood red. Cold fury washed through the room. After a long silent minute, there was a rustle of robes and then the Dark Lord had vanished as well. Tension released, George collapsed to his knees. He then groaned and flopped onto his back and whimpered.

Javier was soon kneeling over him and Rafael's face appeared too. He'd been one of the wizards to be standing back. "Are you alright?"

George groaned. "He's going to kill me when he gets back. What do you think?"

"What happened to Harry?" Javier demanded as the other wizards closed in around him curiously.

"Just what I said! It was a sneak attack! One second we're by ourselves, the next Harry is telling someone to get off him and then they're gone. And no one should have known we were there! It was a secret mission!" He quickly got up and got to his knees, grabbing Javier's shoulders. "Can I have sanctuary in your country, mate? Please?"

"But what about Harry?" Rafael demanded.

George released Javier and turned to his brother. He raised a brow. "The Dark Lord didn't just skip out of here to go on vacation, did he? They took his pregnant much loved husband! Whomever it is, they are going to die. And soon. The Dark Lord placed a tracker on Harry a long time ago. There's nowhere and nothing that can stop him from finding and getting to Harry. Mark my words. Ah...um," he said, looking at everyone around him. "You all should probably leave. At least for today. You *do not* want to be here when he gets back. Trust me."

"Where do you suggest we go?" the yank asked, frowning.

"My fiancé has a lovely home. Very well protected too. Room for all of you until you can finish your business in Britain."

"This would be Lord Malfoy's estate, yes?" the German Minister asked. George grinned and nodded.

"Yes and you'll never find a lovelier hostess than Mrs. Malf—err, Lady Black. Shall we go?"

Harry struggled out of his captor's grip, eyes wheeling around, noticing they were in what looked like an abandoned store. Were they still in the black market? His captor suddenly released him and stepped away. The moment he was let go, Harry's hand lifted to his dagger necklace. Just as he was about to activate it, he noticed his abductor was standing a few feet in front of him, staring at him imploringly with his hands raised in a placating manner. Immediately Harry's hand dropped to his wand and he snarled.

"WHERE THE FUCK HAVE YOU BEEN?" Harry shouted, his wand already pointed at the vampire's face. Nathan winced and took a step back. "Bloody wanker! Have you any idea what you've done to Neville?" he screamed, rushing forward and pressing the tip of his wand against Nathan's chest, over his heart.

"How is he?"

"He's pregnant," Harry snarled. "And sick with heartbreak, you monster!"

Nathan reared back as if slapped. "Pregnant?"

"If you dare question whether the baby is yours..." Harry murmured in a low dangerous voice.

"No. No I wasn't..." Nathan swallowed, and the sick look he'd had on his face the entire time instantly vanished to be replaced by joy. It was so bright that it was Harry who stepped back this time. "My darling is having our child?" he whispered in awe. "Truly?"

Harry studied his face and the emotion in his eyes and slowly lowered his wand; the urge to immediately destroy lessened now. "Yes."

"I..." Nathan swallowed again, this time choked up on some emotion and spun away from Harry, running a trembling hand through his hair. He laughed.

Harry scowled at his back. "Neville wants to know how many other little Nathans are running around. Is this a habit of yours?"

Nathan spun back around. "No! None! No!" the vampire quickly approached Harry, grabbing his shoulder. "Where is he? Please, I have to see him!"

Harry wrenched his shoulder free, back to snarling. "As if I'd let you get anywhere near him!"

"But-"

"He's been getting better! He's stopped thinking he did something wrong and realized it was just that you were a bastard! If you think I'll let you get near him, start all that again-"

"I had to! I had to leave! I didn't want to!"

"WHY THEN? Why leave him like that without an explanation? You must have known how he would react. He said you understood him so you must have known how he would take your disappearing!"

"I had to protect him!"

Harry sneered. What a lame excuse. "From what?"

"From me!"

"Explain."

"It was the bite. The bite—he's truly pregnant with my child?" Nathan asked, eyes wide. That desperation gone again to be replaced by excitement. "Really? My darling—"

"Oi! Focus, Nathan! Focus!" Harry shouted in frustration, going so far as to stamp a foot. Though he wasn't so frustrated that he missed how truly happy Nathan seemed to be about the prospect of having a child with Neville. Harry sucked in a breath suddenly; his vision going bright and then extremely blurry. He dropped back a step as his mind kind of clouded and he moved one hand to his splitting head and the other to his stomach.

"Harry?" the vampire jumped forward, placing a hand on his arm to steady him. His eyes widened further in sincere fright for Harry's wellbeing. "I didn't hurt you, did I? I only pressed a little. Perhaps I should bring you to your healer? Yes, that would be best."

Harry shook his head to clear it and that seemed to work; in moments he was able to focus. "Do you know how much trouble you've caused?" he hissed. "Not only with Neville, but with me now. Are you insane, Nathan? Do you have any idea what my husband is going to do when the twins tell him I've been taken? He'll never let me out of the house again! And you! He'll want to destroy you! Fucking idiot!"

Nathan snarled in frustration. "I've been trying for weeks to find some way to contact Neville and then I fell across you by accident! I didn't know what else to do! I couldn't go to Trent or Wills! The coven would have dismembered me!"

Harry took a deep breath to try and calm down. They needed to get down to the very important matter before worrying about Tom's reaction to all this. "You need to explain before I allow you anywhere near my friend."

Nathan nodded and prepared to explain, but he never got a chance. The vampire was blasted off his feet and into the far wall by a vicious spell which hit him in the side. The spell would have been fatal to a human. Harry spun around to find his husband standing not far away; his complete attention on the vampire, who lay stunned on the ground.

"Stand aside, Harry," the Dark Lord ordered even as he sent a silent severing hex at Nathan, catching the vampire across the chest. Red stained Nathan's shirt. Tom was already murmuring another spell, a far greater destructive one by the time Harry reacted.

"No, Tom!" Harry ran and jumped in front of the injured vampire. "Stop!"

Tom's next curse barely missed Harry. Thankfully Tom jerked his arm at the last moment. And then Harry's scar started burning again and Tom's face went white in rage.

Tom strode across the little space and grabbed Harry's shoulders. Fingers digging into his arms painfully. He started shaking his husband. "Do not EVER do that again!" he bellowed.

"I couldn't let you kill him," Harry whispered in a shaking voice.

Tom shook him some more. "I could have killed you! I could have killed you, Harry!"

"I can't let you kill him," Harry replied calmly, even though he felt anything but. Not with the way his scar was burning and their link was maxed out in Tom's fear and fury. And the fact he was aware that last spell would have killed him. That dizziness returned, as did the bright light behind his eyes. Harry gulped in air, but that only made it worse. "Tom? I don't feel good," he whispered, hands reaching out to grab Tom's robes.

The Dark Lord's fury was instantly pushed aside in worry as he watched his little minx's face go ghostly white. Harry collapsed only a second later, his eyes rolling to the back of his head and his legs gave out.

He woke up to find Narcissa leaning over him, pressing a cold cloth onto his forehead.

"Hush, Harry. You are perfectly fine now. Your babies are fine too. No need to worry about them either."

The tension Harry had harbored upon awakening immediately vanished. "What happened?"

"You collapsed." This came from beside the bed. Harry turned a fraction to find Draco sitting on the side of the bed, leaning close. A frown marring his otherwise attractive face.

"Where's Tom?"

Both mother and son winced. It was Narcissa who answered. "Back to the Ministry... three Ministry workers have been killed already in his anger over the situation. George did well sending the visiting dignitaries to our home before our Lord returned there."

Harry groaned. "He should have stayed home."

"He said something about the link. That's what made you collapse. He said it wasn't safe to be close to you at the moment."

"What happened, Harry? You were abducted."

"It was Nathan. He wanted to know how Neville was."

"Why doesn't he go find Longbottom himself? If he could find you, under disguise, in the black market, why didn't he?"

"Neville hasn't been on a mission yet. He doesn't go beyond here or his estate. Both are warded against intruders; Neville's against vampires and Nathan would know better than to come here without an invitation." Harry looked at Draco sharply. "The twins?"

"They're alive and only had to endure a couple of crucios." Harry breathed out a sigh of relief. "And they discovered where those kids were being dragged off to."

"That's good then." Harry grabbed the covers and pushed them off. He made to sit up and then prepared to leave the bed. Narcissa was over him like a shot.

"Just where do you think you're going?"

"Um... out of bed. I'm good. I feel fine now. My head doesn't even hurt."

"You will keep yourself in bed, Harry. Orders from both the Healer and our Lord. You will stay in bed for the rest of the day and night."

"But there's no need and I have about hundred things needing to be done."

Draco shook his head. "Harry. Do you really want our Lord to return home this evening and find or discover you've left your bed for even a moment while he's been gone? How do you think he'll react to that? You should have seen him, Harry. I don't think I've ever been as scared of him as I was earlier today."

Harry groaned in defeat and slumped back against his pillows. Narcissa smiled. "There's a good boy."

Harry scowled at her. "What happened to Nathan? Please tell me he isn't dead."

There was a slight gasp at the door. All three turned to find Neville on the threshold.

Narcissa sniffed. "The Dark Lord locked your abductor in the dungeon. He's still alive."

Harry kept his gaze on Neville. Neville was shaking his head and backing away. "Nev?"

Neville spun around and raced away. Harry sighed and closed his eyes.

Neville lasted two hours before he was drawn down to the dungeons. It was silent and dark wherever he went and he was afraid of what he would find or see down in You-Know-Who's playground. He saw nothing at first, nothing cringe worthy. As he moved along the corridor that went straight off the stairs, Neville tried to make himself as quiet as possible. He didn't want Nathan to know he was there. He didn't want to have to talk to him. But then he also knew no matter how quiet he was Nathan would smell him. Nathan would be able to hear his heart beating and his breathing. He couldn't help but wonder what Nathan was thinking right now. What would he say?

He firmly believed Nathan wouldn't say anything. Nathan didn't care. Or... Nathan would be angry for the situation he was in. He might even blame Neville for this imprisonment. Neville bristled as he slowed his steps and stopped right outside a cell. It wasn't his bloody fault. The fault lay with Nathan for being a heart stealing arsehole.

He saw something, someone lying on the floor at the back of the cell. It had to be Nathan as he'd seen no other prisoners. And now that he thought about it, Harry had said his husband

hardly used his own dungeons to keep and torture people, unless it was special circumstances. Unless it was personal. Neville saw anyone abducting Harry as a personal insult to the Dark Lord.

"You bloody idiot, Nathan," he whispered. After which he pinched his lips together and held his breath, but the body he saw didn't move a muscle. Didn't make any indication he had heard Neville.

Neville squinted, trying to see though the nearly nonexistent light. When he couldn't, he became frustrated and pulled his wand. Damning himself, he cast a lumos and nearly dropped his wand to the floor in pained surprise. As it was, he dropped to his knees, shaking hands reaching out to grip the cell bars with white fingers.

Nathan was a mess. It was now clear why he wasn't moving. His wounds were all lethal looking. And Nathan had once told him that when a vampire is fatally wounded to such a degree, the vampire will fall into a coma as his or her immortal body pieces back together. Nathan's shirt was ripped to pieces. So much so that Neville could see several deep gashes across his chest. The gashes still dribbling blood. He had cuts on his legs and face too. And one of his arms looked like it had been broken and his shoulder dislocated. And beneath Nathan was a large puddle of blood. Neville groaned as he pressed his face against the bars, fighting to keep the bile from rising past his throat.

He couldn't make himself move. He could only kneel there and watch as Nathan's body slowly healed itself. It was some time before the bleeding actually stopped. Some of the cuts on his face healed in that time as well. Neville didn't want to move until he'd seen all of Nathan's injuries fixed.

He wasn't sure how much time went by, probably hours, but Neville was suddenly wrenched off the floor when someone grabbed the back of his neck and physically lifted him to his feet. "Get off the cold floor," his attacker drawled. Neville spun around, and his eyes widened on the Dark Lord. "Are you trying to make yourself ill?"

Neville swallowed thickly and shook his head. "Don't kill him, please, sir."

"He took my husband without permission."

"H-he wouldn't have h-hurt Harry."

"Nevertheless."

"Please."

"Leave the dungeon."

He spoke so softly, so coldly, Neville quaked in his boots. He'd never been so frightened. The Dark Lord's eyes were still full of so much cold fury; his eyes blazed with it, making Neville feel as if he were being turned to ice. And yet, even as he was so afraid, Neville still managed to move. When the Dark Lord turned without another word and began stalking to the cell door, Neville moved on pure instinct and ran to the door, blocking the Dark Lord's path since

it was quite clear Voldemort had returned for another torture session. Perhaps he'd even come to kill Nathan this time.

Voldemort stopped short. His eyes widened and then narrowed to slits in rising fury. Neville knew it. He could feel it and see it and yet he stayed where he was, blocking the Dark Lord's way.

"You dare?" Voldemort hissed, raising his wand to Neville's face; poised for a curse. Neville saw it dripping from the Dark Lord's tongue.

He couldn't possibly speak. He could only squeeze shut his eyes and press back against the cold bars of the door. He was going to die now. Several long silent moments passed; the only things Neville was aware of was his loudly beating heart and his shaking limbs, and a terrified buzzing in his ears. He kept his eyes closed. He didn't want to see the acidic green light coming towards him. But when the silence stretched and the seconds ticked by and he was still alive, Neville regained enough thought to move and cracked open an eye.

He found himself alone with Nathan once again. The Dark Lord had disappeared.

I will never understand Gryffindors, Tom fumed as he walked down the hall. The boy had been quite terrified and certain he was going to die. Longbottom *knew* he was going to die and yet he refused to move away from the door. Even after what that vampire had put him through, Longbottom was prepared to protect him, to die for him. Tom was both sickened and respectful of such behavior. Perhaps this was one reason Longbottom was still alive.

He had every intention of killing Longbottom. His anger had been so great. Despite Longbottom being good mates with Harry, he had every intention of uttering the Killing Curse. But then Longbottom merely stood there, his eyes tightly closed. Fear emanating from his every pore. And yet he stood there, making his message plain and he'd reminded Tom so much of Harry. In that abandoned store, standing in front of the vampire to protect him. Tom's anger instantly vanished to a numbness as he thought about what would have happened if his last curse had hit his husband.

With those thoughts, he'd turned and left Longbottom trembling against that door and left the dungeon. He pushed the cold emotions away. He pushed his anger away. He built up his walls as he climbed the castle and stored those emotions away. He wanted to see Harry and he couldn't risk his rage hurting his husband again.

By the time he reached their rooms, his violent emotions had been dominated and subdued, pushed away until he was free to let them emerge again... preferably during a Death Eater meeting. He couldn't afford to let loose in the Ministry again either. When he stepped into the bedroom, it was to find Harry slumped in bed, eyes away towards the window while his fingers drummed out a tune. It was quite clear the little minx was bored and annoyed to have to stay in bed.

Tom rounded the bed and sat beside him. Harry reached out a hand and he immediately grabbed it. Though when Harry smiled, he could not find it in himself to smile back. Harry,

of course, would know why, and he didn't seem the least bit intimidated by the blank stare he was receiving.

"Can I get out of bed now?"

Tom narrowed his eyes. He dropped Harry's hand, shifted around, placed both hands on either side of Harry and leaned forward until they were nearly nose to nose. "No," he answered darkly.

Harry huffed, but he had already known what the answer would be. Still it never hurt to try. So he got over it and lifted up a bit so that he could lightly kiss his mentally deranged husband. Tom's eyes narrowed further, but he allowed the kiss. He even kissed back when Harry was bold enough to take it deeper, raising his hands and threading fingers into his hair. Tom's hands ran up his sides and dipped down to his back before lifting Harry into a sitting position. Harry wrapped his arms around Tom's neck and parted his lips further upon his husband's silent demand, sighing when Tom's arms locked around his back.

"So uh," Harry began tentatively when they'd separated. "How long am I going to be locked up in the Dark domain?"

"Forever," Tom snapped, his half way calm mood vanishing.

Harry rolled his eyes. "You can't keep me locked up forever."

"Try me."

"But I wasn't even really attacked!"

Tom sat back. "I will not discuss this with you right now."

Harry flopped his head back down on the pillow. He had known and was prepared for this. He was prepared to wait a few days, being 'locked' up in the castle, before addressing this with his husband again. He could be patient for a little while. He knew how scared Tom had been and how angry he'd been with himself when he almost cursed him.

"Can I still have visitors though? I do have business to take care of."

"Yes. I will make it possible."

Harry nodded, watching as Tom turned away. He lifted a hand, pressing fingers against Tom's clenched jaw. "I'm sorry. For doing that to you. I... I didn't think. Only reacted. Nathan. He was desperate, but he only wanted to know about Neville. He didn't know what else to do. I couldn't let you kill him," he went on, ignoring the dark scowl forming on Tom's face. "He was really very happy to hear about his baby. And I couldn't stand the thought of Neville's child having to grow up without its father. Still, I'm sorry, Tom. I love you more than anything, anyone, and I caused you pain."

"Shut your mouth," Tom hissed.

Harry did as he said and he also let his hand fall from Tom's face, trying to keep from wincing because his scar was starting to hurt again. Tom dipped his head, hands going up to his hair, halfway covering his face and he pulled in a deep breath. He then dropped one hand and splayed it across Harry's stomach, fingers curling in slightly but gently and he seemed to relax further. Harry's scar stopped hurting.

"I know what's in here," Tom murmured when Harry's hands covered his over their children.

"Well of course. Babies," Harry teased with an impish grin.

"Do you really think that's wise at the moment," Tom replied acidly.

Harry cleared his throat. "Sorry."

"When your Healer arrived to check on you and our twins, they were no longer hiding the telling signs."

Harry's eyes widened. "So you know?" Tom nodded, the annoyed look disappearing. He looked pleased now. There was a spark of excitement in his eyes too. "Tell me!"

"I thought you would like to know and had the Healer tell me."

Harry sat up straight. Placing his hands on his husband's cheeks. "Tom!"

"Boys, Harry. They are both boys. Our sons. And they will have your hair and your eyes and be annoying bundles of boisterous joy, I'm sure."

Harry laughed. Tom sounded annoyed, but there was no hiding the pleasure in his eyes at the thought of their two unborn sons. "Surely they'll have features belonging to you."

"You are the more lovely."

"Nonsense, Tom. You are very handsome. They must inherit from you. I insist."

"Oh well, if you insist," Tom replied dryly as he stood and moved away from the bed. "Are you hungry?"

"I could eat," Harry murmured, watching his husband put distance between them.

Tom nodded and walked out of the bedroom. When a house elf appeared with dinner on a tray and Tom didn't appear, Harry stared at his dinner with wide wet eyes. He fucked up. Even if he had apologized, Tom wasn't prepared to immediately forgive him.

Harry sat himself down at the head of the table, giving a small tired smile to Hermione. She barely returned it. She was a little miffed with him after having been told the story of what happened and the risk he put himself in to save Nathan from Tom's wrath. But she and Tom could be mad at him all they wanted. He felt he'd done the right thing.

They were in a large meeting room within the Dark domain. Despite Tom's anger and semi-indifference towards him, his husband had allowed him to invite the Silvers to their home. The Silver meetings would be held there for the time being. Until Harry was no longer under house arrest. The other Silvers would be arriving in five minutes or so.

"This meeting should be interesting, yeah?"

Hermione snorted. "To say the least. Hopefully there won't be any spats. You know werewolves and vampires don't really get along."

"That's in the past," Harry said firmly. "They were made to turn on each other by those who were prejudiced to both creatures. Anyway, it'll be an interested meeting, and we have lots to talk about."

Three days ago, Nathan had whisked him away and although that hadn't been ideal, the initial mission hadn't been a complete disaster. At least they discovered where the stolen children were being taken and kept and Fred had also gotten a good look at some of the kidnappers' faces. And one of them was a ringleader. So they had some information finally and that wizard was now being trailed and everything about him was being uncovered. By the end of the week, they would know his life story and hopefully he would lead them to other big names in the market.

Soon the Silvers arrived, all arriving in groups of two or three. Most nervous to be in the Dark Lord's home. But not in a terrified way.

"Hello, Harry! How's prison?" Lee called out as he rounded the table to sit; Oliver, Angelina, and Alicia with him.

Harry wrinkled his nose and the others laughed. Neville walked in next and surprisingly he came in with the entire group of Enforcers. They were all banned around him and he didn't look upset at all. He looked completely at ease with them. The vampires had basically taken him in as one of them since he was having a vampire baby. And now Harry could see what Nathan had said. Vampires have loyalty and honor -those who weren't mindless blood driven rouges- so yeah; they probably would have given Nathan a beating for a welcome back present had he gone to them first. But between them and Tom, Harry would have chosen the vampires.

"Is he okay?" Neville asked immediately.

"Still so, yes. Healing completed. He's awake. Tom refuses to let him out though. He's asking for you."

Neville nodded and that was all. He went and sat down next to Wills. Harry frowned. Neville was looking as pale and slim as all the vampires. He'd have to tell Tom to order Neville to eat. Hypocritical, yes. But if it meant keeping his friend healthy...

Luna came in next with the Patil twins. The blond separated and went over, planting a kiss on Harry's cheek and rubbing his belly, before rounding the table and doing the same to Neville, who smile and blushed crimson. Bill and Charlie came next and a few minutes after that, the

twins arrived. As loud as boisterous as ever, much to Harry's amusement and relief. They also brought a guest.

"We're here! Did you miss us?"

"No," Charlie and Bill said.

Fred glared at them. George turned back to the door, noticed they were missing someone and marched outside again. "Come on!"

When he reappeared, it was with a reluctant Pansy. She wrenched her grip from George and hovered in the doorway, looking as if she expected to be cursed out of the room.

"Parkinson?"

"What's she doing here?"

"Oi! Be nice," Fred snapped at the Patils. They flushed and looked properly chastised.

"Besides we made her come. We want her to join."

Harry moved closer and Hermione stood. "You can't make her join," Hermione said.

"We don't want anyone who doesn't want to be here," Harry put in.

"But she's brilliant! She's quick and clever. She'd be a real asset!"

Now everyone who had previously known her were looking less hostile with that endorsement and Pansy blushed faintly under the twins' praises. Harry turned back to Pansy and gave her a smile. "Want to give it a try? You might actually have fun."

Pansy smiled a little at him. "Yes. Thank you, Harry."

"Such manners," the twins mumbled. "She didn't have such manners when she was trying to hex our bollocks off in New York."

Pansy stepped further into the room and her eyes scanned those around the table, looking for a suitable chair. Charlie, who sat at the end opposite of Harry, turned to his brother and eyed him. He quickly twisted around, kicked out with his foot, hitting Bill in the side and sending his brother sailing out of his chair. The vampires beside them dissolved into laughter.

"Oi! You bloody pillock!" Bill snapped from the ground, shaking his head.

"Go sit by Ollie," Charlie hissed lowly and dared his brother with his eyes to do otherwise.

Bill picked himself off the floor, grumbling under his breath. "I'm telling Mum on you."

Charlie didn't care. Because if Bill sat next to Ollie, then that left only one chair open since clearly Harry was saving the open seat next to him for whatever reason, and the twins always sat next to Hermione.

Bill dropped next to Oliver, who was snickering under his breath. He patted the taller redhead's shoulder in consolation. Most everyone saw what Charlie had done since he hadn't exactly been conspicuous about it, so most everyone was laughing. Again Charlie didn't care because Parkinson was now taking the seat Bill had been kicked out of. His brothers were singing her praises, which meant they liked her, which meant she was of the good sort, which meant any misconceptions of this one he had were now out of the window, and... she was pretty. That's all he cared about at the moment. Ron was full of shite. She didn't have a pug face at all!

"So we're all here then, right?" Fred asked as he sat down beside Hermione with George next to him.

"Not quite. We're-

Harry was interrupted when several of the vampires launched to their feet, eyes going black and lips pulled back to bare their fangs. Harry stood as well as Trent. The vampire hissed in warning at the others. They looked at him in surprise. Before anything else could be said, there was a soft knock on the doorframe.

Everyone turned look at the young man hovering just inside the door. He smiled shyly around at everyone and had his hands shoved his pockets. Some dark hair fell into his brown eyes since his face was kind of ducked. He had a dozen werewolves standing behind him. Or at least Harry, Hermione, and all the vampires were aware they were werewolves. Harry hurried over to them. "Rafael! Welcome! You too, guys! Come in!"

The room was filled with uneasy tension and confusion on the humans' part.

Luna, who had been ignoring everyone to stare dazedly at Rafael, suddenly sprang from her seat and rushed around the table. She came to a stop in front of Rafael, pushing Harry away as she did so. "You were so brave!"

She grabbed his face, pulled him down, and then proceeded to snog the life out of him.

"Selfless bravery should always be rewarded," she sang after she was done with her attack and skipped back to her chair as if nothing had ever happened. Rafael just stood there, blinking at nothing; clearly his brain was trying to catch up to things.

Harry snickered and led Rafael to the chair he'd been saving for him. "That's Luna, by the way," he said to the still dazed Spaniard. Then he turned to everyone else. "These are our new Silvers," he said, waving at Rafael and the werewolves. There was a wave of welcoming hellos from the human Silvers.

He could tell the vampires were unimpressed. He hoped he wouldn't lose any of them because of this. Trent assured him he wouldn't, but only time would tell. Soon the werewolves were all seated as well after Hermione enlarged the table.

Angelina leaned forward to look around Channing at Luna. "Where did you learn how to snog like that?"

Luna turned to her and leered. "Me and Harry-"

"Alright then! Time to get started," Harry called, shooting to his feet again. "Err, Tally!" The house elf appeared and handed him a bowl of fudge. More bowls of fudge appeared around the table. "Thanks." The elf bowed and popped out again. Harry coughed, sent a mock glare at Luna and retook his seat. "Pansy, stand up and introduce yourself. Tell us something about you. Everyone who's a Silver has to do it. We're all very close. And the Enforcers don't know you at all."

Pansy stood, raising an eyebrow at him. Then she nodded, took a deep breath, and started. "Hello, I'm Pansy Parkinson. Slytherin. I've just come from a trip abroad and..." she went on for ten minutes.

"If I bite her, do you think she'll shut up?" Wills whispered to Neville, who snickered. Two werewolves beside them murmured in agreement.

"Okay, Parkinson!" Hermione called loudly. "Thank you. It's Rafael's turn now."

"Granger, I was just about to-"

"You can finish later," Harry said. "We really need to start soon. And we have thirteen others to hear from."

Pansy huffed and returned to her seat.

Just as Rafael began to speak, Tom stepped into the room. He'd promised Harry he wouldn't intervene. And he wouldn't. But if his husband thought he would leave him alone in a room with twenty vampires and a dozen Wizarding werewolves the first time, he was sadly mistaken. Tom said nothing. He simply strode forward in plain view and took the chair that was directly behind Harry against the wall. The wide eyes on him were amusing. It wasn't amusing when Harry told everyone to pretend he was a scary ornament and to ignore him.

After a few minutes, Tom noticed what it was everyone was snacking on. He also noticed the way Harry was shifting in his chair. Shaking his head slightly, Tom cocked his head to the side and whispered a name. Tally popped in. He leaned down and murmured an order. Tally nodded and popped away.

Only a few minutes passed before the table was filled with more snacks than only fudge. As if that were filling. Harry gasped in delight when a plate full of corned beef sandwiches appeared in front of him. He stopped his absurd shifting at once and began to eat. Tom then watched as Luna grabbed a plate of mini meat pies and turned in her chair to offer the plate to the werewolves beside her. They gratefully accepted. Her example was followed by the others, and Tom was even surprised to see a few of the vampires turn to their barely tolerated magical brethren and offer them the plates of food that had appeared in front of them. Tom couldn't see Harry's face, but he knew this was making his husband incredibly pleased.

"Right, so we-" a pointed cough made his shoulders slump. He turned around and glared before facing front. "So *you* guys need to keep a keen eye on this Boleman character. I'm sure

he'll lead us to other higher ups."

Charlie cracked his knuckles. "I've heard of this guy before. He goes after dragons for their scales. Never been caught though. It's rumored he has his fingers dipped into a lot of things."

"We'll catch him," Harry assured. This time he ignored the cough. "Anyway, who's on shift tonight?"

Bill, Oliver, Padma, Parvati, Charlie, Angelina, and Lee raised their hands. Out of the vampires, Morris, Duncan, and Wills raised their hands. Harry hummed and turned to Hermione. "We should probably have at least three teams out there every time." Hermione nodded and began scribbling down names on parchment, creating another team. Harry turned to Rafael. "How long are you in Britain for?"

"As long as you need me, Harry. I've had enough of Spain for a bit."

"His accent is dreamy," Alicia whispered to Angelina. All the girls nodded and Rafael blushed crimson. Harry grinned at him and turned back to Hermione.

"Let's get him and the werewolves working too. Mix it up, Hermione," he said and she knew exactly what he meant. He was going to get the vamps and werewolves working together if it was last thing he did.

"Return here tomorrow at noon with four of your companions," she said, looking at Rafael, who nodded with a pleased eager grin on his face. "I'll have the rest split into groups by then as well, but they won't have anything to do for a couple of days." She turned to the werewolves. "Is that alright?"

They nodded.

Soon the meeting was over and everyone left the room. Many left for home right away, but some lingered out in the Entrance Hall. "Are you still staying with the Malfoys?" Harry asked Rafael.

"Hmm, yes. Mrs. Malfoy refuses to let me seek other lodgings. I didn't want to impose, but she insists. She's... rather lovely," he whispered. "And my brother insists I'll be safer there than anywhere. He was rather taken with her as well."

"She's Lady Black now and she is lovely," Harry nodded, agreeing. "Are you sure you're ready? I mean, you were-"

"It will be like heaven getting out and doing something, Harry. I can't stand being cooped up for long."

"Well okay, but if you start feeling ill..."

"I'll let you know." Rafael pulled back and gave him a small bow. "Till tomorrow then."

Harry waved at him as he turned and followed the twins and Pansy to the Floo Room. He was now left with Neville, Trent, and Wills. All three were near the corridor that would lead down

to the dungeon. The two vampires just on the edge while Neville hung out a few feet away. Neville shook his head and turned around heading for Harry, while the two vampires turned and headed down.

"What are they going to do?" he asked quietly as they walked away towards his private study.

"Talk to him."

"Didn't you want to?"

"I'm... I'm afraid."

Harry could understand that, however he also knew Neville needed to speak to the vampire. "You really should."

"Maybe tomorrow."

He didn't go the next day, nor did he go the day after that. In fact, Neville let the entire week pass by without going to see Nathan. He was still hurt, dammit; hurt and tired and scared. He couldn't seem to find the courage or even the motivation to go down there and confront Nathan.

He should have expected it when Harry and Hermione appeared at his Estate the following week. He found this slightly odd since he'd promised to stay with Harry for another week. And if they wanted to talk to him, they usually waited until he returned to what Harry was now calling the Dark domain. It was also shocking to see Harry out and about. As far as he knew, the Dark Lord was still angry with his friend.

Neville climbed to his feet and brushed his hands off on his pants. He frowned a little. The two were approaching with blank faces which meant something was about to get complicated. He really didn't need any more complications in his life at the moment.

"Harry, Hermione," he greeted.

"Neville," they responded; then the three just kind of stood there in an awkward silence.

"He let you out, mate?" he laughed when Harry scowled at him. "Guess that's what you get for marrying Voldemort."

"I promised to only come here," Harry grumbled. "But I swear this house arrest is going to end. I'm not a criminal and I'm not a baby! I have the right to go wherever I want!"

"Well...not when you're carrying his sons. I think, by law, he might actually have some very legal rights in regards to what you can and cannot do while you are pregnant," Hermione told Harry, who was looking exceedingly horrified. "They'll be old laws, but I'm sure they are still in effect. When we get home I'm going to look it up."

"Don't you dare!" Harry yelled.

Neville laughed. "Okay, out with it. You two came here for a reason."

Harry blew out a breath. "Um... we've come with some news. We don't know whether to label it good or bad news."

"Is Nathan destroyed?" Neville asked flatly.

Hermione's eyes widened in alarm that he was thinking thoughts like that, while Harry quickly shook his head and raised his hands. "No! Nothing like that."

Neville released a breath of relief. "Okay. Then what is it?"

"Truthfully, I know I'm being nosy," Harry began, looking sheepish. "But I really think you need closure of some kind, Neville. You need to talk to him. I think he had a very good reason for leaving the way he did. And... he knows about your pregnancy, Neville. He's very happy about it. You should have seen his face when I told him. Extremely surprised and happy."

"Is he?" Neville whispered faintly. Harry nodded.

Hermione stepped forward. "Harry told me about something you told him. About how you gave Nathan permission to bite you and about how he seemed disturbed after doing it."

Neville tried to keep from blushing and nodded, wondering where this was going.

"I told her about that because I thought it was odd. And when Nathan abducted me, he mentioned the bite as well. So I told Hermione because she knows more about vampires than I do."

"I learned a lot of things about vampires during my mission in Russia. They are really very interesting beings. Why on my second night there-"

"Hermione."

Hermione paused, cleared her throat, and then smiled at an amused Neville. "Something that is not widely known is that vampires can choose eternal mates if they want. It's not crucial. They don't need to do it, but the ability is there." Here she shifted and looked almost embarrassed. "The vampire's mating bite will lead to a transformation if the mate isn't already a vampire."

Neville's eyes began to widen and Hermione nodded. Harry cleared his throat. "Nathan told me he ran away from you because of the bite. He said he was trying to protect you from him."

"Obviously since you aren't a vampire yet, he must have stopped the procedure when he realized what he was doing. He stopped the mating bite, which by the way, is an exceptional show of control on his part. I'd heard it's almost impossible to stop once started."

"So... he planned to stay away from me forever?"

"I don't know. You should ask him," Harry suggested firmly.

So, finally, Neville did. He left immediately with them and went down to the dungeon alone. This time he didn't even hesitate, didn't question whether what he was doing was right or wrong, or even safe. All he could think about was Harry and Hermione's words, and the bite. The fact that he could feel where Nathan had bit him thrumming away. It was hot, always hot.

"Is it true? You left because of a stupid bite?" Neville demanded the moment he was inside.

Nathan was already up and hovering as close to the bars as he could get without the magic lashing out at him. "You don't understand," he replied, eyes travelling the length of his darling's form, frowning when he saw the damage he'd done.

"No. How can I? You didn't say anything. You left. It's been seven weeks..."

"I've been trying to find you for three."

"And the other four?"

Nathan remained silent and continued to stare at the wizard hovering in the doorway of the open area. It was quiet for a long time, with the two simply staring at each other. "I don't want to take you from your world."

"I don't understand. Our worlds are the same."

Nathan lowered his head. "When you become a vampire, everything changes. You can never go back."

Neville started moving closer to the bars. "There are ways of adapting."

Nathan's head snapped up; he looked hopeful, but that look soon diminished and he shook his head. "You don't know what you're saying. You could never walk in the sun again. What about your work? What about your greenhouses. You need the sun, darling. I refuse to take that from you."

"Is that why you left?"

"I'm ashamed to admit I nearly lost control..." he hissed then and shot an arm through one of the openings. Still careful about the spells but seemingly not caring. He just wanted to touch Neville. "You have no idea how hard it was to stop infecting you."

Nathan's fingers were stretching out to him in desperation. Neville moved closer, reaching out. "Can you control yourself?"

Despite Nathan's eyes becoming increasingly blacker, the vampire nodded. His eyes shined like two metal disks in the darkness. Neville had known Nathan must be starving. Who knew when he'd last had a meal? Nathan's fingers brushed his and the vampire grabbed at his fingers desperately.

Neville allowed himself to be pulled right up against the cold metal bars. And then cold fingers were touching his chin, sliding over his jaw to cup his face and then he felt a hand

against the center of his stomach. He opened his eyes to find Nathan staring at his stomach in fascination with those black shining eyes. "I- I'm going to keep it."

Nathan's eyes snapped back to his face. "Of course we are, darling."

"We?" Neville asked flatly.

"I won't disappear again. The more of your blood I consume, the more control I'll have over the need to mark you completely."

"Did you learn this in your *seven week* absence?"

Nathan smirked at Neville's moody tone. "I did, yes," he purred, hand dropping to take up Neville's hand again. He eyed the throbbing vein on Neville's wrist and licked his lips. His dark eyes flicked back up to Neville's face. He had that look about him. The little kid look; waiting to be told he could finally dig in to the treat. He had that same look on his face when they'd been in bed. Neville had been laying on his back while Nathan hovered over him, whining because he really wanted to feed from Neville. He was like a little excited puppy when Neville finally told him he wanted to be Nathan's donor.

But now Nathan looked hesitant as he took back Neville's extended arm.

"Go on."

Nathan abruptly released him and shook his head. "You'll be dizzy. I won't have you passing out down here and I won't have you walking up all those stairs after it's done."

Neville knew he must have been starving. Apparently he really had worked on his control. The Gryffindor thrust his wrist under Nathan's nose. "Eat. I can call a house elf to take me to my room."

"You are a clever darling."

Neville would have rolled his eyes if he weren't one hundred percent fixated on the tongue already brushing against his wrist. "I'm stupid. I shouldn't be doing this. I shouldn't trust you at all."

"It won't hurt so much this time," Nathan murmured before licking the skin again, ignoring Neville's doubts. He raised his eyes in time to see Neville shiver, the young man's lips parting in a silent pant. It took every ounce of control Nathan had to keep from slamming himself against the cursed bars in order to get to his young lover.

Nathan was right. The pain wasn't anything near like it was the first time Nathan bit him and Neville started talking the moment the vampire's fangs sank beneath his skin. He tended to do that when he was aroused and embarrassed about it. Sometimes it had fended Nathan off, but it almost always did the opposite, especially after a month of Nathan staying at his home; after they'd gotten to know each other better. Nathan's flirting would get more intense then, once he started the awkward babbling, and the vampire's hands would suddenly become very bold and he'd smile more... Neville didn't know if it were because Nathan liked his quirk or

if it were simply a telling sign and it aroused the vampire more to know he was aroused. Neville was willing to bet it was only the latter.

Neville's thoughts sort of drifted off and he balled his free hand at his side, trying to keep from arching his body from the spasms of pleasure shooting up and down his spine as his blood rushed into Nathan's ravenous mouth, a tongue swirling amidst his hot blood like a whirlpool. He pried his eyes opened and found Nathan staring at him; watching his face avidly. A moan broke free of Neville's mouth.

Nathan suddenly released his wrist and lunged at the bars. A high hum filled Neville's ears as well as the sound and smell of burning flesh. "Nathan, stop!"

Neville quickly lunged forward and pushed at the vampire, trying to push him back away from the burning bars. The scorch marks were burning into Nathan's thighs and the side of one arm, and both sides of his face. When Neville got tired of pushing at a wall, he aligned his nose with Nathan's and screamed, "BACK UP!"

Nathan did and immediately turned away to hide the burn marks on his face. "Call for the house elf now. And come visit me tomorrow."

"When will he let you out?"

Nathan laughed. "I haven't been told a thing, Neville. I don't know what he plans to do with me."

"It's not very funny," Neville muttered. "Why did you even do that? You had to have known what was going to happen. Especially since you had every intention of letting Harry go. And now you've gone and made the Dark Lord lock Harry up as well. He's not allowed out of this place."

"I was desperate to see you," Nathan replied. His voice was cast off in the other direction, into the darkness of his cell as he looked down and inspected his thigh. Watching the burned skin heal and weave back together. This quick healing was all due to having just fed off his mate.

"You could have gone to Wills or Trent. Asked them."

"My reception with them wouldn't have been any kinder than it was with the Dark Lord. I've angered them. They think I abandoned you and even among vampires, that is a dishonorable thing. I did not, Neville. I needed time for control. To understand. I needed to get away from you before I turned you against your will..."

Neville stepped back from the cell and pulled his eyes away from Nathan's back. "Tally."

In moments he was whisked away from the dungeon.

Harry tentatively walked into his husband's office, hovering in the doorway and trying to keep from fidgeting. He really didn't want to be spared with a cold indifferent blank stare

again. Those looks always made him feel so low. "Tom?"

Tom looked up and mentally sighed at his husband's state. Harry's fingers were working on the hem of his t-shirt, pulling and pressing in a nervous gesture. His eyes were slightly wide and his hair was sticking up in every direction, which meant he'd been running his fingers through it in worry. He was very tense and Tom knew it was because of the tension between them, but also because he'd been cooped up inside for a while. Harry couldn't thrive like this.

Yes he was still angry at his husband, but he also knew Harry was truly sorry. But it was also in his nature to 'save people' and though this annoyed Tom, he knew it was part of his husband's make up. And he loved Harry. Everything about him. Even the annoying bits. Tom's eyes softened. "Come in, brat."

Harry breathed out in relief. He smiled widely and walked fully into the office. "Done with your paperwork?"

"For now... come out with it," he ordered, already knowing Harry had appeared with a purpose.

"Can you please release him now? It's horrid watching Neville return every time from the dungeon, looking sadder and paler. It's even more horrid going down to find Nathan whining and keening and hissing at the bars because he can't touch his mate. He always has healing burns all over him. You've had your fun, your revenge. Let him go." Harry crossed the room, moved around the desk, and straddled his husband's lap. "They are getting desperate!"

"What do I care?"

"You'll care if your vampire poster boy doesn't cooperate with your vampire poster boy plan!"

"How dare you threaten me!"

"I'm only saying! And it can't be good for the baby, Neville being stressed so much! He needs his vampire, Tom!"

"Fine, I will release him. Now remove yourself from my person," Tom muttered.

"Don't be like that," Harry whispered as he leaned forward to rub his cheek against Tom's late evening stubble. "Will you forgive me now too? Please? Our sons want you to forgive me."

Tom moved his head slightly. Lips coming into contact with his chin. Harry felt those lips curve into a smile and Harry felt the tension he'd been harboring for over a week release. "Do they?"

"Yes, they really do."

"Hmm." Tom began nibbling on his ear. "I have been thinking I've kept you locked up long enough. Wouldn't want you to go insane."

"Unlike someone we know."

"I am in perfect control of mental function," Tom snapped.

Harry rolled his eyes. "You killed several people and nearly destroyed the ministry, Tom."

"I'm sure it had it coming," Tom muttered against his neck.

Harry laughed. "Yes, the ministry building has never been kind to you."

Tom wrapped his arms around him and stood. Harry was careful to keep his legs around Tom's waist because he sensed that's what Tom wanted. He especially wanted to keep Tom's arousal snug against his. He would do anything to make Tom feel better, because he knew Tom was still in turmoil over what had happened and what had almost happened.

Tom smirked against his husband's mouth. "You are very heavy now."

Harry jerked back and glared. "I know you are still angry with me but that was uncalled for!"

Neville sucked in a breath as he suddenly awoke, eyes snapping open. He turned from his stomach onto his back, frowning. His back was cold. Is that why he'd woken? The cold?

Cold enveloped his hip as a hand was placed there. Neville sat up, still unable to see in the darkness. Still unable to see the hand touching him, only able to feel it. His inability to see and Nathan's ability to blend into the dark made his breath quicken. Not in fear. No. No, Nathan's darkness excited Neville tremendously.

"N-Nathan, you got out."

Another hand touched him; this time on the side of his neck. Opposite the side of where Nathan had first bitten him. The mark that could not be seen, but could be felt by Neville every second of every day. And the more time that passed when Nathan was unable to feed from that spot, the more it pulsed and the more he ached.

A face appeared from the dark. Dark burning eyes and gleaming fangs, and Nathan was beautifully pale as he lowered to nuzzle his neck. "I've missed you."

"Shouldn't have left then," Neville muttered bitterly even as he arched up against the body now pressing over his. "I should kick you out of my room. I should tell you to bugger off and never bother me again."

There was a soft exhale that sounded like a soft growl to his ears, teeth scraped against the invisible mark, and Neville melted into the mattress. "You'll forgive me though, darling. Won't you?"

Neville wasn't able to answer. A mouth slid over his and arms encircled him and Neville wanted to weep because it felt as it did when he'd first been in Nathan's arms. And he wanted to scream in frustration because, yes, he would forgive Nathan even though he knew he probably shouldn't and he didn't know what was going to happen in the future. He didn't want to go through the heartbreak again.

Nathan pulled back slightly, staring down at him with unwavering eyes. "I will marry you, Neville. Let me marry you."

Neville rolled his eyes. "No."

"But why?" Nathan whined against his throat, where his lips had trailed off to again.

Neville didn't answer. Instead he moved his head; lips seeking Nathan's to shut him up. Nathan took the hint and nothing more was said. Not for the rest of the night. Neville surrendered to Nathan. To his kisses and caresses, to the burn he fueled throughout the night and into the dawn.

When Neville woke late in the morning, he stretched and then wished he hadn't. He ached in several places. They were good aches, but it was also a reminder. The last time he woke feeling like this, he also discovered he had been abandoned by the one he had foolishly fallen in love with. He couldn't believe he'd done it again. He didn't even need to open his eyes to know he was alone in bed.

"Bloody bastard!"

A low chuckle filled his ears and his eyes snapped open. "I'm right here."

Neville bolted into a sitting position, eyes wheeling around the room, half of which was drenched in sunlight. He found Nathan across the room, lounging in a corner; the darkest part of the room.

"I have no plans to leave you again."

"What are you doing over there? Why didn't you close the curtains?"

"You look beautiful in the sunlight."

"So strange," Neville muttered, reaching over for his wand on the bedside table and when he had it, he snapped the dark curtains closed. He then flopped down onto his back and tried to keep the wide relieved smile off his face. Nathan hadn't left him. He was just being the creepy vampire again and staring at him while he slept. Looking over, he found Nathan was still staring. "Creeper."

Nathan grinned sharply and Neville smiled back. Nathan gracefully stood and approached the bed. His movements slow and languid and Neville's eyes darkened because the vampire was naked and he had a beautiful body. Pale and long. A work of art. If Neville weren't so tired still, he might have embarrassed himself by begging Nathan to take him again. Thank Merlin he was still exhausted. He didn't want the vampire getting a bigger head.

The vampire climbed into bed beside him, sliding that body against his. Despite the lack of warmth from Nathan, Neville turned and plastered himself against the vampire. "I don't want to be nineteen forever," he said after a nice comfortable silence. Nathan's cold skin seemed to warm against his the longer they lay together. "Wait a few years and then you can change me.

Maybe... maybe when I'm the same age you were when you were turned. We can get married at that time too if we can still stand each other. I think that-"

He tried to say more but Nathan's tongue was stealing his words right out of his mouth. Apparently the vampire was happy.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The Black Bunny

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Tom's eyes snapped open an hour before dawn, his usual time of waking. He was not pleased to turn over and find Harry missing from bed and Nagini resting in his place. **Nagini! Where's my minx?** he demanded and slapped a hand down next to the slumbering snake's triangular head. Nagini slowly uncoiled and shifted around to her displeased and deranged looking master.

I don't know where your young wizard has gone, Master, she replied, also sounding on the large side of grumpy. **But it has not been long since he interrupted my sleep the first time.**

Impertinent snake! Do not forget who allows you to sleep warmly in this bed!

Nagini shifted some more. Shifted right off the bed, hissing under her breath as she did so. **Never will I get uninterrupted sleep here.**

You are exiled from my bed!

It is young master's bed too, Master.

Tom snarled at Nagini's swiftly retreating form as she slithered into the shadows of a corner, disappearing into a hidden entrance to one of the many tunnels created for the sole purpose of the ungrateful reptile's use to travel all around the manor. Once she was gone and no longer within his shouting range, Tom returned to lying on his back and took a moment to gather himself before climbing from bed.

He committed his morning duties in the usual timely fashion- irked because Harry wasn't lounging on the bed half snoozing and half watching him move around with sleepy annoyed eyes. And Tom was annoyed because he'd grown accustomed to that particular routine; it was important to him and he knew once the babies were born... many things would change.

Harry was in the kitchen, doing as he usually did. Keeping on top of the orders. He didn't like getting backed up. Tom hovered in the doorway to take a moment and absorb the chaos that was now his kitchen. It was mostly quiet chaos but elves raced back and forth between stations made up in different sections of the area. Each station apparently concocting some sweet or other.

Currently Harry was working on a wedding cake. A large one from the looks of it. Three round tiers were set out on paper along the far counter. Two of those had already been based and put in stasis. Harry stood in front of the third- the largest- and it rested on a decorating stand. Tom moved a few steps to his right in order to see more clearly what Harry was doing and corrected himself. A rotating decorating stand. Why did he even have this information?

Harry's back was turned to the entranceway, his entire concentration was on the job at hand, and since Tom didn't want to disturb him, he turned his attention back to the house elves. Usually he kept only two at any given time but a third elf had been brought on for general work after Tally defected to Harry. And once M. R.'s had taken off, he supplied Harry with four more. Every one of the little creatures were blissfully happy working for Harry and they apparently helped loads with the baking. Hermione didn't much care for the kitchen anymore.

Harry finally stepped back from the cake, placing the spatula in a bowl close by and Tom finally approached. Making his way across the kitchen, he briefly thought about the conference he was having with several Heads of Departments and his following meeting with Hermione, who would also be attending the conference. Some unwisely disagreed with him on Miss Granger's promotion, but those closest to him- those whose opinions he genuinely valued- joined in with his assessments on the muggleborn. Severus had even given her high praises once he'd been promised those praises would never reach Granger's ears. Ever.

"Morning," Tom muttered just before pressing against Harry's back and twisting the brat around in his arms. Harry's eyes were bright and smiling but Tom didn't give him the chance to return his greeting as he was already kissing him; tenderly yet thoroughly. Arms locked as tight as he could manage.

"Tom," the minx laughed breathlessly when his lips had been released.

"You are not to leave the bed before me again," he demanded.

Harry laughed some more and threw his arms around his neck. Tom kissed him again. Couldn't seem to help it. Couldn't seem to stop. It was disappointing having to leave Harry, to leave home, but unfortunately the next two days were going to be busy for both of them. He consoled himself with the knowledge Harry was leaving for a few months to Spain at the end of the second day.

"Aren't you supposed to be on the lookout?"

Neville squirmed within his captor's grip and was able to turn his head a fraction to stare at the air beside the stairs. Stairs he and his partner were barely hidden under. "I'm trying. Really, I am," he gasped out and then bucked his hips against his captor's when a hand was pressed firmly over his panting mouth.

"Hush now esteemed leader of ours," Nathan purred, his black eyes solely on Neville's face. "We are keeping in character and those around us expect me to take this little darling tramp right here in the closest half private place I could find. I've paid for him."

"You did what?" Harry hissed.

"It's alright," Neville murmured around Nathan's hand. He swallowed thickly and moaned when Nathan's teeth softly latched onto his Adam's Apple. "W-we are in character. We've heard...uh... we've heard loads of fun facts." Neville gasped again and his head fell back against the wall. "Piss off now. I... sweet, Merlin, I'm actually enjoying this."

Harry smirked as he turned away, listening to Nathan's smug chuckle and Neville's moans of submission. And they were being truthful. They were in character. Nathan as himself- a vampire and a paying customer. And Neville as a glamourised sixteen year old prostitute within one of the permanent black markets. A huge warehouse turned into a bar/inn/gambling house/whorehouse/shopping center. So far he and his Silvers had learned of three more of these places within Great Britain, and two handfuls around the world. He wasn't concerned with the rest of the world at the moment.

As he usually did at the beginning of every shift, Harry was going around under his Invisibility Cloak checking up on all his people before he took up his own post for a couple of hours. He preferred walking around like this, under complete invisibility. He saw and heard more this way. Even while disguised, he and his team had a hard time catching useful information because people around them were just naturally reserved. Half expected since this was a secretive organization they were trying to learn about and take over. Everybody had secrets and everyone wanted to keep those secrets. But luckily for the Silvers they had the twins, and try and keep a secret from them.

Towards the end of his shift, Harry was found sitting up high in the rafters within the corner, watching everything that went on below and taking voice recordings with his wand when he thought it would be prudent.

"How did you get up here?" a hard voice demanded.

Harry turned to look at the vacant air beside him, cocking a brow at the annoyed and demanding tone. "You shouldn't be here."

"I will have an answer."

Harry blew out a breath and turned his attention back to the crowds below and away from the disillusioned husband sitting next to him. "Give me a break, Tom. It's my last night on Silver detail. Let me enjoy it at least. And it's not like I'm in a dangerous spot," he ended, waving at his darkened corner. In fact he was sitting on the cross boards where the rafters met. "If you must know, I used a lightening charm on myself and climbed up the ladder over there," he pointed to the wall behind, closest to his perch. It was at least eight feet from where they were sitting. "And then I sort of... floated across."

"What nonsense is this? The utter careless-"

Harry grinned. Tom caught on. He wished he could see the look on Tom's face. "Guess all that practice paid off. Thank you for teaching me."

"I had no idea you would master the ability so quickly. Nearly as quickly as I did, Harry."

"I had a brilliant teacher."

"I'm incredibly proud of you," Tom whispered in astonishment.

Harry remained silent because he was much too busy being a sappy emotional wreck beneath his cloak. Tom remained with him on his perch for the remainder of his shift and he didn't

even say anything when Harry scooted over to snuggle against his side; shoving at Tom until he was forced to wrap an arm around Harry to keep him from making them both fall.

The following afternoon found Harry back on a wedding job and barely able to keep his bloody eyes open. At least he was sitting down. Draco had ordered him to a seat fifteen minutes ago.

"Did you know you look to be as far along as Harry Potter? I bet your due dates are very near."

A small breath of annoyance left Harry. "Firstly, Harry *Riddle* and his husband aren't the only ones to keep on living their lives, so yes it's entirely possible we were impregnated at the same time by our partners. However, Melody, he's having twins. I'm quite certain I am not."

"Did you know David knows Potter?"

Harry's eyes shifted over to where Draco was standing in front of a table covered in plates of wedding cake. The prat was grinning and looking at him from the corner of his eye. "David gets around. And it's Harry Riddle. *Riddle*. He tends to become cross when people conveniently forget he's taken his husband's name."

"How do you know-"

"Melody, go down and make sure enough pieces have been cut," Draco interrupted, causing Harry to sigh in relief. The only reason why he was sitting was because he needed a short break and Melody's incessant chatter was not instilling a sense of rest in him. Thankfully she followed Draco's directions quickly and without complaint. They were way above her on the staff ladder and could get her sacked.

Harry watched her walk off and then allowed his attention to wander across the pretty garden where dozens of tables were spread about full of wedding guests eating their wedding cake and engaging in half drunken conversations. He smiled a little, looking forward to Draco's wedding. "Catering has become old real fast. I much prefer to stay in the kitchen."

"After tonight you won't ever have to do it again if you don't want to... You look tired."

"Busy, busy, busy."

"How late were you out last night?" Draco watched Harry shrug and then shift and drop his head back until he was looking at the gray sky. He was actually surprised his mate was still awake, knowing full well Harry had been out late last night for Silver business and had been up before dawn finishing orders and making sure everything ordered for the wedding was perfect and ready to go. "How are you still running?"

"Pepperup potions."

"I should tell on you."

"But you won't."

Draco huffed and sat next to him. "I should."

"And I appreciate that you want to and yet you won't."

Draco climbed to his feet again, glaring now. "I won't this time, but only if you go home. Everything's winding down here. No need for both of us to remain. I'll have enough help to pack up. Go get some sleep, Harry. I'm not taking no for an answer. Disappear."

Harry held out his arm. Draco took it and helped him stand. And then Harry embraced him, hugging his best mate tightly. "Thank you, Draco," he whispered.

"Moron," Draco replied, though it was clear he was smiling, and he returned Harry's embrace before pulling back.

"Think I'll visit Tom in a bit. Haven't seen him up there yet in his new egocentric office, doing ruler of all Wizarding Britain things. I bet it's massive."

"As long as you don't do anything exhausting."

With promises that he wouldn't, Harry returned home and he really had planned to go and visit Tom at the Ministry, but once he was standing in his room and faced with his bed, Harry decided a nap would be much better. He stood at the side of the massive bed and stripped before eagerly crawling under the covers, scooting himself to the center of the bed and cocooning the blankets and sheets around him. After grabbing Tom's pillow and hugging it against his chest, he was asleep in seconds.

The incessant quivering of his bladder and the hateful afternoon sunlight was the only reason why he woke before he wanted and he didn't do so gracefully. He wasn't quite ready for his nap to end nor was he ready to crawl out of bed but it was kind of an emergency. Disgruntled cursing commenced, Harry threw back the covers and crawled out of bed. He was in such a hurry to get to the loo that he didn't bother collecting his spectacles on the way and since he was still so tired and eyes hardly open yet, he ran into a stone pillar on the way to the lavatory.

"When was this put here?" he started patting the pillar in front of him; hands moving up, down, around. And then when he tried to move around the pillar and it moved to block him again, Harry growled lowly in frustration. He had to go!

"Perhaps if you open your eyes," the pillar suggested in a condescending drawl.

"Too much work," he replied while allowing his hands to travel back up and pat what he was now coming to realize was a chest.

"You are going to trip and break your neck," Tom said flatly as Harry's hands made it up to his neck.

Harry rose up for a blind kiss before answering. "Aren't you supposed to be at the Ministry? I was going to visit you after the wedding but I ended up taking a nap."

"A nap?"

Harry made a sound of agreement as he stumbled around Tom to the bathroom, only half surprised when a hand grabbed his elbow and directed him so that he wouldn't trip and hurt himself. Tom then left the bathroom to give Harry a semblance of privacy. Leaning against the wall just outside the door, he closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose in irritation. "A nap?" he murmured again.

"Yes, a nap, Tom. Did you wake up deaf this morning?"

Tom shook his head. "Harry, it's the day after the Sinclair wedding. In fact it's nearly tea time."

Neither said anything else while Harry finished his business. It sounded like he'd swallowed the entire Black lake. Harry then let out a groan of relief when his bladder was nearly empty and Tom couldn't help but snort in amusement.

"Are you listening to me?" Harry cried.

"No." The amused quivering of Tom's voice indicated otherwise.

"Pervert," Harry muttered.

Tom moved away from the doorway and since the shower had just turned on, continued on into the sitting room, debating on how to proceed. It would not be an easy conversation. Harry was likely to blow up, but he couldn't let his husband continue the way he was. Clearly he was exhausting himself.

"Not a nap then."

Tom looked up to find Harry lingering just inside the door, looking freshly showered and dressed. "You slept for a very long time."

"Didn't mean to," Harry said; approaching and then perching on Tom's lap. He raised his hands, fingertips brushing against Tom's sharp cheeks; thumbs lightly brushing down the sides of his nose and over his lips. He frowned as he studied the face so close to his own. Tom had little smudges under his eyes. His cheeks were also more hollow. They'd both been so busy recently he hadn't noticed if Tom had been eating regularly or not. "You look tired too," he whispered softly. "I haven't been taking care of you properly."

Tom stared into Harry's eyes, losing himself as always when confronted with the strength of his love and the depth of his devotion. "Nonsense."

"You're working too hard, Tom."

"That's not it at all, my love," he replied. "It is simply exhausting trying to keep up with you."

Harry pulled back and matched Tom's flat expression with one of his own. "Thinking you're funny when you're really not is world domination suicide. Don't do it, love. Don't kill your victory."

Tom's severe expression dissolved into a grin. The grin only Harry ever saw. They spoke of little things for the next few moments; Tom asking about the success of the last nuptial catering job and Harry asking after his work, and how he was getting on at the Ministry.

"You need to slow down," Tom finally stated.

Harry took a moment to answer, being too busy nuzzling his husband's cheek with a happy little sigh. Finally he said, "I'll do it on one condition..." Tom answered with silence. "I want you to come home *every day* at noon and nap with me."

A quick shifting of bodies quickly found Harry's arse on the cushion and Tom falling over him. The dark wizard's expression changed yet again and Harry was faced with the charming visage of Tom Riddle. An effective weapon, to be sure. "Harry-

"Every day," Harry interrupted, having sort of built up an immunity to Tom's charm... when it really mattered.

Harry knew he was the victor. True, it galled Tom to leave off work in the middle of the day, and yet if he did this not only would Harry cut down his own work load but he would also make sure to rest in the day. Two victories for Tom since all he wanted was Harry to be well rested and healthy and safe. Tucked away preferably. Maybe it was old fashioned or maybe it was Tom's obsessive possessiveness, Harry wasn't sure, but if it got him what he wanted as well, he didn't care either way. Tom would agree to this and make both of them happy.

"I will return home daily to lunch with you," Tom said and then dipped his head, lips brushing over Harry's t-shirt clad chest. Even through the cloth Harry could feel his hot breath. He arched when a nipple was found and caught between teeth, shirt and all. The slightest of pressure applied and Harry's head fell back limply, a moan vibrating in his throat. "Sleeping may not be all that we do."

"Oh, we can start today! Right now."

Harry's eager smile faded when his stomach growled loudly. He started shaking his head when Tom began to pull away. "Tea first."

"Later. It can be later, Tom," insisted Harry as he desperately snatched at Tom's robes to pull him back down.

Tom laughed and pulled away from his pawing hands. Harry looked extremely put out. Finally he huffed. "So I have your oath you'll come home every lunch?"

"You have it."

"I had planned to slow down whether you agreed or not. Just so you know," Harry shot back as he rolled to his feet and caught up with Tom. "It would be really wicked if we installed a slide right here," he said once they reached the stairs, tapping the banister and looking down to the ground floor. "Can we do it? Bet you would look massively evil sliding down it."

"No."

"But these stairs are a right pain," Harry responded, laying a palm on his stomach which was large enough now that no clothing could hide the fact he was pregnant.

"No to the slide," Tom replied while wrapping an arm around Harry's back and leading him down. "But I'll think of something for you."

"So accommodating."

They took lunch out in the garden since winter was coming upon them and soon it would be too cold to enjoy dining outdoors unless they were at the villa. Harry ate everything he was given, plus another plate and a half. And though Tom was pleased about this, he couldn't help but stare at some points at what Harry was eating and how fast. But at least the minx remembered his manners.

"Would it be alright with you if I drop by to see you at the Ministry sometimes?" Harry asked after desert had been eaten and Tom had shifted to recline on his back, drawing Harry over until he had his young wizard settled next to him on his side.

"I would be pleased if you did," Tom answered as he dropped a hand on his husband's swollen stomach.

Harry was nearly six months along now and had stopped looking in the mirror a week ago. He also tried to keep from looking down at his stomach and had started to use a glamour so that he wouldn't be tempted to look, explaining he wanted to see a notable change in the growth of his stomach and he couldn't do that if he looked at his stomach every day, every hour.

As it tended to do, time went by fairly quickly and another month passed in the blink of an eye. During this time Tom had two lifts installed in their home, one for each wing of the castle. He only ever used the lifts when he was with Harry. He also rearranged their bedroom a bit, knowing once he and Harry returned from Spain, he would be spending a lot of time in their chambers. Harry would no doubt be put on bed rest by that stage of the pregnancy.

One afternoon found Harry standing in the bedroom. He blew out a breath and finally stepped in front of a full length mirror next to the wardrobe. Once he'd taken a good long look at himself, he turned away with a wide grin and did a little dance in place.

Tom coughed from where he stood just inside the door. Harry froze with a wide eyed look at his husband. "I saw all of that," he announced as he walked further into the room. Harry raced into the bathroom.

"You're not supposed to be home yet!"

"Well here I am."

Tom walked into the bathroom to find Harry had quickly thrown a shirt on, as his task had been completed. He felt a grin form on his lips. "Does this mean you'll stop using me as a mirror?"

"I suppose. But it's not as if you don't like looking at me."

Tom moved closer and soon his hands were eagerly touching the reason Harry was in such a bubbly mood. The swell of his stomach was more defined now and hardening. Harry had wanted to surprise himself to see how big he'd grown and Tom had been able to see the babies steadily growing day to day.

They were both happy with this method of observation. And while Tom was aware of Harry's increasing annoyance with the changing of his body and hormones, he himself was fascinated by it. So much in fact that Harry should never question his attractiveness even while heavily pregnant. Every night he took to exploring Harry's body and studying every minute detail, every change, and he made these nightly studies very enjoyable for the little minx.

"Is the Malfoy-Snape up the duff yet?"

"Both Severus and Lucius would hex you for your choice of words."

"Let me rephrase. Has the stallion mounted the stallion-mare and produced magnificent offspring yet?"

Tom turned away before the amusement could show on his face, though Harry saw it anyway. "They've wanted children together for years. Of course it's happened already. And Severus was never one to loiter once I'd given him a mission. It was probably a relief to not have to remember to keep careful every single time. Over twenty years of conception spells... Knowing Severus, it was probably a huge pain for him. Lucius wouldn't have bothered, probably hoping for an accident. Occasionally he can be irresponsible at the worst of times. Ever since he was a boy."

Harry laughed as he couldn't imagine Lucius doing something like that. He followed after his husband and hopped on the bed. "When are we going to hear about it?"

At the wardrobe, Tom discarded his outer robes. "After Yule, I suspect," he replied and made his way across the room to the right corner beside the balcony doors. This corner was more of a nook; done in dark woods with shelf after shelf of books and two high back chairs tucked inside and a soft dark blue carpet. Harry never sat there to read because the chairs were uncomfortable. Usually he would curl up on the bed while Tom remained in the corner.

Harry laughed at first when Tom built 'the reading corner' three weeks ago and he didn't dare tell Tom it reminded him of something one could probably find in any child care. After the project was finished, Tom reasoned it was for the best since the library and their offices weren't anywhere near the nursery. Harry hadn't said anything to that. But he had stopped laughing and dragged Tom down to the kink room. Tom didn't care he missed a meeting that afternoon.

The lovemaking wasn't as vigorous anymore. They took it easy now due to his size and there was a lot of awkward shifting on his part. Tom didn't mind either. This was a new thing in their intimate relationship. Tom seemed to love it. Harry hadn't heard him laugh so much before; so freely and with so much... feeling. He did it all the time. Always laughing and

smiling and just looking incredibly pleased with the world when they were alone together. Harry hoped this wouldn't change.

He pulled back from those pleasant memories and returned to watching his husband. Sometimes he fell into a stupor like this as he took a look at his life. He had a healthy happy relationship with the man he loved. They shared the same spaces, had meals together, spent free time together, slept together. Tom had even begun cutting his hours at work- which is why Harry hadn't moved to the villa yet- and he'd also stopped pulling all-nighters at the ministry. If that weren't the biggest kicker, Tom had plans to paint the nursery just after the New Year. Tom was going to do it... *Himself*. Harry planned to sell tickets.

While Harry was thinking of such things, lost in his thoughts, Tom had moved back to the wardrobe, deciding on what to put on now that he was home for the remainder of the evening. As he unbuttoned his formal shirt, he leaned back so that he could see out into the room and found his husband still sitting on the bed. Harry was looking off into space; a silly soft smile on his face with his hands rested over his stomach, fingers tapping out randomly.

"Stop with the sentimental thinking, love. Your eyes are starting to water." Tom then rolled his own eyes, effectively keeping the fond smile off his face. "Gryffindor," he muttered as he stepped out the wardrobe buttoning his shirt back up, plans changing.

Harry's eyes focused on him. "Prat."

Tom walked over and grasped Harry's hand, pulling him to his feet and kissing him. He always rejoiced when Harry's arms went around him to pull him closer. As if his near presence were the only thing Harry ever needed and he berated himself for not embracing his husband the moment he walked into the room to find the little minx already there. "Would you like to go out tonight for dinner?"

"Yes," Harry whispered lowly before placing a kiss against Tom's neck. "I would like that."

"Do you have work to be finished?"

"That's an unfortunate yes also." Harry unlocked his arms from around Tom. "I'll want to finish before we go. It shouldn't take more than an hour."

Before long he and Tom were entering a favorite place to go and dine. It wasn't anything in the grand scale that Servile was, but it had its own lavish charm even if the place was frequently frequented by those of the higher status; nobles, highly paid solicitors, politicians, and wealthy businessmen and women. And though he wasn't comfortable interacting with those types of people at all times, Harry couldn't deny that it furthered his education along in certain areas, which was probably why Tom took him places like this occasionally.

Harry stopped short and in turn jerked the Dark Lord to a stop. While Tom turned to give him a flat stare, Harry was more focused on the bar where two very familiar wizards were enjoying each other's company. One was leaning up against the polished dark wood bar, body angled to face the side of his sitting companion. The standing wizard shifted and reached out, flicking a strand of hair away from his companion's face, fingers lingering on his cheek for a breath before drawing away.

It was a quick move, but it was still there. It happened in less than a second and yet the move itself screamed a thousand words. So excuse Harry for standing there gaping like a fish because Severus had just done something so out of character in such an open place. And yet the move had been so natural and practiced Harry wouldn't have given it a second thought had they been strangers.

Once over the shock and wonder from Severus' behavior, Harry turned to Tom with a little glare. He didn't know whether to be happy about the meet up or annoyed by it. On the one hand, he always enjoyed taking meals with Lucius and Severus. He may occasionally keep company with three older wizards who were far more experienced in life and skill, but he never felt out of place or below intelligence with them. They never made him feel so. Not even Severus, though he couldn't help throwing out barbs now and then. But with no real disdain.

Even Tom and Lucius teased him on occasion. Tom did it because he loved to get Harry riled up. Lucius did it because he thought it was funny. And Severus did it just to be Severus. It was habit. And now that there was no actual poison in his words, Harry could hear them differently and he had to admit some of the things Severus said were actually really funny. Nevertheless, Harry had assumed this would be a date and he loved dates with Tom. And yeah, it could still be a date with the other two but it wouldn't be an intimate one.

But then he decided they could be as intimate as they wanted at home. Spending time with friends was always nice and since he would be moving to Spain soon, seeing Lucius and Severus almost daily would no longer be possible. And the best thing about having dinner with the two was the entertainment. It was entertaining watching Tom interact with Severus and Lucius. He was at times awkward. Awkward for the Dark Lord anyway and it killed him. Harry thought it was the funniest thing. Cute too. Tom was cute when he was trying to be sociable with those he genuinely liked but Harry would keep that to himself or his husband would stop doing it at once.

Even though he'd decided not to care, Harry still glared suspiciously. "What are they doing here?"

"A coincidence, I assure you. Does it look as if they expect to see me here?" Harry had to agree that were true. "Shall we go say hello?"

And just to be a snot Harry replied, "*you* want to go say hello to them?"

"Never mind."

Harry grabbed onto his hand to pull him into the bar area, a hostess and waiter hot on their heels ready to do Harry and Tom's bidding at the snap of a finger. "Let's go say hi! It would be rude of us not to. Maybe we should get a table together."

Tom firmly squeezed Harry's fingers to get him to walk at an appropriate pace. Sometimes he moved around as if he didn't remember his belly was too swollen now for him to move as he once could. Or maybe Harry was just being stubborn again, refusing to accept the limitations coming along with this pregnancy. He had that stiffness about his shoulders. The stubborn defiance. This time he was defying his own body. Stupid lovely brat.

His lieutenants were surprised to see them as told by the graceful speed in which Lucius rose to his feet and faced them fully. Both bowed heads to him immediately. The action wasn't necessary, not out like this in a relatively informal setting. He didn't demand such actions from them but the two continued to do it wherever they happened to be. The action was as involuntary as blinking. Tom dredged up a small smile for them at the sudden revelation and invited the two to the table which had been immediately readied upon his entering the restaurant.

Harry seemed quite immune to the staring now, for which he was immensely grateful. The last time he'd taken his husband out for dinner Harry had not been agreeable with the attention. In fact he'd lost it halfway through dinner and left the restaurant; quickly walking out without a word. Tom had gone after him and was surprised to find his husband not upset in a crying sort of way, but he'd been upset in a very angry way. But now Harry was all smiles and this was best all around.

"Harry, today is the day," Severus said as he pulled Lucius' chair out for him.

"How did it go?" Lucius questioned.

"You can see! I'm big!" Harry exclaimed, looking down at his stomach. "No one told me how big I was getting."

"You told us not to," Tom reminded.

"Yes, I remember. The results are to my liking. There will be a repeat."

"I don't much care for being your mirror."

"It wasn't all the time. Half the time I went to Draco. Sometimes I don't trust your judgment... at all."

"A lovely confession."

"Does it deserve punishment?"

Severus rolled his eyes at the neediness in that question and Tom remained silent for a few moments, staring off as if observing, but Lucius and Severus knew he was doing no such thing.

"How's school, Severus?"

"Nothing has changed despite the outcome of the war. The amount of stupidity coming through those doors year after year is astounding."

"It's your job to make them unstupid by the time they graduate."

"Unstupid?" Severus stared at him for a long blank moment. "Why do you continuously inflict your ignorance upon me?"

"Because I like watching how your face becomes indignant. And you can't give me detention now so it's twice as satisfying."

Lucius laughed softly. "That was one of my favorite games when we were in school. To see how sour I could make him."

"You are not to join in with him," Severus ordered Lucius before turning to the impertinent brat. "And your endeavors, *Potter*?"

"*Riddle*," Harry singsonged and then giggled very quietly when Tom stepped on his foot. He cleared his throat. "It's been busy. Tomorrow Draco and I are catering another wedding and then another ministry event later in the evening. After that things calm down. Won't be doing much of anything after tomorrow night."

"What about the project?"

Dropping an elbow on the table, Harry cupped his chin in hand and ignored Tom and Lucius' mutters of etiquette. "Going well, so far. We've gained more information and even opened a couple of shops." Harry's eyes went bright and he grinned. "George found a guild of hunters who hunt exotic animals and sometimes beings. Some of the creatures they catch are forced in underground creature fights. This is unacceptable and this guild will need to be taken care of. We've got trackers on several people... some of them are nasty individuals."

Severus pretended he didn't see his lord's eye twitch or the way he shifted in his seat. "And how do you propose to take care of them?" he inquired.

"Not sure yet. But something gory. I bet the one bloke's blood would look nice swirling down a drain. You've always said you love the sight—that's a bit psycho, by the way. But whatever makes you happy, love."

Tom turned to the couple seated across from him. "Perhaps you two should go and find your own table."

Severus was unsure as to whether or not their Lord meant that seriously but a quick grin flashed across Lucius' face before he could help it.

Harry shook his head at his husband. "That would be inconvenient, and look! Our food is here now."

The meal began in comfortable silence and Tom became increasingly amused to notice the discreet looks Severus sent Harry. Gouging how much food he was eating. But Severus needn't worry. He made sure Harry ate at least four times daily and took Severus' nutrient and prenatal potions once a day.

"Draco is eager for the move to your summer residence," Lucius announced after a time.

"My vacation is his vacation," Harry replied with a laugh. "And he'll have more time to devote on the wedding since you're letting him take leave from the Malfoy businesses as well."

"You do realize he'll drive you insane within a week," Severus drawled.

Harry shrugged. "He's about to marry Fred and George so I'll let him get away with it this once. And he'll be stuck with me too and nowadays I'm not always great to be around."

Tom kept his mouth shut despite wanting to agree wholeheartedly. And he did see Harry's quick narrowed side glance but he was safe because he was wise and he would not entice Harry's hormonal temper. It was worse than the minx's regular temper. This temper Harry couldn't control really at all and this is why Tom never became angry at him. Annoyed, yes. Angry, no.

When Harry was not in control of his emotions it was obvious. It made him angry and embarrassed and eventually without fail he would blow up and then slink off to be alone and get himself under control. Harry would have gone off to Spain already if he hadn't more previously made engagements to keep him in Britain. Despite his excitement at becoming a father, Harry rather hated the actual pregnancy. Recently for sure and Tom suspected it wouldn't get any better as the twins' due date continued to approach.

"Rumors are circulating, my Lord. Rumors they want you to travel to America. Talk of treaties..."

Tom smirked at the barely hidden eager entreaty from Lucius. If this talk were true, it would be beneficial to him in so many ways. Business wise, certainly. "I'm not surprised you would hear about it first from one of your business associates instead of from me."

"It is true then."

"I don't recall saying that."

Harry turned slowly to him, whole body tense now. "But you are, aren't you? Going away? On another trip."

Tom nearly winced at the softly spoken inquiry. Severus and Lucius shared a look and then became enraptured with the rest of their dinner. "I haven't decided."

"How long would you be gone?"

Turning to Harry at hearing the soft curiousness instead of demanding, Tom answered, "I cannot be certain." Harry wasn't getting angry- thank Salazar- but his eyes did widen at that. "I would of course be home before the wedding."

The young wizard seemed to relax and Tom understood. It was nearing Samhain now, and any time after the wedding was really too close to Harry's due date. Tom had no intention of leaving Harry alone at a time when he'd be needed most. He had every intention of showing Harry how ready he was for their sons and to prove to his husband he would never leave him. He wanted Harry to know he could be counted on.

Harry smiled at him. "Let me know when you're going and I'll pack a tin of fudge for you..." he paused and pointed a strict finger at Tom. "If you are going, you must Floo me every night

so I know you're okay and our babies can hear your voice."

Tom blasted Harry with that tightly hidden love sick smile right there in front of everyone who was looking. Harry's eyes widened and his face flushed and he would have melted to the floor if the chair weren't in the way. Tom's smile morphed into a very perverted grin and all was back to normal and Severus continued to sneer at such sweetness at the dinner table.

Not long afterwards Tom noticed when Harry was no longer completely absorbed with his dinner. He was still eating, halfway hunched over his plate but his bites were very slow as if an afterthought and the direction of his gaze remained somewhere across the dining room. There had been no change with the expression of his face, but his green eyes were alarmingly hard.

Who is he to be awarded such focused attention from you? he questioned once he'd pinpointed the direction of Harry's attention. He dropped a hand on the minx's shoulder and tugged until Harry had straightened in his chair. The object of this discussion sat across the room at the far corner where a couple sat dining. Harry could only be staring at them, at the wizard whose chair faced their direction.

Marcus Donovan. Harry faced Tom, one eyebrow dashing down in displeasure. **One of those nasty individuals I told you about. Only I don't want him to disappear too soon. He can be useful still before he's done.** He then grinned. **Just need a way to control him when needed.**

Donovan and his date rose from their table very soon after, finished with dinner as they had been seated and served before the Dark Lord and his party arrived. Harry immediately stood too but hesitated from leaving the table; waiting to see which path through the dining room the wizard would lead his date. When the man began walking along the far wall around the main dining room, Harry quickly left the table himself. The wizard's path would lead him near the doors to the kitchens, and beyond that, the stairs to the lavatories. Better still parts of the dining hall jutted out into large alcoves of more tables with paths crisscrossing, giving Harry the perfect opportunity.

Waiting until the right moment, Harry discreetly dashed out from between two tables into the main walkway. Donovan failed to notice as he was busy whispering into his date's ear and walked straight into him. And even though he had braced, Harry hadn't been ready for the force of the impact. The bloody wizard smacked into him hard enough to knock him off balance but luckily he was saved from falling by a server who just served a table nearby and had been walking towards them at the time.

"Excuse you!" Donovan snapped when he'd recovered from the jarring stop by Harry. He wasn't even looking at Harry, who was profusely thanking the server for catching him in time, and was instead looking down at his shirt and brushing his hands down his front. His dinner date was more observant and she discreetly nudged him. "Have you any idea who I..." The moment Donovan realized who he'd run into, his mouth snapped shut and he quickly recovered himself, pulling back the sneer and narrowed eyes. "My apologies, Lord Riddle. Are you alright?"

His voice had softened and was without hostility yet he didn't sound friendly either. Refined and restrained. Cautious. "I'm fine no thanks to you. What did you think you were doing anyway, barging into me?" Harry demanded loudly. "I was only minding my own business trying to get to the loo!"

Donovan's date inhaled a sharp breath and Tom was there, appearing beside his husband. Donovan hid the fear well from his face but it was still there in his body language and he looked completely apologetic now. With Harry the apology had only been a status courtesy.

"You were going to blame me for this incident," Harry went on. "I find that truly incomprehensible. My back was to you!"

Donovan's eyes narrowed minutely on him at this and Harry hoped Tom realized what he was trying to do. He didn't want this opportunity wasted especially since it would be months before he could pull something like this off again. He wanted Tom's cooperation and *understanding* of the way he was acting. It was definitely worse when he had to purposely act like a stuck up whiney prat. It didn't sit well with him. He wasn't that type of person. Not really. But this was necessary as he was sure another chance like this would not pass again.

Dumbledore hadn't called Tom astonishingly brilliant for nothing. The Dark Lord focused completely on Donovan. "A private word, Donovan."

Donovan looked extremely surprised the Dark Lord knew his name, knew who he was. He looked surprised and wary and he had no choice but to follow. Harry gave him points for managing to look like he wasn't walking to his inevitable death. A cackle bubbled forth from his throat before he could help it.

A dainty cough was thrown his way and Harry was left facing the witch alone now, sizing her up and wondering how she could be out with such a monster even if he was paying her. She was an escort. Donovan was renowned for his expensive tastes in escorts.

"How did you get him?" she demanded under her breath. "How did you ever manage to ensnare such a powerful wealthy wizard?"

Harry knew exactly what she was about then and it disgusted him. It wasn't her occupation which disgusted him, no. It was the way she operated and for what purpose. She wasn't just an escort. "For one he doesn't need to pay for the sex," he replied flatly, staring her straight in the eye, making his disgust clear. "Genuine respect and attraction helped loads as well. Perhaps you should try that the next time you're on the hunt for a new full bank account-" he paused suddenly and a dark look shadowed his face. "Who the hell do you think you are to question *me* like that anyway? I'm Harry Potter! How the fuck do you think I got him?!"

The woman stepped back in surprise and Harry was only able to hold back another shout when hands dropped onto his shoulders. Looking, he found it to be Severus. "Come along, Harry. Remember your healer's standing orders. Stay off your feet whenever possible. Remaining here to talk to this woman is unnecessary."

Harry was very proud of himself for not sticking his tongue out or smirking at her as he wanted. But he knew it would have been even more childish and beneath him and his yelling

had already caused a stir... again.

"What did she do?" Lucius inquired the moment he was back in his chair.

"She demanded to know how he captured the Dark Lord," Severus answered when Harry did nothing but scowl.

"Ah." Lucius nodded in understanding.

"As if I had some huge elaborate scheme to make the Dark Lord so enamored he wouldn't be able to think of anything else beyond marrying me!"

"It did go something like that," Severus murmured.

"It was Tom! He seduced *me* with his furry Dark Lord awesomeness!"

"Now wait a moment," said Lucius, laughing softly. "I recall when our Lord started to do very uncharacteristic things and it all had to do with you. If anyone seduced anyone-"

"I was fourteen! How could I have any control over what the old pervert obsesses about?"

"I wish you would stop calling me old," Tom said as he slipped back into his seat.

Harry's indignant expression turned sheepish and that line of talk was immediately thrown out to be replaced by something that wouldn't annoy Tom anymore. "I'm ready for dessert."

After his wish for dessert had been granted, Lucius prodded once again. "My lord, about this trip..."

"I'm still debating the matter, Lucius. I'll come to a decision in a few days."

"What did you get me?" Harry asked Tom.

The elder wizard smirked. "Tell me when you need him. I'll snap my fingers and a door will instantly open for you. Seems he has found himself in the unfortunate position of owing me a favor."

Harry smiled happily. "Are you going to finish that?" he asked, pointing at Tom's half eaten dessert. He hummed happily like a small child when the sponge pudding was pushed in place of his empty treacle tart dish.

Harry rolled his shoulders and breathed out in relief as he watched Kevin repack the fine china. The wedding gig was finally over and once again all he wanted to do now was grab a quick bite and then a nap before they moved on to the ministry. Once that was over he intended to sleep for a week. Tom would be going off to the states in two days, which put them mid November. He'd arranged for the trip to take place after Harry was settled securely at their winter home.

Fred and George would be overseeing Silver dealings until his return with plans to visit regularly with reports, and of course to spend time with their lovely darling Draco. Speaking of, the glamoured Slytherin had just paused behind him and fingers dug into his tense muscles with expert precision. Harry moaned, his eyes slipped closed, and he vaguely felt it when he was gently ushered to the side and down into a chair.

"Why were we enemies at school?" he demanded breathlessly. Draco was a god at this. "And not that I'm complaining, but why are you pampering me?" he popped an eye open and craned his head back.

Draco rolled his eyes but Harry saw a distinct light blush on his friend's cheeks. "Really, Pot Head, just enjoy it. I can see you're really tired, you're on your last breath, and *you bloody git*, I love you too!"

Harry smiled just as Kevin paused in what he was doing and turned to look at them. He hoisted to his feet and jumped around to embrace Draco tightly, smiling even more when Draco laughed softly in his ear. "You've turned me into such a sentimental fool."

"I think the twins have had something to do with that as well."

"Yes, I suppose you're right." Draco pulled back and pressed the front of Harry's robes down, giving the swollen belly a little fond pat. "Now go home, have that nap, and I'll collect you this evening for our last job."

Harry didn't bother putting up a fight but it probably would have irked the blond to know he didn't immediately go to bed. In fact when he finally arrived home, he found he was too excited about going on leave to sleep. He didn't want to move around either though, definitely not having the energy for it, and so grabbed one of his favorite study books, *The Power & Depths of Elemental Magic*, and its corresponding journal in which he jotted down notes and thoughts. Once he had everything he needed, he spread out on the bed to finish the chapter currently being studied.

Elemental magic is how Tom, Severus, and a handful of other powerful Dark wizards were able to fly or float around without a broom. Tom's lessons on flying without a broom had been Harry's opener to a deeper understanding of the elements. They hadn't been easy, those lessons. And mastering it hadn't been easy either. Harry had spent at least two hours daily practicing the spells and Tom had been teaching him since just after the Hogwarts and Ministry takeovers.

This magic was wild magic and for this reason alone most shied away from it. Many described it as being Dark because it was dangerous for the untrained and it wasn't a defined subject. However there were unlimited possibilities regarding spell casting when it came to wild magic. It was as old as time and constantly evolving. Always something new to learn. Yes, it was one of Tom's favorite subjects to study as well.

Harry woke several hours later with his cheek plastered to his open journal. Opening his eyes, he found Tally and Button moving quickly around the bedroom; items and clothing floating in the air and quickly and carefully deposited into travelling trunks. "Tally," he murmured. "What time's it?"

Both elves stopped what they were doing and turned to him; both with wide terrified eyes. "Young master!" Tally cried. "Young Master, we's not supposed to wake you. You's supposed to stay sleeping while we pack. Master said!"

"No, it's alright," Harry said, sitting up. "I have to work tonight."

Both house elves rapidly shook their heads and then Tally whimpered and Button began trembling. Seconds later, Tom strode into the room. His eyes narrowed as soon as Harry was spotted sitting up. "They didn't wake me," he hurried to say. "I woke on my own. Good thing too. I don't want to be late... where's Draco?" he looked at the window and saw it was already completely dark outside. "He should have been here by now."

"Draco is at the Ministry."

"But he was supposed to come get me!"

"I don't know what to tell you, love. I came home from the office an hour ago to find you sleeping. Draco has not been by."

"How do you know Draco's at the Ministry then?" Harry questioned suspiciously.

"I stopped by the function before returning home. I thought to see you before coming here. Draco was present along with three of your employees, but you were not. I was delightfully surprised to come home and find you asleep in our bed."

"Wanker!"

Tom straightened his back, preparing for it. No way to slip out of this explosion. "Settle down."

"I will not!" Harry snapped, slapping a hand on the bed. "I made a commitment! I can't just skive off because I'm tired! I'm not a complete invalid yet and it was only one more job! How dare you-"

"You were supposed to be in Spain already," Tom interrupted lowly, approaching the bed. "Be grateful it is only now my will is unbreakable when it comes to what you will and will not do."

"You utter bastard!"

Harry flopped down onto his back and twisted over onto his side, facing away from his husband and not surprised Tom said nothing else to him, ordered the elves back to work, and left the room. The pregnant wizard pressed his lips together and glared at the window, listening as the packing was finished up.

When Draco and the twins Portkeyed to the villa an hour after he arrived, Harry didn't speak to him either as he was most upset with him as well. Not verbally anyway, but his glare was pretty telling. Draco's flinch and subsequent meek actions did nothing to calm him down. It meant Draco knew exactly why he was angry and knew he'd done something wrong. Harry had every right to be angry. They'd conspired behind his back! And he yelled this at Draco

when the blond found him walking alone in the back gardens and forced the Gryffindor to talk to him.

"You're right," Draco replied softly, nodding in a placating manner. "I did. But I didn't think you'd be this upset, Harry. The function wasn't that big of an event anyway. I didn't want you wasting energy for nothing and I knew I could find a fast replacement."

"None of that is the point! None of that is why I'm angry!"

Draco calm face broke down. "Then why?" he whined.

"You went behind my back to Tom! You conspired against me with him to keep me from my work, that's why!"

"But, I didn't! I haven't spoken with the Dark Lord at all today! I swear to you. I wouldn't do that. Yes, I conspired against you but I didn't do it with the Dark Lord. I took it upon myself to go straight to the Ministry. I figured you were sleeping and wouldn't wake up until it was over anyway."

This had Harry drawing in a breath and he went on with his slow walk, Draco close beside him. "But that means... Uh oh."

"Uh oh what?"

"I yelled at Tom for nothing. I'm the wanker!" Then he rounded on Draco. "And I'm still mad at you!"

"But Harry!"

Said wizard ignored the whined plea and stalked off down another path. One which would lead him straight to the kitchen. He was starving. After a quick bite he went to go apologize to Tom and found him in their personal quarters. The Dark Lord was standing out on their bedroom balcony, hands on rail, and staring across the dark grounds to where the chapel could be barely seen in the dark.

"I'm sorry. Shouldn't have yelled at you. You certainly didn't deserve any of that."

Tom was startled out of his glaring. He didn't turn around but a brow did rise. This was surprising. He expected a day to have passed before Harry apologized, not an hour. But only an hour it had been. He chose to forget the entire incident. He had what he wanted. Harry was finished with his incredibly busy schedule and was safely tucked away with his healer only ever seconds away. He was so persistent about this for a reason. He had very good reasons despite Harry's thoughts on the matter.

Once the babies were born Harry was going to go right back to his regular schedule. He couldn't stay still. But it would be different in that it would be more difficult. More work. He had every intention of continuing on with his studies, the baking business, the Silvers, taking up a mantle in the House of Wizards, and raising their sons personally. All of that along with

the duties Harry was expected to carry out as the husband of the ruler of Britain. Harry was determined to do it all and he would.

Harry needed this break. He wouldn't take another for a long while. "It's forgotten, Harry."

The young wizard was suddenly at his side. "This place is wicked. Found another secret passageway in the kitchen."

He asked even though he already knew about it. "Where does it lead?"

"The chapel." Harry leaned against the railing, watching Tom's face. Not surprised when his eyes narrowed and nostrils flared. "It would be a shame to destroy something so old."

"I think otherwise."

Harry gripped his arm and pulled him away back into the bedroom. "I'm ready for bed."

Tom's deranged thoughts about what he'd like to do to that chapel instantly vanished. "I must undress you immediately." He was eager to again catalog the changes to his husband's body.

The little minx grinned. "Hoping you would say that... why did you let me yell at you like that? Why didn't you say you had nothing to do with it? You could have defended yourself."

"Sometimes it's amusing watching you thrash about like a spoiled child."

The bright flush of embarrassment on Harry's face was worth it also.

All too soon Tom was scheduled to leave on his long 'diplomatic' trip, first going to Britain to join with Lucius and a few others high in his cabinet before they all headed to the States. Harry really was alright with this. This was better than Tom leaving right before the babies were due or right after, which would have happened if Tom delayed the trip. He was truly okay with it but when the morning came to bid goodbye for a time to his husband, Harry couldn't seem to let him go. Couldn't unwind his arms from around Tom's neck. Couldn't stop kissing him. He couldn't stop the emotions taking hold of him.

"I don't want you to go," he murmured lowly before kissing Tom again. "Don't go." Another kiss. "Tom, please..." Another kiss and Tom's arms locked around him and his lips prevented Harry from ripping his heart into even tinier shreds. He didn't want to go either. But it was a must and could not be delayed.

Draco and the twins were standing back, giving the two a last alone goodbye despite them all standing in the foyer. Draco had to keep looking away. Harry looked so desperate to keep his husband from moving away. He looked absolutely scared and it made Draco's eyes sting. The Dark Lord really was Harry's entire world. It was relieving Draco somewhat to see the Dark Lord felt this as well and was reacting accordingly. Trying to make this as less painful for his mate as possible. He didn't want to go either. Draco could see that.

"I promise to Floo you every night, love," Tom murmured against Harry's temple. "And to finish this as quickly as I can."

Harry pulled back, looked away, and ran a hand through his hair. "I'm fine. Everything's fine. It's okay. It's not like it's forever..." his following laugh was a little shaky. "I'm being stupid. You'll be fine and you'll come right back so everything's good. No one is panicking here."

It was a fond smile which touched Tom's lips next. Fond and understanding and his eyes were filled with the entirety of his feelings for the young man in front of him and Harry's lips started to quiver. Tom realized the longer he delayed the worse off Harry would be when he finally did Apparate to England.

He lowered his hands to his unborn sons and perhaps they knew of his departure, for as soon his palm settled over Harry's stomach, the minx gasped just as something firm poked against his hand. Harry laughed. He had yet to become annoyed when the babies moved within. On impulse Tom dropped to a knee and pressed his face against the warm flesh. Harry's hand dropped to his head and fingers were slipped into his hair.

Harry gasped again and Tom jerked back. "Blimey that was a hard one."

"This one is going to be a problem," Tom murmured, tapping a finger where the foot had connected with his face. "He dared to kick me."

Harry's watery laugh was well worth the kick. "That was Sirius. His kicks tend to be harder than James' kicking."

Tom climbed to his feet. "Excuse me?" he wasn't suggesting... surely not!

Harry moved closer to brush Tom's hair out of his face. "You're going to be late, Tom."

"Harry, what did you call my sons? You're surely joking."

"What? I think they are brilliant names for our twins."

"It's very inappropriate."

Harry looked at him with faux innocence. "Why?"

"You know perfectly well why!"

"No, I think it would be fitting." Harry then smirked. "A wonderful way of apologizing."

Tom's expression never changed from semi horror and surprise. He still looked that way when Harry shooed him off with tears in his eyes.

"Harry, you aren't really?" asked one of the three who'd moved out of the shadows as soon as Tom had gone.

Harry turned to them. He smiled a little at Fred, who had spoken. "No. But it's fun to mess with him about it. He'll worry for days I'm actually serious."

Tom did worry for days about it. In fact one might even say obsessed and finally he snapped one night a week later during one of his regular nightly Floo sessions with Harry. "I cannot

allow you to name our sons after those two!"

"My father and godfather," Harry responded with a perfectly even face.

Tom winced. Yes. Those two. He was responsible for their deaths. He was responsible for his children's grandparent's deaths. How was he supposed to explain that to his sons when one day they would inquire about their given names? "Harry..."

Harry shifted again upon his floor pillow, this time lying on his side and propping his torso up with an elbow, back to grinning with his eyes alight with mischief. "I did mean it, but only as secondary names maybe if you're agreeable to that."

Tom immediately released a very relieved breath. "Yes, certainly."

Harry laughed outright then. "You should have seen your face when I first mentioned it."

A frown appeared on the elder wizard's face but it lasted only for a moment. And then he shook his head. "I wondered why you hadn't brought up names before. How long had you been planning that one?"

"Since you told me they were boys," the minx replied smugly, shifting again to a more comfortable position.

"Cheeky minx."

Harry flashed another smile and Tom wished he could travel through the Floo. To forget the rest of the trip, despite how well everything was going. He missed Harry absolutely and he told him so. Harry responded with a soft smile and a reflection of his words was clear in those green eyes.

"You're keeping off your feet?"

Harry nodded dutifully. "Yes, Tom."

"And you're keeping up with the potions and eating schedules?"

He barely managed to keep from rolling his eyes. "Yes, Tom. Not as if you don't already know since you have Tally send daily reports."

Tom smirked. "And what of Draco? You two doing well?"

"Yes, actually. Draco's not as bad as I thought he would be. He knows exactly what he wants and he knows exactly where to get it. He had half the wedding arrangements taken care of the week after they were formally engaged! Sometimes he's scary when completely focused on something."

Harry then went on to ask about Tom's trip and they spent some time talking about politics before Tom caught sight of Harry's drooping eyes. "You do that on purpose. End our Floo sessions with politics so I'll bore you to sleep."

"It works," Harry replied softly. "And your voice is heavenly to fall asleep to."

Tom was aware that this dependency for each other was his fault. And he knew it was stronger with Harry. He shouldn't have gone. He should have postponed the trip for at least six months. The only thing he wanted to do, the only thing he could focus on were thoughts of taking care of his husband. He could safely say he was going mad again. "Harry..."

Hearing that tone Harry opened his eyes and sat completely upright. Peering into the fire and Tom's face. "I'm fine, Tom. Really I am. It's only a few more weeks. And I'm relaxing completely. Drake won't let me do anything but take walks in the gardens or on the beach, or eat and sleep." Another smile broke out on his face. "And Iseut and Diandre are coming to visit next week with two of their children! Can't wait to meet them."

Relieving news. People distractions were good for Harry. Tom ended the Floo call a little more relieved than he had the previous night. But he sat in front of the fire a while longer, staring at the flames, or rather glaring at the flickering light. His heart was beating so fast. In fact such a thing had been happening since leaving Spain. Nothing he did could get the fast beating under control. Maddening also.

He wondered how it was Harry seemed the more secure at this point in the separation. He was having a lot of trouble concentrating on the work he had to do here. He didn't want to concentrate. He found himself becoming increasingly annoyed with each passing day. Patience with people fading and his willingness to deal with fools. He looked around and he found he wanted to destroy. No one knew Lucius was the only reason why he hadn't lost it already and demanded every single witch and wizard in America to bow to him instantly and then line up to be tortured for his pleasure.

"You make everything better," he spoke his thoughts aloud, his eyes flickering along with the flames. "The world is stale without you."

Negotiations were concluded a week early, treaties immediately drawn up and signed, and Tom wasted no time in leaving back to his organized world. He was really very close to snapping and he didn't think he'd ever seen Lucius look so tired. But the blond had worked diligently; being the calm voice of the Dark Lord and making sure everything went along without a single problem. He would have given Lucius a raise if the blond didn't already have more than enough money and stature to know what to do with.

Tom travelled straight to Spain without stopping in Britain first. He and his company worked days and nights to get the trading alliance and peace treaty drawn up and instated. It had been a rocky road, all things politics being so, but since both sides wanted the same thing, their relentless work in and out of the offices- and yes, he considered political galas work- paid off and now he was able to return home, excited to see Harry again. To touch him and hold him and chase away all his anxiety over the approaching birth of their sons.

Appearing quietly and suddenly in the south garden, Tom quickly followed the main path and as he approached the house, he noticed lights blazing on from more than half the windows; no doubt the fireplaces were lit. Harry loved the warmth. Remnants of Samhain were still

lying about as well and he could see why Harry instructed the house elves to leave them. It only added to the ambiance of the gardens and outside dining area.

Once inside the kitchen, Tally was already rushing across the kitchen to the opposite side before he could finish demanding to know where his husband was. She stopped in front of a portion of the wall covered by empty shelves. She leaned against the second bottom shelf and pushed. The shelving and wall swung back to reveal a dark passageway.

Tom glanced at the elf once he'd stopped beside her. She bobbed her head. The wizard scowled and stepped into the passageway, wondering why in the blazes was Harry in the chapel. He strode down the narrow tunnel, using his wand to light the way. The passage went deeper underground and the air became cooler. Three minutes into the walk he came upon another passage which veered left and he already knew this escape path would lead straight down to the beach.

He continued on and took notice of how clean the passage was now. Not one speck of dust anywhere and new torches had been fitted upon the wall even though they weren't being used at the moment. When he first explored the Villa after its purchase, this path had been filthy. Not used in centuries. He wondered if this was the work of the house elves. Knowing Tally, it was. She wouldn't have allowed Harry to travel through a dank dusty tunnel, not especially in his current condition. Tom was relieved. He might not need to purchase a nanny elf after all.

The passage started to rise five minutes into the walk and soon his wand wasn't the only thing to provide light. Soon the passage was filled with a soft orange glow; accompanying that were hushed voices, soft laughter, and music. His brows furrowed as he walked on and then came to the threshold. And then he stood there, staring and vaguely thinking he should have known Harry would do something like this. To be perfectly honest, he wasn't upset. He was actually amused, which had probably been Harry's intention. It was way better than demolishing the place.

In his absence Harry had turned the chapel into a magical clubhouse. *Riddle's Magical Clubhouse. Magical Members Only.* Not his words. These were the words printed upon the crimson and black banner hanging over the inside of the doors. What Harry had done was turn the chapel into another kink room, minus the kink. He'd redecorated it brilliantly. The chapel was still visible, but Harry made a ridiculous mockery of it.

One section of the chapel was taking up most of his immediate attention, only because it was blocked off. The section of the altar and the largest of the stain glass windows were hidden behind large heavy crimson curtains which stretched from one wall across to the other. He'd just wondered what was being hidden when the crimson curtains were swept aside revealing the altar had been turned into a bed and Hermione, who was dressed and yet clearly had been recently ravished, appeared; sliding off the altar/bed with Charleston sitting behind her buttoning up his shirt, looking completely sated and smug and that was really too much information already.

Unexpected laughter escaped him. Merlin, how was it possible that he'd missed most of these people. Draco was there, unsurprisingly sitting with his minx on some kind of round lounge and feeding his friend grapes. The blond was sitting across from Harry and he would take aim and toss each grape into Harry's open waiting mouth. The twins were also in attendance,

but they were standing away in front of a table facing the wall. A cauldron between them and their heads together. They looked supremely suspicious. The frequent glancing at Draco and Harry and the accompanying snickers only added to that suspicion.

Others he had not expected to see were currently in attendance. Luna for one, though she was always welcome despite her oddness. And Rafael... he shouldn't have been surprised. The blasted vampire was even there though his young lover was not and Tom found displeasure with that and his laughter stopped, but by then his presence had been noticed and reactions were instantaneous. Hermione and Andrew immediately disappeared back behind the curtain which closed with a clear snap. The twins spun around while trying to hide the bubbling over cauldron. Draco dropped the grape he was about to throw and tried to look innocent. Luna sat up straighter, looked somewhere at a spot over his head and waved at him... he was almost sure she was waving at him. Rafael immediately stood and bowed to him. The vampire didn't do anything but continue to lean against the wall with his arms crossed over his chest and his eyes closed.

The one he'd come to see and the only one he wanted to see was trying his hardest to get up from his lounging position by himself and failing miserably. Tom doubted he could get off the lounge altogether without help. By the time he was beside the round lounge, Harry was trying to roll his way off it with a huge scowl of frustration stamped on his face.

As he lowered a hand to Harry's shoulder in order to trap him on his back like a stranded turtle, Tom could sense and see everyone else scatter, aiming for the nearest exits. The twins vanished the potion they'd been working on and ran for the front doors of the chapel, taking Draco, Luna, and Rafael along with them. And from the corner of his eye he caught sight of the secret passageway closing behind Hermione and Charleston.

Impatient hands grabbed at his arms, dragging him down. He managed to twist and land on his side and gathered Harry as close as he could that way.

"Hello," Harry breathed against his lips while his fingers brushed over Tom's face. "You're early."

Tom placed a kiss under Harry's chin. "Told you I would try."

Harry nodded, sighed out a smile and finally gave him his lips. It was not a long kiss as he soon pulled away and laughed. "Nathan didn't leave."

Tom twisted around and spotted the damned vampire just as he dissolved into black smoke with a sharp grin. "And what is he doing here without the gullible Gryffindor?" he demanded.

"Well," Harry settled back down on his back, looking up at Tom, fingers still against his skin. "Neville's staying the week as well, only he's going to be late coming since apparently he's working with Severus on a project and Severus refused to change their appointment days or times. And of course Nathan's always welcome to come with him."

"The week?"

"Initially it was only going to be the weekend, but everyone had the time to extend the visit. I don't mind. I love the company... and I didn't think you'd be back for another week."

Tom returned to his previous position having made sure they were really alone this time, burying his nose against Harry's neck, inhaling deeply. "I approve of the changes here."

"Knew you would. You've developed a proper sense of humor since marrying me."

Tom grinned against his skin but said nothing to that. Quite content to just lay where he was for the rest of the night. After minutes of silence, in which Tom thought Harry had fallen asleep with his face tucked against his chest, the silence ended with a soft and timid question.

"Err... Tom?"

"Hm?"

"I don't think... I will be unable to attend the House of Wizards first meeting when it convenes." Harry drew in a breath and rushed on before Tom could demand to know why. "I can't really focus anymore. Absentminded all the time and I fall asleep when and where I really shouldn't. I would be no use to anyone-"

Tom caressed away the worried lines on Harry's forehead. "You don't have to go. If you feel you are not up for it."

Harry shook his head that he wasn't. He knew the House of Wizards was an important thing. Important gatherings and meeting influential people he'd never met before. But he knew he didn't have the energy for that at the moment.

"Then it is settled. You will not go. We have plenty of others who will be in attendance. Lucius and Narcissa for one as you gave Narcissa back the Black chair."

Hearing his dry tone, Harry's lips quirked. "What did I need with the Great and Noble House of Black? Sirius left it to me, but by blood, it belongs to Narcissa and Draco and I already have the Potter line. Narcissa is no longer a Malfoy. The Black line belongs to her. Or if you want, I could change it to Bella..."

"No!"

Harry snickered at the stricken look on his husband's face. He couldn't give it to Bella even if he wanted now since he'd already legally passed over everything Black- aside from Grimmauld Place- to Narcissa. But he wouldn't have time to do anything useful with that line and Narcissa would.

"You've put on more weight," Tom commented, pressing a finger along Harry's neck. "A pleasing amount."

"As long as you're happy about it," Harry muttered back.

The Dark Lord's eyes were filled with amusement as he sat back up. "Come. I'm home and it's time to relax. Care for a bath?"

Harry drew back slightly and he hesitated before slowly nodding his head. He wasn't making eye contact and he'd also become very tense. Mentally rolling his eyes, Tom disengaged his arms from around him and slid off the lounge. Soon he had Harry on his feet and leading him back through the passageway. A bath with Harry is what he craved and a bath with his husband is what he would have, Harry's shyness about his body notwithstanding.

The walk back was silent and the silence was telling. By this time Harry should have been talking his ear off; demanding the finer details of his travels abroad or just talking about nothing in particular. But Harry remained silent and stony faced throughout the walk and when they entered their personal rooms, the minx pulled away and headed to the en suite.

"I'll draw your bath," he said softly before disappearing inside.

"We have elves for that."

"We're not really that lazy are we?"

"At the moment, yes. Yes, I am. And I'm also in a hurry." Tom waved a hand and the bath filled up just as Harry stopped beside it. The steam rose up into his nostrils and he inhaled deeply the smell of sandalwood and warmth.

He walked into the bathing room in time to see a fleeting smile cross Harry's lips. It was very brief and disappeared as soon as Harry realized he was in the bathroom also. "Well. Here we go then. A bath for you."

"For us," Tom clarified after taking Harry's hand and keeping him from leaving as he was clearly about to do. Harry didn't leave, but he did pull away and backed up until he was leaning up against the long counter, wrapping one arm around his stomach. They watched each other—or rather Harry watched his shoulder while he studied the minx's face. His cheeks were suspiciously pink. His clothes were simple enough. A maternity t-shirt, jeans, and socks.

"Why do I still find you attractive in that attire?" he demanded seriously, not really meaning to say it aloud. The stomach was new; it was different, but he was looking at his little minx and still wanting. Harry didn't smile. He didn't so much as blink and Tom decided he'd start the hard way. "Harry, come."

"I'm good thanks."

"Now."

Harry shook his head and again tried to head for the exit. Tom stopped him with his next words. "If you'd rather not it's your loss, my love." It would need to be the easy way. Less satisfying than a full out seduction, but it would get him the same end result. Harry relaxing in the bath with him.

The younger wizard had paused just inside the door, hands bracing either side of the doorframe. By the time he looked over his shoulder, Tom had already discarded his vest and was working on the buttons of his dress shirt. He was facing the bath so when his shirt came

off Harry's attention was focused solely on his back. A small barely audible whine came from very near the doorway and Tom smirked as he continued to divest himself of his clothes.

By the time he was completely submerged in their bath, Harry had come back in a few steps and was facing him directly; his eyes very bright. Tom said nothing and five minutes later Harry was also undressed and in the tub; hands being very bold and eager to touch Tom wherever he could, leaving Tom the clear victor but Harry really didn't care anymore. He had some snuggling and touching to do.

Chapter Thirty

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Two days after Tom's return found Harry and Neville in the back garden enjoying the sun and the view the back patio provided. Harry was on a two-way mirror with Hermione discussing the latest week's Silver missions, while Neville was reading over his project journal and trying to keep his spirits up about the project since the last experiment he'd done with Severus had ended in a complete fail. But when he'd been leaving Hogwarts, Professor Snape had walked him out and surprised him by telling him not to give up. They had plenty other avenues to travel before he should begin to think his idea was a lost cause.

"Nathan sleeping?" Harry asked once his call with Hermione had ended.

"Yeah." Neville turned to him. "Thanks for setting up the cellar for him."

"Tom insisted he would do well in the sunroom."

His friend snorted, shaking his head. "He's still angry with him."

"Oh yes. But at least he agreed to let Nathan stay here with you." And he liked Nathan, so he wouldn't have had it any other way. The vampire was fun company.

Neville arrived just an hour before, and even though he knew Nathan was here and only sleeping, Harry could tell he was disappointed. It had been a few days since they saw each other last.

"You know him," he went on. "He'll be up soon. Sun can't keep him down."

Neville nodded but remained quiet for a time and they both soaked up the sound and scent of the ocean nearby. Finally he turned and said, "did you know he was muggle before being turned?"

"No, I didn't know."

Neville laughed. "Yeah. He's like a kid when it comes to magic. He's been a vampire for a decade, but it's only recently he's really started associating with wizard kind. He's always asking me to show off my magic for him. He finds it fascinating. Says wizard folk are so much more fascinating."

"Let's not advertise the fact he was muggle. Tom still hates them. We don't want to give him any more reason to despise Nathan right now." Neville nodded in agreement. "So then I take it he doesn't have any family to go to."

"Why would you say that?"

"If he were magical, becoming a vampire wouldn't... well, it would be a lot less surprising, I guess. Muggles still think vampires are complete fiction. After a certain time, he couldn't hide the fact he wasn't aging or the fact he can't go outside in the sunlight. So I assumed either he doesn't have family or he hasn't..."

"No, you're right. He hasn't talked to them in twelve years. He'd already left home before being turned. His father threw him out after catching him with a bloke. Out of the house and out of the family. Disowned. Nathan thinks being turned was the best thing that ever happened to him...except," here Neville blushed, "now he says I'm the best thing that's ever happened to him. And our baby..."

Harry nodded firmly. "And he's completely right about that."

"Are you scared?"

Harry turned to find Neville staring at him with clear vivid eyes demanding he tell the truth. Harry didn't need to ask for clarification. He knew exactly what Neville was referring to, especially when light brown eyes dashed down to look at his stomach. He didn't want to lie so he didn't answer. He didn't want Neville getting anxious already. When a hand dropped onto his shoulder, he jumped a little. Quickly looking over his shoulder, he found Draco standing there.

"Yes he is," the blond replied softly. "But he's been trying to hide it from our Lord."

Harry smacked his hand away. "Do you want me to make your fucking cake?" he grit out. Before Draco could answer, he managed to haul himself out of his comfortable chair and was proud of himself for doing so without too much of a struggle. He stepped off the patio and shot a warning look at the two behind him as he did so. The message was clear. Follow me and die.

It wasn't anyone's business whether he was afraid or not of the upcoming birth, he thought in irritation as he headed down the main path to be swallowed up in the gardens. It was his business. His business and he didn't want Tom knowing about it. His husband was already worried about him. No need to make it worse.

Harry decided against traipsing through the lovely garden and veered off towards the path that would lead down to the private beach. When he arrived at the end of the path, he studied the rocky steps leading down to the sand a moment before carefully moving forward and making his way down the stairway which had been carved out of the side of the cliff face. It was bright out still, so he used one hand to shield his eyes while keeping his free hand against the rocky cliff side beside him just to be sure. Walking with his stomach this large was always awkward, no matter what he was doing. It might have helped his nerves by the fact Tom had installed and updated strong cushioning charms along the steps and at the bottom just in case because he knew Harry liked going down to the beach. This time he'd come to brood.

Once at the bottom, Harry continued to shield his eyes as he took in his surroundings, a small smile lifting the annoyance away. He liked looking at the empty beach and the ocean beyond. It was one of the most peaceful places he'd come across. Moving straight along the cliff face,

brushing his fingers against the stone, he moved about twelve feet until coming to a bench, which had also been carved from the cliff. It was a stone alcove sunk into the cliff with a lone bench. Harry sat down only momentarily in order to remove his shoes and socks and to roll up the hems of his jeans so that they wouldn't get caught up in the sand.

When he stood back up, he slipped his hands into his pockets and walked out towards the water. He walked until the beach was wet with the tide. His feet sunk into the wet sand as he began to walk along the stretch of beach, eyes cast out along the ocean. The water was cold and though he should probably be wearing a coat or robe, the chilly air felt nice against his skin. It wasn't bone chilling, for which he was thankful. Definitely warmer here than it was in England at the moment.

He tried not thinking about much as he walked the length of the shore, but it was difficult. Draco had been telling the truth. He was scared. For so many reasons. He was scared for his twins. Despite the Healer's assurances, he was always worried they weren't in perfect health. Would they be alright when it was time? What might happen to him? He was afraid if something went wrong. What would happen to Tom if...

"Shut up," he hissed to himself, willing himself to keep that thought far away. He'd survived so much already. He wasn't about to die from childbirth.

After walking back and forth a few times, stopping here and there to pick up and study various sea shells he found, Harry decided to return to the bench. His back was starting to ache. He pulled his hands out of his pockets and as he rested them beneath his stomach for support, a small frown again tugging down his lips. If he should lay down now on the sand, he imagined he'd look a lot like what a beached whale would look like.

He was glad he was having twins now, if only for the reason he could wait some time before thinking about having another child. He hated being pregnant. He knew Tom found his distaste rather amusing, considering his husband felt the opposite. But of course he would. He wasn't the one looking and feeling like an over inflated balloon at the moment.

Upon reaching the bench, he reclined back as much as he could, bending the knee of one leg and letting the other hang off the bench. He spent some time there with his eyes closed. He didn't want to return to the villa in his current state of mind. Everyone was here to relax and he didn't want his bad mood ruining theirs. Especially the twins and Draco, whose wedding was just around the corner and all three had been going around as if on sugar highs. He had to keep reminding them that they were not yet on their honeymoon.

The sun was nearly set by the time he realized he was no longer alone. His eyes snapped open in surprise because he didn't know when Tom had arrived, though it couldn't have been that long ago. But his husband was there, sitting in the sand and reclining against the bench next to his hanging leg. Harry lifted a hand and though it was at an awkward angle, managed to press his fingers into Tom's lovely hair. Deeply, until his fingertips reached Tom's scalp where he lightly brushed down. Tom made a pleased sound and gently dropped his head back against Harry's stomach.

For some time they didn't speak. Content in the silence to watch the sun set and after a while Harry rather thought Tom would let him run his fingers through his hair for eternity. This

thought had him smiling softly and shifting, wrapping his arm around Tom's shoulder and down against his chest. He used Tom as leverage to twist onto his side so that he could lean over and brush his lips against his husband's cheek.

It was getting colder now with the sun gone. Cold and dark. The cold had him finally moving from the bench to seek warmth from Tom's chest and spread out legs. The dark didn't really concern him.

It was Tom's arm now pressed possessively against his chest, over their unborn children and his lips pressed against his ear. "Stupid child," he murmured lowly.

"It wasn't this cold when I first came down here," Harry defended, but he couldn't help but smile at Tom's subsequent snort and murmuring of a warming spell for both of them. "How's things at the Ministry?" he asked, knowing Tom had been speaking to Lucius through the Floo for some time.

"Very well."

Harry rolled his eyes at the formal tone. Tom was pissy. "I'm not about to catch a cold."

"I bet you had your feet in the ice cold water."

Sometimes it was annoying Tom knew him so well. "Tell me about your trip to Albania."

Tom's following silence had Harry smiling, knowing he'd surprised Tom with his inquiry. But he liked when Tom told him stories of his past, so he hoped his husband wasn't so ticked off that he wouldn't oblige.

"Which time?"

"Right after Hogwarts. What was it like?"

"I travelled through the dense forests. Forests remarkably steeped in wild magic. It was... exhilarating."

"How dangerous was it?"

"Intensely. To use magic of any sort was incredibly dangerous. Not only from the wild magic around, but because the creatures were always drawn to the use of magic. I didn't use my wand until the end of my second month there."

The implications kind of staggered Harry. That meant Tom had to basically travel around as a muggle in such a dangerous forest. For two months. "Why then did you even-"

"It was worth it. In the end, I did not regret the way I travelled or the nasty predicaments I sometimes found myself in. I learned an indescribable amount."

"Is this one of the places you plan on taking me?"

"Indeed." Tom went on to tell him some of the experiences of his first trip in the wild forests of Albania, but Harry knew he was leaving much out of the tale. Probably because he wanted Harry to experience it firsthand. He would learn more that way. "I think you'll enjoy it. Since you foolishly enjoy danger. But the wild magic... the wild magic will carry you away to power beyond your wildest dreams, Harry."

Harry grinned widely. "You're my wildest dream, Tom."

He got pinched on the hip for that. It stung a little but the lips which pressed against his throat more than made up for it. "I know you've almost perfected the change to your eyes... I don't want you to get rid of your red eyes," he declared a few moments later. "At least not completely."

Tom's lips paused and it was clear he was waiting for an explanation, especially since he knew Harry liked his natural eye color of hazel. "It's a part of you. A part of your path. A marker, if you will. One you should keep as a reminder and trophy, I guess... Do you understand?"

"I think I do," and he sounded... bewildered yet pleased.

"It's fascinating watching your eyes bleed red when you're magically excited or severely ticked off. Flecks of ruby with the hazel..." he shrugged.

Tom didn't know what to say. He was speechless. To hide the embarrassment of such a phenomenal thing, he shuffled Harry forward and stood before helping Harry to his feet and leading his husband back to the stairs, muttering about dinner. Harry grinned stupidly at his back as he allowed Tom to lead him by the hand.

Minutes later, that smile once again disappeared when he had to stop a quarter of the way up to take a breather. This happened three times. It was far easier going down than it was going up. "This is crap!" he exclaimed the last time.

"You're almost there, love. And it's not forever, you must remember that. Only a handful of weeks left."

Harry bit his lip as he leaned against the stone. He felt so helpless and idiotic, so clumsy and useless at this point. All the good the beach had done him was gone.

"Stop this instant," Tom ordered in a hard voice and a hand firmly gripped his chin, pulling up until Harry was looking at him. He squeezed just the slightest bit when Harry's eyes seemed to want to avoid his. When he finally looked at him, his eyes swam.

"It's hard," he whispered.

The look in Tom's eyes softened. "I know. It wouldn't be so difficult if there was only one, Harry. And I know what you are thinking and you're wrong. What you're going through is perfectly normal. You are growing two babies. Two. All of you is focused on that. And when they are born, when you're finally able to hold our sons, I know you'll realize this was worth

it. Now," he hurried on before Harry could respond, "we'll go inside, have dinner, and then I'll give you a massage for however long you want."

Harry's eyes immediately brightened. Tom gave the best massages! They were even better than Draco's and there was nothing even sexual about it!

Tom chuckled. "Would you like me to carry you the rest of the way."

"Oh," Harry laughed. "No thanks, love. I'd break your back."

"Nonsense. I carried you to bed last night, didn't I? From downstairs."

Harry smiled from the memory. He noticed the strain he put on Tom even then though his husband tried valiantly to hide it. But Tom had insisted and Harry didn't say anything because it was a matter of Tom's pride. "I do love you, Tom."

The Dark Lord smirked. "Of course you do."

When they returned inside, it was to find Neville and Draco sitting in the living room, talking quietly together. No one else was around. Harry was really surprised Nathan wasn't with Neville. It was dark now so he was no doubt awake and about. And it always surprised Harry when Draco took the initiative to talk civilly with Neville. More than just civil. The blond was always really nice to Neville nowadays. He wondered if Lucius had anything to do with that.

"Where's Nathan?" he asked after joining them while Tom went off to his study.

"He had to go feed. Doesn't like feeding from me now. At least not while I'm pregnant. And he was really starving."

"But you got to say hello?"

Draco snorted. "Oh yeah. They said 'hello'. Right there against that wall. Longbottom is not the prude I thought he was." He then laughed outright when Neville blushed crimson.

Neville cleared his throat, glaring just slightly. "So are you ready, Malfoy?"

Harry answered before Draco could. "He should be. They've been practicing for the honeymoon for over a week now!"

A really bright sparkle lit Draco's eyes as he stood and that alone was answer enough. They didn't need the toothy grin on his face to discern the answer. The blond stooped to grab Harry's arm to help him back to his feet. "You should probably stop that," Harry went on. "Otherwise you won't have anything left by the time you leave for your trip."

"Nonsense, Potty."

By the time they were sitting in the dining room, Tally had dinner served, and soon Hermione and Tom appeared. Harry knew they had been working. He didn't much mind it. They were both busy and they didn't spend all their time at the villa working. And Hermione he could

understand. Her new promotion to the Head of Magical Creature Integration would start at the beginning of the new year and she was doing everything she could to prepare herself for a job that would undoubtedly be very demanding and difficult. But it was something she was looking forward to.

While Harry's appetite was as it should be, enormous, Neville's appetite wasn't quite up to par.

"Eat, Longbottom!" Draco snapped halfway through. "You didn't eat any of your lunch! You need to eat!"

"I'm trying, Malfoy!"

Harry turned to Draco in surprise. Again. His tone wasn't mean. It was chiding. Just like when he would do with Harry. When had Draco taken it upon himself to become Neville's mother hen too?

In the blink of an eye the wedding date arrived with a great amount of pomp and circumstance because Draco wouldn't have it any other way. He invited the entire Weasley family, which the twins felt was unnecessary, especially since they didn't think anyone aside from Bill and Charlie would show up anyway. Draco had a devilish smile on his face when he replied that it was indeed necessary. The twins let him have his way, as usual. They weren't really concerned with the finer details. They wanted this day to come and go already. All they were concerned with was the end result.

Imagine the twins surprise when almost every single Weasley- immediate family and otherwise- healthy enough to make the trip arrived at the manor with invitations in hand. Ginny and Ron had even come and Harry knew the blond had only invited them just to amuse himself, especially with Ginny. The Weasley entourage arrived dressed as well as they could- finely dressed in Harry's opinion but Draco wouldn't hear a word. Most kept their manners and most were reserved, but some Weasleys didn't say one word. Bill and Charlie were the most outgoing and sociable of the bunch.

Narcissa could be seen having a few words with Molly Weasley before the ceremony; very few and stiff words, before the two separated. Arthur and Lucius stayed well clear of each other. Severus, for once, walked around with his shoulders back looking very pleased with himself. It was an odd thing to see for most of the guests. However those who knew him *knew*.

Harry pulled his eyes away from the lawn where everyone was waiting and turned away from the window. Pansy had just gone after having an encouraging talk with her friend. Harry was really surprised how well she was taking Draco's upcoming nuptials with Fred and George. "So, it's you now that's kind of freaking out," he softly announced to the wizard pacing back and forth in front of the fire. He moved to sit in a chair not far from the roaring blaze.

"Obviously!" Draco shouted at him as he passed for the hundredth time.

Harry's eyes filled with concern and a small amount of anxiety for what Draco's nerves might mean for the rest of the evening. For what it might mean in regards to Fred and George. He didn't want to but he had to ask for the twins' and Draco's sake. "Maybe you want to rethink this..."

Draco rounded on him. Eyes wide and angry; also full of panic. "There will be no rethinking anything, Potter!" he shouted. "They knew what they were getting into when they signed those contracts and now they're stuck with me!"

Harry's eyes widened a little and he managed to climb back to his feet quickly. He grabbed Draco's arm to make him stop the nonstop pacing. "Is that why you're so nervous? You think they're regretting this?"

"Wouldn't you?" Draco cried in despair. "Who'd want to be stuck with me for the rest of their life?!"

Harry was floored. He never expected this from his best mate. It wasn't exactly Draco Malfoy behavior, to assume he was lacking in some way. But Draco looked petrified. He actually believed what he was saying. "Draco, no," he murmured, wrapping an arm around his friend's back and guiding him to the window. Harry pointed out, gesturing to the front of all the chairs. Fred and George were already there, pacing around the small gazebo they would be standing on with Draco when they were married. They looked very handsome dressed up in their wedding best but they also looked incredibly impatient.

"This can't happen fast enough for them. And you should know that already. How hard have they worked for this? They fell hard and fast for you." He blocked Draco's view of outside, made his friend look at him. "You want what your father and Severus have, don't you?" it wasn't really a question.

"They love each other so much," Draco whispered back. The deep longing swimming in his eyes. "Who wouldn't want that?"

"Exactly. That's what they want with you." Harry then grinned. "I have it on good authority."

Draco blew out a breath and placed a hand on the window and then he was smiling excitedly. "Okay, I'm ready."

Tom had been waiting for him outside and as they started down the hall and to the landing, Narcissa came rushing by in an elegant fast walk. The only thing to give away her excitement was the slightly widened look of her blue eyes. A permanent shine had been in them all day. She grabbed Draco by his arms and jerked him to a stop before running her silk covered hands down his exquisite wedding dress robes.

"Mother," he whined. "You're *making* the wrinkles now—Merlin, look what you've done!"

Narcissa's shrill laughter bounced off the walls. "Nonsense, dear! Now hush, dragon, for I have something to say."

Tom's grip on Harry's arm tightened and he picked up the pace. He had no wish to get caught up in the following emotional last minute talk between them. Especially those two. Harry allowed the handling. As he allowed it whenever they had to leave their homes in the recent weeks. He was always silent during these times but in truth Harry was just grateful for the support and he didn't speak because he didn't really have the energy for it. It seemed he didn't have energy to do anything anymore. The Malfoy-Weasley wedding cake had nearly killed him to make. He would never tell Draco however because it was the best cake he'd ever baked and designed and it had been worth it. The three practice cakes included.

Harry was led to one of the front row seats on Draco's side. It was true he'd known the twins first and they were family, but Tom's place was on Draco's side and he stated Harry would not be even one seat away from him. And to be perfectly honest, Harry wasn't all that comfortable with the idea of sitting with the entire Weasley clan at his back. No thank you. Hermione however seemed to have more courage in that regard, and sat up front on the Weasley side along with her date, Auror Andy. Though she would have other supporters with her should a Weasley try something. Most of the Silvers were seated with and around Hermione. Luna, Oliver, Neville, Lee, Angelina... and they were all keeping a keen eye open at the rest of the Weasley's minus Bill and Charlie. Remus was also sitting on the twins' side, beside Hermione, whereas, Fenrir had stolen a chair near Harry on Draco's side. He had that sulk about him that had Harry laughing quietly to himself.

Harry shifted in his seat near the end of the first row and took a minute to study those around him. Everyone seemed so stiff still. Both sides. It remained that way throughout the ceremony. Luckily it wasn't a very long one and this was Fred and George's doing. Draco had authority over the entire event, with the exception of the actual ceremony. He'd given that over to the twins. And at the end, something astonishing happened. Some of the Weasleys began to thaw out. And even more at the reception once the alcohol had been served.

Long into the reception, after dinner had been served and the guests were given time to mingle and dance before the arrival of the wedding cake, Fred and George made their way to Harry while Draco had been dragged off by his mother. Fred grinned. "Should we tell him his devilishness has sort of backfired and now because of all this, the extravagance and the *invitation*, most of the family likes him a bit more?"

Harry snickered. "I think definitely after the honeymoon."

"I'm ready to go!" they both exclaimed.

"The cake hasn't even been served yet. I did not make that beautiful monstrosity for nothing!"

"Harry?"

Said wizard stiffened and then slowly turned around. He faced Ron with a mixture of surprise and wariness, really having not expected him to approach. He really expected Ron and Ginny to remain in the shadows for the rest of the evening. No one would blame them.

"Blimey! You are huge!" Ron exclaimed once Harry had turned and was unable to miss the changes. He hadn't really had a good look at Harry until that very moment.

"Err, Ron?" George murmured sideling up and shaking his head as Harry's eyes narrowed. "Not very wise..."

"Huge how?"

"You look like you've swallowed one of Hagrid's massive pumpkins!"

Fred slapped a hand over his face and shook his head sadly.

"If this is your way of saying hello, *Weasley*," Harry murmured low and soft, "then you aren't doing a very good job of it." Ron floundered, at a loss for what to say. Especially since Harry had his wand in hand by that point and looked ready to use it. "What do you want?"

"I... that's what I wanted. To say hello."

"Why? We aren't friends anymore."

Ron shrugged and looked away. "Thought might as well."

The twins blinked in surprise at him while Harry watched him levelly. "Is that all?"

"Yeah," Ron answered and began to turn away to leave, his shoulders slouching a bit.

"No, I mean is that all you came here for? Have any alternative motive for approaching me?"

Ron turned back around, surprised. "I'd be an idiot to think of doing anything but that. But yeah, that was it. I just wanted to say hello. Maybe ask how you're doing."

Harry narrowed his eyes again. He was seriously surprised and had no idea how to take this unexpected meeting. "I'm good," he finally responded and then peered at the twins, who were still watching their brother with acute surprise.

"Err... why were Ginny and I invited?" he asked his brothers. "Didn't think you would. It would have been understandable..."

That had the surprise fading to amusement. "That was Draco. We weren't going to invite any of you, but Draco insisted on inviting the whole family," Fred said.

George narrowed his eyes. "Make no mistakes, baby bro. You're only here for our Draco's amusement. We haven't forgiven you and we are not up for making amends just yet."

That hurt, Harry saw, but he remained quiet on that. This was a family matter he had no right getting involved in.

"And Ginny?" Ron asked, pointing to somewhere over Harry's shoulder. The three turned to find her hidden in an alcove. Even though her face was lowered and her hair blocked most of it, Harry could feel her eyes on them.

"Same reason. For Draco's amusement and her humiliation. Hasn't been able to hide that scar all night, has she?"

Ron shook his head. Then he looked at Harry. "She's not over you."

Harry's eyes widened and he dropped his arms down from where they'd been crossed over his chest. "But I thought I made her hate me!"

Ron smiled wryly. "You did. She does. She's also scarily obsessed." He shrugged. "Mum's been trying to get her help..."

"Bugger."

"Is that Neville with a vampire?" Ron was looking back over Harry's shoulder to a spot very near Ginny's hiding place. There was a pale man with an arm draped over Neville's shoulders. He was clearly older than Neville and taller. He had black hair reaching just past his ears and striking pale blue eyes. He was smiling so the fangs were unmistakable. Ron's eyes widened when he saw the man turn and plant a kiss on Neville's smiling mouth.

"Yeah, that's Nathan. They're together. Fit, isn't he?"

Ron cleared his throat and Harry grinned. "How should I know?"

"He is," the twins answered Harry. "Our Neville captured a gorgeous one."

Harry nodded, his lips trembling with laughter at the uncomfortable vibes now coming from Ron. "They're having a baby."

"I didn't know he liked blokes," Ron muttered, more surprised by that apparently than by the last thing Harry said.

"He doesn't actually have a preference. Nathan was just lucky enough to capture Nev's complete attention," Fred remarked. "And persistent enough."

"And intelligent enough to come back."

"But a vampire?"

"They love each other. Why should it matter he's a vampire? It's not like he's a rogue or anything."

"Well," George said laughing. "Not a mindless killing rogue anyway. You gotta admit, Harry. He's kind of roguish in behavior."

"Suppose so."

Harry turned to look around, glancing over the crowds. There were over a hundred guests attending the Malfoy-Weasley wedding, so he didn't see anyone he knew personally with just the once over. Because of the large amount of guests, the reception was being held within the largest ball room in the manor as well as in the garden beyond. The four double doors were opened at the back letting guests come and go between the gardens and the ball room.

He had the urge to find Tom, but he didn't want to leave the spot near the wall. He could lean against it or sit in the chair he'd placed there when the aches started again. Besides it would take him too much energy trying to make his way passed all these people to find him. He would need to stop to talk to most of them and he didn't want to be rude by shrugging them off. The matter was taken out of his hands when Severus appeared.

"The Dark Lord has procured you a nice spot outside in the garden and there are particular guests who want to visit with you. I've come to escort you there."

"Thank you, Severus," Harry returned, smiling brightly at the wizard and took the arm offered him. "See you in a bit, guys."

He heard the twins snicker at Ron's gob smacked expression. Thank Merlin for Severus, he thought moments later as they sliced through the guests like butter. No one dared to approach them with the current look on the Potions Master's face and soon he was able to see Tom, who stood next to a bench which was in front of a beautiful water fountain rimmed with gorgeous Yuletide flower arrangements. Pleasantly he discovered the Dark Lord surrounded by people he would love to chat with.

The first of that group to greet him was Iseut and she glided forward to take Harry from Severus and gave him a warm tight embrace before pulling back and pressing a kiss to his cheek. "You look wonderful, Harry."

Harry blushed and said, "thank you. So do you," even though he didn't really feel wonderful. But then he caught the look in Tom's eyes as his husband watched him and then thought she might be right. Diandre approached and gave him a quick hug also. Following him, he was greeted by their three sons, one of which he'd already met, and then their daughter, whom he'd also met. Though instead of a handshake, he got a hug from Celeste too and then a tummy rub as she exclaimed she couldn't wait to meet the babies. The two elder sons whom he hadn't met before stood back looking slightly shocked. Their eyes went from Harry to Celeste and then over to the Dark Lord, as if afraid what their sister's informal actions would mean for her safety.

Celeste was a year younger than he. The youngest son, Franc, was his age, 19. The second youngest was 22, Aloysius, while their eldest son was 25, Benoit. They were a beautiful family. But of course they were as they were all full blooded Veela. And even though the children were nearer to his age, Harry still felt closer to their mother. It was odd, but he didn't really look too much into it. He loved the connection he had with Iseut.

Harry smiled broadly at Celeste. "As soon as they are born, Tom will send word and have you all visit."

Tom raised an eyebrow, but didn't dispute this. The elder brothers were still looking incredibly wary while the youngest watched them with laughing eyes. He hadn't met Tom before that night, but he had spent time with Harry at the villa so he wasn't half as surprised by this. Harry then turned to the Spanish Minister and his brother, hugging them both and allowing Rafael to tug him over to the bench Tom was saving for him. Before sitting down he gave Tom a hug just because he wanted one and Tom retaliated by dropping a chaste but lovely kiss to his lips.

"Feeling well?"

"Still, yes," Harry answered and knew without having to be told should that change he was to tell Tom immediately. And he would. He knew better than to try and hide it from Tom nowadays.

Harry spent some time talking quietly to Rafael about the continued nightly excursions into the Black Market. They now had three shops opened. Two were gambling shops and the third dealt in questionable potions and books. At one point Rafael laughed when Harry made a particular expression.

"It's not going anywhere, Harry. It'll all still be there when you're able."

Soon everyone was pressing back into the manor to witness the awesomeness that was the wedding cake. Still no one knew he was the MR's baker, so he was able to stand back and silently enjoy all the words and gasps of praises when the red, white, and gold cake was levitated out by two of his employees. He decorated the cake in a reflection of Yuletide with edible red poinsettias, pearly beads, and gold sashes. It wasn't exactly six tiers. At least not six layers on top of each other. He'd constructed the cake in sections. The main part, the middle, was four tiers and square. And then he'd made two three-tier sections off the sides connected to the main tower by bridges of more edible poinsettias.

"Harry," murmured Tom. "That is a beautiful wedding cake." This being the first time the Dark Lord laid eyes on it as Harry let no one but the house elves see it in its making.

And then Draco was in front of him suddenly. The blond's eyes seemed to be swimming. He grabbed Harry's face and planted a kiss right on his lips. It was a quick kiss, completely chaste. But it also said more than Draco's whispered, "thank you," did. And of course that made Harry's own eyes swim. Tom did nothing more than hand him a handkerchief.

"Don't punish him," Harry murmured, ignoring the shocked looks he and Draco were getting.

"Under the circumstances, I can let this one go."

Harry spent the days after the wedding at the Dark domain fixing the place up for Yule and Tom's upcoming birthday. He did it secretly of course, the decorating. Tom knew about his party, for Harry wouldn't dare try and surprise him with that since so many people were set to attend. Tom wasn't exactly pleased with the idea, but he couldn't very well forbid Harry from throwing him a party when he'd gone and done the same to him, despite knowing how he felt about his own birthday. And besides there wouldn't be anyone there that Tom didn't know personally.

"Harry! What do you think you're doing?"

Harry paused and turned with his wand halfway up towards the ceiling. He wondered why Hermione sounded outraged. "Decorating," he stated as if it were obvious, which it was. He was in the Entrance Hall affixing fairy lights around non melting icicles which stretched

across the expanse of the edge of the ceiling and hung down to give the room a frost bitten look. "I need to hurry and finish with all the decoration today before Tom gets home."

"You know you're not supposed to use a lot of magic now."

Harry rolled his eyes and went back to his task. "It's not a lot," he replied in the calmest manner he could muster. "It's just levitation and sticky charms. Simple stuff like that. The house elves have done most of the work for me. At least I'm not on a ladder."

"Who decorated that humongous tree there?" she pointed to the tree next to the archway leading into the castle proper. It was pretty big. The tip of the pines hit the ceiling. Harry smiled at it. It was beautiful and it smelled divine too.

"Course, I did. I've always wanted to decorate a Christmas tree and I knew I wouldn't be able to convince Tom to get in on that activity... maybe next year."

Hermione's severe look melted away. "You did a great job, Harry. It's beautiful."

"Thanks. So you're headed off now?" he tried keeping his tone light, but she wasn't going to be around this Christmas and was instead spending it with her family. He understood of course, it was just that he was going to miss her loads. She planned to spend Christmas with her parents and then return home on New Year's Eve, just in time for the party. Usually they would have had to attend the annual Malfoy Yule ball, but that had sort of been scrubbed and incorporated into the wedding. Two birds with one stone.

"Yes. Everything's packed. Just wanted to come say goodbye first." Harry turned into her when she came closer to hug him. "And to warn you not to overdo yourself."

"I'll take it easy," he promised. He pulled back and grinned. "Can I show you something before you go?"

"Sure."

Harry stowed his wand and then took her hand, and pulled her through the foyer as quickly as he could manage until they got to the front doors. He turned, flashed her a mischievous grin, and then pulled her outside into the cold and snow. He pulled her down the steps and a few yards down the path. He moved his hands to her shoulders and didn't let her turn around once they'd stopped moving. "Tally!" when the elf popped up next to them, he turned to her. "Turn them on for a moment. Just for a minute."

"Yes, Master Harry." And she popped out again.

Harry only had to wait a moment before it was done and then he dropped his hands a let Hermione turn around so that she was facing the front side of the Dark domain. He then snickered when her mouth parted in awe. She looked amazed and a little horrified. "What do you think?"

Hermione didn't speak at first. She was too busy staring at the castle which was dressed up with lights of every kind. And he knew had it been dark outside the effect would be five

times what it was now. There were some lights that stayed on, but most of the lights were flashing blaringly. Not even muggles put this many Christmas lights up. She didn't speak until the lights disappeared. "I think he's going to blast you when he sees this."

"Excellent!"

Hermione shook her head.

"To be fair, I did warn him."

The witch turned back, studying the now darkened stone. She laughed under her breath.

"Actually I wish I could be here to see his face, to see the full effect..."

"When I see you next I'll be sure to describe in great detail his reaction."

Christmas passed quietly. Hermione was off with her parents and Draco and the twins were off on their honeymoon and would not return until well after the New Year. Narcissa invited Tom and Harry over to the manor for dinner, but that was as much visiting for Christmas that they did. One good thing about the holidays, Tom noted at the time as he watched his husband speaking with Narcissa and Bella, was the fact Harry was distracted away from his worry over the upcoming birth. Harry had been in great spirits recently. Tom rather thought it was the calm before the storm. Technically they had about two months to go but he knew the babies weren't going to be full term. The healer said as much at Harry's last appointment. Said it would be too dangerous for the twins and Harry's body would inherently react. He was warned a premature labor was eminent.

"Little minx."

Harry pulled his eyes away from the book he was reading to study the wizard spread out next to him. Tom was laying on his back, staring at the ceiling with his arms up and hands laced behind his head. He looked completely relaxed and if Harry could he would have moved to drape himself over Tom's body. But he couldn't do that now. He could only sit beside him with his legs crossed beneath him, a book propped up on his stomach, and enjoy the view.

"My lord?"

There was a quick lifting of Tom's fine mouth before he spoke. "What would you say to your house elf becoming the nanny elf?"

"Tally?" Tom's eyes moved from the ceiling to his and he nodded. "But she's my best assistant."

"She could start off as the nanny elf and train another meanwhile."

"You like Tally, don't you?"

"Your insistence that I should become fond of house elves is ridiculous."

"Just trying to save some lives," Harry muttered, frowning fiercely.

"I will concede she is very competent. Especially with your care. For our newborns I don't think we could find better. And knowing that, having her train a nanny elf personally would be better off."

"Sure, when you put it like that." The fact was they both absolutely trusted Tally. "We should probably ask her first before..." Tom raised an eyebrow, his expression flat. Harry rolled his eyes. "I'll ask her. Tally!"

The House Elf popped in at the end of the bed and clasped her hands together, waiting. Harry set aside his book, uncrossed his legs, and crawled to the end so that he could see more than just her ears. "Hi."

She smiled at him and bobbed on her toes. "Master Harry. What can Tally be doing for you?"

"Actually I wanted to ask-"

"You are to become our nanny elf," Tom interrupted, no question involved. Harry threw a glare over his shoulder, but Tom was still staring at the ceiling. He turned back to the elf whose wide eyes had become even wider.

"We wanted to know if you would be comfortable becoming the nanny elf and training another we bring in to take up that position after a while. Because I'll certainly miss you in the kitchen."

The wide eyes rounded and became wet and she started ringing her hands. "Master wants me to help with the b-babies?"

Tom sighed with annoyance. He could hear the tears.

Harry nodded, smiling softly.

"Oh yes, Masters! Tally would love and be honored to be nanny elf. Yes!"

Harry reached out to touch her ear. "Thank you." He shifted and nudged Tom's leg. He got a kick back for his trouble. Tally sobbed out but they ignored it, knowing she was happy. "Okay, so right now could you bring me something to eat? Sandwiches."

Tally nodded and popped away. He had a large dinner an hour ago, but he was starving again. Before he could right himself from his hands and knees, arms wrapped around his front and a very nice body pressed against his back. He was jerked to his knees before the weight could press him onto his stomach.

"Stop shaking your arse in my face," Tom grumbled against his ear.

Harry laughed. "I wasn't shaking it." But he did sit back on Tom's thighs, enjoying every bit of hardness there. He knew it wouldn't lead anywhere. Tom wouldn't let it and truthfully he wasn't really in the mood anymore. However, it was quite clear despite their mutual decision about holding out on sex now, Tom was frustrated. And this was funny since it had been Tom who'd wanted to cut out on the sex for the full nine months.

Harry reached for his book once Tom had reclined against the headboard, keeping him between his legs and went on with his reading. Tom had spent much of the day silent and Harry knew he was thinking of the work he had to do or was being done... Dark Lord ruler business. It was how he stayed on top of things when he wasn't actually out doing things.

"You are going to take those lights down. This Yule time nonsense is over."

Harry snickered. Tom's reaction to coming home and seeing the Dark domain lit up like fireworks had been spectacular. And Harry did have to run and hide for a bit, and his scar did ache for the entire day, and they did lose a house elf... he felt really bad about that and had ranted at Tom the moment he found out.

"No I can't take them down until after New Years. I promised Hermione."

"Then the party is cancelled. I will not have people over here to see that... disgusting display of sheer stupidity and whimsicalness."

Harry laughed. "At least I didn't decorate the bedroom."

"You did that out of self preservation."

"And aren't you proud of me for that foresight?" he didn't need to see Tom's face to know his husband was rolling his eyes. "Most of the lights will come down," he compromised. "I'll make it look really nice and classy."

"I get the last say."

"Sure." Harry nodded absently as Tally had hovered a tray of food to his side and he was much too busy eyeing the sandwiches and deciding which one to gobble up first. He devoured four in less than ten minutes before speaking again. "There's this tradition for New Years Eve..." Tom hummed for him to continue. "Uh... it's said if you are embracing the one you love at the stroke of midnight, that's the person you will forever be with. For all eternity. Also good fortune and continued happiness."

"Do we not have that now?"

"Yes, but..." Harry shrugged. Was it wrong to wish for more? To make sure they would have it always. Was he pressing his luck, being greedy? Probably.

"It's a silly muggle tradition."

He tried to keep his shoulders from drooping. "Yes, I suppose you're right."

"Happy birthday," Harry murmured against Tom's mouth the morning of the last day of the year.

"So far it is a good one," was Tom's response as he tried to gather Harry as close to him as he could. It was not easy anymore.

"Will you try to have fun tonight?"

"As much as you tried on your birthday, little minx."

Harry frowned. He hadn't tried all that much. "I promise I only invited people I know you like or can halfway stand to be around."

"And everyone you enjoy being around."

"You like most of my friends."

"Some."

"Most."

"A few."

"Most."

"I can count them on one hand."

"You're impossible."

"I'm the Dark Lord."

By this time they were grinning at each other. Harry managed to wiggle closer some more and threw his leg over Tom's hip for more warmth. It was going to be a leisurely day, since all the arrangements for the party had been taken care of and would be handled by the house elves.

"You've made me very lazy," Tom murmured into his hair after some time. "I've never been so still in my life than I have since marrying you."

"It's good for you."

"I think you might be right."

"Besides, after the babies are born, these still days will be a thing of the past. Caring for the twins and our work schedules..." Harry looked at Tom's face and lifted a hand to card it through his husband's hair. "Did you ever have grey hair?"

A look of disdain crossed Tom's face. "No."

"Bet you will look very handsome with silver hair here," Harry returned, sliding his fingertips along Tom's temples.

"Are you insinuating our children are going to age me?"

Harry stifled his laughter and wisely shook his head.

Soon they dragged themselves out of bed and Tom ordered Harry into the bath for a nice long relaxing soak. And of course he joined his husband, despite knowing he was only causing himself unnecessary frustration. Though at the end of it, he was pleasantly surprised when Harry gave him a very thorough rubdown which left him relieved and very satisfied by the time he climbed out. Again he couldn't help but adore Harry's hands and mouth. Harry said it was an early birthday present.

They ate breakfast together, though by the time he was finished, Harry was still eating, on his second helping. Tom popped down to his office to Floo Lucius. Though these days it was just out of habit. Lucius had proved over and over again he was very capable of taking care of business in his Lord's absence. And Maybe Tom flooed to inquire as to how Lucius was feeling as well, though he wouldn't admit it to anyone and he also asked with such subtlety that he was sure Lucius had no clue. Lucius was of course pregnant, as he had finally been told by his Lieutenants after Christmas dinner. As he said before, Severus never dallied. And they had both wanted children together for a long time.

Once the Floo call was done, Tom made his way to the nursery and spent a little time studying the place, mentally going over everything he planned to change and do to the room the following day. By the time he returned to Harry, it was past lunch time and he found his husband back in the kitchen, working on more fudge.

"I thought you were going to relax," Tom stated when he came to lean against the counter, glaring at the bowl and mixture Harry was engaged in.

"I am relaxed." Harry indicated the stool he was perched on. "It's not hard, making fudge. And what else am I going to do? Besides, fudge orders are still coming in and after Skeeter printed that small article and picture of Drake's wedding cake, I've been bombarded by orders for weddings."

"Which you declined, of course."

"Not too many are for the near future, but the ones who wanted cakes in the next three months, yes, I declined. Stating M.R.'s will be unavailable to do cakes until spring." Harry grinned. "Two of those people wrote back immediately stating they would push back the date of their wedding. I love it when I'm famous for something I've actually done. And they don't even know it's me!"

"Imagine the kind of business you would receive if they did know it was you."

"I don't want that kind of publicity."

"Yes, I know, little minx. No need for that tone."

Harry paused in his mixing and turned to face him. "Can Neville stay over tonight?"

Tom laughed at the sudden question. "Why?"

Harry shrugged. "I guess I never noticed how much I missed him. You know our days at Hogwarts, until we started speaking again. And then when he stayed here and at the villa..."

He's great company. Always has been."

Tom nodded. "I wanted to speak with him anyway."

"Your vampire propaganda?"

"Yes."

"Just don't be forceful."

"Harry, I know how to conduct my business."

"Well excuse me. I'm only trying to keep your desk from being thrown up on."

Tom snorted. "I'll be gentle."

The party began late since Harry wanted everyone to still be there at midnight and guests began arriving just after nine. Harry took to standing in the Entrance Hall at the beginning to greet everyone. He did that until Severus appeared, sneering at him, and dragged him to where the guests had congregated in the two level lounge area.

His feet had already begun to ache so by the time he was shoved onto a sofa, he didn't really put up much of a fight. Though he didn't sit down without a word. "It's Tom's birthday! I have to make sure everything is perfect!"

"Harry," the Potions Master began levelly, "everything is perfect. The decorations are amazing. The food is superb. The desserts are heavenly- Lucius and Narcissa haven't moved away from that table in the last half hour! The bloody ice sculptures are astounding and our Lord is enjoying himself. You have done more than enough already. *You* need to enjoy the party and you can't do that by overtaxing yourself."

Harry blinked and then grinned. "Yes, mum."

A sharp sound escaped from between Severus' teeth as he spun around and stalked away. Harry was only alone for a minute before he was joined by Hermione and Andrew and soon Neville as well. Before anyone asked, Neville announced Nathan had gone around to check out the Wizarding Christmas decorations.

"How are your parents?" Harry asked Hermione.

"Wonderful, Harry. They send their best. They also sent me with a gift for the babies."

He was surprised by this. "You told them about my pregnancy?"

"Of course! They're very happy for you."

"Guess that means they don't know who I'm married to."

"No, I told them that too. They weren't too worried after I told them about my new job. They assume that if I've been chosen for such a position by the Dark Lord himself, neither of us is

really in danger from him anymore."

"I've always thought your parents were amazing people."

Hermione looked across at Neville. "How was your Christmas, Neville?"

"It was fine," he muttered. He rubbed his hands on his pants and looked away from them.

Harry wanted to say something, because obviously something was wrong. But he remained silent, thinking he would ask about it after everyone had gone. "You still plan to stay over, Nev?"

"Sure." Neville looked at him and smiled excitedly. "Looking forward to it."

"So when are you planning to return to the villa?" Hermione asked.

"The end of next week," Harry answered. "Tom's going to work on the nursery before we go and of course you know we'll be having a full Silver meeting too. I want to hear from all our teams before I go. I think it would be good for every team to hear the progress everyone else has made. How's the new Auror division going?" he asked Andrew.

Andy lifted one shoulder in a half shrug. "Not as smoothly as I'd hoped, but we're getting there. We're short staffed, but that's to be expected. The application process is a lot more detailed, the screening process a lot more rigorous, which makes most people unacceptable."

"It'll probably take a couple of years before the Auror department is built up as strongly as it was before the takeover," Neville put in.

"Yeah that's true, but we're prepared for that as well." Andrew shrugged again and then grinned at Harry. "Were you planning on having your babies here or at the villa?"

"The villa. Won't be able to travel after too much longer. Once the babies are born, we'll return here after a few weeks. Depends on how healthy they are..."

"They'll be fine, Harry," Hermione assured, seeing the apprehension in his eyes. "You've already been taking very good care of them and they haven't been born yet."

"Twins are rare for males," he murmured.

"And there's a reason why you and the Dark Lord were blessed with the rare," Neville stated firmly. "You'll see. When they are born, they'll be absolutely perfect."

Soon after Bellatrix and Rodolphus came over to visit with Harry and it wasn't surprising when Neville quickly excused himself, along with Hermione and Andrew. Harry didn't blame Neville. In fact he was surprised his friend took to being surrounded by these people so well. And he was pleased Bellatrix kept her mouth shut. She didn't even look at Neville in a wrong way when she first came over.

Sometime later, the midnight hour was at hand. Harry had charmed the grandfather clock to sound throughout the manor so that everyone could count down. All the guests were standing

around waiting. Suddenly he was disturbed Tom wasn't standing with him. He began to look around and panicked when he couldn't see Tom anywhere. And then he started asking people as he rushed by them, but no one could tell him exactly where they saw Tom last. He couldn't rationalize why it was so important. He could only feel the panic. He might have lied when he agreed with Tom about the tradition being silly.

He raced up the stairs just as the clock began to strike twelve. A quick look around told him Tom wasn't anywhere near the balconies so he dashed over to the doors leading to the outdoor patio where more guests were located. Some of them were already embracing. Tom was not there.

By the time he leaned against the railing to stare at the white snow covering the back lawn, the clock was four chimes away from ending. It was too late to keep looking. It would be over before he could even take five steps. Just as he straightened, refusing to let his stupid emotional hormones and disappointment ruin the evening, a hand grabbed his shoulder and roughly spun him around.

"Why did you disappear up here, brat?" Tom demanded roughly. "Time has almost run out-"

Harry laughed and smashed their lips together; wrapping his arms tightly around Tom's back just as the clock struck twelve and the New Year began. Tom's arm wrapped around his shoulders and they didn't move away from that position for a long time after that. When they finally separated, Harry laughed again.

"You're the one who disappeared on me! I was running around everywhere looking for you."

A dark look appeared on his husband's face. "Running?"

"As close to it as I could get. That's really besides the point as you found me." Harry went in for another kiss. "Thank you."

"The things I do for you."

"And I will never forget it."

"We seem to have a problem." The two turned to the person who spoke. Severus stood a few feet away. "Or more to the point. Harry has a problem."

Harry frowned. "What problem?"

"Whose bright idea was it to invite vampires *and* werewolves and give them copious amounts of alcohol?"

Harry cursed and pulled away from Tom's arms, immediately crossing the space to the stairs. By the time he was halfway down, he could hear the snarls. He wondered what had started this row. So far there had been minimal spats between the two factions whenever they got together. Not to say everything was perfect with his vamps and werewolf Silvers, because it wasn't all the time. But hardly did any very bad confrontations happen. At least not within his presence.

But then he saw Fenrir was one of the werewolves in the center of whatever was going on. He wouldn't have been surprised except Fenrir seemed to be standing in front of a couple of vampires, blocking them and facing off with another werewolf. This one by the name of Elias. He was a biggish werewolf and was openly snarling at Fenrir. This one was stubborn, Harry had learned. The vampires at Fenrir's back were snarling as well, flashing their fangs and clearly ready to attack.

"You will back away slowly now. Do anything else and I may consider it an act of aggression and react as such," Fenrir hissed at Elias. "Do not forget where you are."

At this point Harry debated on whether he should even get involved. He had no idea what this was about and if the werewolves started swinging fists, he didn't want to get anywhere near that. Neville was standing very close by with Nathan so he sidled up to them and quietly asked what had happened.

Nathan was grinning. "One of us apparently kissed someone one of the werewolves had been eyeing."

"Who?"

Nathan shrugged.

Harry turned to Neville, who gave him a sheepish smile upon his exasperated look. "Happy New Year?"

"I'll be right here, darling. No need to fear. He means you no harm."

Neville pulled his eyes away from the Dark Lord's study door to look at Nathan with wide fearful eyes. "H-how can you be sure?"

"He hasn't any reason to do you harm now, does he?"

Neville turned back to the door and actually thought about that and eventually came to the conclusion that no, Voldemort had no reason to kill him now. He hadn't done anything wrong or crossed the Dark Lord in any way... beyond daring to stand in his way when he sought to torture and/or destroy Nathan that one time in the dungeon. But Harry said Voldemort was over that. He was still only mad at Nathan.

"Besides," Nathan murmured lowly, running a cold finger across the back of Neville's neck and grinning when his beating heart shivered. "I know for certain the Dark Lord is pleased with you for trying to develop a way for us to live in the daylight. You are more of an asset to him now. He wants you to succeed in that. It will only help in his goals."

"Do you know what he wants with me?"

"I have it figured out and I would never let you go in there if his purposes were unsavory in any fashion."

Finally he nodded, took a deep breath, and knocked. And bolstered by Nathan's words, Neville went in without hesitation once called to enter. It was a great relief to find Harry inside as well even though his friend seemed to be not paying attention. Harry was stretched out on a sofa with his eyes closed and appeared to be sleeping.

"Sir?" He congratulated himself for not stuttering.

The Dark Lord studied him silently and unwaveringly for a full minute. Enough time to have Neville's heart racing again in panic. He couldn't seem to pull his eyes away either. He was frozen. Just when he thought he might cry, Voldemort looked away. At Harry. Neville had not heard anything from his friend and he didn't dare turn to look. Finally the Dark Lord looked back at him. He was frowning but the look in his eyes wasn't so intense.

"Harry has told me of your intention to keep your half vampire bra-baby."

There had been a slight clearing of throat which indicated Harry was clearly awake. When Neville turned to look, Harry was half sitting up now and staring with the same scary intense look in his eyes that his husband had had only moments before. Only Harry wasn't piercing Neville with that look. He was looking straight at the Dark Lord.

Neville turned back to the Dark Lord and nodded, just missing Tom's uncomfortable shifting. "Nathan and I, yes sir."

"Are you aware of the prestige behind your name?"

"Mr. Malfoy has been tutoring me," Neville answered with another nod. "And I've been doing some genealogy research in my spare time."

"And are you aware of my goals regarding certain magical beings?"

"Yes sir." Voldemort didn't seem to find that answer sufficient. Neville felt he should go on. "You want to integrate them into wizarding society." When the Dark Lord nodded, Neville asked, "what do you get out of that?"

It was clear Voldemort was surprised by his question. It having come without prodding. He looked surprised but not angry. As told by his reply.

"Good question. Aside from their allegiance, magical beings can accomplish many things humans cannot. Have you ever tried to argue with a vampire? And come out the victor?" Voldemort nodded when Neville blushed. It was almost impossible. Vampires were very persuasive. The Dark Lord went on before Neville could lose himself to the memories of being expertly persuaded. "You find yourself in a unique position to help your lover and others of his kind."

Neville was more interested than scared now. "How?"

"Do you know anything about half vampires, Longbottom?" Neville shook his head. "Neither does most in our society. I want that to change. I want your pregnancy known and followed. I would like your pregnancy front page news."

"Who would take interest in me?"

Neville didn't point out the hypocrisy of all this. Why was it acceptable for him to make his pregnancy public when it hadn't been for Harry? He wanted to point this out but he didn't dare.

"You would be surprised," the Dark Lord answered his last spoken question. "To sum it up- in Harry's apt words- you are to become the vampires' poster boy. I want Wizarding Britain to be enamored with your baby before he or she is even born."

"If you- if I can do some good for the vampires in this way, alright."

"This and your daylight remedy. Have you considered experimenting with half vampire properties?"

"It's on my list of things to try."

One of Voldemort's eyebrows rose just slightly and Neville realized he'd surprised the dark wizard again.

"Seems you have things well under control."

"Well it is my project, sir."

It wasn't until he heard Harry's snicker did he realize how that had come out. Snippy. His eyes went very round and he found himself under that intense scary stare again. Neville coughed, turned to Harry, and gave him a pained grimace. Harry grinned and threw back two thumbs up.

"Indeed."

Voldemort's voice was so low Neville's fingers turned white upon his knees. Surely he would be tortured for his attitude now.

But he wasn't. The Dark Lord didn't look pleased, but he wasn't angry either. "I don't want- All this..." Neville lay a hand over his swollen stomach. "My baby won't be in danger?"

"You'll be well looked after if you do this for me," Voldemort answered softly and with more emotion in his eyes than Neville had ever seen before. He looked sympathetic to Neville's worries.

"Eventually I will become a vampire too, so-"

"What?!" Harry cried in shock. "Nev-" the Dark Lord raised a hand and sent a look in Harry's direction. Harry snapped his mouth shut.

Neville would have to talk to Harry about that later. "It would benefit me and Nathan and I just don't want anything to happen to our child."

"You would like for your baby to eventually be able to attend Hogwarts?"

"Oh yes," Neville answered with a big smile and he nodded briskly.

"You do this and that will happen. And as I said. I will look after you and your unborn child."

"Okay. Yeah! I'll do it!"

"Good. You have an appointment with *the Prophet* on Monday."

Neville practically skipped out of the study. Harry watched him go with a frown. When the door shut he turned to his husband.

"Come now, Harry. You didn't see that coming?"

"He never said anything."

"Perhaps he wanted to be sure before saying anything to anyone."

"But-"

"And it isn't as if he'll be alone for all eternity."

"Yeah, but-"

"You, I, and a choice few will not die for some centuries," Tom reminded.

"I know! But-"

"Actually this is probably-"

"Will you stop interrupting me?!" Tom chuckled darkly. Harry huffed and climbed to his feet. "Prat."

"Come here."

Harry huffed again but followed the order. He rounded the desk to stand beside his husband's chair. Tom took his hand and pulled him onto his lap before whispering into Harry's ear the words he so loved to hear from his husband. Harry wrapped an arm around Tom's neck and nuzzled his cheek. "I love you too." He pulled back and his smile was enormous. "You really will look after Neville and his baby, won't you?"

Tom cleared his throat. "In a manner of speaking. I will do as I said and ensure their continued safety."

Outside the study, Neville was staring at his boyfriend with wide surprised eyes. "That went great! I'm still alive!"

Nathan laughed and wrapped around him. "You did well, darling."

"I don't think Harry was very pleased to hear I'm going to let you turn me."

"He was only surprised, I think."

Neville pulled back and ran a hand through his hair. "Nathan... Got a letter from Gran."

Nathan's smile diminished.

"She's uh... she's coming home."

Harry stepped out just in time to see Nathan's face take on a very nasty look. "You told her about the baby, didn't you? I suppose she took it like the old fart she is."

Harry wisely kept from laughing at Nathan's correct description, but only because Neville was back to looking as he did at the beginning of the party- and this explained why he had looked that way- and Nathan looked extremely angry. Harry hadn't seen him look really angry before. It was a bit shocking.

"I thought she would be happy," Neville whispered. But then he shook his head. "She called me an irresponsible wreck."

"You told her it's mine."

Neville's bottom lip trembled and he nodded. All at once Nathan's anger seemed to disappear and he grabbed Neville in a tight hug. And though he didn't look angry anymore, his following words were underlined with chilling growls. "Darling, I'm going to say this only once. I will not let your grandmother ruin this for me. For us."

He pressed a kiss to Neville's temple before stepping back and misting away in black smoke. Neville stood there staring where Nathan had last been. Harry blinked. That had seemed very ominous. In a very dangerous way.

"I told you about what happened. About him being disowned," Neville whispered as if he could hear Harry's thoughts. "He really means it. That's the vampire part of him. And he's afraid I'm going to let her sway me away from him." He straightened and turned to Harry. "I'm only upset because she doesn't want to accept this. But I'm not going to let her ruin the life I've built while she's been gone, Harry. In the House of Wizards, I'm Lord Longbottom. I'm the master of my life and she's going to accept that or leave again."

Harry released a relieved breath. He then grinned and went to grab Neville's hand. "Want to act like girls and hang out in my bed and stuff ourselves with fudge?"

He looked so hopeful that Neville laughed. "Sure. But uh... let's make it my bed. I'm not going anywhere near the Dark Lord's bed."

Harry snickered and nodded.

Several hours later, when the sun had been well up for a couple of hours, the two moseyed through the halls, talking quietly until they came upon the nursery. Harry poked his head in first. His mouth parted in surprise and he moved into the open doorway, gaping. Tom had half the nursery painted already with the solid color they previously decided on. A soft green which would be accented with soft blues, yellows, and browns.

Harry had taken a step inside and then immediately fell back to slump against the door frame. The Dark Lord stopped his actions and turned to him. He then quickly crossed the nursery, took hold of Harry around his shoulders and pulled him out of the room.

"You shouldn't be in here. The fumes are not good for you."

Harry blinked at him. It was true the fumes had immediately bothered him, but he'd also become severely dizzy and his body had felt like a dead weight. He was breathing rapidly and couldn't seem to get it under control.

"Harry?"

"I wanted to watch you do menial labor," he muttered, knowing what was about to happen. "Who knows when I'll ever get the chance again?!"

"You are exhausted," Tom realized. "You'll need to get back to bed. I'm calling your healer. Your Silver meeting is cancelled as well."

"I would love to take a nap," Harry admitted.

"I'll help you back to your room," Neville said. "And then I'll leave for home so you can sleep."

Harry turned back to look in the nursery. "But-"

"You can come and see the end result when I've finished," Tom said. "Otherwise you are to remain in bed until we leave for Spain again. We both know what Healer Monroe is going to say."

"This bites," Harry muttered to Neville on their way back to his room. Neville could only respond by giving him a sympathetic pat on his shoulder.

Once Neville flooded in to his parlor, he immediately called for his house elf. The moment she was standing before him, he began rattling out a set of instructions. "Gran is coming home very soon. When she returns she is not allowed anywhere near my greenhouses. She's not allowed in my office, the cellars, or my bed chambers. Understand?"

The elf's ears drooped and her eyes widened but she nodded.

"Good. Also all visitors must be announced to me first before they are allowed in. And the curtains I have closed are to remain closed. Gran isn't allowed to touch those either. If she orders you to do something, it must be run by me first. And lastly, Gran cannot under any circumstances override any of the orders I've just given you. If any of these rules are not followed, I will replace you."

"Yes Master Neville. I understands."

"Great! Okay. Is Nathan home yet?" He figured he was. The sun was up. Nathan was always home by that time.

"No one has come."

Neville frowned. "Thank you, Buttons. You can go."

An ear twitched. "Would master like lunch?"

"No thanks."

He left the parlor to check the cellars just in case Nathan had snuck in without the elf knowing. The vampire wasn't there. He then grabbed his research and headed out to greenhouse three where he usually did all his written research. He did use his office sometimes, but usually he went to his greenhouses.

The candles he lit had burned down three quarters before he pulled away from his work. The sun was just setting and he found himself starving. By the time he was sitting in the kitchen, eating a small dinner, darkness had fully set in. And because Nathan still hadn't appeared- which was not normal behavior in their routine- Neville had a suspicion his vampire was off sulking about his grandmother's return. Sulking and probably worrying about Neville's imminent choices.

My vampire. Neville grinned stupidly at the thought.

Neville went back down to check the cellar. It was pitch dark. "Nathan?"

He didn't wait for a reply and instead lit the sconce on the wall next to the bottom of the stairs. Once he had given the vampire permission to stay there, Nathan had quickly made himself comfortable in the cellar. Moving furniture in even. He'd moved in a nice warm mahogany bed but also a casket. He said it was a joke but Neville also knew his lover sometimes used it too. The casket was an old fashioned pure white affair with dark red velvet lining inside.

Neville had just opened the top half of the casket, noting no Nathan, when the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end. It was a feeling one got when they were being watched, or more specifically, appraised by a stalking predator. He turned away from the casket to peer into darkened areas the light of the sconce did not reach.

"Lumos."

The shadows dispersed slightly and he was able to see the shadowed areas fairly well. He backed up and sat on the edge of the bed as his eyes met and held a pair of glinting metallic orbs. Nathan was slouched against the wall with his arms crossed over his chest. He definitely had a sulk about him.

Neville had just opened his mouth to speak when the house elf appeared, wringing her hands. She announced his grandmother had arrived and was demanding to see him immediately. Nathan straightened, and his hands curled into fists.

Neville stood, never taking his eyes off his lover. "I'm busy here. Tell her she'll have to wait until I'm done. Don't come back down here again and remember your standing orders. My

study and the library are off limits to her as well." Nathan looked stunned. Neville remained standing at the end of the bed. "Are you done sulking?"

That slow teasing smile appeared on Nathan's face. "Darling, I never sulk."

Neville shook his head at the obvious lie. Nathan had been sulking. "Where were you then?" he then narrowed his eyes. "Were any of them males? Did you leave anyone alive?"

"I won't need to eat for a week if that answers your question."

Neville sat back down. "One anyway," he mumbled.

Nathan finally pushed away from the wall. "You told her you were busy. We don't want to make you a liar, do we?"

Nathan crossed the room and sat down next to him and just as a cold hand slid against the back of his neck, Neville asked, "do you know any half vampires?"

"Hmm, no," Nathan murmured as he leaned over to nuzzle his neck. "Not personally. But Wills does."

"Could you..." there was a mouth sucking at his skin and it was becoming increasingly harder to think. "Um... could you maybe get me an introduction?"

"Anything for you. Now shush," Nathan breathed in his ear while fingers were expertly unbuttoning his shirt. "I want to make your abysmal grandmother wait for several hours. I need to make you very busy."

Neville lay his hand over the one slipping in to press against his chest. "She's going to be very cross with me. You have to promise not to leave me alone to deal with her. Ever."

Nathan pulled back slightly so that they were eye locked. His eyes were back to being pale blue. "That's a promise I will happily make, Neville."

Harry pulled his eyes away from the window, away from watching the rain splattering against the glass. They had been back in Spain for nearly three weeks now and Harry hardly left his bed. And if he did it was always to either go to the loo or go lay on one of the lounges in the adjacent sitting room when he had visitors. Iseut had come for a visit the week before, and just two days ago Rafael had dropped by. Neville was supposed to arrive the next day with Hermione and Remus to visit. Draco and the twins were at the villa now. Immediately arriving once their honeymoon was over. Draco had taken up permanent residence and the twins Flooded back and forth from England every other day. And of course there was Tom. His husband had not really left his side at all in the last three weeks. If he had work, it was always done in the sitting room connected to their bedroom. Or even the fireplace in their bedroom.

"I need to go to the loo," he announced suddenly.

Bunnymort shifted out from his warm comfortable spot where he'd been nestled in between Harry's arm and neck. Harry pushed up into a half sitting position just in time to see his bunny transform into his wizard. He always smiled whenever he could watch Tom transform. "I feel good," he said before he was asked and managed to roll to the edge of the bed where Tom was waiting.

He did feel good as he'd had a great night's sleep. But as soon as Tom helped him out of bed and his feet hit the floor, he was hit with a cramp. He assumed it was because he needed to relieve himself badly. It wasn't the first time he'd gotten cramps for that very reason. But after Tom helped him to the bathroom and he'd done his business, another cramp hit him and this one was worse.

He looked up at his husband with wide eyes. "My stomach hurts," he whispered.

Tom immediately led him back to the bed and by the time they were at the side of it, he was hunched over and pulling in deep breaths. There was no question about what this was. He managed to laugh even through the pain. "Our babies are coming!"

"The thing to do here is not to panic," Tom said evenly as he helped Harry back into bed.

Harry laughed again because his husband's eyes were wide with panic. Imagine, the Dark Lord panicking because his children were about to be born. A man of details and extensive research; a man with impeccable sensibilities- for the most part- and he looked like he had no idea what to do next. "You should go Floo Monroe, yeah?"

"Tally!" when the house elf popped in, Tom instructed her to fetch those who were on the previously made contact list to inform them Harry had gone into labor. He then went to the Floo to contact the healer. Healer Monroe took next to no time to arrive and within the hour, everyone who had wanted to be there to support Harry during this time had arrived at the villa.

Severus appeared soon after he arrived. Once Tom opened the door to him, the Dark Lord was surprised to find the Potions Master looking slightly nervous. "Severus?"

"My Lord... forgive me, but I wondered if you would give me the honor of being present for the births of your heirs." His eyes flickered over Tom's shoulder for a second when he heard Harry panting as he tried to keep the pain under control.

"I will need to ask Harry. It will be up to him."

Severus nodded, and then stood back to wait silently while the Dark Lord went to speak with his husband. It wasn't long before Severus was granted permission to enter.

"Severus! Hi! They're coming!"

Despite the pain he must be in, Harry's face was nothing but excited.

"Thank you for allowing me to be here."

"You wanted to see what it was like, right? For Lucius' time?"

"Yes, of course."

Tom looked at him sideways. His look told Severus he knew perfectly well Severus wasn't in there just for curiosity. Severus had come for Harry. The Potions' Master cleared his throat and took one of the chairs seated beside the bed. "Have you settled on names yet?"

"Pretty much." Harry turned to Tom, who stood at the end of his bed watching him. "We'll make the final decision once they're born. Speaking of..." He looked pointedly at the healer.

Healer Monroe smiled at him. "You've been very patient, Harry. It's almost time."

Harry huffed. "Since you're using magic to retrieve them, I don't understand why we have to wait."

"We must wait until you feel the need to push," Tom told him. "That's when we know they are truly ready to be born,"

Harry was waylaid from saying anything to that when another contraction stole his breath. This one the worst yet. He hunched over his stomach, grinding his teeth and trying to keep from crying out. Tom was by his side in seconds, wrapping one arm around his back and clutching at one of his balled up hands. This happened three times more before Monroe announced he was ready to extract the twins.

Severus stood as Harry was coaxed to lay on his back. The Dark Lord was handed a light blue potion to give to his husband. "Remember," Monroe said to Harry. "The potion will make you feel strange, but you will feel no pain. It will make you feel disconnected from your body for a short time. This will keep your magic from interfering with mine as I surround your babes and deliver them from the womb."

Harry took the potion without hesitation. He was ready and he had been coached many times before, by both the healer and his husband. Once the potion was taken he was instructed to relax. He tried but at the beginning he could feel himself fighting the potion's effects. Tom slid closer and moved his head until it rested in his lap. He still had a firm hold on one of his hands and his free hand slipped into Harry's hair. Harry lifted his eyes to watch his husband's face.

"Breathe, little minx. Everything will be fine. I promise."

It was like an out of body experience. He kept firm focus on his husband while Healer Monroe prodded his stomach here and there with his wand. He ignored the Healer's softly whispered incantations. He couldn't really feel his body anymore, though he did feel a sort of weird tugging sensation. There was a soft resistance and then suddenly the tension released as if a bubble had been popped.

And then he heard a baby crying. Harry pulled his eyes away from Tom's to find Monroe standing at the end of a bed, holding two tiny babies in his arms. Severus did more than just watch at that point and hurried over with a receiving blanket to take one baby to wrap it and wipe away the birth.

Harry had a moment of panic. "Why do I only hear one? There's only one crying? Tom?"

"They both appear to be perfectly healthy," Monroe answered quickly, which immediately calmed both new parents.

"My Lord." Monroe was holding out a baby for him to take.

Tom stood and eyed the shrieking red faced baby. "Perhaps the one that is not crying..."

Harry laughed. "Tom!"

He resigned himself and reached out to take his son. He congratulated himself on keeping his hands steady as the small bundle was placed within them. The baby was so small. But as soon as he brought the swaddled newborn to rest securely in his arms against his chest and murmured a soft "hush now," the baby quieted and tilted his face up. Eyes cracked open just a little bit and Tom was lost.

Harry committed the scene to memory before he was distracted when Severus handed him their second newborn, who seemed content to just lie there quietly and bask in the warmth of the new world. Though his eyes were wet, Harry congratulated himself on not crying outright. He didn't want to disturb the peace of this wonderful moment. Both babies were so very small, but they had dark hair already and though they weren't chubby, they were a healthy size for newborn twins.

Tom came to rest beside him so they could see the twins together. "I told you they would be healthy and beautiful," he said to Harry. "Was it worth it?"

Harry only nodded. He couldn't seem to speak.

"Yes, I think so too."

Chapter End Notes

So this is all I have so far, so chapter updates won't be so quick anymore as I'm currently working on three stories. Life Crusades will be updated before this one. Thank you everyone for your awesome comments!

Chapter Thirty-One

Standing from the bedside chair when he heard the soft whispers of sound, Tom moved the few short feet away from the bed where his husband rested to stand in front of the crib. The babies, his sons, were awake. Not exactly crying, but stretching those new vocal chords. He placed hands on the wood, staring in at them. His hands tightened as he was swamped with emotion. Falling in love with Harry over time was one thing but this instant warmth and protectiveness concerning the babies was something entirely different and unexpected.

Someone quietly knocked on the door and Tom wandlessly opened it, already knowing who it would be as he recognized that knock. “Was it like this for you when Draco was born?” he asked Lucius without pulling his eyes away from his sons. “Is it normal?”

It was a testament to how well Lucius knew him that his question didn’t need to be explained. Lucius silently rounded the bed to stop beside his Lord and peer down for his first look at his Lord’s heirs.

“Yes,” the blond answered. He slowly reached a hand in, giving his Lord the chance to tell him no, but Tom allowed it and he rested several fingers atop one of the babies soft heads, caressing ever so slightly. “I was afraid, when Narcissa was pregnant. I was afraid I would feel nothing even though I love her like a sister. But I feared I would be bitter due to Draco not being Severus’ child... I am uncertain why. I was still young, still angry at my father, at the circumstances. All of that went away the moment Draco came into the world. Children, they hold a power all of their own... this one looks so much like Harry.”

“He is Cyril,” Tom answered with a nod. “Cyrillus. This one is Alexander.” He lay a gentle hand upon the baby on the left. Alexander had been the twin to come into the world crying. Both were awake, staring up at the wizards. Tom wondered if they recognized him as Father. Maybe that was ridiculous. They were only babies after all. However, whenever he spoke their eyes would inevitably move to linger on him. It was powerful and gut wrenching.

“How is everyone?” Lucius ventured, turning to peer at the wizard on the bed. “Harry?”

“Monroe has declared Harry and the boys healthy. There were no complications. In fact the healer was surprised at how healthy the twins are for being newborn twins and premature... but, that is the power of Harry Riddle. He was so afraid...”

“So were you.” Tom immediately faced him, eyes red and narrowing. Lucius quickly raised his hands, and bowed his head slightly. “I mean no disrespect, my Lord.”

“Then what was your intention?”

“The fact is, Severus and myself... we grew up with you. In a way, you raised us. You are and shall ever be our Lord and Master. We wanted to make that plain.”

“Why?”

“Because of him,” Lucius answered, gesturing to Harry. “Your relationship with him has changed you in so many ways. We wanted you to know we feel those changes are to your benefit and ours. We never want you to feel the need to question our loyalty. My lord, your sons are going to make you stronger.”

“How do you know that?”

“How many times should I have been immediately carted off to Azkaban? Dozens. But I never allowed it to happen because I did not want to put Draco through that. I insured my top position at the Ministry not only for you, but for my son and Narcissa.”

“You spoiled your son rotten.”

Lucius smiled. “I did, yes. There were times when I was afraid for him. When I wasn’t there for him. I suppose I tried to redeem myself in the wrong ways.”

“You weren’t there for him because of me.”

“Yes. And you know I shielded him from you on more than one occasion. When you weren’t...”

“When I wasn’t in my right mind.”

Lucius nodded. “One wrong move on my part and you would have used him to punish me.”

“Your son is safe from me now, Lucius.”

The blond nodded as his attention returned to the newborns. “He’s married now. I can’t look at him as a little boy any longer.”

“And how are they?”

“They are taken with marriage, it seems. They are also impatient to see Harry and your boys.”

Tom nodded and turned back to his sons. One was starting to fidget. It was time for another feeding. “As soon as Harry wakes. Monroe says the healing sleep shouldn’t last much longer.” As he bent to pick Cyril up, from the corner of his eye he caught sight of Lucius rubbing his stomach. “You should eat if you’re hungry, Lucius.”

“It’s the opposite, actually.”

“Feeling sick?”

“More and more.”

Tom smirked. “I find that amusing.”

Lucius looked straight at him. “I’m happy.”

“I know you are.”

“Thank you.”

“None of that, Lucius. The heart to heart we just had is enough to tide me over for a century.”

“Next century then. I’ll jot it down in my appointment book.”

The blond left soon after that and Tom called a house elf for the twins’ bottles. He had just settled down to sit with Cyril when he noticed Harry’s eyes were open. “How long have you been awake?”

“Long enough.” Harry slowly moved to sit up against the headboard. “I didn’t know Lucius could make jokes like that. I told you. I told you they love their Lord.”

“You did. I don’t know if I’m comfortable with that.”

“No matter the failures you had in the past, they’ve always stood by you. For you. They’ve done right by you and you’ve finally done right by them. I think you are comfortable with this new relationship between yourselves.”

“Is that wisdom I hear?”

“It’s very amusing,” Harry murmured with a small grin. “Dark Lord’s trying to be funny when they really aren’t.” He held his arms out and Tom immediately gave Cyril to him to feed, freeing him up to feed Alexander before he started to cry again.

After some time of silence, where Tom was yet again surprised at how well the children fed without being squirmy annoying things, he mentioned their guests. “You will be happy to know the villa is at full capacity right now. And of course every one of them is impatient to see you and the twins.”

“I feel well enough. We’ll go down as soon as Cyril and Alex are done eating and-” he paused and his nose flared, and then he eyed his husband with mischief. “When was the last time you changed a diaper, Tom?”

“Never.” When Harry’s smile grew, Tom cleared his throat. “Doesn’t mean I don’t know how it’s done.” He knew how to change a diaper... thanks to Hermione’s tutelage a few months back when he demanded she teach him using a baby doll. Harry would never know about that. He made Hermione swear an Oath. “But for right now, Tally will do the honors. It is her job. And while she’s doing that, you can have a bath.”

“A bath sounds nice,” Harry murmured as he watched the baby in his arms pull away from the nipple, apparently full for the moment. He set the bottle aside and then ran fingers over Cyril’s face, smiling widely. “They’re so beautiful.”

“Thank Salazar. I’ve seen some ugly babies in my time, Harry.”

Harry laughed as he brought Cyril up to his shoulder to burp. “We’ll be surrounded by babies soon enough. The next generation. Neville only has a few months left.” He pretended not to hear his husband’s groan of misery. “And then Lucius will deliver a few months after that.”

Tally was called soon after and she immediately took charge of the twins without any prompting. Once she was gone to the nursery with Alex and Cyril, Tom helped Harry out of bed and to the en suite.

“How long was I out?” Harry asked, since now that he was on his legs, he felt heavy and sluggish.

“Three days. I imagine you’re hungry.”

“Famished.”

Once in the bathroom, Tom gestured to the three potions resting on the counter and instructed Harry to take them without complaint. “They may taste foul but you’ll feel like your old self by the time your bath is done.”

The potions did taste foul and Harry thought it was fortunate he had nothing in his stomach otherwise he would have vomited it up all over the floor.

Tom ended up getting into the bath with him and spent a few minutes washing Harry’s back and then his hair before wrapping arms around him and keeping him plastered against his chest, dropping a kiss against his neck. Harry relaxed and closed his eyes and he must have fallen asleep for a short time for the next thing he knew, a wet hand was gently grasping his chin and lips were next to his ear.

“Harry? Little minx, wake up.”

“Mmm, I’ve missed that.”

“What?”

“You calling me little minx. I thought...”

Tom shook his head, frowning. “You thought I was going to suddenly stop finding you irresistible.”

“Well, I...”

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

“But I’m all flabby,” Harry whined, poking at his stomach. He paused and looked down, arching a brow in surprise. His stomach wasn’t nearly as big as he thought it should be after having carried twins for nearly nine months. In fact one of his many pregnant irrational fears was that his stretched stomach would never be the same again. “Where is it?”

“It’s called magic,” Tom replied dryly. “Potions and healing balms were created centuries ago for this very thing. And whatever you have left will disappear soon enough. Next week we will continue on with our exercises and dueling.”

Harry perked up. “Will you be barefoot?” he couldn’t explain how enticing Tom was when he exercised barefoot. It was the sexiest thing in the world.

“Aren’t I always?” Tom dropped another kiss, this one against his temple before encouraging Harry to sit up so that he could stand and leave the bath.

“Who’s all here?” Harry asked as he was wrapped in a big thick bath robe.

Tom sneered as he pat his husband down. “Everyone.”

Harry laughed. “It’s just for a little while right.”

“Severus isn’t here at the moment but he promised to come back once lessons are over for the day,” Tom hurried to say when a pout appeared on Harry’s mouth. “It’s astounding how your feelings for each other have changed. You used to hate him.”

“That was because there was so much about him that I didn’t know. He’s a brilliant man,” Harry announced without hesitation and with a certain amount of defense.

Tom kept the smile off his face. “Have you told him so?”

“No.”

“You should. Think of the dismay on his face.”

Harry laughed at that. “I can’t wait to see him cuddling a baby,” he announced as he was ushered to sit on the edge of the bed while Tom went to the wardrobe. “Is this going to last?” he asked when Tom returned fully dressed and with clothes for him.

“What exactly?” Tom asked as he began to dress Harry.

“This.” He swept his arms up and down. “You pampering me.”

“Haven’t I always?”

“I suppose, in a way. But I can dress myself.”

“Shush, Harry. I want to. I…” he cleared his throat and concentrated on buttoning up Harry’s shirt. “I like pampering you. You deserve it.”

“Do I?”

“Stop asking stupid questions, brat!”

The cheeky grin Harry threw at him had Tom rolling his eyes.

Once he was ready to leave his room and collected Cyril and Alex, both of whom were full and drowsy, Harry discovered every part of the villa was being utilized. The guests were spread throughout the place with the exception of Tom's private rooms and office. The twins were holed up in the dueling room with Bellatrix. Draco, Hermione, Neville, and Remus were in the gardens. Lucius, Narcissa, Iseut, and Diandre were having drinks out on the veranda with Bill, Charlie, and Andrew. Nathan was sitting in the drawing room talking with Pansy and Fenrir.

After being told who all were in attendance and where they were, Harry was delighted. It really was almost everyone. When they hit the bottom stairs, Tom slithered away to go hide in his study. Harry didn't mind. He was about to be surrounded by well wishers and bombarded with congratulations. It was likely to get loud and boisterous and it just wasn't Tom's thing.

Pansy gasped when she finally noticed him and was the first one up. He didn't know how she managed to get to him so fast without running, but she did. "Harry, how are you?"

"Grand, thanks."

She smiled blindingly at him and then turned her attention to the babies in his arms. Harry immediately indicated she could take one of them to hold. She chose to take Alex and cooed to him as she gently settled him into her arms.

"You are so precious, aren't you?" she whispered. "He looks like the Dark Lord."

"A little, yeah. The nose for sure."

Nathan sauntered up then with Fenrir and Harry smiled at them in greeting before turning back to Pansy. "You're holding Alex and this little guy is Cyril."

"Did you fight over names?" Nathan asked as he ran a finger along the back of Cyril's hand.

"Actually no. We each made a list. Turns out Cyril and Alexander were both in our top twenty... Well I had just Cyril and Tom had Cyrillus. I conceded to Cyrillus and then Tom conceded to letting me call him just Cyril since I'm not an uptight arse. So we have Cyrillus James and Alexander Salazar."

Harry passed Cyril into Nathan's arms then, figuring the vampire should get used to holding a baby. Nathan appeared to be a natural at it. He had a face splitting grin on as he cooed and snuggled the baby. It was lovely to see. It was even more surprising when Pansy turned to Fenrir and the werewolf offered out his arms for his Lord's heir.

"Can I take him to show Neville?" asked Nathan, and he sounded so excited Harry would never have thought to say no anyway. "He's in the garden."

"Yeah. They're bundled up enough. Fenrir, why don't you go with him? I'll join you and the others in a moment."

Fenrir pierced him with a look; skeptical and then downright shocked when Harry shrugged and answered, “Remus trusts you completely. That’s all I need to know.”

Fenrir cleared his throat and jerked his head in a nod before trailing after Nathan.

Harry turned to head for the exercise room. Pansy remained with him. She grabbed his arm and hugged it. “They’re wonderful! And you! You look brilliant!”

“Thanks, Pans.” He laughed when she scrunched up her nose a little. When they arrived outside of the room, he went for the doorknob but Pansy quickly grabbed his hand.

“It’s the twins and Bellatrix. Knock first. Never know what spell is going to come at you.”

“Right. Yeah.”

Nearly a minute after knocking, the door was wrenched open by one of the twins. He had a deep gash over his left eyebrow and his nose was bleeding, but still he was grinning like a fool.

“Looks like Auntie Bella worked you over.”

“Harry! Fred, look! Harry’s come down!”

George was soon shoved over by Bellatrix and Harry found himself in a tight embrace by the crazed witch. He hugged her back, laughing. “I’m happy to see you too, Bella.”

“Little lord, we’ve been worried about you. It’s been three days!”

“I’m fine. Better than fine. The healer said that’s normal for male pregnancies. The healing sleep. Is that why Fred and George look like they’ve been tortured? You were worried?”

“Pretty much,” Fred said.

“Yep,” was George’s response.

“Let’s get you guys cleaned up so we can eat. I’m star-”

Harry was grabbed by the arm and spun around. He had time to see cool blue eyes and bright blond hair before the air in his lungs was forcibly squeezed out of his body.

The twins grinned and they watched Draco squeezing the life out of Harry. “And Draco might have been just a tad worried about you as well.”

Pansy scoffed. “The understatement of the year.”

“Merlin, Draco. I’m alright,” he murmured, returning the blond’s embrace. Draco muttered something and pressed his face against Harry’s throat. He didn’t let go. “Hey,” Harry whispered softly, managing to pull away enough that he could look at his best mate’s

face. Draco's eyes were swimming. "I really am. Tom would have said if something were wrong."

Draco nodded and went back to hugging him. A short moment later, the twins joined in. Harry laughed. "I really like clingy emotional Draco. He's cute."

Draco lurched away, his face flushed. "Shut up, Pot head."

"EXCUSE ME?" Bellatrix shrieked. "Where are my Lord's precious heirs? I think I've waited long enough!"

"I let Nathan and Fenrir take them around."

Bellatrix blinked and then narrowed her eyes. "I'm sorry? You did what?"

"Yes, that's right. I let the *vampire* and the *werewolf* take the babies out to the garden."

Bella took off straight for the garden and the others followed after. However, Alex and Cyril weren't in the garden anymore. They were with Narcissa and Iseut now and everyone else had congregated to the outside dining area.

Harry was given hugs from everyone before being shoved into a chair and he had the pleasure of watching his friends and family greet his sons and coo over them and just basically flooding them with so much love. Remus settled down next to him while Hermione took up his other side and soon those two had their chance to hold the babies.

"I really like their names," Neville said from over his shoulder.

"Good strong names," Lucius said with a nod.

"Neville, what are you doing standing there?" Draco demanded. "Sit down for Merlin's sake!"

Narcissa nodded. "He's quite right, Mr. Longbottom. Get off your feet."

"No, I'm fine--"

"Sit down!" several people cried out at once.

Remus smiled and quickly stood. "Take my seat. Go ahead," he prodded, pulling Neville's arm and steering him into the seat.

Harry grinned at his friend's exasperated look. Remus then transferred Alexander into Neville's arms.

"He's so small," Neville whispered. "I feel like I might break him." He then looked at Harry. "The last time I held a baby I dropped it." The room instantly went quiet, several eyes widened, and then Neville laughed at all their expressions. "Just kidding."

Surprisingly it was Bellatrix who burst out laughing after that, giving the Gryffindor a nod, and Neville even managed to return the witch's smile somewhat.

Harry bumped his shoulder. "You had me going for a second." He shook his head fondly and called for Tally to bring down the bassinet, where he then had the sleeping twins placed. And then much to his elation, food was served. There were more people than the table usual held, so some people chose to eat at the bar area. It was then he noticed they were missing a few people and asked about that.

"I had intended to bring Celeste along tomorrow, Harry, if that's alright with you," Iseut told him and he readily agreed.

"Rafael is on mission right now," Hermione explained. "He'll come by tomorrow as well. Mr. Lovegood sent Luna off into the wilds a couple days ago for a Quibbler article. Not sure when she's coming back."

"Did she go alone?"

"She'll be alright," Remus told him in understanding. "Whatever else she is, Luna isn't stupid. She's resourceful and if she needs help, she'll let us know."

Harry nodded and turned back to Hermione to ask her about any progress the Silvers might have made while he was out.

"Later. Fred and George will fill you in after you've had something to eat."

Harry ate like a starving man, which he very likely was. As the meal progressed, most of his attention remained on the bassinet. Hermione smiled to herself after watching her best friend's eyes go dreamy every time they landed on the miracles laying together in the bassinet. And they were. Tiny miracles. So little, so sweet. Just laying there sleeping peacefully. Wrapped up in their small blankets with little soft yellow (Cyrillus) and green (Alexander) caps on their heads, which were the only things visible outside of the comfy blankets.

She was so happy for Harry. And so happy to finally have the twins with them that it made her eyes sting with unshed tears. She kept that from Andy as she didn't want him getting the wrong idea. She had no idea what he thought of children and their relationship was too new at the moment to even bring it up. That's the way to scare a good thing away. But Andy knew how to handle the babies since his sister already had two of her own.

Hermione wondered how the Dark Lord felt about finally becoming a father. She didn't wonder where he was; like Harry, she knew this type of gathering could quickly try his nerves. This was an emotional get-together and the Dark Lord was still the Dark Lord. His emotions were his own. However, towards the end of dessert the wizard finally appeared with the Headmaster. Both immediately went to Harry and the bassinet. Severus dropped a hand to Harry's shoulder and squeezed gently, which had Harry blasting him with a smile, and then the sour wizard joined his Lord's side to peer at the babies.

The Dark Lord's expression may have been flat, but his eyes... Lord Voldemort was enchanted by the two little things he and Harry had created. Hermione couldn't explain it any other way, the look in his eyes. She had a feeling he was going to become obsessed with watching them.

It wasn't long after when everyone had the sense to return to their homes. It was common sense that the Dark Lord would want to be alone with his family. Some would stay of course, but these were those who had been living with the Dark Lord anyway. After all was said and done only Draco, Fred, and George would remain behind with everyone else promising to visit soon. Lucius and Severus remained as well but they were not planning to stay the night.

When Harry went to sit down in the main drawing room with Draco and the twins, he moved the bassinet over with him. Tom and his Lieutenants had intentions to disappear again- probably to his private drawing room- so when he was suddenly beside them with Severus and Lucius standing off by the hallway, Harry raised an eyebrow in question.

"You cannot horde, little minx," Tom muttered and then bent to take one of the babies, cradling Alex close to his chest. Alex didn't stir from his sleep.

Harry grinned widely at Tom's back as the wizard swept away with his Lieutenants trailing after him.

"So your worries about that have gone then," Draco said.

"Yeah," Harry replied. "I wasn't too worried. I just... Sometimes things are new for him and at times he doesn't know how to react."

"Perfectly, I'd say," put in George. "He loves them already."

Cyril stirred, wiggling fitfully and Harry immediately plucked him out of the bassinet. The baby went still once he was cradled against his chest.

"Do you think they're identical?"

Harry looked to Fred. "It's kind of hard to tell at this point. They didn't share a sac... I'm sort of hoping not though. Being identical has made you two terrors."

"Who us?"

"Stop with the innocent look," Harry said, laughing.

"They certainly didn't behave themselves on our honeymoon."

"If we can't be wicked on our honeymoon, Draco love, then when can we?"

"And you didn't mind anyway."

Harry settled back, watching with a soft smile as both twins dropped a short chaste kiss to Draco's upturned lips. "What's been going on with the market?"

“We’ve had some interesting developments there,” answered George as he fished out a notepad from his robes. “Our shops have been doing very good business. The bookies are a favorite in the market now and this has drawn attention.”

“What sort of attention?”

“Normally it wouldn’t be anything good but concerning Operation Silver Strike, very good enlightening attention. Lee reported three men came in a few days ago. When they walked in, all the patrons who saw them immediately left. Lee says they looked scared.”

Fred nodded. “Real scared.”

“Then one of these men started asking Lee questions while the other two just stood back. Goons is what they were. These questions were probing. Where did he come from? How was he able to establish his business without inside help? How much did Lee pull in monthly? Those sorts of questions. Lee of course handled himself brilliantly.

“And then the real reason for the visit became clear. A certain order governs the Market and apparently Lee has to acclimate to it. They demanded a large percentage of the profits each month or Lee wouldn’t like what was to happen.”

“They mentioned a boss,” Fred went on. “The big boss. And the organization that runs the market. Apparently your magical mafia idea isn’t original. After these guys left we had reports from our other operatives of the same thing happening to them and their stalls or shops.”

“Did someone follow the men when they left?”

“No. We weren’t ready for that. But we’ve installed a system since then. When those blokes come back, and they will since they said as much, we’ll be notified. We can proceed from there.”

Harry nodded, thinking that over. He knew he was going to be first on scene the next time those blokes came back. “I wonder who this big boss is.”

“We asked questions around the market. Everyone we talked to was afraid to say anything, but apparently no one has seen this guy. He has lots of hands to do his dirty work. A very nasty individual. The fact that it is run by one guy and the Magical Law Enforcement hasn’t been able to touch him says a lot, don’t you think?”

“We ran it by Andrew and he said the Aurors never even knew there was a main guy running the whole show.”

“So we don’t have a name or face? Are we sure it’s a man?”

“No, not yet, but we’ll know soon enough. Next time those goons show up, we’ll find out something.”

Harry nodded. “It’s time for more in depth investigation.”

The polite clearing of a throat had the three turning to Draco. “Yes, love of our life?” Fred inquired.

Draco cleared his throat again, his cheeks flushing. “I know this hasn’t anything to do with me, but have you thought about asking your husband to go through the files of his followers. I’m certain many of those associated with the black market- business wise- would be Death Eaters. The Dark Lord’s victory would only help them.”

“Brilliant idea, Drake.”

Draco shrugged. “I’m sure you would have thought of it eventually. But the more information you have the easier and safer it will be. This isn’t a game, I hope you know. This is going to get dangerous and most certainly deadly when this big boss realizes someone is after him and his organization.”

“We know what we’re getting into, Draco. No need to worry about us.”

The blond sneered. “Right, Harry. Sure.”

Harry grinned at him.

“Aww, Harry. Your little one’s awake again,” George whispered. He, his brother, and Draco scooted closer so they could peer at Cyril; watching as the baby’s dark blue eyes moved around. “Hello there, handsome. I’m your Uncle George. This identical wanker beside me is your Uncle Fred and the gorgeous prat between us is your Uncle Draco.”

Cyril’s lips parted and he cooed at them.

“He said hello!” Draco exclaimed excitedly.

Harry’s heart melted all over again. “I really do love you guys.”

In the blink of an eye, the twins were two weeks old and it was time to return to their home in Britain and for Tom to go back to work as well. Harry would not be going to back to work in an official capacity for another week. He wanted to settle his sons into the manor and work out a schedule and get comfortable with it.

“Stop it, Nathan! I’m trying to talk to Harry! Wills, would you please distract him?”

Harry glanced away from his pot of fudge to the two-way mirror set up against the wall on the counter. Neville was there, glaring at the vampire over his shoulder who was trying- in Harry’s humble opinion- to take a bite out of his lover’s neck. Harry snickered when Nathan pulled back with a pout.

“Never want it now,” Nathan mumbled as he moved away from view.

Neville rolled his eyes. “It’s kind of your fault, isn’t it?” he called back.

“At the time I didn’t know wizards could get pregnant by vampires!” Nathan shouted back from out of sight. “Wills, why didn’t you tell me this at the beginning when I set my sights on him?”

Wills could be heard laughing in the background. Harry snickered and shook his head while Neville’s eyes danced with good humor. Unlike Nathan, Wills was a wizard vampire. He maybe should have told his friend wizards were able to reproduce with other males and vampires.

“You could tell him after the baby is born you’ll want it again,” Harry said quietly.

“I’ll let him sweat for a few days.”

Harry laughed. “Pregnancy’s made you mean.”

“Maybe. Are you back at it yet?”

“No.” He then smirked. “But I’ve got it all planned out. I’m just letting Tom catch up on his work. Summer hols are almost here and he’s had to make trips to the three prominent schools to see how things are running and if anything needs to be changed before the next term starts. He doesn’t want to rush me, but he’s been hinting at it.”

“I still can’t get over how he is with you, even after all this time. I don’t know if I’ll ever get over it. Even... even with the babies it was just weird.”

“I’m sure in a few years you might. Listen, I’ve been meaning to ask, how’s the security working out?”

“Really great, actually. The best part. Gran hates them. Especially the ones who live here. I like them. Their personalities. Did he do that on purpose or was that you?”

“That was Tom. He’s really thorough.”

“I didn’t realize he knew me that well.”

“He’s also very perceptive of people. Doesn’t always have to look into their head to understand someone.” Harry took a moment to cross over the short space to the kitchen island where the twins were napping in the bassinet. They were still sleeping. “Have you had any more negative responses to the publicity?” he asked when he returned to his fudge work station.

After Neville’s first interview with Skeeter, there was a deluge of response. Half of it was negative mail but there wasn’t anything malicious in it. No hexes or jinx or curses. He also got the evil eye a time or two going out in public after that first interview, but Tom said it was an expected response. The people had to get used to the idea and it would get much better once the baby was born. Harry was really excited about that. He was glad their children were going to be very close in age and he was kind of hoping Drake would end up the duff soon, though he knew better than to say that out loud.

“No. Not really. Only Gran.”

“Neville, honestly.”

“I know. Not much I can do about that though short of kicking her out. I’m not about to do that. I think it probably wouldn’t be so bad if I drop the restrictions I’ve placed on her for around here. I’m not doing that either. This is Nathan’s home now too. We’re having a baby and eventually will be married no matter what she says or thinks. Nathan isn’t going anywhere.” Neville glanced over his shoulder and then when he was facing him again, Harry saw his eyes filled with worry. “I think she’s planning something,” he whispered. “But I haven’t any idea as to what.”

Harry felt a spike of frustration. Neville knew his Gran well enough that Harry wasn’t going to take his worry lightly. He couldn’t understand why the woman wouldn’t let her grandson be happy. “Just don’t... Neville, don’t eat or drink anything she gives you and keep your eyes and ears open. Contact me immediately if you do figure out what she’s up to.”

Neville nodded that he would. At that moment he looked so tired and it probably didn’t have anything to do with his pregnancy. “Go take a nap, would you?”

“Yeah. Probably should. We’re having guests over for dinner tomorrow night. Some of Wills friends. Half vampires. I’m excited to meet them.”

“Let me know how that turns out.”

“Um... actually, I was hoping you would join us.”

“Sure, Nev. Haven’t anything on the schedule and Tom hasn’t been making dinner lately.”

“Great! Seven, okay? I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Bye.”

Neville smiled and then his face cleared away to leave Harry looking at his own reflection. He shook his head as he got back to his fudge, wondering what Augusta Longbottom would try next, if she were insane enough to try anything.

As it usually happened when he was in the kitchen, Harry quickly lost track of time.

“Master?”

Harry turned around. “Dori?”

“Master, yous has visitors. They say they is expected.”

“Right! Yeah, I forgot... visitors? It should only be Healer Monroe.”

“Someone else is with him.”

“Where are they?”

“Visitors Floo room.”

“Tally, can you take Cyril and Alex to their nursery? I’ll be up in a few minutes. Don’t allow anyone in the nursery unless I’m leading them.”

Tally bobbed her head and both she and Dori popped away, taking the twins with them. Harry washed his hands first before leaving the kitchen and was soon walking into the visitors Floo room. He smiled at Healer Monroe while studying the woman next to him. The witch was a head taller than Monroe and probably two decades younger. She had dark blonde hair and brown eyes and was holding a small bag. A pretty woman but completely unfamiliar.

“Monroe, nice to see you again,” he said upon reaching them and shook the healer’s hand. “But I wasn’t expecting you to bring someone else with you. Here,” he said pointedly, letting the warning inflect his tone.

“Harry, this is Healer Toothill. She specializes in pediatrics and will after this day see to Alexander and Cyrillius’ care.”

“Is that so?”

Monroe smiled in understanding of Harry’s suspicious tone and the flat look in his eyes. Healer Toothill shifted nervously. “I assure you I have spoken to your husband about this. I was given permission to bring her here. She has already taken the Oaths given by our Lord.”

Harry thawed out a bit at this announcement, but he wasn’t completely ready to believe his word only. “Right then. If you two will wait here another minute. I’ll return shortly.”

He didn’t wait for a reply and left the room, walking briskly down the hallway and around the corner. Soon he came upon his sitting room. He approached the fireplace and dropped to his knees upon the pillow there before throwing in the Floo powder and calling out for his husband’s Ministry office, hoping Tom was in.

Fortunately he was. “Tom, why is there some strange Healer here with Monroe?”

“She is one of the best in her field, Harry. And also loyal to our cause.”

“But Monroe-”

“Monroe is an obstetrician. Now that the twins are born, his duties after today are no longer required.” Harry opened his mouth and Tom shook his head. “If you don’t like her we can find someone else. But I know you will like her which is why I chose her without your input.”

“You should have asked me first.”

“Perhaps so. If there is to be a next time, I will be sure to do so.”

“Bloody dictator. Is she safe? Are our boys safe with her?”

“I promise you she is safe.”

“If you’re sure...”

“Very sure, love. Otherwise I would not have given her access to our home.”

“Okay, fine. Will you be home for dinner?”

“I’ll try my best.”

“I’ll make it worth your while if you do.”

Tom smirked. “It’s always worth my while when I go home to you.”

Harry shifted. A deep flush worked its way up from his neck to his face. “Don’t work your charms on me, Tom Riddle.”

“It works brilliantly every time.”

Harry’s face was still flushed when he returned to Healers Monroe and Toothill. He finally shook the woman’s hand and welcomed her to his home. “If you’ll follow me. The twins are in the nursery.”

He led them out into the hall and towards the curved staircase. As they approached the stairs, Harry glanced at the lifts wistfully. He had no excuse to be lazy any longer. Once they trekked the stairs and were on the appropriate level, Harry led them from the landing and down the hall to the nursery. When they walked in, Tally was in the process of changing Alex’s diaper while feeding Cyril. She had Cyril in one arm and was using her free hand to conduct the magic to change the diaper and to keep the baby on the changing table. There was no hesitation in her movements and Cyril was completely secure in her arm with a bottle being held to his lips with sensitive magic. Tally clearly knew what she was doing.

“Tally, this is Healer Toothill. She’s going to be the twins’ Healer. Maybe.”

The healer smiled less nervously at Harry. She seemed to understand his wariness now as much as Monroe did. The witch approached Tally to watch the baby in her arms. “Seems to have no problems eating. That is very good. How often do they eat and how much, Lord Riddle?”

Fine, Harry conceded, *she just earned herself some points*. “Every three to four hours and usually four ounces each time,” he answered while she lifted Alexander from the changing table once Tally was finished with him. She held him in her arms, watching his face. Tracking his eye movement. She ran fingers over the top of his head. Harry thought she was probably checking the development of his skull. She said as much a moment later.

Healer Toothill soon placed Alex back on the changing table. “And this lovely one’s name?”

“Alexander. And his brother is Cyrillus.” Harry gestured over to the house elf. Cyril appeared to be finished eating.

“Alright then. I’m going to measure and weigh these little guys. Check the spines... their color is very good. From all outward appearances you have two very healthy baby boys.”

Toothill had Harry help her get Alex stretched out and soothed so that she could do all sorts of measurements. And then she took blood and Harry lost all his good feelings for her. Only Monroe’s grip on his arm kept him from cursing the witch. Alexander’s wails had his heart breaking. And then he had to do it all over again with Cyril.

“Just this one time, Lord Riddle,” she told him with an apologetic smile. The fact that she seemed immune to his newborns pained cries didn’t endear her to him in any way. Once she was done with his sons, he sent her on her way with Tally leading her back to the Floo room.

“Harry, she was only doing her job. I understand how hard it is for a new parent to go through that...”

“One last exam, Monroe?” Harry asked instead of raving since he was much too busy cuddling his sons and making sure Alex was fed.

“Yes, yes. Shouldn’t take long. Just to make sure you’ve healed properly.”

Harry waited until Tally returned to take charge of his sons before leading Monroe to his old bedroom where he’d be most comfortable with the check up. It didn’t last very long and Monroe declared everything was as it should be.

“Now, Harry, I doubt you wish to see me so soon after this, so I suggest you remember the contraceptive spells. You are very capable of getting pregnant again at this time.”

“Bloody Merlin! No!”

Monroe laughed. “I thought so.”

Later that evening found Harry in the nursery with Fred and George. Harry sat in the two-seater while the twins took position at the window seat. The twins were holding the twins. The first thing Harry did before sitting was to take a picture of that.

“How’s the house hunting going?” Fred and George grimaced. He laughed. “That bad, huh?”

“It’s just...we’re used to living like bachelors, you know? We love not being bachelors anymore but habitation wise, we’re still used to living like we’re single.”

George leaned forward, dropping his elbows to his knees. “Draco’s got the more organized mentality. It was easy to start living at Malfoy Manor. It’s not our place. Everything was already set. We didn’t have to make any decisions. No responsibilities. Our flat was simple. Easy. Draco can’t stand that. He always refuses to stay there.”

Harry looked between the two, smirking. “You’re going to have to compromise.”

“Yeah. We promised Draco we’d buy us a nice place. Some place he would love. A place we would all be comfortable in. It’s just not as easy as we thought it would be. We knew we would do this before marrying him. Knew how high his standards would be and we’re completely okay with that so it’s not an issue but Draco will start to think it is. And we definitely don’t want that.”

“Have you patched things up with your parents yet?”

“Harry, allow us to be stubborn about it, okay.”

Harry raised his hands. “I wasn’t pressuring you or anything. Only curious. Just thought your mum could help with this.”

“Seriously?”

“I know you’re angry with her but you’re also married to Draco now. Nothing she can do about it. I’m thinking she’d want you three to be happy. Think about it. What do you think your mother would do if you suddenly show up asking for her advice on this?”

Both twins frowned in thought, and then sighed in resignation. “She’d jump at the chance to help us.”

“Be insanely happy about it too.”

“Right. Cause she still loves you and wants you to be happy.” The twins straightened up and gave him identical stares. “What?”

“You’re a daddy for little over two weeks and suddenly you know it all?”

“Sorry, wasn’t trying to-”

“No. You’re right, Harry. No matter what’s happened, she’s still our mum.”

“Besides, your mum saw how happy Draco was to marry you two. That’s all she needed to see. She can be a bit much sometimes, but she’s still a good person.”

“She did hug Draco at the end of the wedding reception and sincerely apologized to him for Ron and Ginny’s actions. We were very proud of him for hugging her back without it looking like a huge endeavor.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, that was surprising. Just shows how much he loves you.”

“We did good,” they announced proudly.

“Yes, you did. Never forget it.”

“Not likely.”

“So, Harry? Has the mighty Dark Lord changed a dirty diaper yet?”

Harry laughed. “Not that I know of, but I doubt I would know about it if he did. He has a reputation to maintain after all. Changing dirty diapers isn’t in the Dark Lord manual.”

“That’s what minions are for.”

Harry twisted around in his seat and smiled widely. “You made it home for dinner.”

Tom moved into the room and nodded at the grown twins as they had stood the moment he spoke. “I told you I would try.”

He moved in further until he was by the window and next to Fred. He watched the babies sleeping peacefully with their blasted ‘uncles’ for a moment before moving to retrieve Cyrillus from Fred’s arms. Fred pulled away at the last moment with a pout. “But he’s comfy here.”

Harry sucked in a breath while Tom’s eyes narrowed and bled from light brown to red instantly. “Excuse me?” he inquired with a deadly softness that gave even Harry the chills.

“Um,” Harry started, drawing Fred’s attention. He pointed to his husband. “Occasional homicidal maniac, remember?”

Realizing his huge mistake, Fred instantly offered up the baby with a quick stuttered apology. Tom took his son, cradled him against his chest with one arm, and as he sat next to Harry, made sure the blanket was perfectly snug around Cyrillus. Without taking his eyes off his son’s face, he said quietly, “you two may go.”

No questions asked, they went. With George delivering Alexander to Harry with a wink before departing after his brother. Harry held Alex with both hands and brought him up to kiss his warm cheek before nuzzling his tiny nose. The moment the door shut behind Fred and George, Tom’s severe expression melted away to leave his eyes bright and full of fascination as he carefully unwrapped Cyrillus before laying him on his thighs.

The Dark Lord’s hands were gentle as he once again inspected the small arms and legs, and he was especially fascinated with the tiny toes and fingers. Cyrillus slowly woke and he began to wiggle; his arms and legs moving about without any control. Tom chuckled. “Ticklish, are we?”

Harry sighed in contentment and dropped his head to his husband’s shoulder. “They’ll be ready for another feeding soon.”

“Shall we take them down to dinner with us?”

“Excellent idea.”

“Of course. But first...” Tom turned, grabbed the back of Harry’s head, and pulled him in for a very thorough kiss. The likes of which they hadn’t shared in a few months. It had Harry aching again; had him shaking with want, which was surely Tom’s intention. When Tom pulled away with an infuriating smirk, he immediately went back to wrapping Cyril back in his blanket. “Dinner?”

Harry blew out a shaky breath. "Yeah."

Once they were downstairs in the smallest dining room, seated and served, Harry started conversation. "Some interesting developments have occurred regarding the black market. Apparently one person runs the entire show. At least in our neck of the world. And since I had planned to do the same thing, we both know how risky such a thing is, which means..."

"This person has vast power and resources, and incredible loyalty to keep those below him in line."

"Exactly. Yeah. Though he doesn't have the power and resources I have, does he?" Harry asked with a smirk. One in which Tom returned. "I'm going to tap one of those resources now and ask if you could deliver to me files of any of your followers who are in any way associated with the black market."

"Those files are already waiting for you."

Harry stared at him. "But how did you—"

"I knew you would ask for them eventually."

"Clever bastard."

"This is new for you, little minx. Not for me."

Harry conceded that was true. "I think Donovan will become more useful than I first planned."

"Imperiused?"

"Eventually. The profit he makes, the many things he's into. He must have come into contact with the big boss at some point."

"You hope."

"Hope's a good thing. But don't worry. I have back up plans."

"Harry, you will be careful or I will involve myself. More than passing you information. This changes things, one person in charge of it all. Someone like that will not be an easy foe."

Harry nodded. "I'm not taking this lightly."

"That said, you must be successful in this. Having you in charge of the black market will benefit us both."

"You mean it would benefit you and your rule here."

"I meant what I said, Harry. Both of us. I promised you the world, didn't I? I promised to lay the world at your feet. We will change our world together."

Harry set his cutlery down, staring at his husband. “Sometimes... Sometimes I’m still so surprised, by us. By you. Sometimes I can’t believe we’re sitting here together like this. I look at our sons and I shake my head because it seems too good to be true. What did I do to deserve this life?”

“What did you do?” Tom asked incredulously. “It’s what you haven’t done! It is I that should be asking that! Everything I’ve done! Everything I’ve done to you! And you! You deserve every bit of happiness I can bestow upon you! How can you not see that? How can you question it? Fate, Harry. We are each other’s Fate. This, *us*, were meant to happen. You saved me. You saved the world by saving me. You gave me back actual life and I will gladly repay you that for the rest of mine!”

Harry reached the short distance across the table, grabbing Tom’s hand with his own shaking one. “I wasn’t questioning us again, Tom. I was counting my blessings.”

“I know that.”

The flat tone had Harry realizing something. “But you were.”

“They were born and I instantly fell in love again. I don’t see how that’s possible.”

“You want to give them everything you didn’t have. They’re yours. Nothing can be yours as completely as our boys are.”

“You.”

Harry entwined their fingers, smiling that illegal smile. “And me. Of course, my gorgeous Dark Lord.”

Tom looked at him and a tsunami of emotion swam in his eyes. The man was seriously baffled at his own current emotions. He never even considered how absolute the twins could snag his heart and soul. Instantly.

“What would you say to your younger self right now if you had the chance?”

“Idiot.”

Harry laughed and squeezed his lover’s hand. “Young Tom Riddle was brilliant. If I only had half his brain power.”

“He never even considered...”

“Why would he? What did he have to consider, Tom? Who was there for him to consider?”

“Even if someone or something was there, he would have been too wrapped up in his goals to see.”

“Now, knowing all I know, I wouldn’t blame him.”

Tom's thumb brushed tenderly over his knuckles. "Would you change the past?"

"Changing the past would change the future. No." It had been said before but Harry knew Tom needed to hear it again. "Would you?"

"I would never consider it. If the past were changed, I would lose you. I would lose everything." This talk unnerved Tom. A trickle of panic coursed through his veins. He didn't know where it was coming from, only that there was something niggling at the back of his mind. Something like a long forgotten memory maybe.

"Tom?"

He shook his head slightly, pushing the feeling away. He had more important things to think about. "Are you going to make it worth my while?"

Harry, who had been worried by the look on Tom's face a moment ago, blinked. "Sorry?"

"You said you would make it worth my while if I made it home for dinner. Well here I am. I expect to be rewarded, little minx."

Harry straightened and grinned. "Right! Yeah! Tally!"

Tom expected Harry would put the twins in Tally's care for a while, so that they may go off and reestablish their amazing intimate relationship. The kink room would be ideal. He had been thinking about it all bloody day. He couldn't wait to get his hands on his young husband. So when Tally appeared and hovered a three tier carrot cake onto the table, he stared at it dumbly.

"I made it just for you. Carrot cake's your favorite."

Tom pulled his eyes away from the cake to stare at Harry with that blank expression. He was so disappointed he felt like throwing a tantrum. Aside from that, he was fairly certain Harry knew he had been expecting something else. But Harry's eyes didn't express any sort of deviousness. Maybe he really hadn't caught on to his hints. And then Tom realized maybe Harry just wasn't ready yet. This realization swept the small parts of annoyance and frustration away.

"It's lovely, Harry."

Harry smiled that wide illegal smile and Tom thought it had been worth his while after all.

Harry knocked on the door and then smiled down at Tally and also the twins who were lying in their portable bassinet. He probably didn't need Tally, but he brought her just in case he needed a pair of extra hands since Tom couldn't make it this evening. The Dark Lord had gone to Durmstrang and wouldn't return home for two days. Harry knew Neville would help him with the babies if need be, but he really didn't want his friend overtaxing himself at this point.

The door opened to another house elf and he was let in without word. As he pushed Alex and Cyril in, Nathan bounded in from the hall to greet them. He shook Harry's hand and then bent a little to coo at the awake babies. Harry couldn't help but think he was going to make a brilliant father. Every time the vampire saw the babies he had a wide smile on his pale face. He could see it in Nathan's eyes, how excited he was for the birth of his own child.

"The darling is indisposed at the moment, but he'll join us shortly. Our other guests have yet to arrive."

"I hope you don't mind that we've come early."

"I'm fairly certain you are welcome to come here whenever you like. I haven't a problem with it. In fact the more that angers the old beating heart, the better. Come, Neville wants us in the family parlor."

It wasn't a long walk to the sitting room, but they had to walk past several rooms first as they made their way deeper into the estate house. Shortly thereafter Harry began to hear raised voices as they approached one such door. He caught the tail end of Nathan's wince after recognizing it to be Lady Longbottom who was doing the yelling. Just as they passed that room, another voice rose higher than Augusta's and Harry stopped when he realized it was Neville now doing the shouting and he sounded enraged. Both he and Nathan paused without meaning to, just a little shocked to hear Neville shouting at his grandmother.

"I have had it, Gran! I really have! There's something wrong with me? It's you! You, Gran! And if you try to hurt me, Nathan, or our daughter again, I'll have *you* institutionalized! Say one more disparaging thing about me or my choices and we're off to see a Mind Healer first thing! How about that?"

"Well I never! How dare you?!"

"I am not your son and you need to remember that!"

"Of course you aren't! You're a disgrace! Look at the mess you are! My Frank would never—"

"Gran, if you treat my daughter the way you've treated me, I won't be able to stand it. And I know Nathan won't stand for it."

"T-that—That beast!"

"He's not a beast. He's a vampire. A very lovely vampire and you would like him if you gave him half a chance."

"He's a monster! I won't have him or any other monsters in my house! I forbid it! And I'll not have that little... that little *thing* you're carrying running around here either!"

Harry's hands curled into fists. He knew how much that had to have hurt Neville.

"YOU HOLD NO POWER HERE ANYMORE!" The door was wrenched open and Neville stepped out. His face was white as a sheet. He turned in the doorway, peering back

inside. His hands balled into fists. “G-Gran... you’re banished to the East wing until further notice. I have to protect what’s mine. I know what you’ve been planning. If you try and carry it out, I’ll have you arrested. I need peace right now and you refuse to give it to me. I’m finished trying to get through to you. I don’t have the time or energy...” He stepped back from the door, ignored Augusta’s enraged shouts to that. “Butters.”

A house elf appeared immediately. “Escort my grandmother to her rooms. She’s not allowed to venture beyond the East Wing. From here on out, she is not allowed to venture anywhere else when she’s home.”

The little elf bobbed its head and dashed into the room. Augusta could be heard sputtering and then there was finally silence when the elf whisked the matron to her quarters.

“Neville,” whispered Harry, insanely proud of his friend but also very worried. Neville was too pale and was shaking horribly. When he looked at Harry, his eyes were blown wide with anxiety from the confrontation. “You’re having a girl?”

“Yeah. Surprise.”

Harry laughed. “That’s wonderful!”

“I’m sorry you had to hear that. I should have been more mindful...”

“The door was shut. We were eavesdropping.”

Neville shrugged and slowly moved to them.

“For what it’s worth, I think you’ve done the right thing, Neville.”

“I need to protect my baby.”

Harry nodded.

“Darling?”

Neville walked right into Nathan, who always had his arms out wide for him when he needed it. “I could do with something cold to drink. Maybe a sit down before our guests arrive.”

“Not a maybe,” Harry muttered as he took the lead, walking ahead of the couple with his sons, intent on getting Neville in a horizontal position as soon as possible. He snickered to himself a moment later. That had sounded really naughty. It wasn’t until he realized he couldn’t hear footsteps behind him that he glanced over his shoulder. “Oi!”

The two were tightly embraced and heavily lip locked. It wasn’t a comforting embrace either. It was hot and hungry; so much to the point that Harry doubted company was even welcome. He left them to it and went on into the sitting room, knowing Nathan wasn’t going to let Neville stay on his feet much longer. “Tally, maybe you could ask one of the house elves here to bring Neville something cold to drink?”

“Yes, Master. Tally be right back.”

Harry positioned his sons near the fire, though not close enough that they would over heat. Instead of sitting, he meandered around the room, inspecting the décor; the odds and ends around. Obviously, most of these knick knacks had been placed by Neville and not his grandmother, reaffirming that Neville had taken this sitting room for his own. And of course there was a number of plant life within this room, just like any other in the Longbottom residence. Neville needed his flora and fauna. The room was peaceful, and with the plant life, just a touch exotic as well.

When Nathan and Neville finally appeared, Harry immediately told Neville to sit and pushed the glass of pumpkin juice into his friend’s grateful hands. He and Neville sat in silence for a few moments and watched Nathan go over to the babies. He seemed hypnotized by them.

“He really likes children, huh?”

“Yeah. I think he’s always been this way. I never knew...” Neville shrugged and leaned closer to whisper. “From what he’s told me about them, his family, children were always treated like servants, you know. There to be seen and not heard. It was extremely strict, the rearing of children. No real love or affection shown... I’m glad he got away from them,” he ended firmly. “I’m glad he came here and shoved his way into my life.”

“You two are well matched.”

Neville’s smile was wide and dopey.

The dinner guests soon arrived and Wills walked in with three others behind him. Neville and Harry’s eyes widened when they saw the last to enter.

“Harry! Do you see-”

“I have eyes don’t I?”

“Merlin! I can’t believe he’s in my house!”

Harry started laughing. “Drake’s going to be so angry to know he missed out on this!”

Neville joined in his laughing and nodded because the third half vampire to walk in happened to be none other than Lorcan d’Eath himself.

“I think I might faint.”

“Right there with you.”

From beside them, Nathan cleared his throat loudly, giving them exasperated looks. They both pointed needlessly to the singer, who didn’t seem to mind at all that he had two blokes drooling over his presence. Wills smirked at an annoyed Nathan, having known his famous friend would get this kind of reaction from Harry and Neville.

Karkaroff left the school in shambles, Tom thought severely as he entered his bedroom two nights later, just having come from Durmstrang. *I need to find someone capable enough for that position before the start of the next term.* Karkaroff had been more concerned with the physical aspects of the students' education rather than the intellectual and Tom wanted a seamless joining of both for such a prestigious school. He wanted soldiers, yes. But he also wanted them intelligent. He wanted clever minds *and* fast wands. And why were there no females being trained in martial magic at that school. It was about time to dispose of that outdated rule also.

"Master?"

Tom frowned. Not because of the house elf's presence but rather from the state of his bedroom. All manner of clothing had been tossed onto the bed, as well as several articles lying just outside the wardrobe. As he took in the state of the bedroom, he wondered what could have been so important to have Harry going through his clothes in such a way. Where could he have been going to be so undecided on which outfit to wear? "Yes?"

"Welcome home, Master."

Tom finally turned away from the mess, flicking his wand absently to send each article of clothing back to where it came from. "Thank you, Tally."

"Master. The babies have already been fed, washed, and tucked in. Our young master wished to inform you he may not return until very late. He left a message in the Floo in case you returned before him. We's also has dinner ready to serve you, Master."

"Deliver the meal to my study in fifteen minutes. Are my sons asleep yet?"

"No, but they lay peacefully, Master."

Tom nodded. "That will be all."

Tally bowed lowly before popping away. Tom then moved back out into the sitting room, flicking his wand again to activate Harry's message, trying to keep from being too disappointed that Harry wasn't at home at the moment. It wasn't until Harry's face appeared did his hard red eyes soften for the first time since leaving home. He sank down onto the cushion.

"Hello, my Dark delicious lover. So if you're seeing this, it means I'm not home to greet you. Very sorry, Tom. But I was called away on urgent Silver business. If I'm not home by dawn then you have my permission to send out a search party."

Directly after Tom's derisive snort, Harry grinned. "I heard that."

"No you didn't."

"Yes I did."

"You're a recording, Harry."

“And you’re talking back. Ha.”

“Bloody cheeky brat.”

“I love you too. Anyway, just wanted to let you know so you wouldn’t worry or automatically come out to find me. No need. I’m being careful and I’m not alone. There won’t be fighting... unless someone dares to lay a finger on one of my people. Better go though. Fred and George are waiting and you know what kind of trouble they get into when they’re impatient.” A wink was thrown his way and then his husband’s face disintegrated.

Tom stood and shrugged out of his travelling cloak. He tossed it over a chair on his way out and headed directly for the nursery. He may or may not have huffed petulantly when he found Alex and Cyril were indeed sleeping. He wouldn’t chance waking them just because he was impatient to hold them again.

He lost track of time after that once ensconced in his study with his reports, his dinner sitting undisturbed at the corner of his desk. Twice he paused in his work to glance at the dinner tray, only doing so due to thoughts of Harry chastising him for forgetting to eat. Still the likely chance of Harry’s nagging wasn’t enough to get him to touch the food. Perhaps if Harry had been home instead of doing Merlin knows what...

“Hey.”

Tom immediately straightened from his slouch. His eyes dashed to the time piece above the mantle of the fireplace across the room, noting it was a quarter to four in the morning. His eyes had only begun to narrow when Harry spoke again.

“Don’t do that, Tom. I’m not hurt and I’m back by morning. There were no problems.” Harry grinned from where he stood against the door frame. He was nearly completely shrouded in dark thanks to the meager lighting and the dark traveling cloak he still wore. “What are you doing here sitting in the dark again?”

Tom needlessly gestured to the single candle on his table.

“Cat got your tongue?” Tom remained silent, sitting at his table and watching him. Harry pushed away from the doorframe and approached. “Tom?”

When still there was no verbal answer, Harry moved around until he was able to slip in between the desk and his sitting husband. He’d only planted his arse on the edge when Tom finally moved to stand and Harry found himself in a very tight embrace before he could blink. Tom’s arms slipping quickly and firmly around him and the Dark Lord planted his face against Harry’s warm neck.

One of Harry’s hands immediately found its way into Tom’s hair while his arm latched around Tom’s back just as tightly. “I missed you too, Tom.”

“Tom Marvolo Riddle?”

Turning towards the sudden voice, Harry only got a glimpse of a shimmering mirror suspended in air near the fireplace and a familiar face before Tom grabbed his shoulders and spun him back around.

Tom's eyes were hard now. Cold and gleaming red. His grip on Harry's shoulders was almost painful. "Do not show him your face," he whispered lowly.

"What is it? Who's that, Tom?"

"It's what I've been trying to remember. What I knew was coming."

"Tom-"

"Stay where you are and do not turn around."

Harry finally nodded and had to let Tom move away from him. Move towards something. Something that made his husband very nervous.

"Impossible."

"What is so impossible? You knew what the results would be. This is your third attempt, is it not?"

"You're... me."

How was Harry supposed to not look now?

"What you're doing... this right now," Tom murmured in what Harry recognized was his on the edge of fury tone. "This could destroy everything I have achieved! Everything you are working for! Even the smallest glimpse into the future could unravel everything! End this now and never do it again!"

"I want to see! I need to see it!"

"Obliviate yourself immediately!"

Harry summoned his gold mask and once it was in hand, he quickly put it on and turned around. There in the mirror was young Tom Riddle. A little older than what he remembered seeing of Tom in his second year. Still handsome, still arrogant. A look of wonder and also defiance in his eyes. Completely Tom.

"Who is that?" young Tom demanded, pointing at a masked Harry. *"What were you doing with him?"*

"What did it look like?" replied Harry.

His husband turned halfway around and hissed at him. Harry only shrugged. His Tom continued to look at him and Harry then registered the fear in his eyes. And he quickly understood what was going on inside his husband's mind right now.

“You were seeking comfort from this... from this person?!” young Tom accused. *“You?! Have we fallen so low?”*

“I think I should show off to this fool,” Harry murmured as he came to stand beside his husband. “Show him what he has to look forward to. What do you think, Tom?”

“Voldemort!”

“Merlin, you certainly were a spoiled wanker. And I prefer Bunnymort, Riddle.”

“WHAT?”

“You really aren’t helping,” Tom murmured lowly. “But do go on and show off now that you’ve disregarded my orders...again. Destroy something, love. You know what I mean.”

“Um, what about...” Harry waved his arm around, indicating the room.

“Easily fixed and there’s already a barrier around the entire room so nothing else will be touched, hopefully. Go at it, love.”

Harry nodded eagerly while his husband backed away to nearly the opposite side of the room. As Harry moved to stand directly in front of the mirror just a few feet back, Tom began to erect protective shields around himself. Just as a precaution. He didn’t think Harry’s spell would reach him, but it was always wise to be prepared. Harry was always surprising him.

“You think,” Harry began as he started to gather his power, his eyes beginning to brighten with it, “loving someone makes you weak. You’re wrong. You are so wrong. I’m stronger because of you, Tom Riddle. So much stronger. And you, in this time, are the most powerful wizard in the world. No one can match you. No one would bloody well dare. You think about this after I give you a demonstration.”

Harry brought his wand to his chest and held on to it with both hands, while slightly bending over it and murmuring words that had his hair beginning to sway in an invisible breeze. The mirror image didn’t say a word, only watched with highly visible skepticism.

As soon as Harry felt his magic peak, he dropped his arms. Both hands and wand pointed rigidly to the floor. He hissed out one word, his eyes solely on young Tom Riddle’s, and smirked when the ground began to tremble. Seconds later the ground erupted around him in a circle and then on it went, the destruction. Every few feet the ground exploded up and out, but Harry and the mirror remained safe within the first circle as the destruction went on around him.

It wasn’t until the spell continued to inflict damage fifteen feet out from Harry did Tom’s eyes begin to widen in surprise. Harry’s spell reaching out further and faster than he expected and when his desk was reached and then thrown into the air, splintering into pieces, did he realize he probably should have moved out the room altogether. He only had time to add two more protective barriers before the spell reached him.

By the time Harry's spell tapered off, the entire room was destroyed; the floor in rubble, most of the ceiling also destroyed and fallen into debris around. There wasn't a part of the room that wasn't damaged in some way.

Harry smirked under his mask at the face in the mirror, watching through all the dust settling around him as young Tom Riddle's eyes widened comically. "Pretty fucking brilliant, eh?"

But then those incredulous eyes dashed over and behind, and all at once Riddle looked enraged.

"Did you kill me?! You killed me!"

"What? I never-" Riddle pointed a shaking finger to somewhere beyond Harry, who spun around and felt his heart stop. Felt the blood freeze in his veins. Tom was laid out, crumpled amongst the rubble. From where he stood, Harry could see blood running from his husband's nose and mouth. "Tom!"

Harry dropped his wand and scrambled across the room, tripping over broken stone and wood as he went and fell at his husband's side; shaking hands reaching out to grab Tom's shirt. "Tom! Wake up! Merlin—oh, God, Tom!"

It wasn't until Tom groaned and his eyes peeled open did Harry burst into tears. It took a moment for Tom to get his bearings, to think past the pain, but when he did, he reached up to grab Harry's cheek, fingers sliding into his hair. "Will you never cease to amaze me, little minx?"

That didn't calm Harry down at all, just made him cry harder and he dropped down to hide his face against Tom's chest, fingers curling tightly into his husband's shoulders.

"I'm okay," Tom murmured. "Brat, I am fine."

"I almost killed you!"

Tom snorted derisively. "Not likely." After a moment of gathering his strength he managed to sit up, hiding the pain from his face from that action and gathered his distraught husband into his lap to hold him close. "Shhh. No harm done."

"Are you kidding me?!"

"That was amazing."

While the elder Tom smirked, Harry sniffed and pulled his face away from Tom's neck to look back to the mirror.

"Y-you taught me how to do that," Harry replied.

His husband kissed his temple. "I wasn't aware it would go that far out. Should have known though."

"*You... you really love him,*" Riddle whispered in awe, speaking to his older self. He didn't look disgusted, which both Harry and Tom took as a good sign.

"I know you," Tom murmured as he nudged Harry to move. Harry instantly rose and then helped Tom to his feet. Again Tom had to try hard to keep the pain off his face. He was going to need some healing. "I know the heart of you. I know your soul. I know what's deep inside you. Your... deepest wishes. The desires most longed for."

Riddle's eyes dashed to Harry for a moment before going back to Tom.

"We will lose it all if you do not Oblivate this memory immediately."

"*Who are you?*" Riddle asked of Harry, his voice gone soft and eyes bright.

Harry smiled in understanding. "I'm sorry. I can't tell you."

"Knowing who he is would definitely change your future," Tom said. "I cannot allow that to happen. If you do not do as I say and I lose everything I have, everything that I have achieved, I swear I will go back and destroy you."

Riddle frowned. Harry sighed and pulled away from Tom's arm to approach the mirror. He lay a hand on the mirror. Riddle looked at his hand, looked at the wedding ring. Harry watched with a rapidly beating heart as young Riddle lifted his hand also to place it against Harry's.

"If I tell you something, do you think you could believe me?"

"*I... I don't know.*"

Harry nodded. "I'll tell you anyway. You've won, in the here and now. You are ruler, Tom Riddle. The Dark is no longer being discriminated against thanks to you. And you've given me life. In so many different ways. You saved me... I've bound my soul to you and I swear on everything I am, this is the truth," he said in conviction. "I have and I will kill for you, Tom Riddle. You've given me everything and I plan to do the same for you for the rest of my days. Tom, I know you're lonely but I swear it won't last forever. Believe me, I've been where you are..."

"But... if you don't stop this. If you don't erase this memory, you know what will happen. You know the consequences of meddling with the future, or the past. We'll lose everything," he ended in a whisper, the truth of that matter swimming in his eyes.

Young Tom Riddle pulled in a deep breath as he pulled back his hand. He looked between Harry and his future self and then he nodded. As he raised his wand to his temple, the mirror began to fade away. "*If you're lying to me...*"

Tom smirked. "He doesn't dare lie to my face."

Harry grimaced and shook his head rapidly. That seemed to please Riddle. "*I will do as you say,*" he said. Just as the mirror disappeared completely, they heard a shouted, "*Oblivate!*"

Tom dropped to his knees a moment later, wrapping an arm around his middle. He was obviously in pain but he reached out and grabbed Harry's hand in a death grip.

Harry dropped down in front of him, worry back in his eyes, guilt also. "I'm so sorry."

"Husssh! Do not apologize for something so brilliant, Harry. I'll be fine. Probably just some internal bruising. Let's go visit our sons and don't you move away from my side for even a moment until I say otherwise."

"I'm not about to disappear on you."

"Not for a moment!"

"Okay!" Harry shook his head as he helped Tom back to his feet. Then he laughed. "I'd forgotten how hot you were back then. Snogging you back then wouldn't have been a chore."

He laughed harder at the incredulous look his husband sent his way.

"Oh don't worry. You're much better looking now that you're all grown up."

"Harry."

Harry snickered, knowing what was coming. "Yes?"

"Silence!"

Chapter Thirty-Two

Harry awoke slowly, still way too tired after getting in at nearly four and not going to sleep till after. He felt a hand in his hair and something warm pressing against his chest but it bothered him that his legs weren't tangled up with Tom's.

When he opened his eyes, he found Tom in bed with him, and it was his hand in his hair, but it became clear why his husband wasn't completely pressed against him. Their sons had been placed between them, cocooned by their parents. The hand in his hair tightened and Harry looked to find Tom's eyes on him.

Harry's brows drew down in worry. "You haven't slept at all, have you?"

"I had to make sure."

"You took the memory. We heard you."

"Yes we heard. But we didn't see."

"You don't remember," Harry pointed out, reaching up to touch Tom's face; to slide his fingers into the hair at his husband's temple.

"There was something like déjà vu. I remember that I tried it three times before..."

"We're still here, Tom. We'll always be here with you. And I saw it," he whispered, lifting up on his elbow. "In Riddle's eyes. He believed me. You believed me, Tom. He wanted desperately... If I weren't completely sure, don't you think it would have kept me up all night as well?"

"I concede that is true."

The hand shifted in hair and Harry lay back down and closed his eyes as those bloody brilliant fingers began to run through it and not surprisingly he drifted off again. He was disappointed to find Tom gone when he next woke. He was alone in bed this time. Tom probably gone to work and the twins in Tally's care.

He sat up and rubbed his palms over his face. He'd wanted to be able to wake Tom up... in the most delicious of ways. Ah well. There was always tomorrow morning. And the morning after that. He was also disappointed the babies weren't in the room with him. Tom had a tendency to do that in order to allow him to sleep more in the mornings since they both did take turns at night getting up to feed their sons when needed.

Once he was ready for the day, Harry went to the nursery to collect Alex and Cyril before going down to the kitchen to start on orders. He had one special order needing to be finished

by midweek. A wedding cake. He already had the three tiers of the cake baked and cooled, so when he started all he needed to do was take off the stasis charm and start the decorating. It wasn't long after he began when Draco arrived. The blond went straight to the bassinet and snatched out Cyril to hold. Alexander had already drifted back to sleep.

"Hello to you too," Harry said when it appeared Draco was just going to ignore him. Draco threw him a glare. "What did I do?"

"I cannot believe you gave them the ridiculous notion of asking their mother for advice on our new home!"

Harry turned completely away from the wedding cake, made sure to hide the smile, and faced Draco directly. Hiding that smile was hard.

"It was just a suggestion."

"A stupid one!"

"They're afraid you're going to start getting upset."

Draco made some sort of tisking sound as he went back to pacing around the kitchen, checking every station as he did so and occasionally sneaking treats out from under the house elves noses.

"I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I have patience."

Harry was unable to contain his disbelieving snort. "I really hope you aren't thinking of somewhere like the manor. Because if so it's no wonder you three haven't found the perfect place. It's just too big for them to be completely comfortable in. Too big and too porcelain. They want a home. Not a palace."

"Says the bloke who lives in a castle."

"It's a small castle and it's the Dark Domain so it's not even the same thing."

Draco snorted. "Dark Domain."

"It is! There's still places here I try to avoid. Did you know he has a pool full of blood that he likes to swim in?"

The blond's eyes got so round. He tried to keep from looking disgusted but it wasn't working. "Merlin... Really?"

Harry grinned. "No."

"Wanker."

"It's funny you actually believed it for a second."

"A pool filled with blood," Tom said as he walked in. "Not such a bad idea."

Harry rolled his eyes. “No.”

“Can I not just discard bodies into an empty pond and let them drain to see how long it would take to fill this pond? I promise to use only convicted criminals.”

“No!”

“No need to get so bothered, Harry. You brought it up.”

Draco snickered when Harry scowled at his husband and then spun around to continue icing the cake. The blond then resumed his wandering around the kitchen, checking up on everything that was made, eyeing the end results with a critical eye. Every so often he would nuzzle the top of Cyril’s soft crown with his cheek and smile fondly, and clearly, Tom thought, Draco had forgotten he was even there. Not that he was too bothered by this. It was... nice seeing Draco cuddling his newborn. Not that he would ever admit it out loud.

As he crossed to the bassinet set up near the island to peer into it where Alexander was sleeping, he eyed the blond. “Draco?”

“Yes, my Lord?”

“Have you started on the task I set you?”

There was a lot of throat clearing, uncomfortable coughing, and outright blushing and Tom chuckled darkly as he reached in to touch Alexander’s feet which were unfortunately covered by the blasted one piece he was wearing. “I was under the impression your fiends wouldn’t have any trouble at all with this mission.”

“Ah...”

Tom turned to face him. As he expected, Draco’s face was burning red. But then his eyes dropped to the baby he was holding. His arms seemed to tighten around Cyril just a little bit more and a dopey smile appeared on his face.

“Yes,” he replied softly. “Yes, my Lord. We’ve begun. Ah... since the wedding we haven’t really been trying not to.”

“Excellent.”

Draco blinked out of whatever daydream he was just spinning and smiled widely at his Lord. Tom sneered just for show and moved over to stand beside his husband, who had been listening curiously.

“Does the mission you’ve set for him have to do with the war?”

“No.”

“So can I know?”

“Yes, of course. I’ll let Draco tell you. By the way,” Tom held out a hand and summoned scraps of paper. When he had the seven clippings, he crossed over to Draco. “I think what you’ve been looking for can be found somewhere here. I’m confident one of these will meet the needs of all three of you.”

He exchanged the clippings for his son and went back to leaning against the counter next to his husband while Draco looked through the clippings. Cyril was awake and his eyes wandered to Harry and for a moment seemed content to watch his daddy ice a cake with a furrowed brow of concentration. Tom’s eyes brightened. Cyril and Harry had the same look on their faces!

“Merlin, this is it!” Draco hissed after a moment. “This is the one!”

Tom smirked in satisfaction as he heard Draco rush away. “This is for a wedding?” he asked skeptically, eyeing the purple, black, and pink icing.

“Yep. For the Mayer-Worshower wedding.”

“Worshower... yes, that makes sense. Mental, the lot of them.”

Harry snickered. “I can never get over the hypocrisy when you say such things. And be nice. They’re paying me a lot of money for this cake. They were one of the patrons who pushed back the wedding just to be able to have a cake I made.”

“Still mental,” Tom muttered.

“Aren’t you supposed to be at work right now?”

Tom seemed to be ignoring the question and instead ran the pad of his finger along the rim of the icing bowl, scooping up a small amount of icing. And then he touched his finger to Cyril’s lips.

“Tom! Don’t do that!”

“Why not? He appears to like it.” Cyril’s mouth had opened and he seemed to be trying to suck on his own lips. Tom grinned.

“It’s sugar! And he’s a newborn!”

“It was only a little. Don’t be so tight arsed, Harry.”

Harry tried to stay stern, he really did. “You’re an utter prat. And please don’t do that again.”

Sensing that it really did bother Harry, made him worry so, Tom nodded. “I won’t do it again until they’re older.” *In your presence.*

“I heard that.”

Tom narrowed his eyes. He was fairly certain he didn't say that last bit aloud. Sometimes it was really annoying Harry knew him so well. He consoled himself with the knowledge Harry felt the same way on occasion. And then those thoughts led him to start smiling like a besotted idiot.

"Draco, what's this mission..." Harry had turned and found the kitchen void of a young Malfoy. "Where did he go?"

"Probably to hunt down his husbands and go view the properties I gave information on."

"Why are you so sure any of those will suit them?" Tom gave him one of those looks. "Right. Yeah. Stupid question. All knowing Dark Lord and all."

"You would do well not to mock me."

"No mocking here, Bunnymort." And then Harry laughed. "Did you see Riddle's face when I said that? Thought he would have a heart attack! He looked so shocked and furious. Funny how he immediately knew what I was referring to."

"Harry." Tom took his chin, made sure Harry was looking at him. Harry was still grinning and Tom grew surprised. "You don't realize..." He stepped closer. "Not one soul knew about my Animagus form, Harry. Not one. Not until you."

"Surely not."

"Yes."

"I never actually considered... I mean I figured someone else would have known..." Harry's eyes widened. "But, but you were so nonchalant about it! You just transformed in front of me and we hadn't seen each other in four years and we were still kind of enemies! Why would you do that?"

That was a really good question and Tom found he didn't know the answer. "With you things just happen."

Harry's eyes dropped down to the baby in Tom's arms. Then he turned to look around the kitchen, eyes trailing over the half dozen house elves and he seemed to grow kind of annoyed. Then he turned back to the yet finished cake and hissed lowly in frustration under his breath. When he looked back to his husband, Tom sucked in an inaudible breath. Harry's eyes were dark, intense, and a bloody open book.

Tom cleared his throat and turned away, mentally cursing. "I need to conduct some business in my office. I'll take the boys with me."

"I'll come find you when I'm done."

"Please do."

"Are we really doing this? Should we?"

Fred turned to his brother. "What's the harm in trying?"

George blew out a breath, let his eyes wander down the path to where the Burrow towered. "Yeah, but..."

Fred shook his head and grabbed his brother's arm to start dragging him down the path. "George, we decided we need to find a place very soon. Before Draco starts to really show. We want him to be comfortable, settled."

George nodded. And then he grinned. Draco didn't know. No one did. But the twins knew and they knew even without Draco having been checked out by a healer. They inherently knew their gorgeous darling Draco had conceived during their honeymoon. Draco wanted kids right off so they hadn't tried to stop it from happening. Not for Draco. They had taken precautions with George because they didn't want two out of three pregnant at the same time. Fred wouldn't be able to stand that. Draco was going to be a handful already.

George's grin turned cocky. "We're good."

"Yes we are, and we're Weasleys so what else was going to happen?"

The front door was suddenly thrown open and their mother rushed out to meet them. They were kind of surprised by this. Everything had been nice and all at the wedding but there had been some lingering tension between them and their parents. Now though Molly Weasley was smiling with genuine pleasure as she reached them and threw her arms around first Fred and then George.

"Come in, you two! Draco's just been telling me about the homes we're about to go tour! I was very surprised, I must say, but he's a very charming young man when he wants to be, isn't he? Well come on. I've just set Draco up with lunch. Mustn't let him waste away. Not now surely!"

"Eh?"

"Erm..."

"I do hope you boys are feeding him properly. The early stages are very important!" Molly nodded firmly, spun around, and then hurried back to the house leaving her sons to blink rapidly in confusion after her.

"Did she just say...?"

"We must have heard wrong," Fred whispered and then they both dashed after her.

It was exactly as she said. Draco was there, sitting at the kitchen table and eating food Molly Weasley had made. He didn't even look disgusted. And when Molly sat back down beside him, he groaned a little in appreciation, leaned close to her, and said, "this is really good, Mrs. Weasley. Have you ever thought about catering?"

Molly smiled widely and sort of blushed. She thought he was joking, but the twins knew Draco was being completely serious with his question and their mouths fell open in shock.

By the look in Draco's eyes, they knew Molly hadn't heard the last of it.

"There you are. Finally," Draco drawled upon seeing them. "We don't have all day, do we? We need to be off soon if we're going to see all these," he said, gesturing to the real estate clippings spread across the table between himself and Molly.

"Err..."

"Draco, you mustn't worry about seeing them all today. We don't want you to get sick with fatigue, you know?"

"Hmm? I assure you, Mrs. Weasley. I'm in top form."

Fred turned to George. Finally their minds were catching up. "She knows. How does she know?" he whispered.

"Seven children, Fred. Of course she can see it. Question is, has she mentioned it to Draco outright yet?"

And then their mom was smiling widely at them and they realized this is why there was no tension anymore and why she seemed ecstatic to have Draco sitting at their family table and enjoying a meal.

"Ah well," George sighed. "We couldn't hold on to the anger forever."

"Draco, what are you doing here?"

"You told me you were coming."

"Yeah, but..." Just that morning Draco seemed ridiculously insulted at the mention of having their mom help them out with the house hunting.

"And then I was visiting Harry and babies and the Dark Lord handed me these clippings. He said we would find what we were looking for in one of these, and then I thought it wouldn't hurt to have your mother help us and so I came here to ask her."

He spoke as if it were all very reasonable, as if coming to the Burrow were something he did every day. And their mom didn't even twitch at the mention of the Dark Lord. No frown or nothing. She just kept smiling and nodding along and they could see how pleased she was that Draco had come all this way by himself to ask her to go along with them, which meant he had no intention of keeping the twins away from their family, and they were just falling in love all over again.

"So," Draco began after cleaning his plate. He stood, took Molly's elbow and helped her to her feet. "Shall we go?"

When they heard movement overhead, the twins and Molly stiffened. Draco's eyes drifted to the ceiling and a dark smirk appeared on his face. "Which one would that be?"

“Ah, we should go now, shouldn’t we?” Molly quickly asked. “You said you made an appointment with the realtor.”

Draco’s eyes never left the ceiling. “I did. I take it your second youngest ran away back to Romania.”

Molly looked like she didn’t want to answer, but when Draco looked at her directly, she found she couldn’t keep her mouth shut. He had that same penetrating stare his father had. “No. He’s still here. They’re both here—we should go, shouldn’t we?” she peered at her sons with begging eyes.

“Did he give up on the dragons?” George asked.

“He says he likes the dragons but it’s just not for him.”

“Pity. They might have eaten him.”

One twin frowned while the other grinned. Draco shrugged at George, the one who was frowning, and then smiled sweetly and George’s frown vanished. They all heard movement at the top of the stairs and before Molly could get them to even move one foot, Ron appeared.

“Can I go with?”

Draco frowned in annoyance. This one was the lesser of two evils and he would have much preferred to play with Ginny Weasley.

“Ron, I don’t think that’s such a good-”

“Why not?” Draco answered with a smirk. “I don’t have a problem with it.”

The twins were much too clever to even need to ask why. But they did wonder why Ron wanted to tag along. Ron had to know Draco was going to take shots at him throughout the outing and they weren’t prepared to do anything to stop it. They wanted to keep their darling Draco in a good mood, especially for when they finally told Draco about being up the duff, which they planned to do that night. It was apparent their mother hadn’t clued Draco in either.

The real estate office was located in Diagon Alley near Gringotts. On the way there, the group of five came across a family of three. The Thomas’. Dean, Seamus, and their baby girl. The twins, Molly, and Ron stopped to talk to them while Draco went on to go check in with the realtor.

“Isn’t she gorgeous?!” Molly exclaimed over the baby Seamus was holding. She was a tan thing with curly red gold hair and brown eyes. She smiled widely at the new people.

“Thanks, Mrs. Weasley,” Seamus replied. “She’ll be eight months tomorrow.”

“Give us a name, already,” Fred demanded as he fingered her lovely hair.

“Brigid. Brigid Thomas.”

“She’s a sweet thing. Congrats, you two,” George told them with Ron following suit.

“You as well, right. On your marriage.”

“Thanks! We got lucky.”

“You think so?” Seamus couldn’t help but mutter and Dean nudged him in the side with a quick shake of his head.

The twins didn’t take exception and grinned at him. “Ah well, you gotta understand. We’ve all grown up, yeah?” Fred answered. “Our darling Draco isn’t as much of a prat as he was in school.”

When Ron snorted, they smirked at him. “Unless someone pisses him off,” George ended.

Dean looked around the bustling street a moment before turning back to them. “Harry was right. Things aren’t bad. Um... how is he?”

“Brilliant. Babies are good too. Two healthy baby boys. Alexander and Cyrillius. He’s thinking about bringing them out in public soon.”

Draco appeared then at Fred’s side. “The agent is waiting for-” He took one look at Brigid and gasped. “Look at you! The cutest thing!” He then went on to tickle the baby under her chin, cooing at her. Dean and Seamus were too shocked to do anything but stand there and let him. Ron too actually. Molly just smiled widely with a knowing look in her eyes.

“Her name’s Brigid,” announced Dean when he could find his voice.

“She’s wicked. You guys make pretty babies! Who would have thought? Can I hold her?”

“Okay, I think I’ve been transported to a different dimension,” Dean muttered as Seamus, after a moment’s hesitation, transferred his daughter into the Death Eater’s arms. Malfoy didn’t look like a Death Eater though. Not right now. Not while he was snuggling Brigid with that sincere excited smile on his face.

“Weird,” Dean and Seamus whispered once Draco handed her back.

“Nicely done, Thomas’.”

“Err... thanks, Malfoy,” Dean answered, completely blindsided.

“See?” said Fred as he positioned behind Draco to hug him from behind while Draco took up George’s hand. “We got lucky.”

“Are you still jobless?” Draco asked the two. “Because I remember you were good in Charms,” he said to Seamus. “And I need to fill a couple of spots in one of our businesses. We also have on-site child care.”

Seamus turned to his husband. “This isn’t Malfoy,” he hissed. “No way!”

Dean laughed. "Can you send us some information? That would be brilliant."

"Sure. You too, Thomas."

"Ah, well, Neville has contacted me about another two greenhouses he needs done soon. I like the labor. Building things. Think that's what I'm going to do."

Soon they separated. Ron turned to Malfoy. "How much of that was just for show?" he demanded.

Both his brothers turned to him, clearly ready to defend their husband, but Draco replied before they could say anything. "About forty percent," he answered truthfully, surprising everyone. "But I meant what I said about the jobs and that baby really is adorable!" he exclaimed as he hugged onto George's arm. He peered up at him. "We should try for a girl the first time. A girl would be brilliant!"

George laughed. "That's not exactly something we can control."

"But we'll give it our best, Draco love," Fred responded when Draco frowned.

Ron looked at Draco for a moment and then turned to his mother with a flabbergasted look on his face. She smiled and pat his arm. "It's alright, dear. It'll take some getting used to."

"And when it does happen," Draco went on, "it better not be twins! I'll have your heads!"

Upon the twins' panicked looks, Molly went to Fred and rubbed his arm. "Don't worry, dear," she whispered quietly. "It's not. This time. He would have figured it out by now if it were."

Fred blew out a relieved breath.

Once they met with the real estate agent, they travelled to the first property for sale. Immediately Fred and George hated it. It just wasn't their style. They didn't need to see anything but the outside and the main foyer to know that, but they kept that thought to themselves and would allow Draco to tour the place with the realtor. Draco's back was to them and he hadn't seen the looks on their faces so they were immensely surprised when their blond announced this wasn't the place, even when he hadn't seen more than the Family room. It was too big of a place with too little land around it. There were neighbors near and they were muggle neighbors. They didn't want to buy a place where they would have to be careful about magic.

The second Estate was no better and neither was the third. Though Draco was impatient to get to the property he really wanted the twins to see, he had to admit Mrs. Weasley was very good at pointing out pros and cons of each property. He hadn't expected her to have any say about anything. But this was not the case.

"Did you not ask your mother to help you three?" she asked once they left the third place.

"I brought it up, but only as a courtesy. Mother even said you would be better in this situation. She would rather we live at Malfoy Manor and wouldn't be any help at all. And

truthfully, she would be a bit suffocating and self absorbed in this situation. She would only be able to picture herself in these places. She's a complete Black, you know."

They struck gold with the fourth place. It was perfect. Two stories, but very spread out. Enough room for them plus a whole lot more. Two guest cottages. A lot of land. A lake, stables. Work rooms. Molly even gave an affirmative. Fred and George wanted it, just as Draco knew they would, but the two weren't sure they could afford a place like this immediately.

"What's the asking price?" Draco asked even though he already knew.

The agent rattled off the number of four point five million galleons. Fred and George frowned, Ron balked, and Draco's eyes travelled to the window where he could just make out the charming private lake. His eyes were calculating. Finally he nodded. "Cut that down to three and a half. There's work that needs to be done to it. And it's been on the market eight months already."

Mr. Wilkons didn't think too much on it. The owners were desperate to get rid of it. "Agreed."

"Then we'll take it." He turned to pierce the realtor with a look. "I'm sure the Malfoy name is enough to get you to put the property on hold. I don't want this place sold out from under us."

"Of course! I can give you three weeks before the property is put back on the market."

"Thank you. We won't need the three weeks."

"Three and a half... Can we do that?" George whispered to Fred as Draco and their mother went off to go look through the place again. They could hear Molly going on about the details of the place, no doubt surprising their blond yet again.

Fred turned to Mr. Wilkons. "Will it need to be paid in full up front?"

"If I'm to cut the price to three point five, then yes. The current owners will want the property paid in full."

"It's possible," Fred murmured to his brother. "With our savings and if we sell our stocks. We'd be very low on money for a while, but we'll have the shops to keep us afloat I think and there's no shortage of side jobs to take on..."

"I think you two are insane!" Ron hissed. "You don't even have that kind of money!"

"Yes, we do."

Ron sputtered. "B-but, how?" he burst out. "W-when?"

Fred waved that away. When Ron continued to sputter, George glared at him. "This isn't about you, Ron. This is about us and our growing family. And long term commitment. You wouldn't know anything about that would you?"

“It’s actually perfect for our current and future needs.”

“But the place is massive!”

“It’s actually not. The main house only has five bedrooms. It’s the abundance of acres it comes with that’s costing so much.”

“Still...”

“We intend to have a big family.”

“As if Malfoy would agree to that! He’s always taking jabs at the size of our family!”

Fred smiled. “You’d be surprised at what Draco wants now.”

Harry decided to take a break from the wedding cake once the base icing had been applied. The next stage was the magical additions and he needed to be able to focus completely on the task at hand. But he had been losing focus since Tom’s visit into the kitchen. Tom refused to answer about not being at work, but Harry knew the reason anyway. And this was the reason why his focus continued to wane. Harry couldn’t stop thinking about it either.

So when Tom went off with the babies, Harry went to take a walk and inevitably ended up outside of Tom’s destroyed study. All the debris had been cleared up already. Either by Tom or the house elves, but the room itself hadn’t been repaired yet. Harry winced. He’d demolished Tom’s personal study. Though it wasn’t as if Tom wouldn’t be able to find another suitable room to use, at least until this one was repaired.

He stepped up to the doorway and leaned against it, eyes travelling around until they came to the spot near the fireplace where the mirror had been hanging. Dropping the side of his head against the battered doorframe, he blew out a breath. He kind of wished last night hadn’t happened. Because all he could think about now was young Riddle. After speaking to him, after being able to stare into his eyes he understood a great deal more and it was heartbreaking. He wanted so much to be able to reach through that mirror and touch Tom, to soothe away the pain embodying every bit of his soul. It was no wonder Tom had sought to block out everything. He was so terribly damaged.

Harry slid down to the floor, back braced by the doorframe. There wasn’t anything he could do, but he couldn’t help feeling useless. He didn’t know how long he sat there torturing himself with these thoughts.

“Harry.”

He turned his head a fraction and found Tom standing several feet away. His husband seemed reluctant to come any closer to the study. Harry smiled slightly before returning his attention to the room.

“It can be repaired.”

Harry nodded, but he didn't immediately answer. Only when Tom moved a few feet closer did Harry speak. "You really were so very lonely, weren't you?" he whispered. "How could no one see it?"

It was really painful to know his Tom, even decades before, was in such a state. It tore at Harry's heart, made his eyes sting. "And I-I promised you wouldn't be alone forever, but it would be a long time..."

"Are you feeling sorry for me?"

"No. I just- I wish I could have been there for you, Tom. I saw the look in your eyes..."

And then Tom was crouching in front of him. The look in his eyes suggested he understood perfectly what Harry was feeling. The look in his eyes was so soft. He took up one of Harry's hands. "I would not have been ready for you."

"But would you have let me love you? Would you have loved me?"

"Yes. And then I would have pushed you away or killed you because of it. I was too young, Harry and obsessed about my goals. I would have let nothing and no one get in the way, even someone I love."

"You don't know that for sure."

Tom refrained from answering that but he did know and so did Harry. He sat down and pulled his husband into his lap. Harry wrapped his arms around him and dropped his cheek to Tom's shoulder. He slipped one hand into Harry's hair and wrapped an arm around his husband's back. Harry was feeling this so strongly because he could relate. The loneliness. The feeling of being cared for by no one. He was familiar with the ache and void that would create in the soul.

"Your heart is too big," he muttered; he didn't want Harry feeling this way. "Just remember, back then I really was an evil little shite, love. You've tamed me some... and don't for a second think I'm pleased about it or that I haven't noticed."

When Harry snickered against his neck, Tom smirked.

"You can't rule properly by being completely evil, Tom. That's stupid fictional nonsense."

"And as I've said before, looking back now, I realize I was an idiot."

"A mentally deranged idiot."

"Yes, that too."

Harry rubbed his nose against Tom's neck, inhaling that scent and reveling in it. "I love you. And... I love him. Maybe that's why I'm feeling this way. I looked into his eyes and I knew I loved him too. Even if you were an evil spoiled conceited irrational wanker... oh wait. That's still you."

Tom pulled back slightly to glare at him and Harry lifted his head. "Insolence."

Harry leaned forward and laughed against his mouth. "Do you know what else I've been thinking?"

The arm around his back moved and Tom slid the other hand into his hair. Harry wouldn't have been able to pull away from his lips even if he wanted to. "I'm almost afraid to ask."

"I was thinking it's a shame your younger self couldn't come out of the mirror for at least an hour or two." He pressed in again, lightly suctioning Tom's bottom lip in between his own. "The fun I could have had. Two of you. Yummm. Think about the things you two could have done to me."

Tom narrowed his eyes slightly but Harry felt a better reaction from the lap he was currently perched on. Tom was a kinky bastard too.

"You think you need two of me?" Tom asked lowly, darkly and Harry shivered. "Am I not enough for you?"

Harry shifted again and let his lips trail over Tom's jaw while his hands moved down to unlace Tom's tunic. "Don't sit here and try to pretend the idea didn't just make you insanely horny," he breathed.

"You didn't answer the fucking question, Harry!"

Harry laughed before sucking at Tom's throat. He wanted his Dark Lord and by fueling the fire, he was going to get his pissed off insanely horny Dark Lord. "I don't think the question needs to be answered."

The hands in his hair clenched and Harry winced slightly but he still kept on with nosing his way down Tom's throat and over his collar, running his tongue along Tom's jumping pulse. And then he suddenly found his back on the floor. He had to blink a few times to focus on Tom's face and ignore the slightly painful twinge on the back of his head. Tom was hovering over him, his eyes glowing red.

"I really do insist you answer the question."

"Mmm. Tom, that sort of hurt," Harry murmured, raising a hand to rub the spot. Tom quickly caught his wrists and pulled them tightly above his head. And then he was nestled quite nicely between his spread thighs. It was only a shame they were both still wearing clothes. Though that wasn't going to be a problem shortly. "I can't be sure," he said in answer to the question, which of course wasn't a satisfactory answer. He made sure to grin because if Tom thought for even a moment he was being serious in any way...

"Little minx," hissed Tom as he lowered to capture those smiling lips with his. And as he predicted clothes were quickly discarded. Tom transfigured his shirt into a blanket and shoved it beneath Harry.

“Someone could see us,” Harry moaned when Tom’s mouth started doing lovely things to his chest.

“Hermione’s at work and the twins are away with Draco. Not likely.”

“Lucius could drop by...” Tom’s mouth was getting lower and Harry felt like he was on fire. Tom released his hands and they immediately went to his husband’s hair.

“Then he’ll get an eyeful.”

Tom sat back slightly and feasted his eyes on the body laid out below him. He had that urge, where he just wanted to sink in, get lost to the feel of Harry. Hear the sounds Harry made when he was lost. And he wanted it now. But he made himself be patient. He would take care of Harry first. He let his hands wander over his lover, fingers and blunt nails applying just enough pressure to have Harry’s breath hitching. He dipped down again, mouth instantly latching onto and feasting on Harry’s arousal and reveling in his young husband’s moans, the calls of his name as it was gasped out over and over again. The arching of the body beneath him had his own need growing without bounds.

It felt like the first time, they’re rejoining. He’d made it so. Harry’s begging; the love in his eyes and his own hands shook as finally took Harry. It was just slightly annoying but not surprising that neither of them lasted very long. As Tom wrapped his husband in his arms and rode out the waves of euphoria, he consoled himself with the fact that he would have Harry again very soon, and it wouldn’t be on the floor. It would be in the kink room and he would torture Harry for hours for his two Toms comment. He grinned in sadistic anticipation against Harry’s slick neck.

Harry sighed happily and tightened his arms around his husband. “I heard that.”

The noise of the Great Hall as he approached from the antechamber had Severus scowling. It had been like this since Yule Break. After the takeover he had entertained the hope these students would come back cowed, more behaved, less... noisy. Not the case. The end of the war was official, the world wasn’t burning, and Voldemort’s rule did not entail the mass murder of every squib, muggleborn, and half blood. Britain had relaxed in the last few months.

Harry had a great deal to do with that, though Severus knew the brat wasn’t really aware of that. People may have been angry at Harry for not going after Voldemort, but the fact was Harry being staunchly neutral put people at ease. That part about Harry was obvious even to those who didn’t really know him personally. Harry Potter wouldn’t put up was needless killing and bloodshed. The people realized they should be thanking him.

But here at the school, Severus thought as he took his seat at the center of the professors’ table, the atmosphere was as always due to nothing really having changed aside from a few modifications to the curriculum and the new professors.

“Having a nice day, Headmaster?” the wizard beside him inquired with a toothy grin.

Severus mentally rolled his eyes. Much of the students' ease here had to do with this wizard. Bartemius Crouch Jr. was easily the most popular professor at Hogwarts this year- especially with the young witches- much to the horror of the other professors. Once he made it plain he was there to teach them and not torture them, the students had relaxed. And even more when they realized Crouch wanted to teach them, enjoyed it, and was very good at it.

"I haven't expelled anyone today," Severus finally answered and that was code for 'not really.'

Teaching at Hogwarts seemed to have done wonders for Barty's mental health as well. Crouch truly enjoyed his position. And most of the time he wouldn't stop going on about how much better the weather was here.

"Lucius feeling any better?"

"The sickness comes and goes."

"How often does he complain about the widening of his waistband now?"

Severus grimaced. "Please, let's not go there."

"Are you excited?"

"What makes you think I want to talk about it with you?" he returned acerbically.

Barty shrugged and turned back to his meal, but Severus did notice the disappearance of that grin. Barty may be popular with the students but amongst the other professors, no one really wanted to interact with him due to his past. Not even the new professors the Dark Lord handpicked. They were either too scared, mistrustful, or downright hateful of Barty.

Which left the wizard without anyone to really speak to. Barty's character was complicated. The wizard was brilliant, intellectually. Probably a genius. The Dark Lord thought so. But he'd also been locked away in his own home for ten years and the only interaction he'd had then was with a doting house elf and rarely sometimes with his bastard of a father. And then after, he spent years at Durmstrang, but that had been a quiet watchful post and he spent most of his time spying on Karkaroff and doing research for Voldemort.

Crouch Jr. had never been anti-social regardless of his brilliance so now that he was back amongst the general population, he was having a hard time adjusting.

"Yes. I am excited. Lucius too before you ask."

"Do you know what it is?"

"We're going to wait and see." Severus glanced sideways at Barty. "Longbottom's baby will be born soon."

That was the thing also about Barty. He was a lot less insane in regards to what he would and would not do in Voldemort's name. Or more specifically- because Crouch would do whatever the Dark Lord asked of him- he would think upon it with more of a conscious.

When he had just been turned a Death Eater, Barty was seventeen, and he'd been wild, immediately taking in with the Lestranges. Severus didn't agree with the Longbottom attacks then and he didn't now. It had been unnecessary and like the Potters, a tragedy.

Barty's barely there wincing told Severus everything he needed to know. The Dark Lord was where he wanted to be and also where Severus wanted him to stay. They didn't need that reckless insanity in their ranks any longer to muck it up.

Barty suddenly pushed back from the table. He cleared his throat. "I need to finish setting up for tomorrow's lessons."

Severus watched him walk around the table and to the doors.

"Tomorrow is Saturday." Severus turned to the speaker. McGonagall was watching Barty walk off. "I don't know whether to chastise you for being rude for brining that up, or for being pleased with you because he did do those things. But you clearly upset him."

"It's not as if you care. You all clearly hate him."

"He's good with the children. He's a devoted educator," McGonagall murmured. "It's starting to become very hard to hate him."

"Then try and show it once in a while," he snapped. "At least treat him like a colleague. He is not the same. He's... growing."

"Should we ignore what he's done?"

"That's not what I said. But the fact is, I think he wants to right some wrongs. Is there anything wrong with that?"

"Some wrongs cannot be fixed."

"I agree. But we were at war. We fought battles. It does no good to hold on to such things when you cannot change what is. Let us move on from that," Severus stated softly, his eyes going back to the doors. "It's time to move on. The war is over."

Barty licked his lips as he stepped out into the corridor and quietly shut the Great Hall doors behind him. He looked around, still somewhat surprised to be back here teaching, as himself. Surprised but pleased. Most times. The students seemed to like him but no matter how much, it was clear most were still afraid of him. He always had groups of students coming up after classes or in the halls asking him questions. Never a lone student. No one was brave enough to be alone with him. It was understandable.

"Oh! Professor! Professor Crouch, can you help me a moment?"

Barty sighed, prepared for the deluge of questions, and turned to the left. His annoyance instantly vanished when he saw it wasn't a student calling out to him even though she could have passed for one.

He jogged down to her as she seemed to be having trouble with a large covered bundle in her arms. He recognized her as one of Po-Riddle's friends and also a Silver. "Miss Lovegood,

right?”

“Yes! Hi!” she chirped at him, breathing in relief when he grabbed one side of the bundle just before it would have slipped out of her hands. “Thank you. He was getting quite heavy.”

“You could have levitated this... whatever this is.”

“I already stunned him. I didn’t want to take the chance of agitating him with more magic in case he woke up before getting here.”

“What is it?” Barty inquired. It was half the size of her. Just larger than the size of her torso, length wise. There was an odd smell too coming from under the unusual tarp covering it.

“He’s quite brilliant, really! And a baby too. But I found him injured and hunters were tracking him. I couldn’t leave him there. There are too few of them as it is. So I stunned him and covered him and thought to bring him here to Professor Hagrid for healing and care until he can be returned to the wild. I know if I brought him anywhere else, there was the likely chance he would be destroyed.”

Was she evading the question on purpose, Barty wondered.

As if she could hear that, she said, “here, have a look,” and she started to gently unwrap one side of the patchwork tarp until the head was visible.

Barty resisted the urge to back away and looked at the young woman incredulously. “You brought a Chimaera here?” he whispered in astonishment.

“He’s just a baby, Professor.” She smiled softly at the horribly dangerous creature.

“How did you manage to stun it?”

“As I said, he’s injured. It wasn’t too hard then. Honestly, the stunner is just a precaution for when I brought him here. He let me approach when I found him.”

“He let you approach?” Lovegood smiled widely and nodded. Barty studied the lion face; most of it was covered by another cloth. She’d made sure to blindfold it in case it awoke. Smart. “Is he bound under that tarp?”

“A little, yes.”

Barty blew out a breath. This was insane. “Alright. We’ll set him down here.” They gently lowered the Chimaera to the ground. “I will fetch Hagrid and the Headmaster. If he wakes, stay back.”

“He won’t hurt me.”

Barty shook his head as he walked back to the Great Hall. Just before going back in, he looked to find Lovegood crouched beside the creature, stroking its mane. He shook his head again in bewilderment and shoved open the Great Hall doors. He quickly approached the

professors table and explained the situation to Snape, who immediately shot to his feet and began to round the table.

“Hagrid! Follow!”

When they returned to the corridor, Luna was now sitting cross legged on the floor with the wrapped creature in her lap.

“Lovegood, explain this insanity immediately!”

“Any place else would use or kill him, Headmaster. He’s safe here.”

“And what of the students?”

Her nonchalant shrug was surprising.

Hagrid had already lumbered over, and as expected when he first looked upon the creature, his eyes started watering. Luna smiled up at him. “Professor, can you help him? He’s been impaled badly in the stomach and also a deep long cut on his back. I think those nasty hunters caught up with him at some point, but he managed to get away.”

Hagrid lowered to his knees and touched the Chimaera’s snout. “Aye, lass. I can help him.”

“You cannot keep him,” Severus snapped for he knew that’s what Hagrid was thinking. “Not even in the Forbidden Forest.”

“I’ll return him to where I found him,” Luna assured. “But can I stay here again in the castle, Headmaster? He’ll be more agreeable to care with me near him I think.”

Severus looked heavenward and dragged a hand down his face. “Very well,” he agreed grudgingly and knew he was probably making a horrible mistake. “You can have your old rooms. I’ll need to set the appropriate wards around them. Hagrid, should you need any potions, you will let me know.”

Hagrid turned to Severus and his beard was now wet from his tears. “Thank you, Headmaster! Thank you!”

Severus sneered. Barty stood back and laughed.

“Let’s get ‘im up there and look at ‘is wounds, Luna. ‘Afore he wakes.”

Luna smiled and nodded. Hagrid easily picked up the Chimaera and then extended a hand to help Luna to her feet. “Brilliant, Luna! How did ya even...” and they were walking away, chatting excitedly.

Severus slowly followed after, shaking his head at himself. “Barty, would you mind coming and keeping an eye on those ridiculous two? They’re likely to get themselves killed.”

Barty laughed outright and quickly caught up with Severus.

“A Chimaera! She brought a Chimaera into the school without a care about the students! She says, ‘it’s fine, Headmaster. He’s just a baby’. A Chimaera!”

“Severus, perhaps you should take a Calming draught,” his husband suggested with ill concealed amusement.

Severus glared harshly when Harry snickered and nodded at Lucius.

“She named it Dan,” he flatly announced.

That set Harry, Draco, and the twins off with raucous laughter. After a moment Lucius bit his lip to keep from laughing, but Tom dropped his face to his hands to keep his laughter quiet. It was quite ridiculous and extremely amusing. Especially Severus’ face at the moment.

“And then of course Hagrid was crying over the thing, cooing at it. I can’t wait to see the thing blow fire in his face.”

“Not like that hasn’t happened before,” Harry replied.

“Oh yeah! The baby dragon,” Draco replied, nodding.

Harry glared at him. “Wanker.”

Draco smirked.

“Chimaera’s do not breathe fire until the juvenile age,” Narcissa announced. “So you’ll have some time before you need to worry about that if it truly is a baby.”

“And what happens when the thing bites off that girl’s face?!”

“You say it let her approach. I doubt at this point it will do her harm like that,” Tom replied. “Though it is surprising it let her get anywhere near it.”

“My lord, Loony’s good with animals.”

Severus rounded on his godson. “This isn’t just an animal, Draco. This is a CHIMAERA!”

Lucius hoisted himself out of his comfortable chair and came to stand beside his irate husband. Taking his arm with one hand and rubbing his back with the other. He tried very hard to keep the amusement off his face now. Severus turned to him.

“I can’t stay tonight, Lucius. I cannot be gone with that creature under the same roof as the students.” Lucius nodded in understanding, but his eyes expressed clear annoyance and disappointment. “You could come back with me.”

“Very well.”

Severus seemed to breathe out in relief.

Harry perked up. “Severus, can we visit the school tomorrow since it’s the weekend? I’d like to see Luna.”

Severus narrowed his eyes. Mainly on the twins. “Who?”

“Tom and myself. I know Tom wants a look at the Chimaera.”

Tom nodded, though he didn’t need permission to go to the school and his semi-glare said as much.

“Us as well!” the twins exclaimed.

“No.”

“Oh, come on, Sev! We swear to behave... a little.”

“There’s no harm,” Lucius interjected when Severus was clearly about to say no again.

Severus turned and strode for the door. “Then you can be responsible for them.”

Lucius pierced the twins with a look as he followed his husband out.

“Bollocks,” Fred muttered.

“Now we have to behave.”

Narcissa regally followed after at a more sedate pace. Tom remained seated, slightly glaring at nothing from the fact his Lieutenants had just left without acknowledging him in any way. Though to be fair, Severus was in a slightly panicky state and Lucius was all about calming Severus down. As his pregnancy went on, it seemed Lucius’ ability to multi task had drastically declined.

Harry stopped the twins before they would have gone, mumbling about doing a job. “Did you guys find a house?”

“Yeah we did! It’s brilliant!” Draco exclaimed.

The twins nodded half heartedly and only when Draco looked at them did they look more excited. And then Draco rushed after his father, needing a quick word with him before he left with Severus, leaving Harry free to inquire about the twins’ reactions. “What’s wrong? You don’t like it?”

“No, it’s not that, Harry,” said George. “The place is grand. It’s actually brilliant for us, but...”

Fred blew out a breath. “We’re not really sure we can afford the place right now. We’d make enough in time, but if we buy it now, we’d have little for basic daily living or keeping our businesses running in top form.”

“How much can you afford right now?”

“We’ve got about three quarters we can hand over without it affecting us too badly. But we’d be living like paupers for months and months... and uh... Draco would then divorce us.”

Harry immediately opened his mouth and the twins knew without a doubt he was about to offer to help. “Harry, no,” George said. “As much as we appreciate it. We couldn’t let you. You already helped out with our first store, but we need to do this on our own.”

Fred shrugged. “Don’t worry about it. We’ll think of something. We just have to be quick before someone else buys it.”

“Wait. When you guys say we can’t afford it, you’re just speaking of the two of you?” they nodded. “Um... you’re a partnership of three now.”

“Yeah, but we told him-”

“I don’t care what you told him and I’m quite sure he doesn’t either. You aren’t giving Draco enough credit. He does your finances, doesn’t he? He looks over the books for your stores?”

“Yeah. He’s been a great help with that.”

“Draco would never be settled like this on the property if he weren’t one hundred percent sure you three could afford it and still come out on top. I think you’re forgetting his fortune as well. Once you married him, his money became your money. He’s going to get angry to know you didn’t even consider this. That you didn’t even consider he would want to chip in on your future home. He’s looking to take care of you two, you know. You guys need to remember this.”

The twins were grinning widely. “Geez, Harry. There you go again. Being wise.”

“I know. Scary, isn’t it?”

Tom turned away to hide the smirk brought on from that.

“So now you need to go pop open a bottle and celebrate on finding your new home!”

“We could but Draco can’t really drink.”

“Why?”

“Good question,” Draco said, coming up behind them. He was staring at his husbands and it was clear he heard the quiet discussion Harry and the twins had been having. “Why can’t I drink? I think this calls for it.”

Fred and George thought now was as good as time as ever. They had planned to do it later, when they were snuggling their blond in bed, but they were caught now and Draco wasn’t going to let this go. “Draco, we’re Weasleys. What automatically comes to mind when you hear that name?”

Immediately Draco's eyes went up to their hair. Still copper in color.

Fred laughed. "Not that one."

It took only a moment more before Draco's eyes widened and dropped to his own stomach.

"Yeah, that one."

"Harry, you remember when you mentioned Draco's emotional clinginess? There's a reason for that."

"Probably since the honeymoon. We just know."

"We weren't keeping it from you, love," George hurried on when Draco lifted his eyes back to them. Those eyes began to frost over and narrow. "We just wanted to find the right moment; maybe let you realize it first. But you haven't."

"S-since our honeymoon?"

They looked entirely too pleased with themselves. "Thereabouts, but yeah!"

Harry was bouncing on his toes he was so excited. He wanted to tackle Draco in a hug but his mate looked way too shocked. He'd wait a minute. Tom for his part was just sitting back and wondering if he were invisible. And aside from that, he had to admit to being pleased with Fred and George. They had completed the mission before even being given said mission. He was so pleased he decided a nice reward was in order.

"Merlin, this is... this is brilliant!" Draco shouted and then dashed out of the room. "MOTHER!"

Tom gave Harry a minute to congratulate the twins before taking Harry's arm and leading him to the door. "Let's return home before he comes back. You'll be able to speak with Draco tomorrow."

Knowing Tom's mood had been dropping due to, well, it was fairly normal the mood swings. But since young Riddle's appearance, Tom's behavior had become a little more erratic. Harry understood, never took exception, and was happy to be a buffer between the world and his husband. And besides, Tom had been an absolute dream in regards to his emotional pendulum during his pregnancy and he wouldn't soon forget it.

"Yeah, okay." He turned back to the twins. "Tell Draco I'll see him tomorrow. Also tonight on your watch, could you spread the word? I want a full Silver meeting in two days."

"Sure thing!"

Harry knocked on the door and rocked back and forth on his toes, waiting for it to open. He couldn't wait to see Luna, hear about her recent trip, and see this baby Chimaera she'd boldly brought into the school. Severus was still in an apoplectic state over it. He would have

brought the twins as well since Luna had yet to meet them, but Tom had forbidden it. And he kind of agreed. He didn't really want to bring Alex and Cyril anywhere near a Chimaera.

As soon as the door opened, Luna barreled into him. "Harry! Hello!"

Harry laughed and hugged her back. "Hi. You don't mind me dropping by do you?"

"Never!" she exclaimed and dragged him inside.

"Oh. Hello, Barty," he said upon seeing the wizard seated on a small sofa near the fire.

"Harry," Barty greeted. "Come to take a look?" he asked, gesturing to the tarp covered lump in front of the fire.

"Came to see Luna mostly, but yeah. I'm curious. Tom's here as well. He'll drop by soon. He went to speak to Severus."

"Tom? What did you do to him?" Barty demanded, standing. "How did you forgive him?"

Harry sighed. "Please don't make me get mad at you... again."

"No. No. I didn't mean it like that." The wizard backed up and dropped back to his seat.

Luna smiled softly and took up Harry's hand. "He really didn't mean it like that," she said upon seeing the fire lighting Harry's eyes. "He's... been troubled," she whispered. "We've been speaking a lot. Last night and today. He's brilliant! It's a shame we didn't have him as a real teacher."

Harry studied Crouch. "People can and do change, a little. I've tamed the Dark Lord some and he's corrupted me some." He shrugged.

Barty smirked. "I like that you admit it."

"Can I see it?" Harry gestured to the lump he assumed was the baby Chimaera.

"Yes. But be very slow and quiet. Dan's sleeping. We don't want to startle him."

Harry snorted. "Luna," he murmured fondly.

Luna smiled widely. "I met a Dan on my travels. He was dreamy and well worth being remembered. We had some wild nights in the woods."

"I bet." He then snorted again at Barty's wide eyed look. "She's a nymph."

Barty covered his face with his hands when Luna's smile widened and she nodded. "I... Don't. Just... don't."

"Life's too short," Luna responded with a wink as she led Harry to the baby.

Barty looked entirely too relieved when the door opened to admit Severus and the Dark Lord. He jumped up and practically ran to them. "My Lord," he murmured, bowing lowly.

“That’s close enough, Harry,” both Severus and Tom stated. Harry turned and frowned at them. Luna knelt down and carefully removed the tarp.

“She must have charmed it somehow,” Severus muttered. “I cannot believe how docile it’s being. These are bloodthirsty creatures!” he hissed.

“What happened to him,” Harry asked Luna, leaning forward on his knees and ignoring Tom’s warning glare concentrated on his back. The Chimaera’s torso and back was heavily wrapped in bandages but the serpentine end was perfectly fine.

“Hunters. You know after the egg hatches the mother leaves the baby on its own. Some don’t survive the first six months. Hunters and the natural environment have much to do with that. Sometimes the mother will even come back to try and eat the young.”

“You should have left him, Lovegood.”

“Well I didn’t, Headmaster. And that’s that.”

Harry and Luna shared a smirk upon hearing Severus hiss through clenched teeth.

“You’re the one who allowed her to keep it here,” Tom pointed out.

“A moment of insanity, I assure you, my Lord.”

“It’s perplexing, his behavior with her,” Barty murmured. “You should have seen him an hour ago. He was letting her cuddle his head in her lap!”

“It probably sees her as a mother figure,” Tom reasoned. “She’s been caring for it, protecting it. I’ll assume feeding it as well.”

“Once he’s all better it won’t be like that,” she whispered to Harry sadly. “He’ll definitely try to eat me then.”

“You get to spend time with him now though.”

She nodded and went back to stroking Dan’s snout.

“Draco and the twins are here. They want a chance to look at it. Is that alright?”

“One at a time. There’s too many people here as it is. He would definitely react badly.”

Harry nodded, and because he could feel Tom approaching from behind, he stood and backed away to let his husband have a look. Tom knelt beside Luna, studying the creature. After a moment he slowly reached out to touch Dan. Luna’s hand flashed out quickly and snagged his wrist before he could get any closer.

Upon the narrowing of his red eyes, Luna smiled. “Lord Voldemort, forgive me,” she whispered and dipped her chin respectfully. “But Dan will know it is not me touching him, even in sleep. He won’t like it.”

Barty turned wide eyes on Severus. “She would dare?!” he hissed in astonishment.

“I’ve been told she fears nothing. Not even our Lord.”

“Why would you name a creature such as this Dan?” inquired the Dark Lord.

“She named him after a lover,” Harry responded in a laughing voice.

Luna released Voldemort’s wrist and smiled over her shoulder at her friend. “A very skilled lover.”

“Bloody Gr-”

“Uh uh,” Harry called out. “She’s not a Gryffindor. Hey, Luna? What’s my namesake creature?”

Tom whipped his head around to glare at Harry, who realized he probably shouldn’t have said that in current company. Luna laughed. “Who says you were that memorable?”

“Ouch,” Barty whispered.

“Oh, come on now, Luna...”

“I’m the reason you realized you couldn’t ever be with a girl again after having been with a guy. It was pretty clear halfway through.”

“Keep it up with the knife work,” Harry muttered, shooting Barty a glare because the wizard wouldn’t stop laughing under his breath.

“You are an exceptional snog though.”

“Slightly mollifying.” Harry moved forward and grabbed Tom’s hand and began dragging him to the door. “Come along, Voldemort. I feel the evil seeping through your robes. Bye, Luna. See you tomorrow.”

“Bye bye!”

“Why am I not really surprised?” Tom muttered as they walked through the halls.

“I told you. She looks innocent but she’s not. Anyway, she prefers older men. Can’t stand the young ones. Not enough experience. Clearly we have that in common, yeah?”

“Merlin. Young people these days.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Okay, Oldie Voldie.” He laughed and took off running down the hall, narrowly dodging the no doubt strong Crucio hurled his way.

The following evening Harry, Tom, and their sons’ settled down in the sitting room for some quiet time. As he had been doing, Harry immediately set to spreading the twins’ large soft

blanket out on the floor before laying them down upon it. He sat down with them, intent on playing with their arms and legs. He shook his head when Tom appeared to take a seat next to him.

“This blanket is for the babies... and maybe Bunnymort.”

Tom glared half heartedly for a moment. And then he whipped out his wand and pointed it at his husband. “*Evigilo!* It’s also for kitty Harry.”

This time the transformation took less time. Immediately Harry’s ears disappeared, the tail ripped through his trousers, and those triangular ears appeared. “I’ve been waiting over nine months to be able to do that again.”

Harry’s ears flattened and he hissed at him. Tom laughed.

“Did you forget I’m going into the Market tonight after the Silver meeting?” Harry asked lowly.

He had. “Of course not.”

Harry’s glare lessened as he licked the back of his hand to slick it over one pointed ear. “Suppose it doesn’t matter meow,” he muttered. He then transferred to his hands and knees and began to crawl around the babies, softly nudging them with his nose, pressing the boys closer together. Harry made the circuit five times before dropping on his side and curling around them. His head popped up after a moment, eyes narrowed on his husband.

“Very well,” he answered, and transformed himself into Bunnymort. He hopped a few paces closer to the babies before he noticed Harry was no longer laying down. Harry had risen slightly on his knees, but kept himself close to the floor. His eyes were pinned on the bunny and his nails had slightly sharpened. He looked like he was stalking. In fact the bunny saw the cat slowly move an inch closer.

Tom transformed back to wizard, kneeling over his husband. He poked Harry’s nose. “Don’t you dare.”

Harry pulled back, wiggling his nose. “Meow.” He then cleared his throat. “Err... I don’t know what you mean.”

“Do you want the bunny or not?” Harry quickly nodded. “Then no pouncing on me. I’m not a mouse.”

“Of course meow! Who would ever mistake meow for a mouse?”

“Harry...”

Harry’s tail swung back and forth as he went back to lay around their boys. He pressed his nose against Cyril’s head to hide his smile, but Tom could see it anyway in his shining cat like eyes. Tom returned to bunny form, carefully watching his husband. Harry didn’t move a muscle as Bunnymort hopped to the twins, tickling their faces with his soft fur. The moment

his complete attention was on Cyril and Alex, Harry popped up again. Stalking slowly and carefully around the babies, eyes completely trained on those fluffy bunny ears.

Tom really should have known better. It's not as if he didn't have experience with kitty Harry. The brat loved to play when he was like this. Couldn't help himself. He was a bloody cat. So he shouldn't have been as surprised as he was when he was suddenly wrenched away from Alexander and found himself being swatted around as if he were nothing more than a mouse.

Damn cat, he thought acerbically. And still he allowed it because Harry was laughing and enjoying this and he had long since stopped denying that he had turned into a sap for this brat. Time got away from him. He spent most of his time hopping away from Harry as the cat seemed to like that best, having to chase after him. And maybe he had the thought of how much more enjoyable it would be when the babies were able to crawl and join in on the game.

And then he heard the laughter. Hysterical laughter. It wasn't Harry. And that was followed by, "Lucius! Shh! Do you want to die?!"

"I can't help it! Merlin! I really can't! My Lord!" And the laughter went on.

Bunnymort managed to wriggle out of Harry's arms and turned to the doorway. Severus was standing there looking stricken while Lucius was leaning against the doorframe laughing uncontrollably.

Oh, right. He'd forgotten about them too. They were meant to come dine with him while Harry was away on Silver business.

"Runaway now, imbecile," Severus hissed to his husband.

Lucius didn't stop laughing until Tom transformed in Harry's arms. Then the blond snapped his mouth shut and straightened. Though he didn't run away as Severus wisely suggested. Tom moved one foot away from Harry only to be dragged back by surprisingly strong arms. Harry pressed his face against his neck, tilting Tom's face down so that he could breathe into his ear.

"Don't curse him," he whispered.

"I wasn't plan-" his voice got caught when that rough tongue swiped up from the hollow of his throat all the way up to his temple.

"Mmm, you taste good, Tom."

Tom cleared his throat. "Well, I-"

That tongue transferred to the other side of his neck and his eyes slipped closed on a moan. That tongue was just the right amount of perfect and nothing short of sinful. And Harry, the little minx, knew exactly how to use it. And when Harry's mouth covered his, Tom thought it would be alright to lose track of time again.

It wasn't until they heard the babies crying, probably for dinner, did they come back up for air. Tom blinked when he realized they'd sunk to their knees on the blanket; Severus and Lucius nowhere in sight. Probably gone to the parlor down the hall.

"You really should stop doing that," he murmured as he leaned over to rub Alex's tummy.

The cat smirked. "You love it."

Tom would have responded, but Alexander was done waiting and let out a particularly loud impatient wail. "This one is the one who kicked me. The nerve."

Harry laughed as he reached over to gather up Cyril just as Tom was doing with Alexander. "I'll take him," Tom said. "You don't want to be late."

Harry nodded as he stood and carefully positioned Alex under Tom's free arm. Then he stood back, smiled, and gestured to the dark wizard holding both twins. "Meow. You look really cute like this."

"Be careful," Tom ground out.

Harry nodded. "Of course." He kissed Tom and then the heads of each of his beautiful sons. He turned and gave a wave as he left the room. Tom watched that tail swinging back and forth with a little smirk.

"Hello all!"

His greeting was returned full force. He grinned when he saw the new recruits. About a dozen. All had been extensively screened, been made to give Oaths. All were here with the promise of fun and for the chance to better their nation. And none of them were really complete strangers. That's how they recruited. Present members recruited people they know.

"Meow! We're really growing."

"Ah, Harry," Wills ventured, eyes straying up to the cat ears. "There's someone else who'd like to become a member. I'll vouch for him..."

"Sure. What's the meow-err, problem?"

"He's not sure how he would be received. He doesn't want to cause problems. Also he can't guarantee that he can be present for every meeting. He travels a lot. But he's all for a long term commitment if given leeway."

"It really depends on the circumstances in regards to making meetings and whether or not he can contribute."

"The thing is, he's in a position to gather intelligence on all sorts of people from all over the world."

Harry rose a brow. That might be really useful. He turned to look at Hermione for her opinion. She gave a small nod. There wasn't any harm in giving this person a try.

"Meow. Why not?"

Wills grinned. "He's a bit of a celebrity."
Upon this declaration, Nathan groaned.

"He's doesn't meow a big head, does he?" Harry inquired. "I don't like celebrities with big heads. Already have to live with one."

Several people laughed, including Wills. "Not really... but I think you should speak with him alone before completely agreeing."

"Sure. We'll talk meow after the meeting then." Wills nodded, sat back, and then smirked at Nathan who was glaring at him. "Anyone else have something to add before we begin?"

"Yeah, I do!" burst out one of the new recruits. "Why do you look like a cat? Do you know you're meowing?"

The twins snickered loudly. From now on they were always going to carry at least one fake mouse around with them.

Harry grinned. "Wondered who would bring that up first. Sometimes Voldemort likes to turn meow into a cat. Says he waited over nine months to be able to do it again."

"Kinky!"

Harry smirked and winked at the twin who said that.

"I'm not certain you should go into the market looking like that," Hermione murmured to him. "Someone might try to capture you. They might think you're a hybrid."

Harry nodded. "Meow. Exactly what I'm hoping for. Oh don't give me that meow, Mione. I'll not do it tonight since I'm not prepared to take on an ambush, but down the road... I'll disguise myself tonight. Any other questions. Meow?" when no one was forthcoming, Harry nodded and sat. He ignored his members' attempts to keep from laughing at his sporadic meowing. "Time for reports meow. Nathan, when you go home be sure to fill Neville in."

"Will do."

"You're excused from duty tonight too."

When Nathan nodded eagerly, Harry turned to Trent and indicated he should begin. As he listened to the reports, Harry couldn't help but feel excited. It was almost time to strike.

Later that same night, it was still raining and it was also after midnight and Nathan was starting to get annoyed with his beating heart. He stepped into greenhouse Three just as Neville hissed out an annoyed frustrated breath.

“Neville, we not be married but I swear to you I’m about to put my foot down. You need to come inside right now and let me pamper you.”

Neville blew out a breath and then turned his face away a fraction in order to hide his smile from Nathan. “Maybe. Maybe I shouldn’t over think it. Maybe we should...”

“Should what?” the vampire snapped. “It better be pampering!”

The wizard’s smile grew. “Why are you so sweet, Nathan? You’re a vampire.”

“You’re the sweet one darling and don’t change the subject.”

“I’m thinking... but no. You haven’t actually said the words. I don’t want to be wrong.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Marriage. Though it’s still illegal for vampires to marry mortals so we would have to wait anyway, but I... I really don’t want to.”

Nathan went still. He stood there very still like a statue for some time while Neville continued to pretend to read. His previous frustrations regarding the project pushed away.

“What words?” Nathan whispered, suddenly standing right next to his chair. He took Neville’s arm to pull him up, to face him. “What words do you want to hear? I’ll say anything you want.”

“But that’s the point. It’s easy to say anything. I wonder had you ever heard those words,” he whispered to himself. Due to Nathan’s family, the way he was raised, there was a chance he had never been told. At least, in his case, he knew for a fact his mother and father had loved him. Had Nathan’s? And again, he had never straight out told Nathan he loved him. Just because he was afraid that he might be wrong. Did Nathan love him? “You said attached. That night of the vampire hunters you said you were attached to me. What’s that actually mean?”

“Do you think I don’t know what love is?” Nathan spoke lowly, almost dangerously, but Neville wasn’t afraid. Just a little surprised Nathan had read it in his eyes. “Perhaps you think I don’t know how.”

“That’s not what I was thinking.” Neville took a deep breath. “I was waiting, you know. Waiting for someone I love. I could wait forever because I didn’t need sex. Sex wasn’t important to me. Emotions were, are... I wouldn’t have gone to bed with you that night if I didn’t love you. I’ve been afraid to tell you that.”

Cold hands took his face in hand and Nathan shifted closer until their foreheads were pressed together. “I wouldn’t have mentioned marriage before if I didn’t love you, Neville.”

“It sounded like you were only saying that because that’s what you thought you should do. Because of the baby. Not because you wanted to get married.”

“Silly gorgeous thing. Yes, I love you. And I would very much like to marry you. Legally or not.”

Neville laughed out and slung his arms around Nathan’s neck. “I love you too.”

Nathan’s eyes got so bright and excited. “Changed your mind then? About waiting?”

“I’ve been thinking about it for months but I still don’t want to be turned yet. Not at this age. So what do we do? I want this. I really want this now.”

Nathan laughed. “We’ll think of something. Now come in and let me cuddle you. You make me warm.”

To Nathan’s relief, Neville nodded and allowed him to take him back to the house and tuck him into bed. Neville didn’t say, but he had already thought of something. He kept the idea to himself for the time being. He didn’t want to get Nathan’s hopes up just yet. His were already up and it probably wasn’t a good thing. He had been thinking about it for a while. Obsessing about it. Worrying. Maybe it was the pregnancy. Maybe it wasn’t. But he did know he wanted to officially belong to Nathan and vice versa and before the baby came.

So the very next morning he made a trip to the Ministry and went straight to the Office of the Ruler of Britain. Padma Patil, the Dark Lord’s new Assistant and fellow Silver, sat behind the desk in reception and smiled brightly at him when he came in. The last assistant hadn’t been able to cope under the stress of working directly with the Dark Lord. Padma had been strategically placed there by Harry with the Dark Lord’s permission, of course.

“Hello, Lord Longbottom!”

Neville smiled at her and waved that away. “Hullo, Padma. I don’t have an appointment but I need to see the Dark Lord. It’s sort of an emergency.”

Padma’s smile dimmed slightly at the mention of him not having an appointment. “He’s in a meeting now. It might be a while before he’s free.”

“It’s okay. I’ll wait. Can you just let him know I’m here?”

The witch nodded and gestured him to a seat. He sank down into it gratefully and watched as she scribbled a note and sent it in towards the Dark Lord’s office. The memo disappeared right before it would have hit the door.

“You look ready to pop, Neville.”

“Just about.”

“We miss seeing you on the streets.”

Neville grinned. “Kind of miss being an underage prostitute.”

Padma snorted. And then her eyes widened slightly. “Is it true? Did you really meet Lorcan d’Eath?”

“Yeah. He’s a really nice bloke. He’s coming back later in the week to help me out.”

“Is he as dreamy in real life as he is in pictures?”

Neville laughed. “More so.”

Padma sighed happily. “Do you think you can get me an autograph?”

“Um... Maybe if it comes up. He’s doing me a favor. I don’t really want to bother him with that.”

“If it comes up.”

Neville smiled. “Sure.”

Padma smiled again and then went back to her work and the office fell silent. Neville nearly fell asleep there in the chair. But that was okay. The chair was comfortable.

“Longbottom.”

Neville jerked upright in his seat, blinking in surprise. He must have fallen asleep. The Dark Lord was standing in front of him. Several others were leaving the inner office and exiting reception. Before he could apologize for barging in without prior warning, the dark wizard leaned over and took his elbow, helping him to his feet. Neville was too shocked to do anything but let the Dark Lord help him. His elbow wasn’t released until he was seated comfortably in a chair in front of the Dark Lord’s chair.

“I-I’m sorry for coming unannounced,” he spoke when the Dark Lord was seated. “But I... I didn’t want to wait. It’s important. Or at least to me and I guess that’s still not an excuse, but-”

“Stop babbling.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I’ll assume you want something, Neville.”

Neville was stunned by the use of his first name. He was actually stunned by this entire encounter. The Dark Lord wasn’t even staring coldly at him. There may have been some softness in his eyes as well. It kind of made Neville want to cry, but he didn’t know why. The whole reason for his visit also made him want to cry and he was perfectly aware of why.

“Y-yes, sir. Nathan and I want to get married. Now. But it’s illegal.”

“Nathan doesn’t know you’re here, does he?”

“He’s sleeping.” Neville was given a flat look for that. “No. But he asked me to marry him, at the beginning,” he whispered, laying a hand over his stomach. His baby girl was kicking. “I said no.”

“Why?”

“Because. Because I didn’t know anything then. About us. I thought he was only asking as a duty. But it wasn’t. And then I thought it would be okay to wait until I was the age he was when he was turned, but I’ve changed my mind!”

The Dark Lord blew out a breath and splayed his hands out over his desk. “No need to get emotional.”

“We really really want this. But I don’t want to be turned yet and it shouldn’t be illegal!”

“Neville-”

“Please, can you help?”

“The world will not end if you are unable to marry immediately-”

“Yes it will!” Neville cried. “Please!”

The Dark Lord raised a hand and pinched his nose. “Salazar, not this again,” he mumbled under his breath. “This is my punishment, isn’t it? Pregnant overemotional Gryffindors—Longbottom, you will control yourself in my presence,” he ordered as he conjured a tissue box and set it in front of the crying brat.

“I’ve done everything you’ve asked of me even when it’s your fault my parents are in St. Mungo’s! I just want to get married and I know you can make it happen! You can do anything!”

“It wasn’t exactly my fault,” he muttered but the boy didn’t hear him over his annoying crying. And it annoyed him that a moment later he felt contrite for saying that. “Let’s calm down. We don’t need a premature labor to start here.”

That didn’t help either. Just made it worse.

Tom shot to his feet and strode for his door and wrenched it open. “Have Miss Granger and Lord Malfoy come to my office immediately!” he snapped at Padma.

“Yes, sir!”

Tom turned back to Neville after shutting the door, but he didn’t move around to face him again. Not for a moment. The young wizard was sitting there in the chair, his shoulder hunched and shaking with silent tears, and Tom didn’t want to face another pregnant Gryffindor at the moment. They had the annoying power of being able to make him cringe. Cringe and still not want to set them ablaze. Huffing he finally moved to round his desk and reface the wreck that was Longbottom at the moment.

He pulled open his drawer and pulled out his box of M.R.’s fudge and dropped it in front of the boy. “Eat some!”

Neville cringed back at his barked demand but then lunged forward upon the Dark Lord's glare and grabbed a handful. He was into his second handful when the office door opened and Hermione walked in, closely followed by Lucius. Neville had a handful of fudge in one hand, a tissue in the other, Lucius took one look at his face and snorted.

"Neville!" Hermione was immediately hovering over him, an arm around his shoulder and hugging him. "Are you alright?"

"I-I w-want to get married. Nathan wants to marry me."

"Well that's wonderful news!"

"It's against the law if I'm still human."

Hermione straightened and turned to the Dark Lord, who nodded. "Well of course, I'll get right on it!"

"You as well, Lucius. We'll need your persuasions within the Ministry to get this Bill quickly circulated and agreed upon. I want this Bill passed and set as Law before he gives birth."

Lucius literally paled. "B-before, my Lord? But look at him. He's due in a matter of weeks!"

"Yes. Before."

For a moment Lucius looked as if he might continue to argue. Such a thing would be very hard to achieve. He snapped his mouth shut however. It wasn't from his Lord's glare. It was Longbottom's barely heard disappointed whine. "Very well."

"Hermione, since you did so well with the Vampire treaty, I want you to write up the Bill."

"Of course, sir. May I ask for Draco's assistance? He was a great help last time."

"You may. Begin immediately. You may put your current projects on hold for the time being."

Hermione nodded. She turned and hugged Neville before hurrying out of the office.

"You should have seen him, Harry!" ranted Tom as he paced back and forth in front of the fireplace in their parlor, the babies laying on the blanket very near him with Harry sitting on said blanket and using his tail to tickle his sons' faces. "Unraveling just because he couldn't marry his stupid vampire immediately. Ridiculous!"

Harry smiled softly. "Ridiculous and yet you immediately set to helping him."

"Their marriage, while he is still human, will help my reform. It will move things along. This law will be good for this particular campaign."

“I don’t think that’s the only reason why you’re doing this so quickly.”

“You will remain silent on that front, little minx.”

That lopsided smile appeared but he nodded none the less. “Do you think it will? Pass in time.”

“Yes. No one will get any sleep, but yes. It’s known I have instigated this. No one would dare defy me on this.”

“It’s good that you’re doing it properly though. Making the Bill go through the right channels. Having committees and votes.”

“Time wasting nonsense.”

“But the people will see.”

“Yes. In the long run, it can only help.” Tom then stopped pacing and laughed. “You should have seen Lucius’ face when I ordered I want it Passed before Longbottom’s baby is born. I thought he might pass out.”

Harry’s ears twitched in amusement. “You’ve just given him a lot of work to do in a very short amount of time.”

“I’m not making him do it alone. Anyway, he’s very capable. He might lose some money, but he’ll get it done in time.”

The first date out since before the babies were born and Harry was ecstatic. He couldn’t say it enough. He loved dates with Tom. They went to Tom’s favorite place. Servile. Harry snickered as they walked in. Servile was paying him a lot of money to be able to serve his chocolate crème pies. He had a standing order from this place.

“You look so smug,” Tom murmured as they were led to their regular table. At least he didn’t have that cat like grin anymore. The spell had worn off the night before.

“The business has tripled here because of me. That was brilliant, your suggestion about selling it here.”

“I’m surprised you did it.”

“I couldn’t very well let them go on serving that shite and filling people’s mouths with sand, could I?”

Tom smiled in amusement. “No, I suppose not.”

“Will you be going back to work after this?”

“Afraid so. You can thank your friend for that. It’s almost done. I expect to have good news for the gullible Gryffindor shortly.”

Harry smiled at that. Tom wasn't making Hermione and Lucius do all the work. In fact, because Tom was actively participating, the Bill was being passed around and voted upon a lot quicker than it would have under normal circumstances.

"Your friend just walked in." Tom announced after a time. "Don't look. He'll pass this way in a moment."

Harry waited patiently, wondering whom Tom could be talking about. Only a moment it was. Harry wrinkled his nose once they passed. Donovan and a woman. "Ugh. Think I've lost my appetite. You know what, he's an even bigger monster than you. At least you never tortured defenseless animals."

"That's not true and be fair. The creatures he tortures aren't exactly defenseless."

"He makes them defenseless!"

"I think you're biased. Of course I'm much more of a monster."

Harry pulled his glare from Donovan's back and smirked at his husband. "You were." Tom sneered at him and he laughed. "That witch he's with," he whispered. "That's his mother. Don't have much information on her. She's very private."

"I've had dealings with her since the takeover. She's aware her son owes me a favor."

"I wonder if she knows what kind of man her son is."

"It's very unlikely." Tom sat back, studying his husband. "Not many do. You've done well in your research of the Market, little minx. Your spying. Donovan must keep that part of his life secret or he would be a piranha in society."

"I want to know more."

"Always a good thing."

"I think I'll follow them after dinner."

"Not alone, Harry."

"I'll contact one of my Silvers." Harry tapped his wine glass with a finger. "Can't be Fred or George. They're doing a job for Lucius tonight. Not Hermione either. She's at work... Trent's gone to Russia. Wills has been out every night the last three weeks so I gave him time off. Same for Rafael. None of the new recruits. Nor the werewolves. Too close to the full moon. Luna is busy looking after Dan..." he paused and smiled when Tom snorted. "I'd prefer an Enforcer but I want someone I've tracked with before. Suppose it'll be Nathan then. Neville has company tonight anyway so he won't be alone."

"He also still has the security guard to watch him. Not that he really needs them anymore."

“True. Okay. I’ll take Nathan.” He stood and leaned across the table to kiss his husband. “Be right back. I’m going to send him a message.”

“Thanks for helping me out with this.”

d’Eath smiled that winning smile. “It’s only my pleasure. Besides, if this should work and it’s my blood and samples that lead you to the answer. Well, that just means more publicity for me.”

“At least you’re honest about it.”

“No point not to be.”

Neville smiled. “Okay, so I’ll need at least two vials of blood and more than a scraping of skin sample. Also some hair too. I promise I’ll only use the samples for this project. I’ll give you an oath if you want it.”

Lorcan’s stare was steady on his face a moment before he finally shook his head and smiled that dreamy smile. “No oath necessary, but thank you for the assurance.”

“Um, I’m not sure how to go about getting the skin sample.”

“You might want to look away,” Lorcan suggested as he produced a dagger. “Do you have something for me to put it in?”

Neville turned away and as he did so, shoved a sterile container towards the singer. When he heard Lorcan hiss out, he cringed. He didn’t need to see in order to imagine what was being done. “There’s some bandages there beside you when you’re done.” He then gratefully popped out of his seat when Nathan appeared at the door and beckoned him with the crook of a finger.

“Hi!”

Nathan smiled and dipped down for one of Neville’s sweet kisses. “Hello, my beating heart.”

“Lorcan was just giving me some samples.”

“Yes, I see that. Why did it need to be him?” he returned lowly. Neville laughed. Nathan was still annoyed over his and Harry’s first reactions upon meeting Lorcan d’Eath. Neville knew he’d get over it eventually. “Darling, I need to go out. Harry needs my assistance tonight. Are you feeling alright?”

“Yeah. Not even a headache.”

“Good. I’m not sure when I’ll return but I’d very much like you to be sleeping when I return home.”

Neville smiled widely. “Yes, sir.”

Nathan's eyes went back to d'Eath. "I'm watching you."

Lorcan smirked. "I would too."

Nathan growled, his eyes going dark. Lorcan did nothing but laugh. Neville stood back, amused. Vampires were funny. At least the vampires he knew. He rose on his toes and kissed Nathan again. "I'll be alright. I won't let him seduce me."

"That would be extremely hard with your baby girl in the way," Lorcan called out in a laughing voice.

"Besides," Neville went on in a whisper, "I don't think he likes boys. All his songs are about girls."

Nathan rolled his eyes. "Haven't you figured it out by now? When one changes, gender means nothing. Half vampire or full vampire. Makes no difference."

"That's true," Lorcan put in. "We're very sensual beings. It's part of our predatory charm. And you are severely charming yourself. I can see the appeal for Nathan. Very sweet. Is his blood as sweet, Nathan?"

Neville turned to half glare at him. "You are not helping."

Lorcan knew that. Which was why he was grinning.

"If you're not in bed by the time I get back, I won't give you the present I have for you."

"You got me a present?"

"I'd give you presents everyday if you let me."

"Alright then!" Lorcan called out. "Go on now. It's starting to get too sweet."

"Write a song about it!" Nathan snapped.

"Not such a bad idea," he murmured as he watched Neville wrap his arms around the full blooded vampire's waist and hug him tightly to soothe away the irritation. Lorcan decided to stop the teasing. He had no wish to get into another fight with a full blooded vampire. Not now anyway. Not over something like this. Maybe he could tease later, after the baby was born. Nathan was only reacting so strongly now, being extremely territorial because his mate was heavily pregnant and his instincts demanded severe protectiveness. It was entirely too sweet.

Nathan was soon gone and Neville had taken the samples and stored them away under a stasis spell to keep fresh. He asked Lorcan in as a courtesy, and because he was still curious about this wizard, the singer agreed and followed Neville back into his home. Neville directed him into the sitting room and disappeared with the promise of returning shortly.

He kept his promise and soon returned with a small box in hand. He walked over to Lorcan and opened it to reveal the box was full of blood pops. "Would you like one? I get

them for Nathan.”

“I would.” Lorcan accepted the offered sweet. “Thank you.”

“Um... I also have some blood, if you want a glass. Type O.”

Lorcan’s brows shot past his beautiful hair line.

“Nathan likes it.”

“I will never turn down a glass of type O.”

Neville called his house elf for the drink. The creature returned with a decanter and a crystal glass. Neville waved Lorcan to the tray. “Usually I’d pour for you, but I... I can’t do it now.”

“No. I understand. Thank you.”

Neville smiled and settled back in his seat, rubbing his belly. “Is it true what you said? About being naturally sensual creatures?”

“Yes,” Lorcan answered as he dipped the blood pop into the wine. He sucked on the pop a moment, smirking around it when Neville quickly looked away with the clearing of his throat. Lorcan pulled the pop out and gestured with it to Neville’s stomach. “Expect your daughter, when she comes of age, to be able to charm the pants and skirts off anyone she wants. With the exception of other vampires. That will take more work.”

“Um... I didn’t want to hear that.”

The half vampire shrugged.

“I’ll have you know I was very good at keeping Nathan away from me in that way.”

Lorcan snorted and shook his head. “No you weren’t. He has respect for you. He loves you clearly. He didn’t want to make you do anything you really didn’t want to do. Most vampires wouldn’t think twice about it. It’s hard for us to form any real attachment. Especially with mortals. Even with other immortals it’s a very difficult thing to do.”

“Do you get lonely?” Neville cringed a moment later. “Sorry. That’s too personal.”

Lorcan nodded. He didn’t answer either way, but he did smile to let the wizard know he wasn’t bothered.

“Master, sir?”

Neville turned to find one of his house elves standing beside his chair. “Yeah?”

“Yous has a visitor. Mr. Tarring.”

“Wills! Brill. Show him in. And bring another glass, could you?”

“Of course, Master. Would you like juice?”

“Yeah. Thanks.”

Wills came in looking exceptionally cheerful. He went up to Neville and took his hand, giving it a firm but gentle squeeze. “You’re looking well tonight.”

“I feel well. Glad to see you.”

“Harry demanded I have the night off.”

Neville gestured to the table where the tray of blood sat. “Have some. I got it in just yesterday.”

“Lorcan,” greeted Wills. “No need to tell you how you look.”

“You want some.”

Wills laughed. “Always.”

Neville ducked his head and drank his juice to hide the expression on his face. He couldn’t tell if Wills was joking or not even if he laughed. They were good friends so... at least that’s what Wills said. And Neville couldn’t see someone like Lorcan d’Eath coming here as a favor unless they were.

“By the way,” Wills went on as he took a chair next to Neville’s and spoke to Lorcan, “Harry says he’s amiable to a meeting with you. To talk about it.”

“Nice. Will his husband be anywhere in the vicinity?”

“Not likely.”

“Even better.”

“Not that that would matter if you try to put the moves on him,” Wills warned.

“No, that’s not the reason for my relief. I have no wish to come into contact with Lord Voldemort, thank you very much.”

“He wouldn’t harm you. Nowadays he’s decent unless you give him reason not to be.” This was from Neville and he surprised himself by saying it. But it was the truth. Now.

“That’s really astounding coming from you, Longbottom.”

Neville understood Lorcan used his sir name to let him know he knew his past. The situation with his parents. Wills severe frown at Lorcan clued him in on the fact Wills knew as well. He wasn’t at all surprised by Wills knowledge.

“You’re right,” he murmured. “It is. But it’s still true. And... I believe Lord Riddle will be good for our nation, despite what he’s done in the past.”

“And for our kind,” Wills put in.

Neville nodded, rubbing his stomach again. He frowned. His stomach felt bubbly. Weird. “He’s working on getting a Bill passed. To make it legal for vampires and mortals to be legally joined. He’s trying to make it Law before my baby is born. I’m not sure that will happen, but at least in the near future it will be possible.”

“So everything I’ve been hearing is the truth,” Lorcan murmured.

Wills nodded. “In Britain, yeah.”

“How did you two meet anyway?” Neville asked them.

“He found me,” Wills answered. And then he grinned. “He was running from a horde of fans and found me in an alley. I was starving and he helped me get my first meal. This was right after I’d been turned. He was the first vampire I met, beyond the bitch who turned me.”

“Green thing, you.”

“Whatever.”

“Teaching you to hunt was a pleasure,” Lorcan purred.

The fire in the fireplace suddenly sprang up and turned green. And then a body was stepping through. Neville managed to stand just as the Dark Lord appeared.

“Sir?”

Wills bowed lowly, and after a pointed look at Lorcan, the singer did the same. Tom steadily stared at d’Eath, not unfamiliar with him, and having certainly gotten an earful from Harry about meeting the singer. He was not impressed. He turned back to Neville.

“You may marry your blasted vampire now.”

“S-sir! Thank you!” Neville sprang forward and the Dark Lord backed up, his eyes going wide.

“Don’t you dare hug me, Longbottom.”

Neville stuttered to a stop and he looked flabbergasted with himself. “Yeah. Sorry. Thank you!”

Tom was just as flabbergasted as the gullible Gryffindor. He couldn’t understand it. Was he giving off ‘I want hugs’ vibes? Tom hissed between his teeth and spun around to the fireplace. Just as he was reaching for the Floo powder, he paused and glanced back over his shoulder at the excited Gryffindor.

“What did she do, Longbottom? To have you banish her to the wings?”

That smile slipped a bit. It hadn’t been his intention, but he was curious.

“Gran... she was going to poison the food. It wasn’t enough to kill me, just to make me very sick. Enough to kill my baby,” he murmured lowly, hands balling into fists. “She thought if I were gravely ill then she could get me back under control. She could take back control of the Estate. Destroy Nathan somehow.”

Tom turned completely around, watching him. “That is a crime.”

“I-I know, sir. But, she’s my Gran. It was the security team that discovered what she was planning. One of them caught her in the kitchen.”

The Dark Lord’s eyes passed over the room and he moved to take Neville’s arm and lead him back to his chair. He focused on the tray with the decanter of blood, noticed the two wine glasses being held by the dead and half dead. When Neville was seated he went to the decanter and lifted it to sniff. “Type O. Rare. I’ll assume you purchased this from one of the suppliers the government has set up.”

“Yeah! Really handy that.”

“I’ll say so,” Wills agreed. “How did you know what that was, my Lord?”

“I may not swim in it, but I’ve certainly dabbled enough with it in my time,” Tom returned with a sinister smirk. Tom then crooked a finger at one of the empty chairs and it slid across the room to him. He set it up directly in front of Neville and sat down. “Listen to me carefully, Longbottom. Your grandmother may be losing her mind- and I’m only half sorry for saying it this way- but she is still a powerful and conniving witch. Augusta Longbottom always has been. Banishing her to a wing will only work for so long. Do you understand me? In fact, banishing her has probably made it worse.”

“I-I don’t know what else t-to do. I told her she would be arrested if she tried something else like that.”

“And what happens if the next time she tries something, she actually succeeds? It will make no difference if she’s arrested afterwards.”

“I thought about sending her way. Getting a mind healer here... but what kind of person would that make me?”

“I don’t see that you have a choice right now.”

“You’re going to make me.”

“No. This is not what I’m saying—stop,” Tom ordered when Neville looked about ready to cry. He placed a hand on the boy’s shoulder, squeezing firmly. “Keep yourself in check, Lord Longbottom. You are not weak. You are a strong individual when you want to be. You need to be strong now and know when to take a stand.”

Neville nodded and pulled in a deep breath. “I don’t see why you care, sir.”

“Many reasons. But it’s as you said. You’ve done what I’ve asked of you. People are already in love with the thought of your baby. Polls are being taken about her name. They are

impatient for her to be born. People don't care she will be half vampire. People don't care you will eventually let your blasted vampire turn you. You've opened up minds to the idea of being able to live side by side with vampires. You no longer need the security detail here. When she's born, you don't want them around, do you?"

"No. It would be nice with just the three of us... and Wills too." He leaned over to look at Wills. Both he and Lorcan were sitting there with wide eyes, hearing everything and having trouble with the fact the Dark Lord was speaking to Neville in such a way. "We want you to move in with us."

Wills grinned and nodded.

"Are you sure that's wise?" Lorcan asked. "Wills is known to steal lovers."

Wills hissed and climbed to his feet. Eyes going dark and slitted. "That's you," he growled lowly. "And don't say something like that to him!"

Without turning to face them, the Dark Lord spoke to them. "You two will remain silent," he whispered lowly in obvious anger. Using that voice that reminded them he was still the Dark Lord Voldemort. When Tom focused back on Neville, the boy's eyes were clear. Determined. He nodded. "You already know what you have to do."

Neville nodded.

"Good. Now I have one more thing to say. Harry loves you. You are part of his village. Do you understand that?" Neville smiled brightly and nodded. "I expect your daughter to become part of my sons' lives. Is this also understood?" that bloody smile got wider. "Fine. That's all I want to say."

Neville then giggled. "You let me throw up in your personal bathroom."

Tom mentally rolled his eyes as he stood. "It was that or let you vomit all over my bedroom floor."

Neville struggled to his feet and followed the Dark Lord to the fire place. He didn't miss the icy glares being passed between Wills and Lorcan. "Thank you, sir."

Tom hissed in frustration. "I need to do something evil," he muttered as he reached for the Floo powder. "This is becoming intolerable."

Neville had started to laugh, but that was cut off by a pained gasp. Tom looked over his shoulder to find Neville hunched over himself, hands clutching at his stomach. Longbottom moaned and reached back blindly for something to hold on to. Nothing was there of course. He was too far away from a chair. He then cried out in terrible pain and stumbled back. He would have hit the floor but Wills was behind him instantly and Tom had moved forward to grab one of his arms.

"N-Nathan," Neville hissed out between clenched teeth. "I need Nathan. Where's Nathan?"

Tom groaned. No way was this happening now. With him there. Without Harry. What the blazing hells?!

“This isn’t happening now!” Neville gasped. “We need to get married first! Where’s Nathan?”

Tom spun around to the fireplace when Neville cried out again. Harry never cried out like that. Not at the beginning. Something was wrong. “Take him to his room,” he instructed Wills as he grabbed the Floo powder and dropped to his knees before throwing it in. One of the first things he did after promising to take care of Longbottom once the boy agreed to becoming his vampire poster boy was to set him up with a Healer of his own choosing.

“Healer Monroe!” he called out once the Floo connected to the correct address. “Monroe, answer!”

It took only a moment and the Healer’s face swam into view. The man was always on call. He looked extremely surprised to see the Dark Lord. “My Lord? Is something wrong? Harry?”

“No. I’m at the Longbottom Estate. It seems he’s gone into labor.”

“Oh dear. She’s early.”

“Yes and I fear something has caused this premature labor. So if you could make haste.”

“I’ll be right there, my Lord. Let me get dressed and grab my bag.”

Once the Floo call disconnected, he sat back on his haunches. How did he find Harry and Nathan? They could be anywhere. The Market wasn’t just in one place and Donovan may not have gone into the Market at all. Cursing under his breath, he took out his wand. There was nothing for it. He loathed doing it, since it was something the Order had done frequently, but this was an emergency.

He conjured a serpent of mist, relayed his message, and sent it out to find his husband. Next he threw in more Floo powder and called for Lucius. Grinning because Lucius, when he answered, looked exceptionally displeased to see him. The wizard must have just gone down to bed.

“This is an emergency, Lucius. I need you to contact Hermione. I’ll assume she’s still at the Ministry.”

“When is she not? I expect she sleeps there, My Lord.”

“Longbottom has gone into labor. Have Hermione obtain the necessary documents and find an official who can perform the joining. This needs to be done now. I don’t think there’s much time.”

“I’ll do it myself.”

“Find Hermione. I’m sure she’ll want to be here.”

“Of course, my Lord. We’ll be right there.”

Tom climbed to his feet and turned away from the fireplace. He was not surprised to find d’Eath standing there looking useless. He’d known the half vampire was still there. Tom ignored him and left the sitting room and hurried up the stairs. Half way up he could hear Longbottom’s hysteric cries. Fear and pain and desperation.

“Calm down!” he barked once he’d gotten into the room. “She’ll be fine. You’ll be fine. I’ve contacted your Healer. I’ve sent for Nathan.”

Wills was sitting on the bed, trying to calm Neville down. Talking softly to him, trying to keep Neville lying on his back. Wills looked panicked. He knew something was off too.

Neville calmed down a little. He craned his neck slightly to look at Wills. He tried smiling through the pain. “You won’t steal him, will you?”

Wills laughed and pressed his forehead against Neville’s. “Of course not. Besides if I were to try to steal anyone, it would be you.”

Tom knew he meant that and he was certain Neville didn’t realize this. Neville lifted a hand to press against the back of Wills head a moment, taking comfort from his friend.

“It’s going to be alright, Nev,” whispered Wills. “I won’t leave you and Nathan will get here in time.”

Tom thought it was rather astounding. It wasn’t just Wills that harbored such fondness for Neville. It was all the Silver vampires. He’d seen it with his own eyes. The dark creatures were drawn to him for some reason. Maybe because it was clear Neville cared about them. Neville easily saw beyond their dead state. Once over his skittishness of vampires, he only focused on the person and he was taking strides to insure vampires could live lives beyond the dark.

Monroe appeared then, hurrying into the room. He set to checking Neville over, trying not to frown at how close the contractions were already. “When did this began?”

“Nearly ten minutes ago,” Tom answered as he noticed d’Eath hovering in the doorway. Even he looked concerned.

“People are here,” Lorcan said.

“We cannot wait,” Monroe announced.

“No! No we have to! Nathan’s not here! Don’t touch me! We have to wait!”

Tom moved out of the room and returned down stairs. Not only was Lucius, Hermione, and an official there. But so was Narcissa, Draco, and the twins. Upon the severe look on his face, the excited smiles on Neville’s friends faces dropped away. Tom turned away to look at the front door. *Harry, hurry.*

“For a bastard, this bloke is boring,” Harry whispered to Nathan.

Nathan nodded and continued to watch through the window as Donovan did nothing more than sit at his desk scratching out on parchment. It was a disappointing night. They hadn’t learned anything new about the wizard. Just that he and his mother seemed to be close. The two had spent hours sitting together and talking.

Unfortunately not even Nathan had been able to hear what they were speaking about. And the fact that both of them had a couple of wizards who followed them wherever they went as guard detail. These wizards were even now posted around the house. Nathan was in shadow and Harry was under his cloak and this was the only reason why they hadn’t been spotted.

“Seriously, I could be home with my babies right now.”

Nathan laughed quietly and nodded yet again. “I think it’s probably time to take a hands on approach if you want to learn more about him.”

“Yeah. You’re probably right. I’d like to do it now, but I wouldn’t dare try and break into his home. He’s got too many wards to get around. Guess I’ll have Tom call up on that favor. Get him somewhere where it will be easy to curse him.”

“Ah, Harry?” whispered Nathan. “There’s a weird looking snake circling you.”

“Shit,” hissed Harry when he looked down to find fanged wisp of smoke circling his invisible legs. His eyes darted over to where the closest guard was positioned. Then he took off running in the opposite direction and down the closest alleyway. “Shit. Did he see?”

“He saw something. I don’t think he realizes what it was.”

“Damn.” Harry continued to run until he was a couple of blocks away. If that wizard had seen something, he probably would have moved to investigate. “What?” he snapped at the snake.

“I’m at the Longbottom Estate. Neville has gone into labor. Come now and bring that blasted vampire with you.”

Nathan waited until Harry had safely Apparated away before immediately following after. Harry Apparated to the front doors and burst inside. Nathan had misted straight into the house and was within the room in seconds. Harry raced up the stairs, breath hitching at hearing Neville’s pained cries. It was early. She was early.

When he stumbled into the room, it was to find Neville hunched over himself on the bed. Both Nathan and Wills on the bed. Nathan had Neville in his arms. The same man who had married him and Tom was there. Apparently he hadn’t been killed.

“Do it now,” Tom ordered Thurwhorl. “He can’t wait any longer.”

Neville leaned over, trying to reach for the drawer of his bedside table. Harry sprinted over and opened it.

“The box,” Neville told him.

Harry grabbed the box and shoved it into his trembling hand. “We’re going to get married now, Nathan,” he breathed out.

Nathan pulled a similar box out of his pocket. “This was your present.” He grinned at his darling. “How did you manage this?”

“I went to the Dark Lord and demanded to be able to marry you.”

“Brave little darling.”

“I was! I really was!”

“If that’s what you want to call it,” Tom muttered. “More like hysterical in my opinion.”

Harry turned and grinned at his husband. Thurot took the parchment and handed it to Nathan. “Sign this, both of you. Then I shall perform the abridged version of the ceremony. Seems your daughter is impatient to meet you.”

Neville laughed shakily and took the quill offered him. He signed his name and passed the quill over and watched Nathan eagerly sign his. He turned to the vampire with a grin. “So you do have a sir name.”

“What?” Harry asked. “You didn’t know it either?”

“No. He always gets out of answering when I ask.”

“It’s not important anymore,” Nathan answered lowly.

Tom, curious, took the document for the Official’s hands and looked at the name. One brow raised after a moment. “I beg to differ.”

Tom and Nathan had a staring match. “They kicked me out,” Nathan finally replied. “And they’re muggles. Surely it has no meaning for you.”

“Makes no difference. This, blasted vampire, is important.”

“Leave it.”

“Do not dare demand of me.”

Nathan clearly stamped down the need to argue and instead jerkily nodded before turning back to Neville. He and Neville quickly exchanged rings and said the words the official wanted them to say. It took less time than it did for Harry and Tom’s ceremony. Which was a good thing because Monroe was already forcing Neville to take the potion before the light of the rings had even dimmed.

Despite being overjoyed at having just married his beating heart, panic entered Nathan’s eyes. “Her heart beats too fast,” he hissed at the Healer. “What’s wrong? Do something!”

“Check them for poison,” Tom whispered to Monroe before taking Harry’s hand and pulling him from the room behind the official and shut the door. Wills remained in the room with his friends. Harry looked up and came face to face with Lorcan d’Eath. “Stick around,” he told the singer. “We’ll have that talk after this.”

Lorcan nodded and went back to staring at the door.

Harry turned to his husband. “They’ll be okay, right. The baby? Neville?” Tom jerked him forcibly away and down the hall. He didn’t answer. “Tom? They’ll be okay, right?” he demanded.

Before leading him down the stairs, Tom pulled him into a hug and still he didn’t answer. “Answer me, Tom!”

“Come sit down,” Tom prodded as he pulled back and led him down the stairs.

Lucius was still there. Along with Narcissa, Hermione, the twins, and Draco. No one said a word. Not even when Tom and Harry entered to sit down. The room remained utterly silent. Draco’s eyes were wet and swimming as they met and held Harry’s. The look on Harry’s face as he walked in was all anyone needed to know about the situation.

And then Tom stood and beckoned Lucius out of the room. “You did good work, Lucius. You and Hermione. They just married. Thank you.”

Lucius nodded. “My Lord... Longbottom?”

“We’ll know in short time. Lady Longbottom may have poisoned him.” He turned, studied the corridor. “We should round up the House Elves here. Have the two replaced. They may be more loyal to her than to Neville. In fact I’m almost sure of it.” He strode back into the room and straight for the glass of juice he remembered seeing. Lucius was right behind him. He picked it up. Studied the remaining liquid inside. There was a faint residue around the inside from where the juice had been. He raised his wand and uttered a detection spell. It came out positive.

“Fuck!” the twins hissed and Draco moaned.

Lucius ran to the fireplace and immediately called for Severus while Narcissa and Tom raced back up to Neville’s room. Neville was already unconscious and the baby delivered. The baby was too quiet. Monroe was quickly rubbing her chest. The baby’s lips were turning blue.

“It is poison,” Tom announced.

Monroe was already nodding. “I put him in the healing sleep. It won’t help for long if he doesn’t get an antidote soon, my Lord.”

“What about the baby?” Narcissa inquired as she went over to him. Monroe didn’t answer.

“Abigail,” Nathan announced hollowly as his eyes feasted on Neville’s pale face. He didn’t dare turn and look at the still newborn. “We named her Abigail.”

“Severus is on his way with potions.”

“Give her to me!” Wills growled and grabbed Abigail from Monroe’s hands. He started rubbing the baby’s chest. His movements far quicker than the Healer’s. After a terrifying minute, the baby started coughing and life flushed her cheeks.

Narcissa gasped in astonishment and blasted the vampire with a relieved smile. “I’ve never! What an amazing thing to see!”

Wills blew out a breath and dropped his forehead to Abigail’s. “Beautiful thing. If my heart were beating, you would have made it stop.”

“She’s not safe yet,” Monroe told him sternly. Then he smiled. “But you’ve given us time.”

Wills moved to the bed. “Nathan. Nathan, look at her. Look at your daughter. Her eyes are open. She has your eyes.”

“I need her crib. She needs to be incubated,” Monroe announced.

“Where is it? I’ll retrieve it,” Lorcan said, stepping forward.

“Two doors down, to the right,” Will answered, still hovering beside Nathan. “Look, Nathan. She’s alive.”

Nathan halfway pulled away from Neville, but he never stopped touching him. Then he reached out warily to touch Abigail’s face. Wills stood patiently holding her, knowing his friend was in a state of terror. In one horrifying moment he thought he had lost his child before she could even take one breath and he was still afraid of losing his new husband.

“Take her. Hold her close, next to Neville.”

Nathan finally moved to hold her in one arm. The other was still around Neville’s head. He turned in so that he was holding his family close to him. Wills moved over when Lorcan appeared to place the crib next to the bed.

And then Severus arrived and everyone breathed out in relief. If anyone could take care of the poison, it was this wizard. No Healer in their right mind would laugh off the expertise of a Potions’ Master in a medical emergency like this.

“The baby first, please,” Monroe instructed as he took Abigail back. Severus wasted no time in checking her over, evaluating the symptoms.

“She would have died if she weren’t half vampire,” he whispered. Monroe nodded. “Deadly Nightshade is the probable culprit. A concentrated amount.”

He moved over to the dresser and set up. Opening his bag he pulled out a mortar and pestle, dropped a bezoar into it, and set to grounding it into smaller particles. He then added dittany and mandrake. While he was doing this, Tom had moved to his side and pulled out

Severus' shrunken cauldron and set that up, adding the water and ensuring it was boiling and adding the potion base by the time Severus would need it.

Narcissa moved to put the baby in the crib and set up the incubation spells herself. She smiled at Nathan and dropped a hand to his tense shoulder. Nathan suddenly looked towards the door and flashed his fangs. A chilling hiss followed.

"She's laughing," Wills announced. "One of the house elves announced to her the child is gravely ill. She's fucking laughing."

"Insane woman," Severus muttered. "We should remove her before the vampires do, my Lord. If it should get out vampires ripped Augusta Longbottom to shreds, even if she did do this..."

Tom made his way to the door. "LUCIUS!" When Lucius appeared, Tom ordered him to get the security detail and apprehend the house elves. "Arrest Lady Longbottom as well. Lock her up somewhere. I don't care where. Just as long as she's not here!"

Downstairs, Harry and Draco were sitting together, squished between the twins, while Hermione paced in front of the doorway. It wasn't long before they could hear Augusta screaming at the top of her lungs. Screaming that she was only trying to purify her family; she was doing the right thing. It was her duty as the only sane Longbottom left. Harry dropped his elbows to his knees and bent over to cover his ears. Hermione rushed to stand in front of Draco because it looked like the blond had every intention of getting up and attacking the old woman as soon as she was dragged by the sitting room.

Soon she was gone with the two house elves with her. Harry got up and moved to the Floo, and called home.

"Master?"

"Tally. Could you-" he cleared his throat. "Could you pack an overnight bag for Alex and Cyril and then bring them to Neville's house? Could you also choose a house elf to stay here for the time being to help out here. Choose someone who doesn't mind babies."

"We's all loves babies, Master," Tally patiently reminded him.

Harry smiled a little at this. "I'll trust your judgment then."

"Right away, Master. We be right there."

"Thank you." When he stood up, he turned to his friends. "You guys gonna stay too?"

"Harry, you know nothing on earth would get us to leave right now," Fred answered.

Harry then smiled. "Drake, you'll never guess who's here right now."

"I don't care," the blond replied sullenly.

“I think you will. And I think we all need to take a breath and remember who’s up there with Neville and Nathan. It’s going to be alright.”

Hermione smiled at him and nodded. George got up to move around. He felt too antsy sitting there. He paused at the table and stared at the blood filled decanter and laughed. “Whoever would have thought someday Neville Longbottom would be fine with hosting vampires? Look at this! Blood in wine glasses and boxes of blood pops. Brilliant.”

“Nathan was out with you, right?” Hermione said to Harry. “Who else was here?”

“That’s what I was trying to tell Draco. Wills and-”

“In case any of you are wondering, the baby’s name is Abigail,” Lorcan announced as he strode in and went straight to his half drunken glass. He drained that and went to the decanter for a refill. “And that Potions’ Master has given her an antidote. She should be alright. Is there any actual wine around here?”

“This one,” Harry finished with a grin as Draco’s eyes got exponentially round. “Thanks for the update, Lorcan.”

Lorcan toasted Harry with his wine glass.

Draco got a dreamy look on his face and just stared. Fred jabbed him in the side. “What? Oh come on! It’s Lorcan d’Eath. I’m so gonna sit here and stare at him. He’s pretty. And when I’m done staring, I’m going to go chat him up— actually this is a better view,” he ended when George went to stand directly in front of him. Draco grabbed his husband’s arse and bit him.

“You people are funny,” Lorcan stated as George danced away with a laugh.

Harry snickered. In a few short minutes Tally arrived with Cyril and Alex and one of his baking elves. Tally and Berry immediately went off to make up guest rooms without having to be asked. Since his sons were awake, Harry spread out a blanket and set to feeding them. Draco got up to join and took Alex to feed. Harry then invited Lorcan over so they could discuss his joining the Silvers.

Tom and Severus appeared half an hour later. Severus blowing out a breath as he came in. Those in the sitting room held their breaths until Severus announced Neville and Abigail would be fine. But they would be closely monitored the next few days. Lorcan left soon after, muttering, “seriously, where’s the wine?”

“Really!” Draco exclaimed when his husbands rounded on him with small glares. “If you love this,” he swept his hand up and down to indicate himself, “then you liked that. Go on. Tell the truth. I won’t get mad.”

There was no way in hell they were going to tell the truth. Draco was a lovely bloody liar.

A/N: The length of this chapter really got away from me and I didn't even manage to get everything I wanted into it! But that just means more to come soon :D Hope you enjoyed! Have a great day!

Chapter Thirty-Three

Chapter Thirty-Three

"Nathan, you need to feed," Harry murmured as he walked into the bedroom three nights after Abigail came into the world. Nathan was sitting in a chair next to Neville's side of the bed. The vampire was cradling his daughter against his chest, occasionally running a gloved finger against her cheek. He'd taken to wearing gloves when he held Abigail to make sure he didn't give her a chill. When he wasn't sitting in that chair holding his daughter, he was in the bed next to his husband and hadn't moved beyond that for more than a moment.

"I will."

"You said that last night and the night before. You haven't gone and there's no more reserves here. I'll stay with Neville and Abigail while you go get blood. Promise I won't leave them."

"Harry-"

"Please. You won't do either of them any good if you're too weak from lack of nourishment. Nor if you become agitated and violent. Don't make me go and get Trent. You'll only worry Neville when he wakes."

Nathan pulled his eyes away from Abigail to look at his mortal husband. Neville had yet to stir. Monroe said it should be any time that night or the following day. The healer said the antidote took, but Neville was still too pale. He still looked like a vampire before his time.

He blew out a breath and stood, knowing Harry was correct. "I feel like hunting someone. It's still better coming out of a neck than from a bottle."

"There are those restricted areas the Dark Lord set up..."

Nathan laughed at Harry's worried tone. "Don't worry. I'm not about to do something to anger your husband again."

Harry went to take up Nathan's seat, smiling when the vampire deposited his daughter into his arms without hesitation. "Um... Nathan? What was that about your sir name? Tom hasn't explained." Nathan looked like he didn't want to answer, didn't want it brought up again.

"You don't have to answer."

"I was near royalty," Nathan murmured as he sat on the side of the bed facing Harry. "My parents are far related to the Royal family. They disowned me because of my preferences- in many things- and then told people I was killed to save face. They paid me to stay away

forever. I was fine with that so I took the money, signed their abysmal contract and disappeared because I had no intention of ever wanting to see them again. I still don't." The vampire shook his head. "Your husband recognized the name immediately, which means he knows that. He must have recalled the story. It was in the news at the time, my apparent death. They could easily be blackmailed now."

"Shit," breathed Harry, suddenly understanding why Nathan would have rather kept it secret.

For a moment Harry wondered how Tom could know that information, as a decade ago he was still in spirit form; but then he reasoned when Tom was resurrected, the Dark Lord would have studied up on all the news and knowledge that he missed. Muggle and wizard. He wondered if Tom had been aware of what was going on in the world while he was a spirit. Had his husband been able to see and hear what was going on around him at the time? It was something to ask later though he was hesitant to do so because Tom avoided talking about that time. Being nothing more than a spirit for years was not a pleasing experience. Still, Harry thought he deserved it after killing his parents, murdering so many innocent people.

"He will use that to his advantage in some way, as only he could," Nathan went on, "and I know there's nothing you or I can do about it."

Harry grimaced. That was true.

Nathan shrugged, turned back to look at Neville. "Doesn't matter, whatever the case. I have my darling and our little girl. I don't care about anything else. One day Neville and I will have a second child and the four of us will walk this earth for eternity together. As far as I'm concerned, I'm much better off without my first family."

"You are," Harry stated firmly. "We care about you here."

"I don't know... how I got so lucky."

"That's easy. You pursued Neville." Here Harry went back to grinning. "And from what Nev has told me, you did it in a brilliantly relentless fashion."

Nathan turned back to him; the haunted expression dissolving to be replaced by mischief. "Ah, my darling was a fun chase. Still is." He then laughed. "Getting that first kiss was a chore! The silly thing actually said I was being ridiculous for wanting a kiss from him! That he wasn't kiss worthy or some such nonsense! It took some persuasion..."

"And you really love him?" Harry asked, his eyes dropped to the beautiful baby in his arms.

Nathan noticed the changed tone and the wariness in those pretty green eyes, trying to be hidden beneath the black bangs.

"I would rather destroy myself than walk another night on this earth without him, Harry." When the young wizard looked back at him, his smile was soft. "When I realized this, I was afraid, conflicted... I came to this realization just after he let me live here. I'd never met anyone like him. There isn't anyone like my darling."

"I agree."

"Shouldn't you be out hunting, vampire?"

The two turned to see the Dark Lord and Draco walk into the room. While Tom hovered just inside the room, Draco went straight to Neville. Anger burned in his eyes as he lay a hand against Neville's shoulder.

"He's going to be okay, Drake."

Draco nodded stiffly as he dropped into the other chair beside the bed.

"My lord, I was about to go out... where's that old beating heart?"

"Somewhere you will not be able to get at her."

"She nearly killed them. She tried to kill our daughter," Nathan growled. "The right is mine."

Again, Draco gave a silent nod.

"I will not dispute that. You are correct, however-"

"Neville wouldn't like that," Harry said softly.

"That's neither here nor there," Tom replied lowly, clearly displeased at having been interrupted.

Harry's look was hard on his husband. "Isn't it?"

"I will go hunting," Nathan declared after eyeing the two, sensing an argument on the horizon. He took Abigail from Harry to give her a hug and a kiss before replacing her back in the wizard's arms, knowing she was in good hands.

Harry looked down at Abigail's face and murmured something very quietly for only his ears. Nathan grinned.

"Yes, of course."

Harry smiled and nodded. "And I'll contact you if Neville should wake before you return."

"Thank you, Harry."

Nathan misted out and Harry stood.

"Secrets?" Tom hissed.

Harry couldn't hold back a snicker as he crossed to him and carefully deposited Abigail into his husband's arms. Tom automatically secured her gently against his chest. "I only asked if he'd be alright with you holding Abigail. You haven't yet."

"Why should I want-" Abigail then looked straight at him. He snapped his mouth closed, a ghost of a smile on his lips.

"You're a sucker for babies now. Imagine that," Harry responded as he left the room to go check on his sons, who would probably be waking any moment now for a nighttime meal. Draco laughed. And because he laughed out loud without meaning to, he hurried after Harry to save himself from his Lord's wrath.

"Bloody brats," Tom hissed as he took Draco's vacated chair. "Hurry and wake up, Longbottom," he snapped at the pale figure on the bed. And then he glared, half expecting the gullible Gryffindor to do so just because he was alone with him in the room.

Again his eyes went back to the baby. Newborns were amazing little things. She was a pretty one, he would admit. Blue eyes with slightly elongated pupils- the only current indication of her vampiric blood- and darkish peach fuzz hair. A cute button nose. Still nothing as grand as his sons. "You have some power in you," he murmured, softly bouncing her in his arms. "I can feel it even now. Pleasing. Also surprising considering your muggle father..." he turned back to study Neville, frowning harshly. What kind of power was buried deep within Longbottom; untapped just because he didn't have the confidence in himself? Maybe, he thought as his eyes brightened with an idea, maybe it was time to start training elite again. To train more than just Harry. He enjoyed teaching. Lucius and Severus' training had not been a burden. And training Harry was always a pleasure.

He looked back down to Abigail. She was still watching him. He gently bounced her in his arms as a pleased grin passed over his face. "We'll see."

A groan coming from the bed had him tensing. He looked to find Longbottom's eye lids flickering. After a few short moments it was clear the young wizard was trapped in a nightmare. His head tossing back and forth, fingers clutching at the sheets. And before Tom could make himself scarce, the impudent wizard bolted straight up in bed with a strangled cry. Those hands gripping at his stomach. Eyes wide and wet.

"My baby! Where's my baby? Abigail..." he moaned in strangled grief.

"She's here," Tom answered, striding around the bed; unable to keep unaffected. The boy woke up thinking he'd lost his baby to the poison. "She's perfectly healthy. Abigail has been waiting to meet you." He deposited the baby into her papa's arms. "She's alright, Longbottom. I did promise you."

Neville held Abigail in both arms, cradling her head in his hand. He brought her up to eye level and as Wills had done, blew out a breath and pressed his forehead against hers. "H-hello."

Tom quickly vacated the room and went in search of Harry. Once he found him, he glowered something awful. "Why do you always leave ME the one to deal with it?!" he demanded.

Harry, who was in the nursery and sitting in a rocking chair feeding Alex, blinked stupidly up at him. "Erm... what now?" before Tom could answer, he went on. "Could you burp Cyril for me? I've done it already, but I think he might need another one."

"Your friend is awake," Tom replied as he pulled his son from the crib and settled Cyril at his shoulder, not forgetting the burp cloth this time. "He woke from a nightmare, thinking he lost Abigail to the poison. I think you should make sure he stays calm. I'll contact Monroe."

They both left the nursery and split in the hall. Harry taking Alex with him as he hurried to Neville while Tom went to the Floo. Harry hurried into Neville's room to find his friend cradling his daughter. He was both smiling and crying. Pain in his eyes.

"Harry... she's so beautiful—Gran! She tried to kill her! She almost succeeded!"

"Right now the important thing to remember is Abigail is safe. And she's healthy. You were also poisoned and need to keep in bed and relax. Think about your grandmother later."

Harry then quickly shot off a Patronus message to Nathan.

Neville took a deep breath and went back to studying his daughter. Then he grinned happily. "She looks like Nathan!"

Harry laughed. "You're in there too."

Neville lay kisses all over her face and inhaled deeply. "She smells wonderful."

"Not an hour ago, she didn't," was the laughing response as Harry took one of the chairs beside the bed and went back to feeding his son. "Nathan fed her then as well so she should be good for a little while. He's been so worried about you, Neville. He went to go feed," he said before Neville asked. "He'll be back shortly."

"We married..." Neville breathed as if just remembering, which was understandable since it happened during a lot of pain, chaos and just before he was put to sleep.

"Yep. You're Mr. Nathan now."

"Mr. Neville Nathan... that sounds ridiculous." Neville laughed. "I like it!"

They fell into silence for a short time in which Harry finished feeding Alex and burped him before cradling him; hoping to get his little boy back to sleep. Seeing both Alex and Abigail nearly side by side, Harry was startled to see how big his son had become in such a short time.

Nathan returned home very shortly after. The vampire had forgotten to wipe his mouth after dinner.

"Nathan, you've got a little something on your face," Neville pointed out calmly, indicating the blood around his mouth and dripping down his chin. "And you're not touching us until it's gone."

Nathan dashed into the connecting loo. By the time he reappeared, Healer Monroe had arrived to check Neville over. Harry left the four alone then to give them privacy and to put Alex back down for bed, hoping to get some sleep himself. Tom would stay the night again, but until he was ready for bed, he tended to lock himself in Neville's library.

The next morning, Neville made it down for breakfast, which was relieving to all within the residence and the young Lord looked genuinely surprised to see he had guests staying at his home. Draco Malfoy and his mother mostly.

"You didn't actually think we'd leave until we were sure you and Abigail would be fine, did you?" Draco demanded before scoffing at the look on Neville's face.

Neville then shook his head. "You keep shocking me, Malfoy."

"Clearly I was stupid at school," Draco declared to the surprise of all. "I think you're brilliant. People who are sweet aren't wastes of space after all."

Narcissa smiled gently at her son while both Neville and Harry turned to the twins. They laughed and shook their heads. "We didn't give him anything."

A light blush spread across Neville's cheeks. "Well...alright, then. Thanks, Draco."

"Shall I close the curtains," Hermione asked. "Will Nathan be joining us?"

"No, thanks, Hermione. He's staying upstairs with Abigail."

As Neville sat down, he frowned a little. "Where's Alex and Cyril?"

This question spurned a very surprising giggle from Narcissa while the others smiled or laughed. Harry answered with a dreamy smile. "Tom took them to work with him. To the Ministry."

"I'll look in on them on my way to the office," Hermione said.

Harry snickered and nodded. Probably a wise decision.

Near the end of breakfast, Narcissa cleared her throat. "Lord Longbottom," she began.

"Ah..." he shifted uncomfortably. "Please call me Neville."

"Very well," she went on with a nod, "Neville. I'm not sure if anyone told you. About the night of Abigail's birth and the following events once you were asleep, but I feel you should know..."

"Go on."

"Abigail wasn't breathing when she was born and Healer Monroe wasn't having any luck reviving her."

Neville sucked in a pained breath. "Not breathing?" he whispered.

Sitting right next to him, she leaned over to grasp his hand. "The vampire. Mr. Tarring. He took her and he was able to rub breath back into her. I thought you should know this. It was miraculous to see. And then of course Severus arrived and all was well with both of you."

"T-thank you for telling me. Thank you so much for looking after us."

Narcissa gave his hand a gentle squeeze before pulling away. "It's the least we could do," she replied and Neville felt she wasn't just speaking on her behalf.

"Harry, have you heard from Remus?" asked Hermione.

"Got an owl from him yesterday in fact. Going to visit today with the twins." He grinned. "Hopefully try to bully Tom into going with me. Fingers crossed Fenrir will be there as well."

"They're funny together," Fred said.

Harry agreed whole heartedly.

"... don't know, Lucius," hissed Tom with impatience. "When I practiced, the baby wasn't real! Hermione conjured a doll. Its limbs weren't moving about all over the place nor was it continuously leaking!"

"This is tremendously difficult—Merlin! It's on me! My Lord, it's still coming—*Scourgify!*"

"Alexander, you will cease movement at once!"

"Couldn't we just use our wands?" Lucius asked desperately.

"I will not be bested by an infant, Lucius. Even if he is using very dirty tactics."

"It smells."

"You sounded remarkably like your son just now."

"At least my son never smelled like this!"

"And clearly you never changed Draco's diapers so how would you know?!" Tom snapped back.

Harry pulled away from the door, covered his mouth with his hands to keep his laughter from being heard in the office. He looked to Padma to find her sitting completely still, staring at the door. Honestly Harry thought she wasn't able to process what she was hearing, concerning who exactly she was hearing it from. Harry pulled away from his amusement long enough to feel proud of his husband for not cursing Lucius for that snapped retort. Both elder wizards were in a state of panic, which was probably another reason why Tom hadn't locked the door and silenced the room.

"Thanks for calling me," he whispered to Hermione.

"They need help, obviously. And I'm not about to go in there. I might actually get cursed this time..." She trailed off with a quiet laugh. She nodded to both Harry and Padma before quickly leaving the Minister's waiting room.

"How's the Evil Overlord's schedule look today, Padma?"

Padma dragged her eyes away from the door. She cleared her throat and shook her head. "I'm not allowed to give out that information." Here she smiled. "Not even to you, Harry. And as I like my health and my job and want to keep both, there's no use in trying to persuade me," she went on when he opened his mouth.

"Mustn't be too busy," Harry concluded with a grin. "Otherwise he wouldn't have brought the twins with him."

Padma dipped her chin in answer.

"So you do like this position then?"

"Yes. Thanks so much for the referral! It's a great job, wonderful benefits. Lord Riddle keeps me on my toes. Never get bored here, that's for sure. He's... he's not been horrid to me. He's very demanding yes, but he's not been cruel or... evil, like I thought he might-"

"Lucius! Come back!"

A moment later, the Lord Malfoy stumbled out of the office; hand covering his mouth and nose. "I'm going to vomit," he croaked before falling gracelessly into a chair. His hair was slightly in disarray, his face was flushed, and he looked as if he'd been battling for hours. Padma rushed over to him and started waving a folder in his face to cool the pregnant wizard down.

"Thank you, Miss Patel."

"You better get in there, Harry," she whispered. "Seems Alexander is winning."

"It was coming from everywhere," Lucius answered, which could have been taken as an agreement.

Harry walked in and quietly shut the door behind him. Tom was standing over by the window where he had the conjured changing table set up. The portable basinet was stationed at the desk. With a quick peek in, Harry saw Cyril was sleeping and he wondered how his son hadn't woken yet from all the ruckus.

"You're two months old, Alexander! I won't have you besting me until sixteen!"

"I did it at eleven so maybe you should drop a few years."

Tom went rigid and hissed out a curse. "You had help!" he snapped without turning around.

He must have been using the scourgify charm as well because when Harry reached his husband's side and peered at his son, Alex was completely clean as was his husband. Completely clean and gurgling with happiness... or amusement. Harry was willing to bet Alex was being entertained by Tom and Lucius' flailing about. Just as Lucius did, Tom looked as if he'd been wrestling around with a magical creature. Eyes slightly wide, face

flushed. Hair in a sort of disarray, falling into those wild eyes. Tom looked very attractive right now. And annoyed.

"Nappy," Harry asked. Tom grabbed one from the bag next to the changing table. "Fold it like it's supposed to be folded." Once he'd done that, Harry pointed to his son's feet. "Now grab his ankles and lift his bum. Then place the nappy underneath him. Once that's done you only need to be quick in fastening it."

Tom made quick work of it and growled under his breath. "He was not this docile with Lucius and myself... nor was he as tidy."

"Well his daddy arrived and distracted him," Harry murmured as he bent over and kissed his son's forehead.

Tom pushed him aside and picked Alex up, shouldering the boy. Insanely embarrassed Harry had caught him in the act of not knowing how to do something. "Why are you here?" he demanded as he went to his seat, half glaring at Alex as he did so.

"Can't I come visit you whenever I like?"

Tom narrowed his eyes; saw the hidden amusement in Harry's and glowered. "You said you would be working until the afternoon."

"Finished early." Harry rounded the desk, watched his husband nuzzle and then kiss his son's temple; amazed at how well Tom held his temper in check during the harrowing ordeal of changing a baby's diaper. "And I thought if you're not too busy right now, we could all go visit with Remus. You haven't eaten anything today yet, have you?"

Tom tried to hide the guilt by looking down at his son.

"You haven't. You were in such a hurry to leave Neville's house this morning, you didn't give it a thought." Harry appeared before him and took Alex into his arms. "Go get washed up. We'll have an early lunch."

Harry worried a little when Tom did as he said without a word. Standing and crossing the massive office to a door which led to his personal lavatory.

Alex was already half asleep so Harry placed him in the crib and began to rock it until Alex drifted off with his brother. He then pulled over to top to shut out the light of the room.

He was back at the desk when Tom returned. The Dark Lord paused upon finding Harry leaning against the desk with his arms crossed over his chest, slightly glaring.

"What's wrong?" Harry demanded. When he saw Tom draw up, preparing to deflect the question, he shook his head roughly. "Something bothers you, *husband*. I won't drop it until you answer."

Tom deflated slightly and thrust his fingers into his hair, brushing his bangs back away from his face. Without even turning or lifting a finger, he shut and locked the door. Harry also felt the effects of a silencing spell around the office.

"I'm bored." Harry blinked at that simple statement. "I've achieved victory and I'm bored out of my bloody mind. I don't mean with us, with our family," he quickly added, waving a hand to the crib.

Harry smiled. "I know what you meant."

"There's no need for cursing or manipulations or scheming... much. I'm working on so many things, but every one of those projects is progressing without a problem. Victory is dull. There is no challenge."

"There's still always the campaign for world peace," Harry teased. "That would be very challenging."

Tom shook his head. "World peace is easy, Harry. One dominating power..." he trailed off, brightening at the thought.

"No!" Harry laughed as he ran up to his husband, embracing him. "There's no need to start a world war just to stave off boredom. Have you ever thought about a mental holiday?" Tom pulled back slightly, eyes narrowed on Harry's face in confusion. The words didn't make sense to him. "That would be no then. Never mind that now," he went on quickly, rising on his toes to press his cheek against his husband's, his lips just against Tom's ear. "We can discuss that a little later. You've brought up an interesting topic, love. Your victory."

"Yes?" Tom's arm instinctively wrapped around Harry's back; the whispered breath against his ear made gooseflesh shoot up his spine. "My victory," he prodded, pulling his husband flush against him.

"Isn't it said somewhere 'to the victor goes the spoils'? Well here you are, the victor. I wonder what sort of spoils you would want..."

A resting room of sorts was located through a secret door just behind them. A room Harry had yet to visit. Tom had every intention of showing this room to Harry, and the ridiculous useless chaise lounge inside, when they heard soft cooing come from the basinet.

Harry sighed when he found himself suddenly alone. His husband immediately letting go of him to hurry to their sons' sides. Tom pulled back the canopy, softly murmuring to Cyril as he picked the boy up. Clearly he spoke truthfully when saying he wasn't bored with his family. Tom really was enraptured by his progeny. Cyril's eyes were bright on his father's face as Tom kissed at the little grabby fingers pressing against his mouth.

He did get annoyed for a moment, jealousy sparking in his chest and not for the first time. And then he blew out a breath. Astounded. He was jealous of their sons! This too was a miraculous thing. It was another sign of how much Tom loved his children. Harry just wasn't used to sharing his husband with anyone. Not like this. When Tom was just Tom.

"What's wrong?"

Harry shook his head, suddenly embarrassed to find Tom had faced him to see the emotions crossing his face. "Something silly. It's nothing. Shall we go?"

Tom took acute notice of the embarrassment. "Tell me," he demanded.

"Just... I told you it was silly. Not important."

"Harry," he began patiently, but in a voice Harry understood meant he was not letting go. "If you wish me to go along with you to visit your werewolf, and if you wish for me to remain in a perfectly passive mood, I suggest you tell me what is wrong. Did you not demand of me a few minutes ago?"

Harry blew out a breath. "But it's stupid. You'll laugh at me." Upon the narrowing of his husband's eyes, he gave in. "It's jealousy, alright?" he snapped. "I've been getting jealous over your time with Cyril and Alex. I'm jealous, but also really happy about it. I told you it was stupid!" he ended, crossing arms over his chest and spinning around to stare out of the fabricated window.

Tom stared at his back, truly surprised. But that lasted only a moment as he thought it over. It wasn't stupid. They were new to being parents. He was aware of how enamored he'd become with their sons. No one was more surprised than himself. And now that he recalled, he was aware Harry had tried on many occasions when possible to instigate alone time between them- not necessarily intimate times- and he'd, for lack of a better term, brushed his young husband off to spend the time with their sons. Even when the boys were asleep or being tended to by the nanny elf. Harry missed their closeness. And now that it is brought to his attention, so did he.

"Your sons have bewitched me," he said in answer.

This drew out a laugh and Harry turned back to him, nodding. "They get that from me, yeah?"

"Undoubtedly. Come, let us go visit Lupin." But he wouldn't soon forget what he'd failed to realize.

The door was wrenched open with some force, causing Harry's eyes to widen while Tom raised a brow. Immediately they could tell Remus wasn't as he normally was. Now he seemed agitated and appeared to have a permanent flush around his face. His amber eyes were also very wide and bright; almost glowing.

"Hi, Remus."

Remus smiled at Harry, which put the young wizard at ease. But then he tensed again when Remus turned his attention to Tom. The smile disappeared and the werewolf's nostrils flared. Tom went very still in sudden comprehension. He didn't move a muscle even when Lupin lunged forward, grabbing at his shoulders and pressing his nose against his throat; a soft growl pouring past his lips.

"What the- Remus!" snapped Harry as that nose was inching along Tom's temple. "My husband!"

Tom took hold of Harry's hand, squeezing gently. Harry was not at all pleased with his friend for intruding on his husband's personal space, and he was twice as bewildered by Remus' actions and the lack thereof on Tom's part for allowing this.

Suddenly Remus exhaled, quickly shaking his head as he pulled away; a frown of annoyance on his face. And then in the blink of an eye he was all smiles and was acting as if nothing odd had just happened. "Come in, you two. Ah, and Alex and Cyril." He turned and disappeared into the cottage. "Harry, you had better of come with news of Neville."

"What the hell?" Harry demanded.

"He wasn't thinking. What he did was involuntary. He sensed an Alpha of a sort and was only investigating. Clearly he found me lacking."

The fact that Tom sounded so amused confused Harry tremendously. But he followed his husband into the cottage, pushing the bassinette in front of him. The boys were still sleeping. They caught up to Remus in the kitchen where they were waved to the table as the werewolf began to make tea, as he remembered the Dark Lord's need for it when he came calling. Harry watched him, eyes narrowed in contemplation. Remus was still very agitated and jumpy. But he chatted with him normally. Asking questions about Neville and Abigail.

Harry quickly assured Remus of Neville and Abigail's health, as he had owed Remus two days prior about the ordeal. "She's an absolute angel," Harry said of Abigail.

"She won't be in thirteen years," Tom responded lightly, watching the werewolf carefully.

"To think Augusta would do such a thing!" Remus barked, again suddenly irate. He slammed hands down hard upon the counter. "I never thought she would have such a bias against creatures! And then to try and *kill* an innocent baby! Neville's baby, for Merlin's sake!"

"I think Neville stepping up to his rightful place is what did it," said Harry. "His determination in being himself and not his father. It's turned her mad."

"Well it's unforgivable!" Remus snapped, still facing away from them. Then he visibly shuddered and whined as if in pain. Shortly after the panting started; shallow rapid panting as if he couldn't catch his breath.

"Remus, are you alright?" Harry demanded. He tried to stand and go to him but Tom braced a hand on his arm to keep him seated. Tom didn't seem concerned, though he continued to watch Remus, a sort of tame glee in his eyes.

Remus didn't answer immediately. Didn't even seem to realize they were there. But after more than a minute he started moving around as if nothing had happened. Finally he sat at the table, bringing with him the tray of tea and popped open the first button of his shirt, blowing out a breath and slightly wriggling in his seat.

"It's very warm in here," Remus finally murmured. "Are you two warm?"

And then Tom made it clear to Harry, who was more than worried now. "Lupin," he began with ill-concealed amusement. "You appear to be in heat."

"You... you mated in wolf form then?" Harry asked faintly, trying desperately now to keep from laughing.

Remus looked entirely too uncomfortable and again squirmed in his seat; his face turned as red as Ron's did sometimes and he popped open two more buttons of his top. "It's just very warm in here," he repeated. "Maybe I should stamp down the fire."

"There's no fire," Tom announced.

"No?" Remus shifted again; eyes wildly looking around the place. "I could have sworn..."

Tom peered at Harry from the corner of his eye. He was finding this way too amusing. Maybe because he now had a firm grasp of Lupin's character and he had relaxed immensely around the wizard the last few months. Lupin was an interesting character and could keep up an intellectual conversation if he should suddenly want one.

"Um, Remus? If you're in heat, doesn't that mean Fenrir will be in heat too? Shouldn't he be at home? Locked away from innocent people..."

"I'm not in heat!" Remus snapped out even as he popped open the last of the buttons.

Tom chuckled darkly while Harry snickered.

The front door banged open then and that was quickly followed by a pained whine. Tom immediately stood, grabbed Harry's arm to jerk him to his feet, and then quickly ushered his husband and the bassinette to the back door. "We need to leave now."

"But things are just getting good," he whined as he was shoved out the back door.

"You don't want to be anywhere near a pair of mated werewolves who are in heat. I'm surprised Fenrir left at all."

And then they could hear Remus snarl. "Am I in heat?! I don't like this, Fenrir. It's absolutely-

"

A loud crash was heard, which sounded suspiciously like the kitchen table buckling under the weight of two grown men who'd suddenly fallen upon it with relish.

"They won't... hurt each other will they?" Harry whispered, the both of them standing in the back garden with their sons between them, staring at the back door. He only asked because by the growling and snarling going on, the mating didn't seem all that fun.

"I've never actually witnessed the mating of werewolves. Never cared before to learn more about that particular thing..."

As one, Harry and Tom inched to the left window and cautiously peered in. Remus' clothes were shredded to pieces already and there were several oozing gashes littering his back and legs

as they wrestled around on broken wood. Although this concerned Harry, he was more relieved to see Remus was causing just as much damage with his teeth; sinking them into to whatever part of Fenrir he could reach and he wrestled around with his mate. They were still in human form but certain aspects were definitely werewolf. Remus' teeth had sharpened, both their eyes were glowing, both had a strip of fur running down their backs and the hair on their heads was definitely standing on end. And fingers adorned sharp claws.

A hand dropped onto his shoulder, causing him to jump, and he was slowly pulled away again.

"Interesting."

Interesting is not the word Harry would use describe what was going on inside the cottage. Scary, more like. He jumped again when a particularly bone chilling snarl reach their ears.

"Those aren't very loving noises," he whispered.

Tom snorted as he turned to the bassinette to retrieve Alex. He passed him over to Harry before picking up Cyril. "I wouldn't suggest visiting again for a few days, perhaps a week," he murmured as he shrunk the bassinette and then pocketed it. "I suppose this is why it's said a recovery period is usually needed after mating cycles."

"I will never laugh at the mating thing again," Harry murmured just before they Apparated home.

Belial meandered down the road; eyes straight ahead, neither looking here nor there but seeing everything. Suspicion would be raised should he glance around curiously as if he were an outsider or a new buyer. Anyone new to the Market was looked at with immediate suspicion. But at this time, however, he and his fellow Silvers were something of a regular fixture. Those of this particular black market knew he was on his way to his shop which sold hard to get potions and obscure magical artifacts.

He did meet the eyes of some folks as he went and gave brief firm nods. But he wasn't overly friendly about it either because again that would draw too much attention. In a surprising way though, his aloofness drew the regulars of this road to him and his friends. Which was a good thing. They also learned a great deal more from their fellow vendors.

"Oi, Tom!"

Belial turned and nodded to a man by the name of Cathal, who sold a bit of everything. The Irish wizard beckoned to him so Belial veered off course to meet the man at his stall, also nodding to the dusty bedraggled witch in the stall next door. Hera-Pansy- pretended she wasn't paying attention. Cathal, as it turned out, was a valuable source of renewing daily information about the place. Which is why Hera's stall was next to his.

"Wotcher, Cat," he greeted as he took up the squat stool sitting next to the wizard upon Cathal's gesture to it.

"A load of fights are lined up fer today. You gonna put in?"

"Depends," he replied as he eyed the two jars before him which apparently held Inferi brains in a milky blue substance. He wondered how Cathal acquired those. "Lost a lot the last time. Might not be able to afford it this time. Still need to pay the boss."

Cathal winced. "Don't fall behind there, mate. You'll disappear."

"So I've heard."

"Tell ya what though," Cathal turned around and rummaged in a large pack tucked up under one of his tables. "Since you're one of me favorite people here, I'll let ya be the first ta try it. Free a charge. This one time." He pulled out two very small pouches. Tossed one in Hera's direction and handed the other to Belial. "Guaranteed to make you happy. Try it out. And then promote my name wouldya."

"Cat, I told you I don't-"

"Nothing harmful!" Cathal protested. "Completely natural, I tell ya. That's what's so great about it! Gonna make a killing off that. You watch. Just stuff a little in your pipe and see."

"Sure, thanks." Belial said, shoving it in his pocket. Meanwhile Hera had already whipped out a long thin wooden pipe and was doing as directed. She really loved being in character, not to mention the fact that she was fearless. She'd try anything once.

"If this harms me, I'll harm you," she said to the man in a rough voice that wasn't her own.

"Promise, love. It'll be legit in a year." Cathal's eyes travelled the road a moment and he perked up. "Fresh meat."

Fresh meat came in the form of a well-dressed young wizard. By his clothes and walk, Belial guessed this bloke came from old money. Old money was very much welcomed in the Market.

"You need something?" Cathal asked when the wizard came to stop before his stall, rather less cheerful than he was moments ago with Belial and Hera. But new people, even if they were customers, were not to be trusted.

"Course he needs something," Belial said as he returned to his feet, throwing a smile at the stranger with the nice dark blond hair, bordering on bronze. His eyes were a penetrating blue. "People don't come here for nothing."

"Well?" Cat prodded, impatient.

"Yes, ah..." The bloke's eyes passed over the table, and then on to Cathal and finally lingering on Belial for a longer moment before going back to the wares on display. Belial could understand the curious look he'd been given. Where Hera appeared to be struggling, on her last dregs financially and Cathal dressed as if he didn't care, Belial was dressed in nice slacks, a dark blue dress shirt rolled up at the sleeves, and a black waistcoat. He didn't match

the majority of the vendors around here. At least the ones owning open stalls. Belial had many personas for the market and this was just one of them.

"The manifest directed me in this direction," the man finally said.

The manifest was a document, ever updating, listing every product sold within this particular market. One had to know someone who knows someone in order to find the manifest. It was not an easy thing to come across. But by no means impossible. Otherwise the market would hardly have business.

"So what are you after?" Belial asked.

The man turned to him, eyes intent on his face and Belial was happily startled by the quickening of his heart rate at the look he was receiving now. "I'm in need of powdered Death Cap."

When Cathal tensed in suspicion, Belial's smile slowly vanished; his glamourised brown eyes hardening. "You can find that elsewhere. Don't waste our time."

The man cleared his throat, knowing he was on thin ice with these people and hurried on. "Also Dragon's claw and bloodroot. And then I would like to peruse. I might find many things I'm interested in buying."

Only when Cathal relaxed did Belial allow his smile to return. He waited for Cathal, wondering if the man had any of the items. When he didn't speak up, Belial pressed closer. Clearly the manifest was not the reason for this encounter. "I can get what you need. Wanna follow me?"

"I think I might, yes." The bloke nodded firmly, eyes taking Belial in from top to bottom and clearly enjoying the view. Belial enjoyed the inspection. "How much are you?"

"I don't go for a price. That's not my thing," Belial murmured, and then gave the man a thorough once over. "But for you I may make an exception."

The man looked chagrined as he realized his mistake. "Pardon me! I- I thought—I'm very sorry."

"Why did you even think that? He was only sitting here talking?" Hera demanded. "The nerve! He doesn't even look like a whore!"

"Joanne, honest mistake," Cathal murmured with a firm look at her.

"Bollucks to that! What, are we all prostitutes just because we work here? Go back to your golden cloud, wanker! We don't want your money!"

Belial turned to Cat. "Thought you said it would make her happy?"

"Clearly she's been nettled."

"I really-I do apologize. I-I've never been here before..."

"Is this what you came here for? Some arse?" Belial asked the man. "I wouldn't think you'd need to buy it anywhere."

"And what the bloody hell, Tom?! You can't be flirting with him!"

"Well he's nice to look at, is all."

"Tom? That's your name?"

Belial's smile grew. "Sure is." He turned back to Hera. "And you need to be nice, Joanne. Be nice to customers." He turned back to the man. "Someone said something to me once, which now pertains to you."

"Yes?"

"Your bone structure is completely obvious." He winked at Hera, who still looked clueless for once, and nodded at Cat before turning and heading down the road; one very handsome man walking along beside him.

"You must have been bored again, to have done this. Come here," Belial murmured, indicating his husband's somewhat changed visage. He guessed Tom used mirror Tom as inspiration, with only the hair and eyes changed. "You played your part very well in front of Cathal and Pansy."

"I am not an amateur and you've had a busy schedule the last week. Do you not understand if I don't get enough of you, the world will suffer."

Belial smiled broadly at this. "How did you know it was me? You've not seen this disguise before."

Tom withdrew a pocket watch and opened it. He held it up for Belial to see. Both hands were pointing directly at him. "Your tracker charm."

"One day that will annoy me," he murmured under his breath as they passed some people.

"Not likely."

Belial didn't answer. His husband was right. It probably wouldn't ever annoy him. He liked the fact his husband could find him anywhere at any time.

They didn't speak again as they traveled down the road. Tom dropped back to follow two paces behind, to remain in view as a visitor, allowing Belial to lead him to wherever he was going. He looked around with steady eyes, walking along with his own confidence. But he also made sure his body language expressed clearly his unfamiliarity with the area and people around him.

In truth he frequented black market's before, but never to the ones in his own back yard. And not for many many years. When travelling in his days after Hogwarts, the Middle Eastern and Asian black markets had much to offer. Here this particular market was a much more civilized affair, as with everything British. It had the feel of Knockturn alley, but larger, more

open. Shops and stalls on a far grander scale. And this one was a far sight better than the one Belial had been posted at before his break during the last stages of his pregnancy.

As Belial veered to the left to enter a shop on the ground floor of a two story building, the open shop to his right caught his eye where there were several strange tapestries hanging on both sides of the door. The tapestries had bizarre scenes on them, but Tom was more intrigued by the magic he could feel from their make-up. A closer inspection was in order.

Belial left him to it, knowing he'd come around when he was ready. He was not surprised something caught his husband's eye. The Market was full of fun wicked and obscure things. Tom may even find something he hadn't ever come across before. That would put him in a very boyish mood.

"I'm back!" he called after stepping into his shop, pretending not to notice the goon standing just down the road watching him. He shut the door behind him, seeing the place empty of patrons. Only Agni and Rudra were about, sitting behind the counter playing a game of Wizard Skittles. "Anything exciting happen?"

"As usual, no," the one to the left answered. This was Agni- Fred- and currently he was a heavy set man in his forties with a face full of greying hair. Rudra- George- was slightly younger with a clean face, though he was in a constant bedraggled state. The twins' shop owner personas here always made him laugh and then cringe. He laughed when he thought about what Draco's reaction would be to seeing his husbands' looking like this.

"I may have bagged a new potential customer. He's across the way now, inspecting those wicked tapestries."

"Best be careful or those tapestries will bag him."

"No. This one's magic is too powerful to let him be ensnared."

"Nice. The magically gifted always spend the most coin here."

"Yep." Belial leaned against the counter, grinned at them. "I like him. He's exceedingly handsome."

The two looked up from the game, blinked at him in surprise.

"He wanted to purchase me. I almost said yes."

Agni's eyes narrowed "What, now?" he snapped, leaning forward.

Rudra climbed to his feet and also leaned against the counter, getting very close to Belial's face to peer into his eyes. "Don't look bewitched," he murmured. "Did you accept candy from him? You know better."

Belial had to work very hard to keep from laughing. "He was very flattering."

"Well sure. Any bloke who's into blokes would flatter you, even looking like this. Still, you can't be serious..."

"Thank you. But your flattery does not make my heart skip a beat as his did."

Agni looked on the verge of becoming very angry. Of course Belial knew why. The twins had split loyalty now. They were very loyal to both he and Tom. Anyone tricking him in any way to turning away from Tom would anger them. Anyone encroaching on Tom's territory would piss them off. Especially since they knew Harry would never in a million years consciously step out on his husband.

"I think we might be obtaining another partner as well," he went on, ignoring the rising tension.

"Penth may need to be summoned," Agni muttered, looking to his brother. Rudra nodded firmly. Apparently they were going to ignore his last statement

"What for?"

The bell over the door rang before an answer could be given and a customer walked in. Belial turned away from the counter to give the man his full attention.

"How much did she get you for?" he asked of the seller of the tapestries.

"I only purchased two. The others were duds. I'll pick them up on my way home."

"Good. Means you have money still to give to me."

"I'd go bankrupt if it meant more of your company," Tom murmured as he moved to stand before him. He noticed the glares he was getting from the two behind the counter. "Not that.. that is to say... not to buy. Just..."

"Dinner? I'll let you take me to dinner."

Tom's eyes brightened. He smiled excitedly. The emotions Tom was showing on his face was one of the reasons why the twins had yet to figure it out. His husband was an astonishing actor. "Tonight then?"

"Yeah."

"That's it. Summon Penth, bro."

Tom ignored them to a degree. Much more enjoying his husband's play at the moment. Clearly they didn't realize yet who he really was. And then one of them inserted himself between he and Belial. The elder looking one.

"What do you want here?"

"He's looking for dragon claw and bloodroot."

"Go get it for him, bro so we can send him on his way."

"Hold on, Rudra." Belial reached around Agni to take hold of Tom's arm. "You're not being very nice to a paying customer. None of you are being very nice." Belial and Tom were halfway around the counter when he stated, "and anyway, I'll take him to the back to show him my wares."

A moment of stunned silence was shortly followed by, "the hell with that!" and the brothers were suddenly blocking the doorway leading into the store rooms.

Belial straightened and narrowed his eyes. "Move your arses right now or I'll move them for you," he coldly stated.

They reluctantly moved. No going against him when he became like that. "You sounded like your *husband* just now," Rudra announced. "Remember him?"

Belial ignored him and went on to pull Tom into the room; meanwhile Agni had whipped out his two-way mirror to contact Penth, sure his friend was under some sort of spell.

"We might need to do this bloke harm," Agni whispered to his brother before the mirror connected. "Penth! There's trouble!"

"Here we are," Belial waved his hand before him, indicating the candle lit room full of tables groaning under the weight of all the products they had to sell. "Look around to your heart's desire."

In seconds he had fingers digging into his hair, a mouth against his, and he was backed swiftly against the nearest wall. He moaned as Tom swiftly and easily stole his breath with a searing kiss that made him dizzy. In time Tom's hands shifted; one to Belial's face cupping his cheek, while the other hand dropped down, questing fingers engaging with the buttons of his husband's vest.

Tom's mouth slowly withdrew and his thumb replaced his lips. He looked pleased. "Your face is different, but you feel and taste the same," he murmured lowly.

"It's only a light glamour," Belial replied breathlessly, easily stripping his husband of his jacket in seconds. "Don't like polyjuice. What did you do?"

Tom lifted his right hand, showing off a ring on his index finger with the Slytherin crest upon it. Belial went to grasp the ring and pull it off. A quick shimmer later and his husband as he was stood before him.

Belial laughed in delight and returned the ring back to Tom's finger. The change was instant again. "That's great! Will you help me make a few? They'll come in handy here. Do they have to be likenesses?"

"No. And yes, I'll help. Now shush!"

Belial nodded quickly and then went back to kissing him. And rather quickly he was without his vest, shirt, and the buckle of his trousers was undone. It all seemed so new, with their

faces being different and this was a different kind of play they had yet to try. He was beginning to think glammers was another thing they could add to the kink room.

The door was wrenched open and by that point Tom had him leaning back against the table carefully cleared of objects. They only moved their heads, peering at the doorway, where Penth was standing. The moment she saw them, saw Tom's face, she sighed and shook her head.

She spun back around. "Are you two morons?" she snapped. "Did you even *look* at the man? You're supposed to be carefully observant here! Honestly, what-" she shut the door.

Tom laughed, even as his fingers found and stroked Belial's arousal. "I really do like her. Did I tell you?"

"Later," he breathed, hooking an arm around Tom's neck and the same with his legs around his middle. "Tell me later."

And later, when they finally reappeared from the back room, Belial found two semi-glances aimed at him. He laughed. "You should have seen your faces! Especially you, Agni."

"Har har," Agni responded, watching Tom take one of the stools at the counter and proceeded to study an old ring he found in the back room. He sat there in a relaxed state, completely unconcerned with them. He also looked like a man sated from a bout of fantastic shagging. His light hair was in a bit of disarray though. "Erm, this new partner you spoke of..."

Tom briefly looked up from the ring and flashed them an eerie grin.

"We're still in charge," Belial said to them. "He's using this as a mental holiday."

Part of that didn't make any sense. The twins shrugged. "Okay."

Belial went back to Tom and used his fingers to tame down the hair. "We need to think up a name for you."

"I thought you banned him from this operation."

"Err," Belial flushed when Tom pierced him with a look. "Ban is a bit strong."

"That's exactly what you said," Agni said, a grin springing up on his face. "You said, 'he wouldn't dare encroach here as I've banned him from interfering.'"

Belial cleared his throat. "I'm sure you misheard."

"Nope."

"Anyway! It's time for my rounds!"

"Is this how you speak of me when I'm not around?"

"Of course not. I said they misheard!"

The twins snorted.

Belial moved around to insert himself between his husband's legs; bending down to press their lips together.

"I'm only letting you placate me," Tom murmured.

"I know."

Agni released a short sharp whistle and Belial hastily pulled back, facing the door just as it was thrown open. That same goon who was watching the road walked in. This one could be seen quite often walking around with Donovan.

Without saying anything, Rudra reached under the counter and pulled out a sack of coins. He dropped it on the counter.

"Boss wants triple this time since three of you are working here."

Agni shook his head. "Not the agreement."

"There are no agreements here. You do as the Boss wants or else. Send this one out into the street if you're not making enough here," the goon indicated Belial. "He can pull."

"I think you are under the wrong assumption," Belial began coldly, walking around the counter to stand before him and lifting a hand just slightly when Tom climbed to his feet in forced calmness. His glamourised husband stilled. "Surprising since you've been watching us for weeks. What gives you the idea they are in charge of this shop? Also, it's not a matter of having the money. You just made that up about your boss wanting triple. Take this money and fuck off now or I will find a way to let your boss and associates know you are taking and pocketing money under your boss's name. I'm certain this would not be good for you."

The man left quickly with the money pouch, fully understanding he wasn't dealing with amateurs here. "That might come back to bite us in the arse."

"Maybe," said Agni. "He's certainly try to get you back for that, but whatever he tries, it won't work. Everyone here underestimates us. Cause they don't know what we're really about."

"He will try and catch you alone," Tom said.

"Sure. Types like him are predictable." Belial turned to the twins. "Make sure the others know he's trying to scam us. Have only a couple of them actually give in to his demand. The rest stand firm."

"But our profits!"

"Seriously? We'll make it up next month."

"I'll go spread the word," Agni said as he left.

"Rudra, hold down the fort. I'm going on patrol."

"Err... what about..." he discreetly nodded off towards the man who had gone back to his seat and ignoring the world in order to study the ring.

"Lucifer?" Belial asked with a not entirely straight face. "He's used to working in a Dark shop. A jolt of nostalgia wouldn't hurt him."

"That was many years ago, impertinent brat."

"Nearly sixty years. Ancient times."

"You will need to come home eventually," Tom said offhandedly as he stood and pocketed the ring. "And this shop is nothing like Borgin and Burkes. I do, however, accept your alias for me." And like that, the Silvers had a new devil amongst them.

"You're going to pay for that, right?" Belial asked, pointing a rigid finger at the man's pocket. "You can't just walk out with our merchandise."

"You want to charge me for this cheap and useless-"

"If it's so useless, why are you taking it?"

Lucifer rounded on Rudra, who jumped just the slightest bit since the Dark Lord was standing right beside him. A galleon was held up in front of his face. "I trust this is enough."

"Of course it is," the twin flatly replied.

"Miser."

Belial's muttered response was ignored. "I'll come with you. I need to pick up my tapestries and check up on some things at home. I'll return in an hour's time." He turned, took in the shop, the slightest bit of a sneer formed. "And help recover this place. This is a pig sty, Belial. Do you make any money here?"

Belial said nothing as he donned his Invisibility Cloak. But he did smirk in triumph once his face was covered. This is what Lucifer considered a mental holiday, even if he didn't know it. "The boys?"

"Still at Malfoy Manor. Apparently Narcissa missed having a baby around. She... adores her time with them." His tone expressed his surprise at this. "Suppose it's easier knowing they'll be picked up this evening."

"That and they're well behaved."

"Unless a diaper is involved."

Belial laughed, truly loving it. He waited for his husband to open the door before exiting the shop. Silently they bid goodbye for a short time and split ways. Lucifer going across the way

for his tapestries, and Belial walking deeper into the Market to check on all his people; stopping at all the stalls and shops. Watching and recording.

By this time it was clear to the Silvers the actual taking over of the streets would be child's play. Quick and easy. In fact most of those working there probably wouldn't care about a coup, as long as they were still able to sell their wares. The problem was behind the scenes. So many people carefully and cleverly hidden. Never showing their faces; money easily scrambled so no way to trace where it was actually going. If they didn't take care of the behind the scenes, a frontal assault would mean nothing in the long run.

He returned to the shop a few hours later, internally seething. "I've had enough of this," he hissed as he ripped the cloak off him, taking just a moment to notice the shop looked nothing like it did when he left. Lucifer had been *busy*. This shop was now tailored for the classy and the classless. It was mysterious and had character. It was clean and had controlled clutter. The shop looked brilliant.

"We're not ready," Rudra returned, knowing exactly what Belial was incensed about.

"We can't keep standing by and letting this happen!"

"We've got several unsavory on the list," supplied Agni. "Why don't we just take care of a few of them now? Silent assassinations. It'll slow down the trafficking at least."

"I don't want to kill them. I want them to rot in prison!"

"Besides," Lucifer put in, "if you do that, their guard will be up." The three turned to him. "If you really need to do something, I suggest you track the children once sold and plan a quick rescue for each once they are away from the market. Shouldn't be too hard of a task once out of the Market's grasp. Unless your people are incompetent, Belial. Which I suspect they might be."

"We object to that!"

"My people are your people," Belial returned, smirking.

"I had questioned my sanity again at the time."

Belial laughed, at once feeling better with the mention of a viable plan that would not put their overall operation on the line.

"So how are we going to do this?" Agni asked. "Since the children are sold at night and disappear, maybe we should use the Enforcers."

"I'm not sure... most are muggle children," Belial murmured thoughtfully. "And sending vampires, who are perceived as monsters in the muggle world, probably isn't the best idea. And what do we do with them once we have them? Some if not all are probably orphans and runaways. Do we just put them back out on the streets?"

"You know your blasted heart wouldn't let you do that," said Lucifer with an eye roll. "And don't for an instant imagine you are going to bring those things to my Dark Domain."

"Children!"

"Whatever."

Rudra snickered. "He said Dark Domain."

"Belial, come look what he did," said Agni, indicating the back room. Belial eyed his husband before following after one of the twins. Lucifer was busy staring down Rudra in a terrifying way.

The backroom was meticulously organized. The over stock of potions, potion ingredients and certain artifacts they did not want displayed on the sales floor. But what Agni was getting at was the quaint little kitchenette. Small stove and sink. Nice clean cups and a kettle. Jar of biscuits and a box of M.R.'s fudge.

"While you're back there..." the words were called from the front.

"Coming up," Belial called back. He laughed. "He must have his tea if he's to deal with people."

"Didn't actually think he took you seriously. Blimey, Belial. Do you see how nice this place is. In less than four hours! I helped of course, but he did most of it and without hesitation."

"When he came back, I bet he already knew exactly where everything was to go," Belial said as he went to start the tea. "He thought about it the entire time he was away."

"Belial, do not make the tea!"

He popped away from the stove with his hands raised in the air. "You then, I guess."

"Hot stuff is the only one between the three of us who can make a decent cuppa."

"Don't tell Lucifer that... he makes you tea?" he asked in some surprise.

A wicked grin appeared. "Sure. Especially after we've rubbed him raw. He'll get all sweet and-"

Rudra poked his head in and shook it. "He can hear you. Doesn't look happy."

"Right. Tea." Agni quickly went about setting the kettle on.

"So... the house?" Belial inquired.

"It's going to be brilliant! We closed yesterday, moved some stuff in already. And do you know what hot stuff did? He paid more than half of it behind our backs! Wouldn't hear a word when we wanted to pull from our savings too. Actually, we think his father might have paid for some, but no one is coming right out and saying it."

"Wow."

"Yeah. And before you ask, hot stuff isn't wanting visitors until we've fully moved in."

Belial laughed. "Merlin forbid anyone see his home in disarray."

"He doesn't like it. Drives him mental."

Weekend afternoons were wonderful things, Harry thought as he sat beside his husband in their shared parlor; both holding a baby. Tom hardly worked on the weekends and if he did it was usually from home. Harry was sharing his time with Tom again with the babies, but he really didn't mind it. Not when together they frequently discovered new things about their boys, played with them and talked with them. Well, Tom talked. Harry liked to make a lot of baby noises. He sometimes worked on his baking on the weekends when he had deadlines for orders, but this weekend was completely free. All he needed to do was check in with his Silvers every night.

They were hardly interrupted on weekends as well. Harry had a suspicion Tom had ordered it so unless an emergency had arisen. So it was a bit of a surprise when a Floo call was redirected to their study. Merry indicating the call came from Hogwarts.

"Ah, good afternoon, My Lord." Barty nodded respectfully when Tom answered. The wizard appeared nervous. "I was wondering if I may speak with Harry for a moment? If you don't mind."

Soon Harry was kneeling before the fire, greeted Barty with curiosity.

"Harry," greeted Barty. "I was hoping you could clear something up for me."

"I can try. What is it?"

"Well..." Barty cleared his throat, looking a little embarrassed. "Miss Lovegood. She asked if I would like to go have a walk in the forest with her and I have the feeling this is code for something."

Harry leaned back a little, shot an amused grin at his husband. "It could be..."

"Is she asking for sex?!" Barty burst out.

"Maybe. Or maybe she just wants to take a walk with you. Luna said she enjoys talking with you."

"She does... she does realize who I am, right?"

Harry's grin faded a little. "Are you still that same person?"

"Yes and no."

"What's that mean, Crouch?" demanded Harry.

From behind him he heard, "am I still that same person? Yes and no, blast you Harry."

Harry's smile returned full force. "What's the problem? Afraid of a woman?"

"She's a young impressionable girl and I am a dedicated educator of young impressionable minds. It would be-"

"So impress upon her," Harry interrupted with a leering smirk. "Maybe she'll rename the Chimaera Barty."

Tom laughed and then coughed to try to cover it up.

"She's a lovely girl, Harry, but not really what I... I don't want to hurt her feelings..."

Harry looked at him like he was crazy. "You're not serious? Are you? When was the last time you got laid?"

"Not helpful," Barty muttered as he pulled away from the Floo and Harry's amused grin.

Barty left his room and travelled the castle, riding the stairs down to the second floor where Lovegood's room was located. He took a deep breath after knocking, trying to dissipate the unsettlement he felt. The ridiculousness as well.

After a moment his brows drew down, as Luna was usually prompt in opening the door. When he heard the growling, Barty opened the door himself with great alarm. He shut it behind him and instantly erected very strong wards. His worry increased greatly upon taking in the room. Things appeared as usual with the exception of two things.

One, the Chimaera was where it usually was, by the fire. But now the creature was sitting up, poised and no longer looking vulnerable. It's eyes were hard and gleaming and directed unwaveringly at Barty, as if daring the wizard to move a breath. The creature looked capable of attacking at any moment. It didn't look so much like a baby any longer. Leading away from the Chimaera was a trail of blood. A small pool there at the creature's feet, and then spots here and there leading away into the next room.

Heart suddenly racing, Barty dashed across the room, following the blood trail. From the corner of his eye he saw the creature move, but only it's head swiveled around to follow his movement. "Luna!"

The blood led him into the bedroom and into the connecting bath. He found her leaning over the sink; one hand holding a shaking arm under the running water.

"H-he bit m-me," she whispered shakily as he appeared at her side, grasping her wrist just under the torn flesh. "I don't think he meant to."

"Luna," he murmured, relieved that it was only a bite and could easily be fixed. The young woman's sadness however was another matter. She knew it was time. "Let's get you to Madam Pomfrey. From there we can figure out what to do about Dan."

He grabbed a hand towel and quickly wrapped her arm as it was still bleeding. He'd only finished when he heard the growling again. He spun around and shoved Luna behind him.

The creature was now poised on the threshold of the bathroom. Dan ducked his head, snout close to one of the drops of blood.

"It's bloodthirsty," he whispered, understanding they were clearly bugged. At least it couldn't breathe fire. He slowly drew his wand and shot off a message to the Headmaster before leveling it at Dan.

Before he could think of a solution, Luna took his wrist and moved his aim just as the creature slowly approached, sniffing the air. He glanced at her over his shoulder, but her wide eyes were solely on the Chimaera.

And then Dan was pressed against him, his tongue out licking at Luna's arm. "He's sorry," she whispered, sounding in better spirits. "He didn't mean to. It was instinct."

"Yes, and his next instinct will be to eat us."

"Not yet," she murmured, slowly reaching out to caress Dan's snout, which he allowed. "But it's time to return him."

He wondered how she could be so calm right now. He felt the wards shifting; knew Snape was letting himself in. Slowly he wrapped an arm around Luna's shoulders and drew her away from Dan, out of the bathroom and to head the Headmaster off. One more person in the room was sure to set the creature off.

"He's awake and mobile and must be dealt with," Barty immediately reported upon facing Snape.

"Maybe," Luna began. "Maybe it's not too late to get him into a charmed crate, Headmaster. I don't like to trick him, but it might be the only way. We could entice him with doctored raw meat."

"Take Miss Lovegood to the infirmary, Crouch. Alert Hagrid on your way. Tell him to bring a crate large enough for this creature. Also alert Minerva of the situation. Have her move all students to the Great Hall and seal it off."

"Yes, Headmaster. He's in the lavatory," Barty said as he departed with Luna.

Severus eyed the doorway leading into the bed chamber. He could hear the growling now. Taking a deep breath, he inched his way to the fire place and threw some powder into it. Calling to the Dark Lord's manor. His Lord would be angry for this interruption but it couldn't be help.

"Yesssss," was the hissed answer upon connection. "What is it now?"

"My Lord, forgive me but I require your assistance. The Chimaera appears to be healed. It attacked Lovegood—Harry, she is well and being cared for," he quickly assured because he could see Harry behind the Dark Lord. "She has come up with a ludicrous plan that might actually work, however I would feel better with someone of your caliber here to help keep the creature under control, in case the plan fails."

"I wonder if that hurt, him asking for help?" he heard the brat ask.

"Harry," warned Tom and to Severus, "step back, I'm coming through."

"Thank you, my Lord."

Severus stepped back, turning towards the bedroom. He heard the brat speaking. "Tom? You have this?"

"Wipe that look off your face, Harry. Of course I have this."

"But... it's a Chimaera. Have you ever faced one?"

"I faced the wild forests without a wand for three months. Stop your worrying. I am-"

"Lord Voldemort. Y-yeah," Harry laughed a little nervously. "I forget sometimes."

How could he forget? Severus wondered and then realized Harry was probably trying to be funny in order to put himself at ease with this bloody imbecilic situation.

"Do not under any circumstances follow me through, little minx. Do you understand me?"

"But Tom-"

"You will NOT!" Tom barked and Severus unconsciously flinched. "Swear it!"

"I promise to wait for word from you," Harry grit out.

"That will do."

The Dark Lord appeared beside him a moment later and immediately disconnected the Floo. With his wand gripped in hand he turned to Severus. "Shall we?"

Severus nodded. "This is not an ideal place for such an endeavor," he whispered. "I'm inclined to let the creature out into a wider hall. The students have all been moved to the Great Hall."

"Good. Have you anymore of a plan than the crate?"

"Lovegood thought to lure the creature using potion infused meat."

"Clearly this isn't her first foray with wild animals," Tom replied with amusement. His amusement grew upon seeing the sour look on his friend's face.

"The growling has stopped," Severus murmured after a moment and the two cautiously approached the bedchamber and then the lavatory. They found the creature curled up under the sink, apparently asleep. His snout next to drops of blood.

Despite the creature being wild and severely dangerous, it was perhaps an indication it was minutely comfortable with the scent and nearness of humans. Lovegood, Barty, and Hagrid's

doing, no doubt. The fact that it was a youngling probably also had much to do with it. A full grown Chimaera would not act in such a way.

"The creature is mostly healed. A stun now would do no good," Tom said once back in the sitting room, knowing what Severus was thinking. "Would you have anything in your store rooms strong enough for a creature such as this?"

Severus pondered on it a moment, going through the mental list of all his on-hand potions. Then he nodded. "Dobby!"

Three heartbeats later, the house elf appeared. His ears drifted down slightly upon facing Severus, but once seeing who stood next to him, those eyes grew very round and to Severus' immense surprise and disgust, the elf started babbling happily. "Oh, m-my! The Great Harry Potter's husband! Such an honor it is! Such an honor to meet the one Harry Potter has chosen!"

Severus then barely contained the snort upon seeing the Dark Lord's expression; astonishment and annoyance.

"Dobby, you are in the presence of Lord Voldemort."

"Yes, Headmaster. Dobby be knowing. Dobby be knowing this is the Great Harry Potter's mate, his chosen one. He has been chosen by the very best wizard! What can Dobby be doing for the Great Harry Potter's chosen one?"

Tom pinched the bridge of his nose.

"We need many pieces of raw meat infused with the talic potion, which you can find in my store rooms."

"For the creature, yes? Dobby be getting it ready right away!" and the house elf disappeared with the snap of his finger.

"Ridiculous!"

Severus pressed his lips together, tried looking impassive. Knowing better than to say anything in response. But yet again, he could not contain himself. "I did warn you of the creature's obsession with your husband."

Miraculously he was not cursed to within an inch of his life, but he did notice his Lord had to stamp down the urge to do so.

Shortly Dobby returned with the meat and announced Hagrid was also down the hall setting up a large crate. Lovegood also appeared, walking quietly into the room, despite the wards, stumping both Tom and Severus to speechlessness. The young lady appeared more subdued than they ever witnessed from her. She also had a large bowl full of the cut up raw meat. Crouch hovered very near her. Not the least bit comfortable letting her do this alone.

"Hagrid has the crate ready," Barty quietly announced, dropping a hand to Luna's shoulder to stop her before she would disappear into the bedroom. "Apparently he's been in contact with

Mr. Newt Scamander and relayed the situation. The magizoologist suggested only Luna be the one to lay the meat and coax him to the crate since she's been nursing him back to health."

"Scamander?" Snape questioned with a raised brow. "Is he not yet dead?"

"Apparently not."

"I was sure one of his beasts had eaten him."

Tom smirked at Severus' disappointed droll.

"He's still as dangerous as Hagrid when it comes to magical creatures."

"We can add Lovegood to that list," Tom pointed out just to watch Severus' expression sour even more. He turned to the girl. "Luna? Are you prepared?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. We'll await you in the hall. Shout out immediately should the Chimaera look as if he might attack you. Is this understood?"

"Yes."

"If I should be killed by this creature," Severus said to her, "prepared to be haunted for the rest of your days."

Luna laughed at Severus. "Wonderful. I can tell Harry you've added me to your list. He says you constantly threaten him with that."

"I want to see my child, Lovegood," Severus fairly growled.

"Don't worry so much, Headmaster," she replied cheerfully. "Dan will behave."

Tom found Severus' agitation and anxiety absolutely hilarious, but of course not an ounce of it was found on his face as he and Severus headed out to the hall. Tom posted near the door while Severus took position near the crate where Hagrid waited with bated breath. The half giant continuously wringing his hands in nervousness.

Soon Barty was slowly backing into the hall, Lovegood on his toes; every few feet the witch would drop a piece of meat as they continued passed Tom and towards the waiting crate. And then the creature appeared. Snout pressed firmly to the floor as he hungrily lapped up the pieces of meat dropped for him and he completely ignored the Dark wizard standing post beside the door. Halfway down the hall, Luna grabbed a handful of meat before passing the bowl back to Barty.

"Drop the rest in the crate," she whispered.

Dan straightened upon hearing her voice; ears lying flat against his head with the hint of fangs flashing at her. Luna quickly dropped a couple more pieces and Barty didn't move away

until Dan was back to being distracted by the scrumptious red meat. Maybe the potion dulled the creature's senses, because Dan entered the crate without fuss. He didn't even make much of a fuss when they sealed the crate shut. Everyone except Luna breathed out in relief once the crate was locked. Only a grown Chimaera would be able to escape that crate.

"You understand you would be expelled had you still been a student," Severus hissed to Luna. She smiled her odd carefree smile at him.

"Thank you for helping him, Headmaster."

Severus sneered. "What now do you propose?"

"I'll take him back to where I found him. If someone can help me with the crate until we're outside Hogwarts grounds, I'll be able to Apparate."

"I don't think you should take him back alone, Luna," said Barty, and everyone but Luna silently agreed with that statement.

"Ah, Luna love," Hagrid interjected, "Mr. Scamander said he might send some help fer ya."

"For Dan's continued safety, I will not lead anyone to where I'm taking him." She spoke as usual, but there was a firmness about her which suggested no argument would make a difference. However that changed once down stairs. Tom himself helped Luna with the crate, sending Severus off to go calm himself and see to the students being kept in the Great Hall.

By the time they were downstairs, Dan was slumbering thanks to that potion and as they levitated the crate out of the doors and down the lane, they could see someone standing at the gates. Leisurely waiting. Though the man perked up upon seeing their approach. Tom at once knew who he was, having seen his picture within the *Prophet* before. Just like his grandfather, Rolf Scamander was a renowned Magizoologist and naturalist and had written many articles in that regard for the paper and other literary journals. Tom could admit he enjoyed reading those articles.

Tom looked to the small young woman beside him and saw instant recognition. Of course, having the same interest professionally, she would know who he was. Her usual round eyes widened further in excitement. There might have been some hero worship in her eyes as well, which Tom found amusing. The man watched Luna approach with some shock. He ignored Tom. The Dark Lord would take a moment before that angered him.

"My grandfather said, but... You're Luna Lovegood?" Luna nodded. "Not the Luna Lovegood who has contributed so many fascinating articles on the different species of lizards found in the Timankanks? Perhaps your mother? Grandmother? Certainly it wasn't you who traversed those swamps."

"I don't have a grandmother and my mother died when I was very little."

"Younger than you imagined?" Tom put in with a raised brow.

Finally Scamander focused on him. The wizard's eyes widened and then he immediately sketched a bow. "Forgive me, Lord Riddle, I was... uh..."

"Distracted?"

Rolf cleared his throat.

Luna turned to the Dark Lord. "Thank you very much for your help with Dan, sir. I can take it from here."

Tom nodded. "Keep yourself safe, Luna. Otherwise I'll never hear the end of it."

Luna giggled, nodded, and then she had the nerve to hug him. Scamander's jaw hit the floor.

"Harry really did do well."

Tom was the one to clear his throat and he pat her on her head, a little fondly. "Yes, well... you should be getting on before he wakes. Perhaps you'll allow Scamander to help you."

"I don't want anyone to know where Dan is being released."

"Dan?"

"It is what she named the Chimaera," Tom explained.

Scamander digested that fairly quickly and with barely an incredulous expression. "I only wish to assist you, Miss Lovegood. Like yourself I wish to preserve his safety. Perhaps you will take my oath that I will never divulge his location to anyone. I would like to observe him for a short time also once released, for my own notes. If my word does not sway you, perhaps that of my grandfather..."

Luna eyed the naturalist and then turned to Tom. She looked uncertain. "I don't think you could find better or safer help for Dan, Luna. You really shouldn't go alone. You might run into more poachers."

"I don't like poachers," Rolf stated in a hard voice, his warm eyes suddenly going cold.

"Okay then," Luna responded; warmed by that cold. She scrutinized the wizard intently and then a sudden dreamy smile drifted across her face. She crooked a finger at Tom. He obliged her by bending down slightly so that she could whisper in his ear. "I think I will marry him one day."

Tom straightened and eyed the wizard himself. He chuckled. "Good luck, Scamander."

A short time later he returned home to find Harry pacing in the kitchen. The little minx held both their sons in his arms, bouncing them gently; an extremely worried frown on his face.

"Silly brat," he murmured soothingly, coming up behind Harry who spun around upon hearing his voice.

"Tom," he whispered in relief, allowing the older wizard to pull him in within a warm soothing embrace.

"Come. Let's return to the parlor," Tom said as he took Alexander into his arms. "I have an amusing story to tell. Severus was in a frightful fit."

Two days later, Harry was back in his kitchen, happily baking. Tom was at the Ministry and would be there all evening. The two-way mirror he long ago had installed in the kitchen made a noise; the sound of melodic bells, which indicated someone was calling. Harry assumed it was Neville or Draco, but was pleasantly surprised to see his husband when he answered.

"Harry, can you have the boys looked after for a few hours and your baking suspended for the day?"

"When?"

"This evening. Right now."

"Well... I guess. What's this about? Aren't you supposed to be attending that ministry meeting tonight?"

"It's not really a meeting, per say. More of a blasted party in which Lucius persuaded me to attend to help further a certain number of our upcoming policies..."

"You said I didn't need to go. It would be boring and my presence wasn't necessary if I didn't want to. You didn't want to hear me complaining all night about the rigorously uptight bastards who would be there."

"An opportunity has arisen. You will want to take advantage. It shouldn't be boring at all, for you."

"What happened to your mental holiday?"

"Harry."

"Yes, yes, I'll come."

"Dress appropriately, brat. Or I will not wait until we are in private before spanking you."

Harry grinned. "Promises, promises."

Tom failed to keep a straight face. "Floo to my office."

"Very well. I'll be there shortly."

Tom was waiting for him when he Flooed in; leaning against the mantle in order to catch him upon his arrival. Harry went straight for a kiss instead of waiting to be dusted off the moment he was steady on his feet. Tom didn't have it in him to be annoyed.

"Did I dress appropriately?"

Tom looked him from head to foot then sent him that snake strike grin; which was assuredly a yes. They walked hand in hand out of the office and down the hall and into the now empty dim office floor. They made their way to the lifts and descended two floors where the Ministry ball rooms were located.

The double doors automatically opened for them and Harry was almost used to it when every pair of eyes turned to them and the room went quiet for five heart beats before the chatter resumed and attentions wandered elsewhere.

"I should have brought our leash and collar," Harry murmured as they paused next to a refreshment bar.

Tom plucked up two flutes of champagne and passed one to Harry. "There's always the after party."

"Where's that being held?"

"The kink room."

Harry sipped at his drink and wound an arm around Tom's back when his husband pressed against him. Cheek to cheek they stood there for a moment, slightly swaying with the music. They weren't the only ones taking advantage of the music. Many people were dancing in the center of the room. Also much lively chatter swirled about the room and it didn't resemble anything like the stuffy elbow brushing affair he thought it would be. "Maybe working at the Ministry isn't such a boring affair after all... you all do work, yeah? It's not just Hermione?"

"Hermione works too much and I will be having a word with her shortly. Have you spotted them yet?" the words were spoken into his ear; had his spine tingling pleasantly.

"I'm supposed to be focusing on someone other than you?"

Tom discreetly nibbled on his ear. "Not entirely."

Harry waited a moment before he moved his head a fraction to brush his lips over Tom's jaw. "I like dancing with you."

"We are not really dancing."

"I love being with you."

Tom set the glass down and slid his free hand along the back of Harry's neck, into his hair. Harry pulled back slightly and Tom used the opportunity to capture his lips in a deep kiss. "Would you like to dance, little minx?"

Harry flashed that illegal smile. "Yes I would."

Tom led him towards the center of the room where the others congregated to dance. Harry was surprised he deigned to get closer to anyone else, but he wasn't complaining. In fact he

had a sneaking suspicion Tom was making another statement of sorts by doing this.

"Now I see them," he murmured some minutes later as they continued to dance around and he was able to observe those from every direction. "Please tell me he doesn't work for the Ministry. I'm sure I would have discovered this already."

"No, he doesn't. But he does have standing with many of our circles here. As does his mother. In fact Lady Donovan has more to do with the Ministry."

"We seem to be the center of their attention," he said of the Donovans, who indeed were watching Harry and Tom intently. At least Elanor Donovan watched them closely, but her son whom she was arm in arm with frequently pulled his eyes away to watch attractive witches as they flowed passed him.

"She will want a word with you," Tom murmured in his ear. "To undo the unfortunate occurrence her son caused, mend the rift, so to speak. Knowing you came away with ill thoughts of him. She does not want her son in my pocket. And above all, she aims to be in our good graces."

"For good reason."

"It might be in your best interests to strike up a civil acquaintance with this witch."

Harry looked away from the two, dropped his cheek to his husband's shoulder. "I'm not keen on the idea knowing eventually I will be responsible for taking her son from her, one way or the other. They are very close and he is all she has in regards to family."

Tom muttered in disgust. "I assure you, she is probably more fond of her money and status and will want to retain it above all else. Remain neutral, love. Indifferent. Perhaps you would be doing her a favor in the long run."

"Suppose."

"There is nothing that says you must dispose of him, Harry. What becomes of him is not a problem you need to think on right now."

"So... I should ignore them and make them come to me?"

"Yes. We'll move around-" the hand at Harry's back suddenly moved; flashing out to press against the shoulder of a wizard who was about to brush against Harry as he danced by with his date.

The man turned his head just slightly to see who was pushing him and the blood immediately drained from his face when he was faced with Tom's red blazing eyes. Needless to say, the wizard and his date quickly vacated the dance floor and the other dancers made an even wider circle around the Dark Lord and his mad Riddle.

Harry laughed and pressed his cheek back to his husband's. "They all think that was the touch of death."

"You didn't give the look. He's safe. They all should learn to keep their distance."

"It would have been an accident."

"Even accidents have consequences."

The two spent quite some time dancing and Harry enjoyed every second of it. Every touch and look; Tom's undivided attention.

"The Donovans are not the only reason why I insisted on you coming tonight," Tom admitted when the current song ended and they decided to make a walk around.

Harry kissed him before entwining their arms. "I know." He sounded calm, but his insides had completely melted.

Tom took the lead, Harry following along. He wasn't too interested in the conversations taking place, as he was in no way the politician in the family, but he did make it a point to pay attention since being husband of the Ruler of Wizarding Britain required such knowledge and behavior. And it did help Belial and the Silvers with their endeavors. Speaking of...

"Where's Hermione? Shouldn't she be here?"

"Yes she should," Tom stated softly. "I've been told she's still up in her office, working."

"I've tried talking to her about the amount of work she's doing. She said I'm being silly. Wouldn't hear a word."

"As I said, I will be speaking with her about it. I understand her position, as I placed her there, and she has many hoping to see her fail which drives her harder. She will fail trying to do it all herself. Trying to do too much too fast." Harry nodded and Tom reached over to try to rub the worry from his young husband's brow. "I am not disappointed in what she has accomplished already. Her work has already pleased me greatly and I will make this known to her. I will also make it known I wish for her to live as we are. To enjoy life beyond work. You have taught me this.

"Now," he went on quickly before Harry could do what he looked like he wanted to do- Tom would prefer to do that in private, "you are going to go to one of the refreshment tables, perhaps gravitate to someone you can halfway stand to chat with after. I will go another way. Lucius doesn't seem to be as pleased to be here as usual and Mrs. Donovan will cut you off before you can make your way back to me."

"And go with the flow."

"Exactly."

But I don't want to stop touching you yet.

Tom groaned. "Harry. We can't go home yet. So stop it."

That lopsided grin was thrown his way and the little minx sauntered away. They followed the plan, mingling separately for a time. But Tom realized he miscalculated when Mrs. Donovan caught him alone instead of going after Harry. At once he knew what she was about. Bold, though wasted, in her effort to tempt him. Dangerous also should Harry figure what she was about. Any lesser man would probably be tempted, for at her age, Mrs. Donovan was still a striking figure, but he had eyes for no one but Harry. Now or ever. Even if he were a murderer and an all-around cold hearted bastard, he did have pride and morals to some degree. He would never be unfaithful. The thought was utterly ridiculous to him.

He wondered if she thought she was being clever by herding him away from the party. Though from the look in her eyes it was clear she thought he was interested since he was letting her lead him away to a vacant antechamber. But Tom was only curious about this foolishness. What did she hope to gain by this? Did she really believe Lord Voldemort could be so easily manipulated. His eyes narrowed in sudden anger with this thought.

She waited for him to sit in order to put herself as close to him as she dared, which was a chair directly across from him. She spoke of little but slightly engaging things to do with the Ministry to keep him interested in her presence- he was still angry but didn't let her see it. Then she broached the topic of her son. She did it hesitantly so as not to draw his ire. He had made his displeasure with her son abundantly clear the last they spoke.

"I would think my husband should be the one you seek to mend things, if they can be mended."

Her smile was chaste, but her eyes were coy under shuttered lids. She leaned forward more than was suitable and let her shawl fall to show off her bare shoulders and the low cut of her gown. "My Lord, you are right, of course. I only wanted to seek your permission before I do so."

"Harry is not my pet. He doesn't need permission to speak to anyone. He makes that choice."

Mrs. Donovan was clearly about to move on with her foolish seduction, as she slid herself closer by perching on the edge of her seat and leaning forward even more. It was unfortunate for her that Harry decided at that moment to come in- probably having noticed his disappearance and the ongoing annoyance thrumming through him- and to see what she was trying to do. The moment he snapped the door closed and she looked over her bare shoulder to see who the interruption was, Elanor straightened and quickly rearranged the shawl to cover her shoulders and chest.

Harry seemed perfectly at ease, but only Tom could see the eerie light in his eyes. Tom would need to remind the little minx Mrs. Donovan was not on the hit list. He was amused to see her nervousness upon facing Harry, the fright she couldn't quite mask behind the confident demeanor. Just like her son. She hadn't expected Harry to come upon them yet.

"I hate weak men," Harry began as he slowly moved towards them. His voice low and dangerous and eyes pinned on Elanor Donovan. "I didn't marry a weak man. And do you know what I love about strong men, Mrs. Donovan? Their ability to stand firm, cherish loyalty, be loyal and not be swayed. There are so many powerful people who are weak. They

allow themselves to be swayed, to fall. To forget themselves. Power and strength doesn't always come hand in hand. Don't you agree?"

The woman glanced at Tom first, curiously, before turning back to him. "I believe I do."

His eyes were steady on her face. That understanding was in her eyes. This was a onetime shot and she wouldn't try again. Harry halfway didn't blame her but he was still fucking pissed that she would even dare.

"So, what were you two talking about?"

Mrs. Donovan relaxed minutely, though she did stand to face Harry directly as he approached. "We were speaking of my son and his horrible manners concerning you, my lord. I do beg your forgiveness."

"I don't want your forgiveness. You weren't the one who collided into me, nearly made me fall, and I have no doubt that fall would not have been pleasant for my boys or myself. You also weren't the one to try and blame me for it, and then give me a completely vacant apology."

"I understand, Lord Riddle. And Marcus does wish to speak with you, if you have no objections. He does feel guilty and ashamed of his behavior that night."

"Perhaps a short word wouldn't hurt."

"And how are your beautiful babies?"

Harry allowed a true smile to reach his eyes, even if she really didn't care. But the thought of his sons always brought a smile to his face. "They are doing very well. Thank you for asking."

As the seconds passed, she relaxed further. "I dare say you'll have your hands full in a short while."

Harry laughed. "Yes. I'm looking forward to it. Well, since we're here and have this moment alone, why don't you go fetch your son. We can all sit and have a chat."

Mrs. Donovan looked genuinely delighted and quickly agreed. As soon as she was gone, Tom laughed. "She didn't pick up on your condescending tone." Harry abruptly glowered at him. Which prompted him to laugh again. "That was in no way my fault."

"Maybe if you toned down the charm," was the sneering reply.

Tom stood and approached him with that charming smirk; very much appreciating and reacting to this show of jealousy-spawned hostility and the rigid possessiveness burning in Harry's eyes. "I cannot stop what comes naturally."

"I said tone it down, wanker!"

Darkness surrounded him as a hard body pressed snugly against his. A warm hand slipped beneath his robe and tunic, snaking across heated skin while another roughly grabbed a handful of black hair; pulling until Harry was looking at the ceiling. Harry swallowed thickly, biting back a moan when a finger scraped against a suddenly hard nipple as a mouth worked down his throat.

"When I get you home," Tom breathed without pulling his mouth away; hand still moving a burning trail over his skin and behind to finally slip beneath his pants and take his backside in hand, "I will lay you down, slowly strip away your clothes, piece by piece. I will feast on you for hours and there is *nothing* you will be able to do but lay there and enjoy it."

By then Harry's breathing was ragged and he whimpered when a certain part of Tom's anatomy collided with his own, sending his body in delirious shock. Goosebumps spread across his flesh and the only coherent thought he had at the moment was that he wished home were now.

"When we are home," Tom breathed in his ear, "I will make you forget this ridiculous notion of yours that someone may succeed in trying to steal me away."

The hand beneath Harry's tunic continued to move; mapping out the contours and plains of his husband's torso, delighting in the flexing muscles and unconscious tremors. Harry was always so pliable beneath his fingers, his mouth. And the little minx was aching right now, the deliriousness of it shining in his gorgeous darkened eyes.

"Harry," he breathed against his husband's mouth, "the breath of my soul, the beat of my heart. Can I stand to be around anyone without you? Not for a second. You keep the monster at bay. You are what gives me purpose. No one else has that power. In my mind, you are the most powerful wizard in the world."

"You torture me," Harry breathed, overcome by emotion and physical need. "... we are not at home."

"It is my specialty, torture... and charm," he added as an afterthought; laughing when Harry hissed at him as if he were back to being a spastic cat hybrid.

They were prepared for the interruption, knowing the Donovans would return and had separated slightly by that time, but they didn't expect to find Lucius walking in with them, though Lucius' presence was welcome. Harry noted what Tom had earlier. Lucius didn't seem to be in all that great of a mood. The Donovans of course wouldn't be able to tell because they didn't know him at all, only by reputation; most people who did know him still probably wouldn't be able to see it, but Harry had grown closer to the elder Malfoy over the year and could see the difference in his moods. Pregnant or not.

Donovan would go and speak with Tom first, as etiquette entailed, so that gave Harry a moment to speak with Lucius alone. The two stood aside a bookcase towards the front of the room while Donovan and his mother continued to speak with the Dark Lord.

"You're looking very well tonight, Lucius," he said softly, noticing the hard edge around the man's eyes. Something was wrong, yes, but Lucius did look very handsome tonight. His

pregnancy making him glow, and of course his male paternity clothes was top of the line. Harry didn't think he'd ever looked that good seven months pregnant. "But... I feel like something is wrong. Are you alright?"

For a moment, Lucius' eyes flashed in temper. Maybe not directed at Harry, but it was there. Then he looked directly at Harry, saw the genuine concern in the young lord's eyes and blew out a breath, managing a real smile.

"Thank you for the compliment, Harry. And yes, I'm perfectly well."

A lie, Harry thought in amusement realizing no one but Severus could probably get the aristocrat to be honest in that regard. "I've been meaning to ask... have you been telling Draco to be nice to Neville?"

Lucius chuckled. "At the beginning, yes. When I realized once the boy was taught how to be a real Lord of his House, he could be a fierce ally of sorts in areas we cannot touch."

"Typical."

"But Draco took it beyond what I asked for. He genuinely likes Longbottom, Harry, so no need for that glare. I myself am surprised how taken with Longbottom he is. Draco sees things now he never cared to see before. He's different and in a much better way. The things I see as weaknesses in Longbottom, Draco sees as strengths."

"Are you looking forward to being a grandfather?" Harry asked cheekily and then laughed when Lucius scowled and staunchly refused to acknowledge the question.

Harry then turned towards Tom and the Donovans, thinking now was as good a time as any. He caught Tom's eye for a moment, a quick glance conveying what he wanted to happen in the next few moments before turning back to Lucius. "Would you mind distracting Mrs. Donovan for a few minutes?" he whispered with a hard green glint in his eyes. "I need to curse her son."

"With immense pleasure."

Lucius moved away to the three and touched Elanor lightly on her elbow. He said something to her which Harry didn't catch, but in moments the lady followed Lucius to the other side of the room, away from Harry and Tom and her son. Harry remained where he was, pretending to browse the many years' worth of literary journals upon the bookcase, eyes going over the weathered spines, studying the antique and probably priceless bookends which separated different journals and subjects.

He knew Donovan would not move away from his husband until Tom dismissed him. No one would turn their backs on the Dark Lord without permission. And Tom knew what he was about to do so he wouldn't release Donovan's attention until he was done. For now, a quick Imperio would do the trick. He doubted very much Marcus Donovan was mentally strong enough to shake it. It was clear by the way his mother led him around as if he were still a little boy. It was clear by the way Donovan conducted himself when he was alone.

Harry was preparing for the moment; to turn back to the two and cast the curse when he felt the air shift in the room. Felt his husband's magic lashing out. When he turned, the two were in the same position. Donovan was speaking and though to an outsider, Tom may appeared relaxed, calm, Harry could see and feel differently. His husband was extremely angry. To the point of his scar reacting to the rage.

Tom's eyes cut across the office to Harry and he minutely shook his head. Harry discreetly slid his wand back into its holster along his forearm, wondering what the problem was. He'd soon find out. Harry faced them fully and walked over, taking the seat Tom stood next to. His husband then dropped a hand to the back of the chair next to his head, and they both peered at Donovan, who had tensed upon these actions. Harry sitting and Tom standing and that's how their marriage was. Before, Donovan might have assumed as many did. Harry took a back seat to his husband. And now he was tense again, wary because clearly this was not so. Clearly it was a true partnership and his slighting Harry could mean very bad things, from Harry himself. He had to fix it.

Harry saw all this in Donovan's eyes, watched the wizard working it out. And Harry enjoyed every moment of this disgrace of a wizard's panic. Whatever he did with Donovan, he would enjoy it. This wizard who had no qualms about selling children, this wizard who pitted beasts against each other just to make money. This wizard who enjoyed playing games with people for no other reason than to make a game out of it. There was no rhyme or reason to his crimes; only enjoyment. He was a decidedly different sort of criminal than Tom, who always had reason for what he did, who always had a goal in mind, even if he'd been going about it all wrong before...

He might have been careless in letting his aversion shine through in his eyes for Donovan cleared his throat and stepped back from Harry just the slightest bit. Beside him, Tom smirked with pride and amusement.

"You wanted a word," Harry started, trying to keep his voice neutral, reminding himself he had his own game to play and it wouldn't do to give himself away so soon.

"Yes, Lord Riddle," Donovan replied as he bowed in a suitable manner, his voice now the picture of respect; there was no underlying annoyance as before. His attitude with Harry was completely different. Harry wasn't sure how much of this was spurned on by his mother's instruction. As Harry had already told Elanor, he didn't like weak men. And this man was weak. In so many ways... the hand suddenly pressing down on his shoulder had him instantly pushing away anger inducing thoughts again. One thing was clear. He couldn't wait to play with this bloke when the time was right.

"I wanted to apologize again, for what happened between us at the restaurant. It was of course my entire fault for not paying attention to where I was going." Harry raised a brow and Donovan cleared a through. "I was distracted by my date."

"Dates that need to be paid for generally don't need that much attention," Harry dead panned and he felt Tom's exuberant amusement at such a statement.

Surprisingly, Donovan did not react to the dig. "I can see you are still angry..."

"You could have hurt my boys by that fall and were prepared to blame it all on me."

To be honest, Harry felt guilty on his own. He had planned that whole thing. And he miscalculated the force with which Donovan would run into him. If he had fallen, it would have been his fault.

The hand on his shoulder began to knead gently. Tom didn't need to be able to hear his thoughts, but he didn't have to. He knew Harry so well he automatically knew how his thought processes went.

"I do beg your forgiveness, Lord Riddle. My behavior was inexcusable. At that moment and just after. I admit to being embarrassed..."

Donovan must really hate this. Submitting to him like this, acting as a child who was being chastised by a parent. Harry was loving it. "I suppose holding on to such grudges is beneath us, Donovan. I want to teach my children about forgiveness after all," he said, peering up at his husband a moment before turning back to this wanker, "what kind of example would I give should I hold on to a little thing like this. I think maybe I should thank you for being the bigger person here and coming to apologize."

The next thing he should have done was stand and offer his hand, but since he had no intention of touching this disgusting bloke, he remained where he was and conveyed through facial expression alone that they were done talking for the night. Donovan straightened and nodded to him, clearly relieved, bowed to Tom and then turned away to join his mother and Lord Malfoy.

"Someone," Tom began, bending slightly to whisper in his ear, "has charmed him. Any curse put upon him will make itself known to the person who cast the charm. A very strong bit of magic. I'm inclined to think Donovan does not have the capabilities of such a thing."

Harry shot to his feet and faced his husband, suddenly enraged at the thought.

Tom pressed closer so that they could continue to talk without being overheard. "I'm inclined to believe his employer is the person responsible. Clever. Very clever. Especially if Donovan is that well involved in the Black Market and with this Boss."

"Clever, but it doesn't help us any."

"Not at this precise moment, but there are ways to get around this."

"I suppose I'm to be patient," Harry muttered.

Tom smiled, dropped a kiss to those petulantly turned down lips. "Just for a little while longer." He looked across the room and nodded to Lucius. Harry didn't hear what he said, but he deftly finished the conversation and sent the Donovans on their way.

"I've decided to have a dinner party," Lucius announced as he joined the two, ignoring Harry's penetrating stare since he could once again sense something wasn't quite right with

the blond, "at the end of the week. I hope you'll come with your husband," he said to Harry. "I've invited others you would like to dine with."

"Of course I will," Harry answered, again amused by the formality of the invite. But he also understood because Harry didn't always attend Malfoy dinner parties since they were usually just for Lucius' contacts and business dealings and another way for Lucius to stay on top of everything that's going on in the Ministry.

"And since clearly something kept you from cursing the wizard, I invited those two as well. Mrs. Donovan was delighted."

"She would be," Tom murmured.

Lucius, bless your foresight and sneakiness, Harry thought in amusement. It would be the perfect time to do whatever he planned to do to Donovan, since an Imperio would not work unless he wanted the Boss to know Donovan was compromised. Tom went on to explain to Lucius why he couldn't go through with the curse.

Lucius frowned, turned to Harry. "Whoever you are dealing with appears to be very intelligent. Dangerous. And prepared for anything."

"We are being cautious, Lucius. I promise... are you sure you're alright?" Harry demanded.

"If you could also invite Longbottom and his husband, as well as Mr. Tarring, Harry," the blond went on, ignoring the inquiry. "Narcissa would love to have them and I'm not finished with Longbottom's studies. This will be a good learning experience for the young Lord. And anyone else you feel might benefit from such a gathering."

Harry gave him a weird look at this.

Tom chuckled. "Lucius' dinner parties are well known, Harry. There are many benefits to attending them."

Politics, Harry thought with an internal sneer. "Sure, if you say so."

"Not just politics," Lucius said as if he could hear his thoughts, smirking. "Also for business. And do you yourself not own a business?"

"Point taken."

Lucius then departed, leaving Tom and Harry alone. "I suppose we should also go back out and mingle," Harry proposed without any enthusiasm.

The laugh pouring from his husband's lips was decidedly dark. It made Harry's blood boil, made the room suddenly unbearably hot and his breath quicken. No, Tom wasn't prepared to go back out there. Tom was prepared to take him home and commence with the lovely torture as promised.

Long awaited, I know. Apologies for the two year wait. Hopefully the next chapter will be out much sooner. Thanks for reading, keeping up with the story and have a great day! :D

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