

## **I Waited For You, In The Shadows Of Time**

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/6921907) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/6921907>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Harry Potter/Tom Riddle</a>   <a href="#">Voldemort</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Harry Potter</a> , <a href="#">Tom Riddle</a>   <a href="#">Voldemort</a> , <a href="#">Original Male Character(s)</a> , <a href="#">Albus Dumbledore</a> , <a href="#">Gellert Grindelwald</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Time Travel</a> , <a href="#">Romance</a> , <a href="#">Possessive Voldemort</a> , <a href="#">Obsessive Voldemort</a> , <a href="#">First War with Voldemort</a> , <a href="#">Post WW2</a> , <a href="#">slight AU</a> , <a href="#">Tom likes pretty things</a> , <a href="#">Oblivious Harry Potter</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of <a href="#">Drifting In Time</a>
Collections:	<a href="#">Top-Tier Complete Tomarrymort Fics</a> , <a href="#">Tempus et Spatium (Time and Space)</a> , <a href="#">Amarillie Harry Potter Fanfictions</a> , <a href="#">Tomarry\Harrymort</a> , <a href="#">top_tommary_completed</a> , <a href="#">hello yes i can't stop thinking about these works</a>
Stats:	Published: 2016-05-24 Completed: 2022-01-01 Words: 120,113 Chapters: 16/16

# I Waited For You, In The Shadows Of Time

by [watchingvfall\\_n\\_drown](#)

## Summary

In a twist of fate, Harry is stranded in a time when Grindelwald has just been defeated and First Wizarding War hasn't begun yet. Desperate for answers, he still has the presence of mind to keep himself hidden from all, especially the power figures of the Wizarding World. And then all his carefully built hope and shelter shatters one day, in the shores of the black lake.

Formerly Tom Riddle, now Voldemort comes upon one that captures him with their beauty and magic, stroking the inevitable desire. Like all the pretty things he has collected, this will be no different. Unfortunately for him, his newest obsession has a will of its own and no intention of quietly acquiescing.

Will Harry be able to find a way home? Or a reason to stay? And will the Dark Lord find more than a desire to possess in his heart? Even as the two fated ones find each other again, the world moves on. There is still a Dark Lord and still a headmaster with sharp eyes on the horizon.

## Notes

Disclaimer: I do not and never will own Harry Potter of J. K. Rowling. This little thing is my own though and I will guard it like a starving lion guards its food. Except I am not going to eat it. So perhaps that was not the correct analogy.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# For A Glimpse Through The Veil Of Light

## Chapter 1

In the Tapestry of Fate, golden and silver threads weave away, coming together and spilling apart, continuing the grand design that had started since the beginning of time. Every once in a while one or two threads glow brighter than the rest. Every once a while some threads find their way to each other, no matter how many times they are cut off and renewed to bring forth a new design

Among those, there were two such golden threads, pulsing bright and heavy; two souls whom destiny introduced each other to in such a way that it dictated the fate of an entire world. Their meeting held no simple greeting, but an explosion of events to mark them both irrevocably and to twine their souls irreparably. But even the one who painted the cloth painstakingly with old, old knowledge didn't predict the way those two souls would intermingle with each other so closely that soon there might as well be only one thread rather than one. Their paths were separate as were the color of their souls and yet the threads never parted from each other for more than a breathing period.

All threads of time run parallel, breaking apart on instances marked common, and thus never meet each other again. Each changing thought starts a future that wasn't to be moment earlier and every single action divides the time into separate threads marked with every minute difference, never to be reversed. The universe must have once started as a unity at the beginning of time, but now it was an amalgam of decisions of the mortals and whims of the rest.

One warm summer evening on the hills of Scotland, marked such a detour in the designs of fate, all for a single change in one's action. Then two souls who had been parted by time and death irrevocably find each other again, but this time there would be no hand of prophecy to guide their paths. Some might call it sheer chance, others a hand of fate. In the end, the choices were all their own.

A darkly dressed man in his early thirties left the Castle of Hogwarts School of Wizarding and Witchcraft in a decidedly foul mood. He had applied for the recently vacated teaching post of Defense against the Dark Arts as was his intention after having been refused once by the previous Headmaster. He was freshly graduated then, brimful of confidence in his abilities, but the then wizened headmaster, Armando dippet, had very kindly advised him to experience the world first. After all, he was a prodigy of that time, Prefect and Head boy with connections that could easily give him a very lucrative post even in the Ministry of Magic. He had goals different than merely being satisfied with the position of a subordinate however, and he had shocked many of his old professors with his inferior career choice. In the end, he had taken that advice and now he had experienced the world; he had met the secluded mages of Europe, he had delved into magic so ancient that their written forms had fallen apart and traipsed into forbidden Arts of Magic that ordinary wizards would hardly ever have any courage to.

But all that had mattered naught to the headmaster Albus Dumbledore, who had only expressed a subtle disappointment over his actions. As if the old self-righteous man had any right to condemn him so! He was more than qualified for the post, but what did it matter in the end, when he had been dismissed with an implication that he never had any chance from the beginning? Rage had bubbled steadily in his veins and he had felt humiliated at such a blatant rejection, for a moment he had so wished to wipe that knowing glance out with his yew wand. In the end, his hand had stayed and so did the relative health of the headmaster. Same couldn't be said however for the castle itself as an hour later he left the castle with a dark satisfaction soothing his fury, after having cursed the position so that none might hold the post for more than a year. The revenge might have been petty, but so very gratifying. Irked as he was, the passive acts didn't hold enough sway over the enraged mind and he strode out to the ground with a dark cloud deepening his steps.

It was one of those pivotal moments that determined the direction the future would take, one of those instances that historians quoted as the most defining factor directing the flow of time, because the moment the man left the castle, it would be the beginning of a new era heralding the rise of the most powerful and terrible Dark Lord in the Wizarding history. Of course it was always to be so, for some men's fates are as unaltered as words on a stone, but nothing set it definite more than right that moment when a man upon his rejection from a desired career had no more distraction from his ultimate ambition of conquering the Wizarding world. In another reality, the man would take his leave without another glance at the sprawling castle and rendezvous with a group of 'friends' who would be eagerly waiting for their Lord to return and congratulate on his triumph. After all, nothing less could have been expected from him. But this time it was not to be so, this time the man instead *lingered*.

Swayed by nostalgia and memories of long seven years as a Slytherin student faltered the decisive steps and instead directed them to the rocky shores of the Black Lake. The gleaming light of the setting sun reflected softly off of the placid surface and the man was reminded of the night when he had his first glimpse of Hogwarts, resplendent in its beauty with countless lights streaming from it to spill off on to the night. He had been breathless at the incredible sight, a slight possessive longing stirring in his heart. But no matter how much he wished otherwise, it was only a school, controlled by other authority figures and it could never be entirely his. He had learned that painful lesson early enough.

As deep in the thoughts as he was, the brooding man was snapped out of his musing and he stiffened to attention, when he became aware of another presence just over by the forest. He needn't have bothered with the unnecessary caution though, since the other was completely oblivious to the fact that they had company. Taking advantage of the other's distraction, he turned his unfiltered observation upon the unknown figure unabashedly.

The first thought that brushed his mind was how very *lovely*.

And indeed, the man was enchanted by how enthralling he found this unknown being and he was momentarily grateful for other's lack of attention as he avidly, greedily familiarized himself with each and every nuance of the lithe body. Ignorant of their avid watcher, the person continued to look out at the slowly darkening sky with such melancholy on the lovely, pale features that even the cold heart of an inferius would ache in sympathy. Long dark tresses floated down their back, unbound and untamed, swaying slightly in the Scottish

breeze. Clad in a pale simmering blue robe, the person was nothing short of an ethereal figure illuminated in the dying light. Their features were pale, chiseled as if by an attentive hand of sculptor, in sharp contrast with such dark hair but no less engaging. It was a beautifully sorrowful sight, surely a dream of every soulful painter.

Greed found a home in the scarlet eyed man, drawn as it was by the man's avarice for this alluring being, stirring in the tainted heart of one who would carefully nurture the bottomless monster and one who would never try to turn away from the whispers of temptations. Lust went side by side with its brother, enchanting its prey and capturing it in a chokehold as it would forever covet for the one.

He had seen many beauty personified in his travels and many who were capable of alluring the strongest willed person even to their death. He had never fallen prey to such siren's call or a veela's allure, secure in his mental fortitude. He could say for sure that this person was no creature, for to be able to work their thrall they needed an eye contact or a direct notice at the very least. No, there was nothing of mental manipulative magic that could capture him.

Even so, the creature was so incredibly beautiful, wrapped as it was in its own melancholy. Despite the fact that he could feel very clearly that it was a wizard, and yet he was reluctant to call it one. Instead he wondered if it was not an unknown creature of exceptional beauty and in front of him was the only one of such kind or maybe even last of their kind. Surely he would have somehow heard something of such enchanting creatures otherwise? And yet it was so clearly a wizard, what with their magic crackling in the surrounding air curling about their host, unrestrained.

Marveling at the potent sight, he was very careful so as not to startle the lovely creature, for its magic was snapping possessively around its unguarded host warning away any potential intruder that might harm it and its own. The unintended display was impressive to say the least. Magic of untrained children was wild and undirected, lashing out at the nearest outlet in an attempt to engage itself, while that of the trained adults was highly wound up in its core and disciplined, only slipping out at the times of great emotional or magical distress. Then there were those who had a rare affinity with their magic, and which was a common trait among those with powerful potential. Contrary to the norm, their magic was disciplined, but also in a semi sentient symbiotic relationship where it responded with their hosts as if it was a tangible part of theirs. Such was its behavior, when the excess magic leaked around their wizard, wrapping them in a reflective aura imitating the mood and character of their hosts.

It was very easy to be intimidated by a powerful wizard, when the magic that trailed off of them practically charged the atmosphere with their intensity.

How he had come upon such an incredible opportunity, power wielded by such an enchanting creature, he didn't try to wonder about. Instead greed and lust curled about his heart whispering in dark tones, of possessions and claims. Never before had he felt such powerful desire and had it been anyone of less fortitude they would have wondered about a spell being cast. But he was confident in his capabilities and in his magical prowess. So when the whispers of a faint stirring of an obsession coiled like a snake, he didn't ignore it.

Tom Riddle was never one to deny his desires.

With slow and steady steps he approached the still distracted celestial being, so as not to startle them and provoke their magic to lash out at an undetermined intrusion. But no matter how careful he was in advertising his slow advances without resorting to outright brashness, the creature didn't heed the footfalls of its visitor or the agitated hissing of its own magic, so entrenched it was in their misery. Thus there was nothing to be done about the creature from being so startled, when Tom called in cooing voice, "Are you all right?"

Magic spiked in emphasizing anxiety and midnight dark tresses whipped around as the being turned around to face the one who had come upon it so unexpectedly, and Tom held himself still at the sight of impossibly wide, if a little wet, green eyes. It was almost destructive, this sudden need that rushed inside him, to capture, to have, *to own* entirely. With inhuman strength of will, he resisted the lure of the siren like eyes and kept his approach obviously non-aggressive. His hands were open and non-threatening, and well out of the proximity of his wand holster, his steps were small while he kept a keen, attentive gaze upon the lovely creature. He was treating this situation as he would, upon encountering a wild, skittish doe. Off-handedly he wondered if it wasn't indeed the same, for the eyes of the divine being in front of him were certainly as innocently charming as that of the afore mentioned animal.

He stopped, some feet away, when his query took a timid step back.

When instead of answering him, the lovely one continued to gaze at him absolute surprise and ill disguised horror, he prodded it with a soft voice, "I am sorry for startlinging you."

And it jumped lightly as if until that moment it hadn't realized that the person standing in front of it was indeed real.

Pink lips parted uncertainly as if to say something, but then closed. Green eyes were fixed upon his features in an expression akin to horror and disbelief, Tom couldn't help but feel slightly offended at that expression, "Am I so repulsive?"

Pretty eyes widened in horror of different kind, "No, no! I didn't mean to offend you or anything! I just wasn't expecting anyone here." He finished lamely. Before he could even start thinking about the words uttered, Voldemort focused on the soft voice of the angel. Whispery thick and raspy, it was slightly distorted, undoubtedly resulting from the recent melancholic period, but enticing just like the rest of the creature. It was as if the creature belonged to a species designed to lure and seduce. And the Dark Lord had indeed been captivated, instead of resisting the siren call he was determined to make the divine being the jewel of his court. And he was quite sure, that it would shine brighter than all stars.

Nonetheless, his logical mind functioned, quite detached from the internal maelstrom that was twisting and turning in the fractured soul and Voldemort didn't believe the words of the little creature, whose face as open and honest as possible betrayed their own and practically radiated uneasiness. He understood though, his rituals hadn't really been generous to his physical body, but he had never once regretted it. Some sacrifices were necessary if one wished to achieve pinnacle of glory. Physical beauty was the least of his concern when he could accumulate greater goals. Now, it seemed to be rather detriment in the goal of capturing this flighty little creature but it wouldn't be for long, he was confident of it. He was capable of ensnaring people's will and mind without the use of a skin deep attraction or magic.

He was more than proficient in turning any and all situations to his advantage.

“Then you wouldn’t step away if I were to take one forward, would you?”

It would have. It certainly wanted to. The thoughts were playing clearly for him in the wide eyes even without having to resort to Legilimency. But pride stalled its limbs and the pale face stared at him resolutely even when their magic was raging around him frantically, like a caged bird desperate for freedom.

Voldemort hid a smirk. So easily manipulated was the lovely little creature. It was fascinating how often pride overrode self-perseveration, as if it was better to fall with head held high rather than to bend but be alive. Not many chose pride of course; the proof was in the number of followers he had accumulated who, too intimidated by his power preferred to follow him without even a token of protest. He didn’t complain that much, as it was all for his benefit. Nevertheless, he quite liked this stubborn angel, seeing how he himself was guilty of more than pride.

“But I won’t force you to tolerate something you would rather not.”

The lovely face crumpled with guilt.

Voldemort almost wanted to cackle with glee. So innocent was this little creature of his. In any other he would have scoffed at how easily the little creature could be persuaded into his will. But in this instance it was not the same. The divine being in front of him didn’t feel like the ordinary mortals he often associated with. No, it was someone detached from this world, untainted and devoid of impurity. It glowed with a brightness that even their magic seemed to resonate.

He couldn’t wait to possess the little creature and corrupt it himself.

Another sharp burst of lust went through him at that thought. So delicious would be the final result, he was almost impatient to taste it. But the preparation needed careful management and he knew he would savor that as well.

The little creature curled within itself. Maybe in another circumstance it would have reacted with a little more resolution, but the misery from earlier seemed to seep into every other of their emotions.

“I didn’t mean to offend you. I was just surprised and you caught me at a bad moment.” The creature spoke in a soft voice looking away from the intense red eyes, slim hands wrapping around their body as if to ward off a chill, even when it was quite warm in the rapidly approaching dusk.

Voldemort hummed and took a careful step forward but the angel took no notice,” I feel like I am supposed to apologize for that. But I can’t. Seeing how I was well aware of your state of mind when I approached you, it wouldn’t be sincere.”

Green eyes sparkled wetly, remnant of their sorrowful countenance, not really understanding and innocently confused,” Then why did you?”

“I couldn’t just let a person be to their despair knowingly, now could I? That wouldn’t be very noble.”

Much to his surprise, suspicion immediately stiffened the creature into sharp attention and it spoke, “Really? And, you would be so concerned for all unfortunate people that you came across?”

He smiled humorlessly, “what is so hard to believe? That I stopped by to help someone or that I might be a good person?”

Inwardly he wondered at this caution from the little creature and almost frowned visibly as its body tensed even further. This development was most unfortunate, but he was patient at the moment, slowly unraveling the mystery that was the exquisite little creature it was. After all, he could hardly be expected to manipulate someone fluidly unless he knew all the weaknesses. The fact that the seemingly innocent one seemed so guarded against him was curious and he wished to find out if it would be true against all or whether he was a special case. He was less inclined to believe the later hypothesis considering they had never even met before and there shouldn’t be any probable cause for alarm.

But no matter how improbable a factor, he never discarded a possibility until it had no more ground to stand on. He followed the same rule with people as well actually. He wouldn’t outright dismiss someone as long as he could still think of a way they could be of his benefit.

Green eyes narrowed, “Yes, actually.”

Voldemort hummed, not at all offended. He couldn’t be seeing how he wasn’t really, a good person that is.

“You seem awfully suspicious of me, considering we just met.”

Voldemort watched with no small amount of delight as the lithe body stiffened further with agitation and a small flash of panic glazed the exquisite features before it stammered out a viable explanation.

“It would be rather foolish of me to take a stranger at his word.”

It would be rather, really. And, in another circumstance he would have been approving of this self-preserving trait. But at that moment it was hindering him from establishing a line of trust that he could base further communication upon with the object of his desire, and he didn’t feel quite so benevolent.

“It might be so. But it would be a rather lonely life if you would be so dismissive of all before you could actually get to know them. Caution is admirable as long as it doesn’t encase you in a well of solitude.”

The little creature moved their shoulder in a dismissive manner. A plebian gesture, Voldemort supposed, but fitted the bold, expressive way of the pretty thing.

“I guess.” The syllables seemed to be coated in doubt.



“I suppose you still don’t believe at my genuineness.” Manners dictated that he is offended at this continued disregard, but he couldn’t help but feel amused.

Green eyes were slightly chastised, but they were determined nonetheless,” I didn’t mean it as a slight to you or anything...” And the tone was anything but apologetic.

The soon-to-be Dark Lord couldn’t really justify his actions at that moment. If it were anyone else, he would have weaved a charming picture of patience and faith, to slowly win them over by means of actions. He had played long games enough times to know that not all fall instantaneously to his docility and well-mannered behavior. He could have done the same. But somehow, he realized this little creature would never be swayed by his honey coated words or by his public persona. Perhaps his mind had been too annoyed by the constant suspicion the creature regarded him with while his entire being howled with the need to claim, to possess, to make it submit. If directly confronted with the demand to explain at a later moment, there would have been some logical line of reasoning.

But truthfully, his steps were taken almost impulsively, the prowling monster within him refusing to let their query back away anymore.

“No, you didn’t...” The Dark Lord practically purred while slowly advancing,” And how delightful it must be for you, to know that you were not entirely mistaken.” He smirked at the bewilderment in the beautiful face.

“Wh-What?”, the question was almost swallowed by a gasp, when the little creature noticed the almost predatory gleam in the scarlet eyes.

“You were right in that I would certainly not have involved myself at all for anyone. But I couldn’t help it, not once I saw you.”

“You could have, you know, just ignored me and walked away.” was the pouty reply from the impudent lips.

Voldemort laughed softly, at the boldness the creature was displaying, at the brazen confidence. Perhaps, the wayward little doe didn’t understand the kind of monster it was facing, seeing how recklessly it was provoking him with such carelessly thrown words.

“Hmm... no. Not really. I couldn’t have. My body practically refused to move after I saw your lovely features marred by your grief. It might not have been out of sheer humanity and I might not have been here for any other person. But my lovely little angel, I came here because I was drawn by you. Whether you were in the best of mood or not, I would have come regardless” Voldemort cooed softly as he slowly circled the little creature.

The celestial creature glowed softly in the rising darkness, its breaths coming fast. “Why?” The voice was so full of plaintive and bewilderment, Voldemort was hard pressed not to tug the little tempter into his arms.

“Does it matter, lovely?” The Dark Lord was admittedly delighted at the broken countenance; at the way the little creature seemed to unconsciously seek his reassurance to be grounded and he would be happy to provide it, with himself as the only stability that the little creature

could find. “Does it matter why, when you could have someone you could lean on regardless of the circumstances? What it would matter except the trust that I want to be the one, the only one,” The greed within him growled in warning,” that would be with you in every instances.” He twirled a soft dark lock between his thumb and forefinger.

“I don’t understand.” As he turned his newest obsession around to face him, there was no suspicion in the dark green eyes, only confusion and slight fear.

And the Dark Lord inwardly rejoiced at the victory while at the same time intrigued by the fact that the bare truth had seemed to be more efficient in influencing the wild creature while no charm or persuasive words hadn’t been able to and that it didn’t seem to be as alarmed as it should have been at his aggressiveness.

The creature seemed to be *expecting* it.

How interesting.

But that was a puzzle to be perused on a later day, now he needed to focus on the enchanting little beauty that he was determined to possess him all for himself.

“There is nothing to understand, lovely,” He smiled at him, both to reassure the fidgety being and at the knowledge that the creature was too off-guarded to object the endearment.”All I want is,” *‘you’* “to take care of you. Would you give me the chance, angel?”

There was no choice, not really. But he supposed it would be polite to make a request that was a warning at the same time.

The creature was indecisive and slightly overwhelmed,” I-I don’t know.”

He understood. He really did. But it didn’t matter a Knut to the monster in his chest that was pacing in agitation.

The night had fallen, he couldn’t tarry any longer. And he needed to step away before the creature did, if only to upset its balance it a little more.

“I understand. I will give you some time to think. No doubt, you would be exhausted from all the excitement of the day. I will find you” He laughed at the indignation in the pouty lips. His glance drifted downward, but he controlled himself.

And now for the one last memory, that would settle him irrepressibly into the creature’s thoughts till the next meet.

“Sweet dreams, my lovely.”

Thin lips pressed lightly down on warm forehead and with a last hungry view of the utterly stupefied creature, he turned on his heel and left with fingers that had been clenched into fist and lips tingling with a want for more.

He licked his lips to savor the innocent taste that would hopefully be enough to pacify the beast for now.

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Harry Potter sat in a cocoon of fluffy, warm pillows against his back, in front of him, surrounded by them actually as if they would protect him from any attacks as the flimsy things kept their ward in their midst while they stood in a mockery of a castle. Green eyes were wide and dazed, as they looked at the creamy blue wall, but not really seeing. His thoughts were in turmoil and past images swirled around, blurring their edges in a way that he couldn't distinguish where the end began.

He wondered detachedly if he was in shock.

Perhaps it was that realization that guided the first coherent thought of the night.

*'In the name of Merlin and Morgana, What just happened?'*

He had gone to Hogwarts in an innocent excursion, or perhaps not that innocent. Nevertheless, he had wanted answers or at least something that resembled an answer. He had, notwithstanding the lack of academic enthusiasm, thrown himself into the research to find a single line that could allude to the extraordinary situation that he had landed himself in.

After all, how many in the Wizarding World or otherwise could claim to have travelled to the past without the time turner and certainly not just a few hours or days, but almost half a century?

At first, he had been exasperated, quite certain of the fact that this was in practice actually impossible and that he would soon find himself home, in his reclusive manor. And then, days passed by and weeks winked at him but he was still stranded in this strange land. He had been alarmed, then terrified and rapidly started on trying to find a way back home. He would have neglected even his basic needs if not for the fact that it would be impossible to. He had had to establish an identity, because he needed a place to stay and also find a way to more than just survive. That was not including the fact that he also needed resources to actually fund his research.

Meanwhile, he needed to stay invisible.

No matter how frantic he was in burying himself deep in the research, he had no intention of changing something in the timeline and affecting his own existence which might turn this whole affair into a cycling paradox and even the thinking of which gave him a headache that no potion could dissipate.

But it had all been for naught. Time Travel was strictly the domain of Unspeakables and they guarded that knowledge jealously. There were no published texts that hinted at the sands of time, least of a possibility that could even begin to compare with the said situation.

Then, in a brilliant stroke of inspiration, Harry had contacted the centaurs. He was not really sure of the whys and he couldn't even explain how he had convinced himself but he was sure it was right.

It was not meant to be his salvation, though.

There was hope, fragile and silver in the back of his mind that shattered at the centaur's words. The magical beings were terse and unhelpful, full of cryptic words but somehow Harry knew from the pity in their words that there was nothing left to be done.

With that, the fragile stability that he had established on a vague hope had dissolved, leaving him scrambling for a meaning that would ground him at least temporarily until he had found his center again.

Then, the last sanctuary he had in terms of his anonymity, of the knowledge that no one actually knew of his existence vanished when The Dark Lord Voldemort formerly known as Tom Marvolo Riddle had appeared when he had been at his most vulnerable. One would have thought that the man wouldn't have bothered with someone with so obvious display of weakness and yet, the man hadn't scoffed. Harry hadn't been able to dispel his attention, not with his fragility nor with his caustic behavior.

It wasn't supposed to happen. He knew he would have quite a difficulty to find a way to create a portal that would get him back to his timeline without having disrupted it in any way. Alright, the possibility was less than minuscule, but that was still less complicated without having added the budding Dark Lord into the arithmancy. Now, if he would change something even in the slightest, there couldn't be any chance that he could return unscathed.

What was the man doing in Hogwarts anyway? Clearly, he had already graduated and by quite some years too. What were the chances that the both of them had decided to visit the place on the same day. They had different purposes with separate venues to be in, Harry in the forbidden forest and Voldemort in the castle. They had met in the only common place possible to meet: the black lake. The coincidence had too narrow of a possibility to feel comfortable.

And it wasn't supposed to happen. He had even managed to evade the notice of Albus Dumbledore by directing his request directly to the centaurs, for even as they claimed the Forbidden Forest as their own and it was a part of the Hogwarts the headmaster held no authority over them. The entire thing was arranged carefully so that he would come across no wizard, or even a human being.

But all that was what the analytical part of him had determined before being swallowed by the tides of his emotional state.

Harry had always been very emotionally driven, and even dead, cold logic often failed to calm him in his most raging times. Time had calmed him somewhat, but hadn't erased it completely. After the meeting with the centaurs he had already been in a frayed state, the agony of a hopeless existence enveloping him so entirely that he had subconsciously let go of the tight control he held upon his magic. He was tired of trying, helpless after the failures and above all, so confused that he had been entirely caught off guard at the appearance of Voldemort.

Now, he remembered, the pensieve memories that the headmaster Dumbledore had shown him in his sixth year, where Voldemort had approached the man to apply for the vacated post of Defense against the Dark Arts. He had been refused of course; the headmaster couldn't with good conscience put the budding Dark Lord in a position of authority over malleable

young minds. Now, Harry could clearly remember the faded memories of a face once seen in a pensieve and most recently the pale of a Dark Lord.

This was the Dark Lord; there could be no question about it. He was not Tom Riddle, the Slytherin prodigy of Hogwarts, an all around good student any more. Now he was Voldemort, the dark Lord who was concentrating upon amassing a group of followers only to lead them into an era of terror and destruction upon the Wizarding World. He had already shredded his soul, Harry couldn't be sure how many times, to warrant himself a safety precaution from the one thing that he so feared; death. His features had already twisted and shifted. The eyes had lost their natural hue and had taken the permanent bloody hue of scarlet that only the darkest of rituals could bring. The skin was pale as freshly fallen snow and his fingers were spidery and long. His features were not as devastatingly good looking as they were once before, but he wasn't the frightful monster of that all hallows eve who had strode down the streets of Godric's hollow either.

He...he wasn't supposed to take notice of him. But Voldemort had, in the most inexplicable way. Harry was still rather unsure of what exactly had happened. But he had felt like he was falling, without an anchor to ground him. He would have been even more vulnerable if it were not for his magic that was even then guarding him most devotedly. After he had seen Voldemort however, he was even more on guard. He hadn't fallen for words of concern and polite remarks.

But the man hadn't attacked him.

Had he continued with the spiel of being a good Samaritan, Harry wouldn't have given him a second glance, but somehow the man had shed the polite persona to show him what he really was: a ruthless predator. That took, not exactly trust, but something for the Dark Lord to bare himself to someone who wasn't already branded as one of his death eaters.

Then the man had whispered sweet promises in his ear, grounding and at the same time taking apart everything he knew to be true and granted. He had in a way bound himself to him, speaking to him in the hissing, velvety tones that had sounded nothing like the high, cold ones that Harry was used to hearing.

This was a strange amalgam of man and monster, of knowledge and intrigue that he knew and yet he didn't. He recognized the cruel tone, but the soothing words were unfamiliar. He knew the man behind the mask of public humility and yet there was also man who laughed simply out of amusement and not just from watching someone being tortured. He couldn't coincide the man in front of him with the one in his memories; one who had been prophesized to be his mortal enemy and another who spoke to him in a tender voice that Harry didn't know he was capable of. But he could still recognize the one from a past long gone, and a future yet to be written with the charming personality and Slytherin behavior.

Then there had been the strange occurrences that had happened in the dark glow at the later part of the evening. The absolute chaos had been so upsetting that his mind automatically shied away from those memories. Only his body had started trembling, with a hot flush darkening his cheeks.

It was strange, confusing, all together frightening and Harry just didn't have any strength to take it anymore. He only hoped that the man wouldn't be able to actually find him considering Harry hadn't given him his name or address of any sort. It was only a small relief in the absolute disastrous evening.

Harry clutched his pillow in a desperate stranglehold. What would it mean for him that he had caught the eye of one of the major players in the politics and future of the Wizarding world?

# I Waited For You, To Look At Me Once

## Chapter Summary

Second time they meet, it is on Harry's turf but will it give him any advantage in the battle of the wills? Or, is it in fact a disadvantage?

## Chapter Notes

This is in Harry's Pov. My story will probably have alternate Pov's to get all the delightful insights into our character's minds. Being in Harry's Pov, it is a little different from the previous chapter, in the manner of description. Anyway, hope it doesn't disappoint! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

## -Chapter 2

In the Scottish Mountains, a narrow ridge lay bound in between rising slopes of its taller brethren, but no less hostile with sharp cliffs jutting out menacingly, to discourage wanderings of curious feet or hooves and it succeeded in its efforts well, as few dared brave the unsympathetic terrain that would yield nothing but threats to their physical well-being and no satisfaction on their part, because the hill was curved mimicking angry swell of the sea, only more dangerous, and it would be incredibly difficult to reach the hilltops. Adding to the fact that such elevation called for a dramatic climate, there were not much life to be found at the bottom of the mountains either. Outwardly desolate and deadly, how would anyone ever suspect of a thriving community being cradled in the protective arms of the stone giant?

As cold and bitter one side of the ridge was with bare mentions of stiff sedge and mat grass, the monotone changed abruptly to bright aspen trees and moss contrasting with russet color of liverworts. The cheerful explosion of life continued its nonverbal confirmation in the forms of trailing white willows and mighty birches. Occasional glimpse of cold grey stones reminded of the presence of the high mountain, but the vibrancy of fauna was uncharacteristic of such elevated place and unforgiving stone. The mystery of the unusual presence of such abundance of plant life laid in magic or more particularly the strangely clothed people that called the steep ridge as their own.

The narrow ridge, or Rowena's Ridge as its inhabitant named it, was truly a magical place. Its harsh exterior dissuaded non-magical beings without even the help of any muggle-repelling wards and the place being inaccessible to any communication except for magical ones was encouraging as well. For centuries wizards and witches enjoyed the novelty of a magical

place without any neighboring non-magical nuisances, particularly those who were strongly disapproving of muggle influence on their culture and as other Wizarding villages were encroached upon by their non-magical counter parts, Rowena's Ridge remained happily oblivious. By and by magic seeped into the Ridge and the stoic mountain succumbed slowly to the life spreading through it.

When Araemon Peverell claimed a land in the Rowena's Ridge as his own he had been ecstatic, not merely at the addition to his asset of a place of magical lineage, as the approval stemmed from how non-magically isolated the place was. It was immensely appealing to a wizard such as Araemon who held nothing but deep contempt for muggles and abhorrence of everything associated. As he grew older and his children started to develop into their own, he had preferred to retire into the multi-story cottage that was seemingly balanced precariously on the precipices, reflecting the questionable sanity of its owner.

However, when his middle son inherited the house, he didn't quite share in his father's enthusiasm for a place that was so far from the cities and the subsequent generation sought manors with greater lands and more prestigious places even with the possibility of nearby muggle presence, not merely a 'house' in such a sheltered place. For decades the house lay abandoned, only playing host when one of its masters remembered it on a whim. Being abandoned for too long, the wards had dilapidated and were it not for the ward stones soaked in Peverell Blood, it would have fallen prey to any that would try to take advantage of an unprotected and obviously well-built house. Nevertheless, it was not protected from malicious attacks and despite standing proud after repeated assaults the once prim house had suffered much.

No matter how much time passed or how much damage it tolerated, the house was always vigilant to welcome the Peverell heir and the lonely house had sung with joy when the old blood once again graced its threshold.

In a garden alcove that was hidden in the shadows, protected against the direct sunlight, a dark haired male was curled up comfortably as if to hide away from the rest of the world. He had no reason to seek solitude since he was probably the only person for quite some distance nor was anyone even aware of the newest resident of the dozing cottage and even if they were, the blood wards and the thick groves with an undergrowth of woolly moss refused to be politely inviting. But, when one spent their childhood living in a cramped and dark cupboard as their bedroom, a lasting impression tended to be left behind deep inside. He might have had eventual lightened and wide space of his own but even so, once in awhile he would seek out such small hiding places to relieve the safety and security a cupboard had once provided.

Flowering vines trailed from the stone work, hanging in front of the alcove and occasionally blocking the sunlight from hitting the fair skin but the youth in question didn't notice. He was pressed against the wall cozily, brows furrowed as he perused yet another book that he had bought to find an answer, any answer in fact. If it weren't for the fact that the Peverell vault was sufficient to support his frantic search, he would have been in even more despair. But it didn't matter. Even with all the monetary resource he had, he couldn't find what he wanted. Galleons were not the answer to everything after all.



Frustrated, the dark haired man dropped the book with a small exclamation of annoyance before dragging a weary hand across his face. He couldn't stay still anymore, his whole body vibrated with the need to move, to do something so that his agitated mind would relax, and to remove this nauseating feel of numbing helplessness that was spreading through him. Without further bother he snatched up a dark green cloak thrown carelessly onto a pillar before heading out of the house. Originally he had intended to take a trek in the clustered trees, but the scope for wandering was woefully small before he stumbled upon the someone or other. After he had spent so many times avoiding talking to a single sentient being, he had no intention of breaking it now. Thus, he wandered away from the magical village with small and deliberate steps, His mind carefully blank. Up he climbed, avoiding sharp slopes, and stiff cliffs that jutted out. Barely half an hour had passed before he saw the bridge that separated the commercial section of Rowena's Ridge from rest of the village and eventually Maltrige's scones.

It had been entirely by coincidence when a restless Harry had one day chanced upon the secluded tea shop which boasted of complete privacy and confidentiality. The unique style that it showcased was not a deterrent either, for instead of tables and seats each customer and any companions had their own booths in the form of intimate pavilion like structures, protected with a mix of privacy charms and illusions that established an outdoor feel without being watched or eavesdropped on.

Harry had gladly welcomed the small respite. He had not even begrudged it for being startled quite badly at being served by a construct that was not human but instead a impressive mix of transfiguration and charm.

Small tendrils of midnight black hair flirted across his face, as the youth absentmindedly searched for an unoccupied sitting and sighed in relief upon finding one. He had to wait few minute before a server popped up at the front step and bowed down. After a small conversation in which he had placed his order (caramel tea and pumpkin scones), he gazed out at the floating clouds in faint disquiet.

"I see you were determined to make this wait as long as possible."

The quiet voice broke through whatever daze Harry had lulled himself into. Startled beyond control, he jumped; knee jerking up and the tea cup rattling badly enough to spill its content. But Harry didn't notice this, all his attention was riveted unfailingly upon the figure who was leaning against one of the posts nonchalantly. He might have felt indignant at being caught off-guard, if not for the fact that he was a little bit too horrified and in disbelief to feel anything more.

But his impromptu visitor didn't ignore the effects that his sudden appearance caused. Smoothly he straightened, to approach his wide eyed pursuit calmly," It was not my intention to startle you so badly."

Harry would have lashed out a sharp retort had he not been so unsettled. Perhaps subconsciously he had wanted to brush off the previous encounter between him and this wizard, around whom his life seemed to revolve intentionally or unintentionally, as a strange hallucination forged by a distressed and exhausted mind. Beyond that day, he had shied away from those memories so bewildering and he had thought about them no more. Perhaps he had

somehow trusted the saying “Out of sight, out of mind”, only furthering it by adding a nonverbal “Out of life.” Had he hoped that the young dark lord would no more seek an elusive wizard he had met upon a stray afternoon, when he hadn’t even known their name? Perhaps he had, but mostly he had just pushed it into far back of his mind.

And now upon seeing the tranquil face so close, so close to his sanctuary, to him, threw him into much perplexity. Thus he remained sitting upon the settee, still and stupefied as the other advanced upon him with calm and determined steps.

Eyes that were large in frozen astonishment widened further as the tall wizard kneeled slightly, dark blue robes pooling around the crouched figure with a rustle, and took a stiff pale hand into their grasp.

“Nor to put you in the path of possible injury.”

Green eyes looked down at their captive appendage as they were being carefully inspected by the Dark Lord to find any harm, not entirely comprehending beyond the trembling the cool fingers brought. Harry couldn’t find himself to process those words, his confusion only increasing in bounds and he didn’t really appreciate the fact how mounds of events seemed to be building around him cornering him into a hopeless case of uncertainty. It was a state of vulnerability that he didn’t like at all.

There was fear, and there was bewilderment, for was it not impossible for any to see the occupants of a booth once it was occupied, how did this man know he was here?

He voiced that concern if only to make sure such occurrence stays rare," How did you find me?"

The tall wizard rose fluidly from his lowered stance, releasing the small hand and Harry couldn’t help but cradle it close, as if it was injured even if it wasn’t really. There was a foreign coolness there that clearly emphasized where the two had come in contact and small it might have been, it felt so very significant, only making the unnerved wizard shiver. He wanted to rub his cold hand into warmth, to erase the phantom memories his hands still held, but all he did was hold it close to his chest, supported by a light grasp of his other hand.

His eyes met the intense crimson eyes and the other smiled charmingly, thin lips curved and his features relaxed, “Such lack of faith in my abilities. But then you hardly know better. Now, don’t you want to offer me a seat?”

No, he didn’t. He wanted the man to go away and stay away for however long he was trapped in this world. Not now, not ever.

But he couldn’t say that. Even with all their history that they shared, history that this man was oblivious to and Harry was much too aware of, he couldn’t treat a man with blatant rudeness when the other had been nothing but affable thus far. Relatively, that is.

Swallowing the obvious reluctance, Harry gestured to the other settee,” Would you like a cup of tea?”

“Yes, I think I would.”

Harry brushed over the side of the table to summon their server and waited as they popped out with fresh orders. He had wanted some pineapple pastries, but he didn't want to prolong this...whatever this was. Of course he still might be detained by the other, but at least he himself would not be guilty of the delay. And hopefully it would subtly advertise his reluctance to the other without having to resort to bold statements.

They both sipped their tea in silence for some time, as scarlet eyes remained fixed unwaveringly upon him, and Harry squirmed slightly. More to now distract the man from himself than to curb his curiosity, Harry repeated his previous question,” What are you doing here?”

The other was sprawled gracefully upon the seat and Harry couldn't help but envy that ease, while his own body was quivering with tension. The ivory cup was set down upon the table between them with nerve wracking slowness and Harry felt his tension rise further,” Surely you didn't forget my words so soon from the last time we met? I promised I would find you, did I not? Or perhaps, did you choose not to believe them?”

He had actually *hoped* that the wizard was insincere in his words, that he would be safe in this isolated community. All in vain it seemed.

Harry turned his glance away, abruptly fearful,” I wasn't exactly...in the right sense of mind last time.”

The young Dark Lord, Voldemort, he supposed he was. And yet, his mind shied away from that name, from making the connection between his childhood monster and this charming yet dangerous man in front of him.

Long finger curled pleasantly around the armrest, so relaxed and unarmed, “You were a little distracted. That was all it was. Even so, I gave you some time to recover. Nevertheless, I don't like to break my words.”

There was nothing that signaled that the man had taken offense to his reticence, and Harry was starting to feel dizzy from the abrupt way his emotions were bouncing from opposite sides of the spectrum. He couldn't quite understand this man's motive and given their past interactions his paranoia was affecting the beats of his heart. It was unknown territory he had unwittingly wandered in and like a trapped animal his instinct was to lash out at the offending party.

He fisted his hands in his robes to stop their shaking and oh, how he despised how easily his body conveyed his emotions. Glaring at the unwanted visitor he spoke, his tones low and hissing slightly,” I am not distracted now. And do you know what I think? I don't care for your words. I don't care for you. I didn't ask for you. So you could do us both a favor and leave me alone”

He hated this. Hated how vulnerable he sounded when despite the harsh words his voice trembled so. His despair at being blocked in every way from returning to his own time thread

and his bewilderment at this situation had so unsettled him that he couldn't find himself in a firm enough ground.

"So hostile at mere verbal provocation. What have I done to warrant such reaction, I wonder?"

'By being you. You were once the enemy, looking down upon me with hatred on your face and now there is something other than hatred with the way you look at me. And I hate that I can't really turn you away. I hate that I am not looking at you with hatred either.'

But Harry couldn't speak. His lips trembled and he bit it harshly to stop the show of his fragile state of mind.

Feeling betrayed by himself and humiliated at the loss of composure, Harry looked down, focused upon escaping as soon as possible. But before he could put into action his intentions, the seat beside him dipped with added weight and his hands stilled. His gaze remained fixed downward, hardly daring to look up and confirming his suspicions.

Long, pale fingers captured his wrists, patiently uncurling them from grasps that had loosened with shock. With wide eyes, he looked down upon their joined hands with faint astonishment, a detached part of him commenting upon the difference of size between the two. His hand was held delicately, yet firmly with no hope of escaping. Even as his panicked mind scrambled for balance, another finger came up to lightly lift his chin.

He stiffened in his shock. Tom Riddle was sitting close, too close considering how small the lounges were. From this proximity, he could see every detail of his features and however unwilling he might have been, he found himself unable to tear his sight away from the man. Never before had he the chance to study this powerful person so up close, because so many of the man's natural features had been distorted by time and usage of intensive dark rituals. The end result had been something that could only be described as something conjured from the deepest pit of hell.

This person however had not yet degraded so far on the quest of power and dreams of forever, neither in sanity nor his physical attributes. The natural dark eyes had receded giving way to scarlet orbs that seemed to glow with power, crimson threads spreading through the cornea giving it a permanent bloody look. The skin was unnaturally pale as if they had never seen the light of the day and slightly pinched. Thin lips were flushed off color, only slight pink rather than blushing with blood. Dark hair fell in composed waves over broad shoulders, curling in the ends. In such a pale face, the red eyes were almost a violent outburst of color as if to compensate what it drained from rest of his features.

But otherwise, the aristocratic look suited the wizard, combined with his self-assured personality. Harry could see how this man had managed to accumulate such a large group of followers even while he was merely a student.

So absorbed he was in his musing that at the soft, velvety voice he jerked back. But the hand pressed down on the swell of palm firmly, keeping him grounded and trapped.

“Is that what you truly want? Do you really want to be left alone?” Harry’s breath hitched and there was a smile in the other’s voice as they continued, “Even so, I am afraid I have no wish to do that. And you will find you have plenty of time to get accustomed to your new companion. In time I am sure, you will change your opinion.”

There was a threat in that voice and a promise. Harry had never been the one to go along with other’s orders without blatant disregard and this wouldn’t be an exception despite how his magic prickled at his skin in warning at the danger he would be courting.

“What if I don’t want to? What if I would disappear after today? You might never find me. Besides who says I even want you to anywhere near me? I have been alone all this time and I didn’t need anyone before. I don’t, now.”

A thumb was pressing down on the soft rises of flesh that signaled the end of each finger meeting the palm and Harry dearly wished he hadn’t somehow provoked the man to carry out drastic measures to keep his word.

In a dangerously soft croon, the malevolent wizard murmured, “I found you, did I not? Even when you had hidden yourself away in the most unexpected of places that I myself was never aware of. That is an accomplishment you should be proud of, I assure you. You haven’t known me for long, which is something that shall be remedied soon, starting from now. Let me tell you something of myself, my dear one, I *take* what I want. No exception. No matter how small a hole you squirrel yourself in, I will find you. Even if I have to blast through the entire earth.”

A golden haired laughing boy and the man he grew up into to be imprisoned in Numengard flashed through his memories and Harry didn’t doubt his words for a moment. He didn’t like it though and it certainly didn’t help the rising trepidation in his heart.

“Why? What do you want from me? Why are you so willing to go to such lengths just for... just tell me what do you want?” He whispered. He was apprehensive, on guard and cautious to be prepared to brace himself against any offers the charismatic wizard might make to join in his merry band of followers who would go on to become the most dangerous terrorizing group of history. He would never be one of them; he would never be one of the mindless people to...

His mental voice stuttered and was struck speechless when a finger tip pressed against the middle of his lower lip. Without having to see it, he knew his cheeks had blushed dark as he looked at the dark gaze of a dark lord.

“That is something you will have to find out, don’t you?” Harry wanted to protest but he didn’t dare move his lips. “You don’t have to fear me. You have nothing to be afraid of. Now put your pretty little mind to rest and let us enjoy the hospitality of this establishment, shall we?”

Harry really didn’t want to decline the peace offer, when having to say something will make it more real. Besides his thoughts were indeed making him feel exhausted and he didn’t want to give himself a migraine.

The finger was removed. And Harry had never known cold to burn with such intensity rivaling fire.

“The tea is lovely. How did you find this place? It isn’t situated in a place that is frequented often.”

It was a not so subtle offering, which Harry gladly took considering the fact that the alternative would have been awkward silence.

“I found it by sheer chance actually. I was just looking around the place, when I saw the sign. I was a little curious and went inside.”

“Am I correct to assume that you have residence nearby?”

Harry almost choked, that was a little too close for comfort. It was already terrifying that the man was able to find him without the knowledge of his name or residence and cursed he shall be should he invite the monster into his abode of his own volition.

“How do you know I am not just visiting the place?” He finally answered, watching the tall wizard with narrowed eyes. But the other just smiled lightly without any outward unease.

“Are you?”

Harry scowled mentally, pouting at the fact that he couldn’t tell a lie to save his life. Perhaps, literally in this case.

Had he been always this honest or was it further ensured by the carving letters in his hand that still shone paler than his skin?

He didn’t reply; instead choose to avoid the comment gracefully by sipping his tea only to choke as the dark wizard laughed softly.

There once was a living nightmare that feasted upon all living souls and rejoiced in their terror with cold laughter. That was how Harry remembered this man, the one taking pleasure in the torture of others and reveled in the screams of pain his wand wrought. How many night had he violently woken up at a memory of cold, high laughter and a green of light?

This sound however had squeezed his heart like an unforgiving noose, for it was warm and full of amusement, free from the malice he would have expected. It was leagues apart from the high tones that his memories ringed with and his very core shook as he tried to reconcile the two. It should be wrong. It was wrong, and yet he felt inexplicably happy to have caused the would-be monster laugh.

At his expense.

“You can stop laughing at me now.”

The dark lord smiled and being so close as he was to this charming features, Harry looked away in fear...of what?

“That is not the reason I was laughing, little creature. I am merely pleased that you seem to be fairing far better than you did last time.”

Harry winced and simultaneously flushed with mortification. That reminded him...

“I am sorry for being so terribly distressed and for disturbing you.” His eyes were closed tightly even as he forced the words out. He had learned the lesson of not apologizing for any slights he might have caused. Slytherins carry long grudges after all, and he had two such exhausting experiences. But that didn’t mean he wanted to look at the man while doing it. Harry absolutely refused to look at Voldemort or acknowledge the act that he was apologizing to the Dark Lord for disturbing him. This whole situation seemed entirely too surreal and he was already starting to regret it.

A cold finger trailed softly on his cheek and he let out a soft gasp at the sensation, at the realization of what was happening.

He opened his eyes to find the pale features tracking the finger. He tentatively made to move away and the cold left his skin as blood mixed with relief flooded back in.

“You will never apologize for that, sweet angel, because I have no complaint. Your sorrow was something that was unfortunate and not desirable, considering how it made you suffer but I did have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. “ ,The soothing murmur did nothing to appease the willful heart of his that had suddenly decided that his chest was no longer a place it would care to live in and that bursting out violently seemed much more appealing.

“I...” His throat was parched and he swallowed thickly but his senses had deserted him so traitorously. He didn’t have the energy to curse them for it even.

“Besides, you have more than compensated by introducing me to this incredible place. I don’t think I have heard of it from anyone. The tea house is truly excellent.”

Tensed shoulders relaxed slowly as the low voice flowed fluently, easily distracting him and Harry smiled for the first time since they met.

“It is really refreshing, isn’t it?”

There was a small pause, before Voldemort continued. Harry missed the shadow of a gleam that flashed through the scarlet eye for no more than a moment.

“Is that why you like it here?”

Harry nodded, mentally searching for a distraction frantically, anything to keep the attention away from his home.” I have never been much fond of crowds.”

“Oh?” The question was inquisitive, not probing at all but Harry stared down at his cup.

“I like my space I suppose. It is fine if I have to deal with crowds once in a while, but it just makes me uncomfortable before long.” Harry grimaced.

“You don’t have to answer if you don’t want to.”

“No, it’s fine.” Harry waved it away. He might not want to, but it was innocent anyway.

His cup sat on the saucer and Harry didn’t know what to do with his hands. They switched from tearing napkins restlessly to lying stiffly on his lap, when he realized he was showing his uncertainty.

“Are you finished with it?” The young Dark Lord asked, gesturing to the still half-filled cup of tea. Harry jumped at the excuse.

“Yes, I am.” He was indeed. So very finished with it all, he had a little too much excitement for one afternoon. Now he looked so dearly forward to the hot fragrant bath that was undoubtedly waiting for him.

Jumping up from his seat, he hastened to put galleons on the table.

“Very well, then. Now you may take me on a tour of your place.” The dark wizard rose as well.

Harry was frozen still on the way to the curtains that for a moment. “Wh-what do you mean? I am not inviting you to my place. I don’t even know you...” ‘in this time.’

“Hush, lovely. Don’t go jumping into conclusions that might lead you into trouble one day. I merely desired to see more of this village. Seeing as how you are one of its residents, it is only logical of me to ask you as a guide.”

Smug, arrogant, infuriating....

“I haven’t been here for long actually. I am sure an actual resident might be of more of help than I.”

“And why would I go for looking for an alternative choice when I already have a solution?”

“You don’t have to look, I will do it. I am sure the tea house host might be really helpful and all...”

“I would assume it might only be polite to accept a request for assistance.”

“Are you asking for help then?”

Strong jaws tightened and Harry felt momentarily victorious.

“I am asking for your company.”

And that triumph was replaced by shock. It seemed to be the semi permanent state of his mind in presence of this person and Harry didn’t know how he should take it.

“I don’t...” Trying to get back into his previously unscrambled and fair position, Harry missed the predator coming towards him with slow strides.



He yelped when he felt the suffocating proximity of a body behind him. A hand carefully, cautiously went up his palm to rest at his pulse point.

“But apparently I am being far too lax with you. It was polite of me to ask for your permission, lovely, if I wished to avoid coming across as uncouth. You seemed to have mistaken it as me offering you a choice.”

It was difficult to listen, even less understand the sibilant words what with how hard his heart was pounding in his ears but Harry hadn't won a war only to stutter just because his sense seemed to desert him at the presence of this particular wizard.

“You can't force me into doing anything.” The familiar Gryffindor fire burned in his veins and cleared some of the fog, “you can never force me into doing something I don't want, much less control me.”

The solid presence behind him seemed a bit taken aback at the vehement tone with which Harry replied, but soon recovered. Harry despised how well composed the man was, able to deal with anything and everything he faced.

“I am not going to force you to do something. Your will is entirely your own, my fiery angel. But I am afraid I will monopolize on the matter that I would not be deprived of your company. You will never turn me away.”

“How does that even make any sense? Isn't it forcing me when I don't want to spend any time with you?”

“Is that really the truth?”

Harry opened his mouth to adamantly proclaim that yes indeed, of course it was. But his throat refused to oblige.

In his befuddled state, Harry voiced the first coherent thought that came to his mind, “Did you silence my voice?”

“And yet, you seem entirely capable of speaking.”

Yes, he could speak. But he couldn't say he didn't want to be with that man.

For one terrifying moment, Harry didn't trust himself. Turning confused eye to the man behind him, he subconsciously waited for an answer that might better answer the maelstrom within him.

Because he certainly didn't want this man his life, even if he was the sole focus of familiarity he could find in this place. Even if after meeting this man, the hollow aching of his heart had been all but forgotten.

“It is alright. Don't think about it anymore now. Do you think this place has branches in other Wizarding places?”

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They made a striking pair on the stone path of Rowena's Ridge. There were not many people about even in the afternoon, even with all the shopping places open and inviting with their cheerful designs. Since it was an exclusive catering place however, few curious shoppers were to be seen on the road walking by determinedly to their destination. The environment called for tranquility and not many were willing to disturb the soothing peace. The few that were present however found their gaze riveted on the incredible sight the couple made.

The taller man was very good-looking, if a little unorthodox with scarlet eyes and sharply contrasting pale skin. He was intensely focused upon the other male beside him, which needn't be debated on, what with how eye-catchingly gorgeous the other was. The shorter male was explaining something with expressive hands and rapidly moving mouth, while his companion was looking on amused. The reddish-golden light of late sun lit up their profiles and in the shadows of Rowans they looked positively picturesque.

"That's Arch and Stones. It is not its main venue however, just the England branch. The main branch is situated in Germany. That is where dwarves do their work and they won't change their working condition for any galleon."

"Dwarves?"

"Yes. They are the ones who actually do the masonry and building, even the warding. All the Wizarding houses are made by dwarves, you know. They are great with that. If you don't use enchanted foundations to begin with, the house becomes a little more unstable with repeated use of magic."

"I never really thought about the Wizarding houses."

"No one does. People don't like to think about the fact someone other than wizards are building them, which is why all the contracts go through their human spokes-person."

"Wizards do tend to prefer ignorance on such matters. How did you know then?"

"Well, I actually prefer to supervise the building of my own house a little more closely and the builders were not expecting me to drop by without warning. There was a little bit of disturbance in the beginning, because they don't like an audience when they were working and I was much too excited to just wait until the house is built."

"What happened, then?"

"It took some time, mainly because they do not like speaking with humans and their speech pattern is difficult to follow unless you are familiar with twin-speaks except that in their case it is multi-speak."

"Multi-speak?"

"Mm-hmm. One of them will start a sentence, but it will never really end because another would have picked up from the middle and then the rest will be agreeing and disagreeing. If you are not careful, the best that would happen is you will lose track of the conversation and completely forget what you were speaking about in the first place."

“And the worst?”

“You will lose your mind and try to find an escape before it is permanent.”

The dark wizard laughed in delight and Harry smiled up at him, caught up in the flow of reminiscence and the disaster that was the meeting with the dwarves.

“Effective strategy they have to avoid people they don’t want to socialize with.”

“Exactly. Even if one would realize that what their intention is, they wouldn’t care enough to argue with them about it.”

“What about you?”

“Oh. It took some time, but we did come to an arrangement.”

“Indeed?” The Dark wizard looked with a glance that questioned the mischievous tone that Harry carried.

Harry nodded happily, “That I would come at the end of each day and stay for an hour to see the work and I won’t disturb unless it is for valid reason. They were not happy with it.”

“No, I imagine not. Did you talk afterwards?”

“Oh, I wanted to! I really liked them.”

“But?”

“They didn’t like me. Not that there was any surprise, they just don’t like talking to humans. Messes up their nerves, they say.”

“Did you make it easier for them?”

Harry laughed, “No, I can’t say I did. Anyway, what were we talking about?”

“Dwarvish warding.”

“Right, so Goblin warding is good for protection in businesses and assets, but dwarves are preferred to do the protection layers in earth based wards.”

“Why not?”

“Well, mostly because goblins are really malicious in their intent based wards. It’s not much of defense but more of a severe offense. If you would ever go against a goblin protected item, one is sure to lose a limb.”

“I will remember that.”

Harry jerked to an abrupt stop. In the flow of conversations he had somehow forgotten who exactly his audience was. Yet looking at the scarlet eyes and thin cruel lips, that he still remembered used to utter curses without a regard to the person or cause, he couldn’t

understand how he could have possibly done it. Had he somehow gotten comfortable to the presence of the Dark lord? Merlin forbid he could never get accustomed to it, the dangerous aura tantalizing his magic every instant and enveloping him with its presence. But somehow, he had forgotten who exactly this presence belonged to. And now, he was unpleasantly brought into sharp awareness by that innocuous comment, for the Dark Lord had indeed once gone for a goblin protected item in a goblin protected bank and had escaped unscathed. He didn't succeed, true, but he wasn't injured at the slightest: a remarkable feat considering the ill-reputation of goblins in their incredibly perilous protection schemes.

Harry knew that it was surely unlikely, but he couldn't help but wonder if he was the one to warn the Dark Lord against the goblins' ways and the woe that would befall any that might dare steal from them.

Such were the complications of time travel.

Fists clutched at his forest green robes, as he fought to keep the rising panic under control. What was he doing? This was Voldemort; even being in his company was likely to tangle the time thread into an irreparable mess. How was he to ever go back home if he was to make everything more difficult for himself? It was not likely that he would ever join the faction that called themselves death eaters, no matter how charming Tom Riddle might be, no matter how much he tried to integrate himself into Harry's life. Why was Harry being so accommodating when the end result would always be the same? Why was he making connections here when he would gladly leave behind this world one day?

"Are you alright?" The soft, silky voice drew him out of the possibility of being imprisoned in his own mind. Harry turned away from the slightly concerned visage of the Dark Lord. That was a false impression. Voldemort would never be concerned for anyone but himself. False or no however, Harry couldn't bear to have that directed at him.

"I need to leave." With those words the concerned façade shattered like the illusion it was and the scarlet eyes narrowed. His heart quickened at a memory of distant thrill.

"What do you mean? Where are you going?" The other kept their voice low, mindful of the public place but they were no less intense, no less demanding.

"It is none of your business. I am leaving." Harry turned away, intending to disappear away, his fists tight as the vestiges of the anxiety still ran through him and he just needed to go. But spidery, long fingers were holding his wrist, twisting it so that his body was irrationally close to the other.

Air left his lungs in a soft gasp, "Let me go. Let me go, please."

"No. Tell me where you are going."

"Let me go or I will hex you."

"Temper, temper my little one. Why so anxious to leave? Would you not tell me first? It would not be polite to leave your companion without a suitable apology." The dark tone sent

shivers down Harry's spine just as the helplessness brought a fresh bout of panic. He pooled his magic into his hand for a wandless shocking spell to startle his captor into releasing him.

He had somehow forgotten precisely how incredibly powerful the wizard that currently holding him restrained was.

The tingle of the hex dissolved before touching the other.

"How rude. To attack without warning."

"I wouldn't have to if you hadn't been the one to attack me first! Let me go."

"Not before I know what sent you in such rapid fretfulness. Tell me, let me help you."

Minutely, Harry sagged into the unorthodox grip "You can't."

'Because you are the problem and what I really need is to stay from you.'

"Very well."

Incomprehensibly his hand was released and Harry fought the urge to hold it. He wasn't going to bring any further attention to it." Now leave me alone."

"Don't be so foolish, my angel. I am letting you go so you may work out whatever worry is troubling you. And then, *then* you will be back."

The abrupt command ruffled his feathers like no other. "What?"

"In a week of time, you will be back here at exactly this time."

"What if I say no?"

"I am afraid you don't have an option otherwise. It wouldn't matter. Because you *will* come back."

"You can't force me! I will do whatever *I* want. Even if I choose never to see you again, you can't do anything about it. In fact, I think that is what I would rather do, because I don't want to see you."

"Well that is rather unfortunate but you will have to make a few compromises, don't you lovely? Because you *will* come back to me. Or I will find you. I found you once already. I can do it again. No matter how many wards you would seek to hide behind."

Anger flared in him at the threat, and at the assurance that he would indeed acquiesce like one of the man's sycophantic dogs "You can't find me in those wards." And he couldn't. Blood wards might not be as effective as an offense, but they worked wonders as a defense to forbid the entrance to any not of blood.

"Then I will make you come out."

“I won’t...”

For the second time that day, his breath left him in a gasp as his chin was grasped in a sharp hold of insistent fingers, while another hand tugged at his long hair possessively. His heart was hammering wildly at the proximity, at being so close under a serpent’s flare.

“Yes, you will. Or I will burn the world around you to smoke you out.”

As suddenly as he was captured, he was released. The scarlet eyes were boring into him with an inscrutable expression. But Harry didn’t care. His whole body was smoldering and he could barely keep himself from stumbling as he stepped away.

“Remember. A week. I will be waiting.”

Harry disappeared away without a reply, still shocked green eyes fixed upon the Dark Lord with a faintly betrayed edge in them.

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## Chapter End Notes

Hello! Were you as anxious to read this as I was to write it? Probably not. I wanted to make this perfect and after countless rewriting, I truly hope I delivered. Being in Harry's POV it is lot more playful, innocent and lot less evil. And naive. And I am not one of those gifted ones who hold a pen and bam! instant best sellers. amateurs like me write a draft and change their mind fifteen times as to how the plot would be moving. Anyway, forgive my rants and do comment if you have any suggestions or corrections that I missed out on. Cheers!

# A Touch Of Life To A Withering Soul

## Chapter Summary

Patience is a virtue, but the Dark Lord is not looking for redemption.

## Chapter Notes

A huge apology for the delay. But I had to choose from three probable plot line running through my head and it was a hard decision... Lets have a moment of silence for all those story ideas that prematurely met their end, but they had such vibrant life.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A malevolent storm stirred lazily, from the dark confines of an enraged mind, shifting with tone of blinding white fury and carefully nurtured, actively encouraged by silvery taunting memories. No evidence carried, of the rising maelstrom that threatened to overwhelm all reason and restraint, in the dark crimson eyes and no fissure could be seen in the unruffled features, a flawless façade so chilly as if it was sculpted from ice itself, that might form from the cruel pressure.

He was the Dark Lord after all, in addition to being the ultimate Slytherin; he could hardly let any weakness show by gesture or emotion. His magic however held no such principles

Curling and twisting through air, in mimicry of a serpent, it burned through with cold flare leaving behind the smell that signaled the strike of a thunderstorm. With whispers of forever sleep it crept maliciously, seeping through the ground like fine mist but infinitely more dangerous for it longed to appease its wizard and at the same time so gleeful at being granted relief, that it seeped into the ground like an unforgiving plague, cruelly absorbing life all around it to appease the abyss.

The Dark Lord walked through the scarce vegetation surrounding the narrow stone path to his house under a darkened sky as shadows dared extend farther than their comfort places while light waned in the advent of darkness. Scarlet eyes were hooded slightly, his composed expression otherwise completely unassociated with the malevolent blizzard that was stewing increasingly livid, and his magic curled about him in perfect symphony corresponding with the dark fury. Like a shadow it trailed through the air and every living being that had the misfortune of encountering the malevolent magic fell for a sacrifice intended to worship its irate God. It was a worthy effort as foliage dramatically aged and ashes fell to earth with soft whispers of mourning in response to the rage of a Lord and his vindictive servant.

The ice storm brewed still, with a resentment that was as unassuming as the loving cold touch felt by a heart when death brushed by.

So very in contrast with the firestorm that raged in a wildly beating Gryffindor heart as it raged mutinously, in righteous fury with the world around it twisting and melting to cater to the petulant caprice.

Thus in two different corners of the world, the horizons remained darkened and hostile in response to the storms in the two souls, in nature poles apart from each other and yet equally devastating in nature, heart of one storm focused upon nothing but the other.

The dark wizard in question paid no attention to the withering summer around him. He ignored it all, focused as he was in the memories, so fresh and haunting of a creature he coveted but remained frustratingly out of his grasp.

There was another presence besides him as he entered the foyer and scarlet eyes narrowed onto the figure that had dropped to their knees the instant he had come into view, while his malevolently seeking magic rushed towards the intruder with perverse enjoyment only to be reined in by the dark wizard at the last moment, but not before a silver of its intention touched the terrified person.

“Dolohov,” the hisses were a little more elongated and that was all that augured the other of his Lord’s possible irate mind, “Why are you here?”

“My Lord.” the man didn’t stutter, but remained kneeling respectfully,” There was to be a meeting in the House of Rowle tonight.” Dolohov stayed quiet under his master’s observation after.

The red-tinted film, that had enveloped him after he had returned from the high mountain ridge empty-handed, tightened its hold on him and snarled at the interrupter for distracting it from those memories it had chosen to be wrapped with. Incomprehensibly, suddenly, he couldn’t quite fathom why indeed he had returned without the little creature in his arms. Their meeting had ended disagreeably and with a premise that the Dark Lord distrusted. Why indeed had he let the delicious little angel escape his grasp when it was certainly in the place where it belonged? That being In the confined of his hold, trembling in his arms.

Rather he should have brought his lovely prey with him. He still seethed at the impudent tone with which the creature had denied him and his magic had risen at the insubordinate provocation, longing to dominate the enchanting green-eyed siren, to crush it completely underneath him.

“My Lord.” The tentative questioning query broke through the haze that had temporarily ensnared his senses.

His magic surged violently and the sandy-haired death eater hitched a breath at the danger that seemingly surrounded him.

Fortunately, the dark lord took a subtle, proverbial deep breath so that the ice storm that still raged furiously wouldn’t shatter the cage that held the beast.



In any case, had he not determined that the professional part of his life would remain separated from the personal without one tainting the other?

The firm decision stayed mere hours before being proved wrong as he held a recruit under a bone-shattering curse.

It was only the first day.

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“My Lord...Please...”

“The Dark Mark in your arms is not a mere decoration. It is the mark of honor, a privilege that is earned.”

“Please...My Lord, For-forgive me.”

“I have already forgiven you, Farian. However I must ensure that such a transgression doesn’t recur in the future. Curbing such impudence is imperative before it endangers your health; because one day it might even invite a more permanent punishment that would serve a warning to others. But you do not want your future to be cut off so violently, especially when you do have some potential, do you? It is for your own benefit. What do you say, Ruben?”

“You are most merciful, My Lord.”

“Very good. Do remember your lesson. Crucio.”

The death eater screamed the moment the curse slammed into his body and other wizards clad in non-descript dark robes shifted at the realization of the intensity of the spell. Trembling hands were clenched inside their robes so as not to show weakness within a predator’s den and in spite of the relatively passive tone of their master, they had come to understand that he was not in a very forgiving mood.

The Dark lord was dispassionate as he spoke to his death eaters, expressing neither pleasure at any of the relative successes of their objectives nor sadistic interest as he tortured someone. Since they couldn’t contemplate the reason for this volatile mood that had seemingly stemmed from nowhere, they were feeling rather hopeless and could only hope that they survived this storm.

Voldemort looked down at the still shivering and moaning wizard in quiet contemplation, inner disgust only slightly reflected in the curling of thin lips, conscious of an unfair punishment. The reprimand had been much heavier than the offense asked for. Of course, this musing wouldn’t be mistaken as to a concern for the health of the unfortunate death eater or even for a sense of integrity, but rather pertaining to his control.

Tom Riddle, unlike his peers or even elders had a different scrutiny in regards to pain: or rather others pain. He didn’t feel empathy or pity for the sufferers, there was only a feeling of utter indifference perhaps mixed with occasional annoyance should the wails and cries interrupt his peace.

Thus was his perception before he discovered that he could *inflict* pain.

After that there was only a thought about being caught unaware, for society certainly wouldn't hold the same opinions as he did about torturing someone else. The pleasure however which he derived from causing others mindless pain was unexpected and rather welcome.

It did answer many questions regarding human behavior and some of the older bullies.

Unlike any other emotions that human beings seemed so abundantly to frolic with, which he more or less was indifferent towards and which he himself seemed to be rather deficit in, not that he cared about that particular element, their twisting expressions when in agony brought him much amusement and satisfaction. He reveled in it.

Soon however, he came to an epiphany; it wasn't pain itself that soothed his cavernous soul but rather the power that it contained. He rejoiced in the sight of defiant eyes kneeling down in front of him, begging for mercy. He craved the bliss that the knowledge of broken countenance brought, that it was *his* hand that had brought about such misery. He adored the rush that the power was, of having the entire world on such mercy at his feet.

It was addicting, this feeling.

Power sang to him with the sultry promise of more, and pain was an age-old effective weapon that accompanied it.

And he had learned to wield the weapon efficiently. Each and every living being understood the universal language of pain and he had vowed to become a perfect and undisputed master in it. He had studied extensively the degree to which a conscious being could be subjected to it while still remaining relatively healthy. He had drawn invisible boundaries around which he could skirt while still keeping his victim alive. Magic had been a wondrous gift, for he could experiment endlessly while not having to replace his subjects repeatedly.

He had gathered so much knowledge and yet there had never been an issue regarding his own control. Unlike normal people, he certainly never had to think about restraint nor about any moral block that impeded his actions. But now, as he looked down upon his followers trembling still from a curse that was apparently not at all withheld in its all terrible intensity, his inner perfectionist felt irritated at the new tenuous hold of his control.

And he knew the reason as well.

How very vexing.

The yew wand twitched in warning and he tilted his head curiously in attention, upon seeing the tip of the wand glow poisonous green. Rather like the shade of elusive eyes.

Perhaps, it was better if he refrained from decimating his own army with the misplaced murderous intent.

His voice was quiet and not a single present death eater failed to hear the deceptively soft tone,” It is time to end this meeting, I think.”

He rose and as the death eaters bowed their foreheads to the floor, he passed through to the exit. He could almost feel the restrained eagerness in them to flee and his magic flicked like a claw, as if to drag them to his feet as he poured out his rage into them.

At the heavy doors he paused and turned without looking over his shoulder, the kneeling wizards holding their breath in unison, “Do not disturb me unless I call you.”

It was an order and a threat. He hoped his followers were intelligent enough to decipher it.

Three days had passed since that dusky afternoon.

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And now, he stood near at the very spot he had disappeared a week ago, waiting for his willful little creature.

It came in a swirl of green and black and no longer than the dust had settled before there was a bludgeoning hex speeding towards him.

Rage flowed through him at the sheer audacity of the creature as with a twitch of wand the hex was deflected. With the wand moving fluidly along, he had disarmed the fiery one without giving it a chance to recover. Then and only then did he let himself peruse the visual delight.

And he wondered as if the bludgeoning hex hadn’t actually caught him for how breathless he suddenly seemed to be as he looked upon the angel.

The green eyes were glowing with fury and the pale cheeks were flushed, flooding it with color and life. Errant strands escaped the bound hair and framed the enchanting face in a completely riotous fashion, falling across the eyes as the creature unconsciously shook his head to clear them. So utterly, devastatingly lovely. Merely a week had gone by, and he felt as captivated as he was the first time.

This time however, there was an untamed fire in those exquisite eyes, making them blaze as brightly as the killing curse. Never had he thought that he would actually tolerate a person who would dare look at him without fear darkening their eyes.

He let the other hand hold onto a clenched wrist before casting a notice-me-not and then pocketing the wands.

“It is considered rude to greet someone with a hex first without provocation.”

The little creature hissed at him, “I think it was perfectly warranted seeing how you threatened me!”

He bowed to the accusation, “I did.”

The green eyes blazed as it spluttered,” You infuriating, arrogant... You can’t bully people into doing whatever you want!”

“I don’t see why not. The method is perfectly effective in bringing me the desired result.”

The pink mouth opened soundlessly; clearly the creature was so indignant that he could find no retort against the blatant acceptance of his actions.

“You can’t do that! How dare...”

” Can’t I? I think I can. I did, actually. Perhaps, next time you will have better sense than attempting to run away like that.”

Apprehension had mostly replaced the fury in the pale features but the creature lost none of its fire,” You have no right to dictate what I can or cannot do. You have absolutely no right! Do you think you can just manhandle people to your whims and get away with it? Others might let you, but I won’t!”

“No? But you did, do you not?”

Internally, he felt something akin to jolt when the angry eyes filled with betrayal again.

“I did, didn’t I? So foolish of me trying to find something in nothing, and being a hypocrite about it.” The lovely voice was so very mournful and the Dark Lord found that he loathed it, even more so when he was apparently the cause of it.

This was not at all progressing the way he desired. He wanted to woo the little beauty into his arms irrevocably, binding it to him in such an irreversible manner that it would never want to escape the gilded cage that would be built for him and now, all his aspirations were falling like ruins of a spring past. He was perilously close to being his own downfall, and there was not a suitable reason for it except his hubris and a stuttering of previously rigorous control.

For a vulnerable moment he tried to center himself to find stability somewhere other than the glistening eyes the shade of scale of a young basilisk, preferably within his logical self so that he may resist from being utterly spellbound with this unsuspecting creature that was ignorant of its own allure.

From the very first moment he had laid eyes upon the divine creature he had wanted to possess it entirely, rather like one of his precious treasures. Thus he had confided in none the existence of this lovely being or his desire to acquire it, not from a fear of it being eyed by some other lowly person but rather more from a vicious possessiveness. But there were differences this time. When he had wanted to have something, he had only needed to find it. Never had he have to struggle endlessly to *keep* it. This was a strange territory he had wandered into, not including the fact that he apparently lost all his sensibility in the proximity of this seductive being.

There was to be no question of whether or not he might take this exquisite creature as his own, for he had determined, with the will of a Dark Lord ingenious and unwavering, that be it by a blood soaked path or nectar coated lure he would claim his divine little creature.

But perhaps such brash actions, characteristic of near-sighted Neanderthals, were nothing but a stain upon him, a disregard towards himself and for one so very confident of an unfaltering mental fortitude, there couldn't be a higher slur. Certainly it was the most ineffective method, even if the creature had obliged for once, he himself had not taken into account the wildness in its spirit, a wildness that could be as uncontrollable as a poorly cast fiendfyre.

Surely, he was more than proficient in persuading someone and there would be no further need of forcing out his little creature through drastic means?

As he looked down upon the exquisitely fine features, his hand flexed unconsciously and he was reminded why he had chosen to forego the polite method wrought with patience. Want was like a clawing beast baring its teeth, the rapid growls a shiver in his heart. How could he contain himself in the face of lips only slightly parted as if to tempt, invite and inevitably drown within them?

With whispered words of barely heard Latin, the darker wand left his robes to be caught by reflexive pale hands and the beautiful owner of it grasped it tightly so as not to be defenseless again.

"I came as you wanted." The creature almost choked saying the last word, its stubborn pride curling into itself out of mortification. "But that is all; I don't care for whatever you say next. I have had enough."

Spidery, long fingers fisted, sharp nails giving tiny bursts of pain that Voldemort took no notice of as he almost felt the anger draining from the creature and despair settling in.

"Don't be so impatient, lovely." The calm voice belied the utter struggle within him, even as a dark thrill went through him for he longed to entangle the restless little creature into his web, of be it lie and deceit or charm and guiles.

Green eyes looked at him warily, tiredly.

"If you think you can again threaten me and I will just go along with it, you are delusional."

"Yes, I suppose it was rather plebian of me, being so forceful about it. I am not often so disrespectful, I assure you. And yet I find I behave most uncharacteristically when around you. It is undesirable, especially when it upsets you so."

The lovely angel was looking at him, with its eyes wide open as were its soul burning bright and honest threatening to overwhelm him with its transparency, so very different from his own twisted and splintered one, so very different from his malicious and shadowy self and yet he couldn't turn away from the intensity of the glowing purity for the monster sat awaiting to devour it whole, to taint it and mark it warning away other predators from its prized one.

"No, I think it was perfectly characteristic of you."

The dark vine of a deceptive reassurance that was slithering quietly to entangle the unsuspecting prey in its trap recoiled, not having predicted such resistance, a resistance he

had had no experience with in the cunning and devious Slytherin dungeons, but equally effective in its brutal honesty.

Even as he felt slightly stupefied at the unexpected reply, the little creature continued,” Are you honestly going to say that you didn’t mean to threaten me? That you didn’t mean to say such words?”

A soft chuckle escaped Tom Riddle. And he had been wondering why he hadn’t portrayed the enchanting self that swayed the general public and charmed even the most stubborn one of his peers. How could he even try to do so, when this creature was most adamant upon drawing the monster into surface, disregarding white lies effortlessly and looking at the beast into the eyes, challenging it to be denied?

He almost laughed at the sheer audacity of this bravery upon the face of awakening something that the pretty little angel would find to be rather fatal for its continued innocence.

“You think I would have indeed done something just to draw you out?”

It was a play upon its insecurity, to plant a bud of doubt that would fold its argument upon itself. And it worked beautifully.

Pale cheeks darkened from mortification and he had to resist from visiting the warmth even as he wondered if the blush would be the same should it rise from something other than embarrassment,” I-I didn’t know. How was I supposed to know anyway? I wasn’t going to risk you going crazy just because for once in your life someone didn’t follow you order without a question.”

It was a shame that the creature managed to overcome the lingering sense of doubt as it righted its posture.

“You are very sure of yourself, are you not?”

But that didn’t mean he would slack in his efforts from shattering every one of its certainty, so that it might have no other option but to lean on him to find even a tentative thread of reality.

“Quite incredibly sure of my personality considering we have not known each other for long.”

He delighted the way the angel clenched its fist tightly and averted its eyes. Small victories. Even then he noted that there was fear in the gesture, not embarrassment. The little creature was certain of its belief regarding him and his persona, not that it was mistaken. Regardless of the fact he couldn’t focus upon it at the moment, he found it really curious and mentally catalogued it for later perusal.

“And yet that doesn’t stop you from treating me like you have any right to do so!”

Touché.

He did act in an unorthodox manner. He was aware of it and not all concerned because he did have the right, not that the oblivious creature was any aware of it or agree to it, hardly perceptive as it was of the peril it had found itself in, with no other place it would ultimately find itself in save the maws of a prowling beast from where there could be no escape except to accept its destiny and the Dark Lord found he had no intention to enlighten his prey of its true position.

But for now, he needed to appease the offended lovely somewhat if only to coax it back and thus he inclined his head a little, "I admit I was rather callous in my treatment of you. I had not expected to lose my cool in such a manner and to treat you so was unacceptable."

Before he could weave a tale of soothing words that were not quite apologies but charming enough to satisfy the ruffled creature, the dark haired creature crossed its arms and stated, "But you were sincere with your words."

It was incredible how the little creature was so very observant of his true nature. Sometimes it made him weary that none of his illusion would ever manage deviate the green-eyed angel, even as it filled him with a dark pleasure, a hungry satisfaction.

He smiled, truly content with his chosen," Perhaps I was braver than most in vocalizing my honest thoughts. Nevertheless, it was unnecessary to make you feel so wary and frightened even if the very presence of you apparently threatens the control my baser urges."

Red blossomed appealingly and temptingly on the smooth cheeks as the other exclaimed, "I was not frightened! You think much too highly of yourself if you think..."

The outraged words abruptly stuttered and truthfully Voldemort had paid no attention to it as he succumbed to the temptation of the blood filled silky skin and he bit the inside of his cheek to content himself with only tracing it with a deceptively gentle thumb instead of satisfying the overwhelming desire to see the blood well up to the surface.

His voice was a dark murmur, "But you were upset. Unfortunately it could not have been avoided even if I could have predicted your response; for I couldn't have stopped myself from reacting in the exact some way once again. You caught me absolutely off-guard, with your sudden declaration to leave my side and gave no explanation what so ever to your sudden change of my mind and your change in demeanor. There was no other reason I could find save for me and yet I hadn't thought I had acted so despicably in that moment to deserve your abandonment. All I had wanted was your company and you denied me. Then you denied the basic courtesy of giving me a reason before attempting to flee in such a manner. Perhaps my actions were rash and insolent, but you hardly gave me a moment to recuperate and I had to act fast before I could lose you and that was never an option. So I gave you a choice. Poorly delivered, but a choice nonetheless."

The blush hadn't receded any and the Dark Lord quite enjoyed the warmth.

Then to his much displeasure the creature moved away and averted the enthralling eyes, as nervous fingers played with the dark green cuffs of the robe," It was not a choice. You forced my hand."

“A matter of perspective.” The Dark Lord replied dismissively, “I can easily accuse you of being needlessly suspicious of me even going as far as leaving me so carelessly, in deliberate disregard. May I know if you would have been of the same temperament to any other in my place?”

The slim hands twisted unconsciously, wringing the fabric into every other direction, “Yes.”

He hissed at the blatant impertinence, “You lie. Even if you don’t want to tell the truth, do have the courtesy of not lying to my face as if I am a fool.”

“No.” The visage looked incredibly pale but resolute, “I would not have encouraged conversation with anyone else. For months I have lived alone, do you think my solitude I would have broken for anyone? Do you think I am doing it out of pleasure, letting myself be contented with nothing but the sounds of wind in the trees and no living being otherwise? Maybe I treated you unfairly, but a good bit better than anyone else! And for what? So that I would be threatened into doing something? I don’t think so.”

With a spin of cloak, the supple figure turned its back upon a ravenous, unpredictable monster. And the predator couldn’t be blamed for reacting to such dismissive action.

With fluid strides, the dark Lord was upon the smaller figure and the larger shadow covered the other. He had wanted to draw back the other into his body, but instead settled for a hand to settle upon the hip with cool fingers dipping slightly enough to ignite the nerves and yet light enough not to justify apprehension.

Bending slightly, he crooned in the dainty ears of the creature, coaxing it into pliability as his magic crawled upon the other’s body, touching and yet not, as his other hand travelled down to take the other’s wrist in his grasp, feeling the faint pulse flutter against him, “I had thought it would be best not to overwhelm you again. But you are adamant upon shattering my control, are you not? To provoke me into such a state that I have no other choice but to *act*.”

The slight figure almost trembled against him as he breathed in the soft fragrance of wild forest clinging to the angel’s skin, so lovely was the scent that he could almost taste it. It wanted to protest against the hold as it started speaking, but he hushed it with soothing tones.

He wanted to give the creature a moment to adjust to its capture, to familiarize itself in his arms and as it began to withdraw minutely he had only to remind it of his hands by tightening his grasp a little before the creature froze so as not to invite any more touch. It was a lost cause, but he let it find shelter in its delusions.

Besides which he had wanted a moment to himself as well. For the second time he was holding his desired one much more intimately and he wished to savor such treat, surely he couldn’t overindulge before the creature managed to find its scattered sense. For now however, he luxuriated in the tempting feel of the soft skin just underneath the robes, teasing him with the proximity and taunting him with the knowledge that he had had to stay his hands for the moment. He wished this could momentarily satisfy the gaping abyss inside his soul, however how could a predator be tamed by the smell of shed blood and not be expected



to attack? It was cruel, to torment himself so. Being someone of higher intelligence than any other mortal creature, he prided himself on the control.

Besides this was mere appetizer, to keep his craving rousing till the end, not that there was ever any fear of it being forgotten or neglected.

“Let me go.” He would have accepted it as the sharp command it was intended as, had it not been for the breathiness in the voice.

“So that you might run off again? Not likely, my lovely. It seems to be the only way to tame your skittish behavior, not that I am complaining.”

“You are forcing me...”

The dark Lord interrupted the crossly protesting words, “I am not forcing you, little angel, merely allowing you a moment that you wouldn’t grant yourself to reconsider your words, to change your mind.”

“To change my mind? How so? Why would I do that? Or do you plan to threaten me again?”

“Let’s not bring up mistakes of the past so many times. Bearing in mind that we were not familiar enough with each other, there is bound to be some minor setbacks in the beginning from misconceptions and more. I would rather look forward to the future.”

“What future? You are crazy if you think any future communication might ever exist between us.”

“And why ever not? You have admitted to yourself of your unacceptable state of loneliness. Why force yourself to endure it?”

“I am not forcing myself to endure it! I chose it...I chose it for a reason.”

“But you are not content, are you? You are not happy, but you were with me. Or would you deny that?”

“I can’t... I shouldn’t... “

“You let yourself worry much about inconsequential matters. For once, let your happiness be in the fore front of your mind.”

“It is not inconsequential. It is important.”

“So are you. Don’t you think you have the right to be selfish? My methods might be unusual but you will be happy.”

“You can’t promise me that.”

“I can promise I will try my best.”

“It depends too much on mere probabilities...”

“Sometimes you need to have a little trust in life, lovely. You won’t regret this.”

“And if I did, would you let me go?”

Was it not fortunate that the pretty creature was faced away from him, because surely it would have recoiled at the gleam that passed the scarlet eyes, transforming them into something belonging to only an inhuman and cruel?

The quiet tone was pleasantly deceptive however, “You wouldn’t ever have to make that choice.”

He could almost feel the little one shudder in resignation, “You wouldn’t let me, you mean. Let me go, please.”

“Of course I will. We can hardly stand here for eternity. “

Contrary to the implied agreeableness in his words his hands merely readjusted their hold on his cherished one, sliding away from the hips to span widely on the curvature of its waist and back. It had the twin advantage of him exploring however advantages that were granted to him and stiffening the little squirming creature into sharp attention.

“Wh-what are you doing?”

“Making a bargain. Are you amenable to that?” Even as he murmured, he focused upon the shimmering warmth that emanated even under the layer of robes, calling away his attention as surely as would raging fire burning under his hand.

“I...” Neither of them was capable of ignoring their current state and he wished he could see the delightful response that would dance across the expressive features

“Come now, it is hardly such a tall request. “

“I won’t make any deals with you.”

How long would his desired one draw out his admittedly low potential for patience with its stubbornness?

“You haven’t even listened to what I have to say, little angel, so presumptuous of you to form an opinion.” Without having to see it, he knew his captive was flushing with mortification, “A bargain in exchange of a word.” The next words he whispered directly into the shying ears for emphasis, “I will release you and you will promise you won’t run away when I do.”

“And you will be satisfied with that? Sure you don’t want an unbreakable vow as well?”

He could almost feel the cringe that the creature went through after having said that. He had already experienced the rather impish nature of the little creature, especially when the sassy responses were directed towards others, and quiet enjoyed the repartee that was so very refreshing for no one would ever dare tease a Dark Lord and before that he hardly ever let anyone afford the opportunity to feel comfortable enough in his presence to partake in such. Such indulgences carried a high price for those in position of power, as quite often than not

people gather enough courage from that to commit a social offense or even sometimes bear a notion of mistaken intimacy, and hence nothing but troublesome for him.

This light wit without expectation was a source of unexpected delight and it only served his desire to possess this exceptional creature.

Now however, his feisty little creature was clearly cursing its sharp retort in fear that it had granted him some ammunition. As if he would be so foolish to construct a visible cage.

His amusement showed in his voice and he didn't care enough to retract it.

"Are you offering?"

"Not really."

"Don't fret now, my angel. I have complete confidence that you would never take the coward's way out."

The non-magical and yet completely effective method, that had as of yet deterred the little creature from moving in his arms for fear of inviting even a closer embrace, was overwhelmed by the turbulent emotions in the creature as it turned to face him rather than away, and never once noticed that when it was cradled even closer. It never noticed a greedy flash twist the Dark Lord's features into something foreboding as inconspicuously the fingers dragged them just that little bit closer.

The prey remained blissfully ignorant of the web around it tightening as it hissed angrily up at him.

"I am not a coward! Don't you dare imply otherwise."

"Indeed not. Which is why, I need not bother with a magical oath to ensure your agreement. You are much too honorable to break your word once you have given it, are you not?"

"I suppose not." The pouty lips pursed mutinously and he could feel his control dangle in a tenterhook.

"You will not try to leave if I let you go now."

"No, I won't."

"You will never try to run away from me again." And perhaps his rapidly paling composure against the tempting proximity was a harsh realization that he had overestimated his ability to remain nonchalant with the luscious being offered so innocently.

Lovely eyes widened as they realized their unexpected position and his finger tips pressed a little deeper in warning.

The little creature swallowed its trepidation as it tried to gather its bearing against this sudden assault, "I..."

“You will accept me into your life unconditionally and won’t object otherwise.” Even as he harshly spoke them, he knew he was demanding much too fast. There was no other choice however. The monster was so very close to the surface, prowling in dissatisfaction and as his finger tips gave a minute caress, he was well aware of the retracted claws that were present waiting to be unsheathed.

The creature seemed startled, he couldn’t fault for it to be cautious “Wh-what are you...” It made to step back in dissent, but there was no escape.

Small hands clutched the front of his robes to push him away or keep from falling apart in seams as the distraught visage seemed to be, and the Dark Lord swallowed to keep the blood thirst from blinding him.

Green eyes, green as morning dewy ferns, looked up at him beseechingly and he fell into the enchantment willingly.

“That wasn’t part of the bargain.”

His voice softened at the pleading tone of his lovely one,” I know. I wouldn’t have to if you were not so stubborn, dear one. If you were not so insistent upon wallowing in this misery. I don’t know how long you have had to live like this, but I can’t abide to let you endure like that anymore.”

“There is really no need...”

“And you keep on protesting on as if you really are so very opposed to it. Your words may say something, my lovely, but your eyes are much too open.” He gave a caress to the wrist he had been holding on lightly,” Your heart beats much too fervently to attest to your denial. What are you afraid of? Say yes to me and you will want for nothing. Grief you will never mar your lovely face and you will not want for company. Accept it and I will pour the world at your feet.”

The grip tightened on his robes before relaxing and the creature looked away, unruly dark hair falling away and covering the turned face loyally,” It is not that simple, to abandon everything like that.”

“Then make me understand, why you must bear all alone. Why you can’t accept a simple request for companionship and why you must shy away from even little of my attentions.”

The little creature made his gaze, unabashedly scouring his face for any hint of mockery,” You won’t understand.”

“Let us leave that decision for me to make, shall we?”

And then there was an uncertain nod, but it felt like the first taste of victory to him.

“But perhaps we should retire to a different setting for this conversation.”

At that the other jumped slightly, looking about the Ridge with an embarrassed countenance and he couldn’t help but laugh.

“Don’t worry. I already warded against any curious ones or eavesdroppers.”

“I know that!” The creature snapped in annoyance and then muttered,” Still, it is embarrassing.”

“Don’t try to put it off now.”

And with a lingering, unwilling last touch, he let the enticing being step away.

Hesitantly the creature led him away from the vicinity of shops, apprehension clear in the face that occasionally looked back at him to confirm his presence, over a small bridge into a scarcely populated area. They turned sharply instead of following the obviously taken road, into a place generously dotted with Willows and birches.

Standing at the edge that announced the starting of a denser fauna, the creature was clearly indecisive and he decided that he had been the follower long enough and thus touched it at the junction of elbow to prompt a hurried response.

Thistles snapped beneath their feet and occasionally they had to shoot petrification spells at bold, finicky junipers, mountain shrubs that get annoyed upon being trespassed and in revenge try to tear everything of the intruder with their thorns, but slowly they steered even farther from any trails and the Dark Lord could physically feel the increasing agitation his companion was slowly experiencing due to their growing distance from civilization.

Hands nervously chased the swaying edges of their robes and finally the fidgety being started to grumble to itself, chastising itself for its easy compliance to someone who had hardly met with it in sum three times.

“This is ridiculous.” The creature finally lost its tolerance and turned to face the contemplative Dark Lord,” We don’t even know each other!”

He smiled, completely in contrast with the agitated being and his smile widened when he saw how cross his companion seemed to be upon seeing his utterly unruffled countenance,” We will be working on correcting that. Everything has a beginning, dear one. Don’t be so impatient.”

His words seemed to have roused the other into a higher level of irritation and the pouty creature crossed its arms,” I am not... impatient in knowing anything. Be it you or even your name.”

A name. How unexpected.

Name was a form of identification he was rather loathe to attach to this creature, as if to attest a false promise in order to place a veil of denial over its true heritage, to draw away attention from its exotic reality and force it into a mediocrity- certainly not fit for this precious stone- in the hope that the brilliance it shone with would be dulled it into a mere glaze.

Truthfully, he had not thought about the fact his little creature might have name. A name would imply that there are others of its species and it had to be distinguished from others. A

name would imply that there was another form of identification for his creature and he was indeed very reluctant to act upon this knowledge, for he hadn't thought of this lovely being as anything else than something that would be soon his and there would have been no need to address with any crutches.

But then, he mused, perhaps he was just skirting around the core of the matter. For truthfully, he hadn't seen this being as more than a creature, certainly rather cherished and coveted and one that he would possess entirely for his own, a future that would be undeniable and unavoidable regardless of how much the pretty one protested, but a creature nonetheless. He hadn't certainly named any of his treasured assets, which he valued more than any living being for that matter and a name didn't alter their incredible value, not just monetary ones either. He laid very little interest in expensive items, but rather rare objects that caught his eye through their inherent singularity.

Why would anyone feel required to name any belonging of theirs?

But then, he thought, people do tend to name their pets with an enthusiasm as they adored them and besides which, he never had before claimed something which had a consciousness not imparted by him.

Unfortunately, no matter how perceptive his creature seemed to be and how very delightfully receptive even with layers of denial hiding it underneath, it would never appreciate how he really perceived it as. Nothing more than a possession to be owned and claimed. Besides which, it was only good manners.

It presented a dilemma however.

How should he introduce himself as? Certainly Tom Riddle was something that was loathed too deeply and forsaken so gleefully to be uttered by the tempting rosy lips of his angel. He had gone to great lengths to erase that part of his life and now, save a shrewd headmaster no one would ever speak of that name without forfeiting their life to him. He had crafted a new identity to himself, one that would be revered across the Wizarding world, one that would be in equal parts feared to such an extent that people would recoil from hearing it, much less uttering it.

And for such precise reason he couldn't bring himself to have the sweet mouth of his angel speak of a name that would be soon be covered with blood and terror.

Names had power and his couldn't handle such conflicting responsibilities. However, there was one other option that he felt quite ambiguous about but was neutral enough to satisfy the criteria.

"It seems I have been remiss in my manners. Let me correct them. It is a true pleasure making your acquaintance, my angel."

And he made his decision.

"Please call me Marvolo."

## Chapter End Notes

Gah. This took longer than I expected. Funnily enough, my chapter length increases a tiny bit every time, it's like every time I look away they are conspiring behind me. Very suspicious. Anyway, here is the third chapter. Yay!! I do hope it will deliver..

Right then, the story goes in a pace to bare their relationship slowly and I hope the chapters are sufficient in communicating exactly how they are progressing. For example, Voldemort doesn't even look at Harry as a human now. I mean sure a living being, but more a possession and less an independent thing. Lets hope Harry never finds that out. It won't last forever. But let's face it, this is Voldemort. He is hardly going to recognise love even if it is in a shape of a stinky sock thrown in his face. ...-\_- Not that I am saying he is in love or anything..

And a huge thank you for all those kudos and reviews, THANK YOU ALL!!! ^\_^  
Hope you enjoyed the chappie.

# I Waited For You, At The Edge Of A Sword

## Chapter Summary

Harry didn't even know when he had stepped into the quicksand. It had already coiled around his feet but Harry couldn't look away from the sweet promises it whispered.

## Chapter Notes

First of all, my apologies for the ridiculous delay. Do remember to read the A/N below. Disclaimer- Harry Potter books and movies don't belong to me. No matter how much the devil on my shoulder wants.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*"This is ridiculous. We don't even know each other... be it names or anything."*

Harry had only meant to draw the other's attention to how truly unreasonable he was being, perusing a stranger who might or might not be any valuable and, the utter irrationality the man was indulging in without any apparent cause.

Instead his hesitant defense led to a smug countermove that destroyed his rook and skillfully breached inside. In a twisted déjà vu Harry was drawn into a memory of a plant that had thrived in darkness and of an eleven year old boy struggling within its hold; the more he had gasped for freedom, the more he had found himself smothered within the unyielding tendrils of devil's snare. It was not dissimilar, this sensation he was currently feeling- of a trap looming closer.

*"Please, call me Marvolo."*

With all his near fatal encounters with predatory creatures, should he not been more acclimatized? Yet, he couldn't contain his instinctual flinch.

Because it shouldn't have been this heavy, this tie that always formed within two magical beings upon customary greet they give each other with directed magic. It should be hardly noticeable; the starting of a bond that grew depending upon future interactions. But a gasp escaped the strangled throat of the dark haired young wizard: a physical response to the newly wrought chain that bound him to this stranger Dark Lord, a chain that felt neither fragile nor new. Harry couldn't help unadvisable response.



“I didn’t... I didn’t ask for your name.” If he were so blessed, he would rather have nothing to do with this person.

As he finished speaking, no illusion stepped away from the tall and dark haired Wizard with striking good looks. No hypothetical monster broke out from within the snowy pale skin. No claws broke through the elegant long fingers and there was no fang to draw blood. But the contours of blood tendrils in the intense gaze flared and Harry felt Tom Riddle never really needed to look inhumanly frightening.

“Do you reject the right I give you?”

“No.” It was only a whisper torn from the stifled throat, and magic moved warily.

“No.” Voldemort advanced with slow, anticipating steps and Harry clasped his hands against the tree needing solace, only for his support to be torn away from him by insistent fingers,” You wouldn’t want the consequences of not accepting one’s name once it is offered, would you? Not when it is beyond a mere social faux pas, and carrying the possibility of offending the person as well their magic.”

“No.” *‘No, he couldn’t.’*

Harry had turned his head to the side, dazedly looking away to the far-off vegetation even as he tried to breathe steadily through the knowledge of the unwanted link that should have been fragile, that should not have mattered much more than a newly established magical contact, but had taken the strength of an age-old existent bond. He had yet to orient himself after the staggering pull his magic had felt, the analysis of the how and why had to take a backseat.

How was it that Voldemort didn’t feel the heaviness as well? Surely as a magical prodigy he was as in tune with his magic?

A cold finger, that almost burned his skin upon contact, cajolingly sweet and yet undeterred, turned his head and Harry didn’t deny the silent command. The barely touching appendage didn’t leave him upon having its objective, but held his chin in a caressing hold. The collective weight of it was adding to the other hand, one that he wished shouldn’t be real- shouldn’t be there, but rested against his lower back gently and surely and they took away the chance to find stability anywhere but in those arms.

Harry couldn’t trust that they wouldn’t let him fall instead, leaving him shattered on the ground. He wanted to push this stubborn body away, to stop the dark wizard from advancing any further, to stop the closing in of a determined predator. But he couldn’t bear to touch this person. It was malignant, this infection, and should he ever stretch out his hand in curiosity it would drag him to an unforgiving abyss.

The long finger curled beneath his chin raised his face and as Harry grasped his own robes to suppress the trembling in his hands, green eyes lifted unerringly to meet the intense gaze-the shade of pooled blood.

His voice was quiet, mere whisper in the wind and yet steely, dripping with a chill that froze the warm afternoon breeze.

“No.” Voldemort repeated.” I should rightfully take offense to your reticence, if not for the sheer terror in your eyes.”

Harry made to shift, from denial and ardent protestations, but the hands never relented.

“So, tell me, my sweet little angel, what could you possibly have to fear from accepting my name?”

He didn’t fear his name: this or the other name the Wizarding world would soon refuse to speak out of terror. But he feared the unexplainable connection that seemed to have stretched out between them.

“I am nothing but a stranger to you, and yet in a span of three meets you have been trying to turn my life upside down. I have the right to be weary. Do you not see it? Do you not see how unnatural this sudden interest seems to be?” It was almost a pleading, to make the other shake out of whatever trance he had apparently fallen into.

“You are under the assumption that my actions are not of my own.” The scarlet eyes were narrowed slightly,” But I assure you, my choices...”The next words were a promise, “are very much accepted consciously.”

There was not much of a gap between the two bodies, the younger wizard seemingly held tenderly in the other’s embrace, a mirage that didn’t speak of truth. The distance between them was less than respectable and Harry took in each and every twist on those ruthless features.

“I am still a stranger, one that has not been very welcoming to you either.” He should have been even more infuriating, but without much provocation he would really humiliate himself.

“And I am looking forward to rectifying them both. Perhaps, it is you who is afraid to wander into the unknown.”

How could he say, that which made him anxious might have been cloaked in darkness, but was very much familiar?

He was still rather dazed, the feel of his magic sluggish. He would have preferred to rest his fatigue against a tree, but as it was a strong hand supported his weary frame and his face was cupped still with the dilated red eyes never breaking contact away from him. Thin lips were curled in slight triumph and Harry cursed each and every show of his vulnerabilities knowing the Dark Wizard would gleefully remember them for his own advantage.

“However, I digress. I was led into the belief that you would tell me of your reluctance for my company. Apparently there were grave reasons why you couldn’t afford to have a single human contact, much less mine.” The tone was mocking and soaked in disbelief. Despite himself, Harry flushed with embarrassment. He hadn’t meant to sound so dramatic, but there were not many words he could speak without violating his own secrets.

His life had been turned upside down in a matter of seconds and for so long he had been convinced that this would be nothing but temporary. He had had a life, a home. Then he was

plucked from it all so carelessly as if it had never mattered. But he couldn't speak of it and because of that he couldn't impress upon the Dark Lord that his reasoning were not mere excuses.

Not that he would even if he could.

"So tell me."

"I...I don't belong here. I can't stay here. It was unfortunate and unwanted...this wait. But it is meant to be temporary. And soon I will be leaving." His voice was not as steady as he had hoped, but it was not lack of truthfulness that was the culprit.

"Leave? And abandon this lovely place?" There was a strange inflection in the thoughtful tenor, the consideration of an executioner and Harry felt the cold breath of death flirt his face as he stared into the hooded gaze.

"As lovely as it could be, it is not my home."

This place might seem so similar to his, but it was not home. His home had been broken and scarred, bearing the wounds of two wars that leaned heavily on the present. But they had built their world again, with loving and determined hands. *This* world was saturated with a magic that was purer than his world, and it was so very easier to breathe without feeling the decade long chains that ministry had forced upon magic and magical. But it was not his home. Harry bit the inside of his cheek, unable to stop the rush of emotions that flooded, the nostalgic memories tinted with despair.

As much as he would like to be cautiously optimistic, he held no high hope that his expressive face wouldn't have betrayed his emotions already. He could lower his traitorous eyes to the side, away from the sharp gaze that seemed to catalogue his emotions with smug success, but pride presided over survival instincts for he would sooner break than bow.

The inhuman scarlet eyes gleamed even as the rest of his features remained aloof and observant, "I wonder if you are so desperate why you have not left already." There was no sympathy in the inquisitive tone, and ironically that was what made him regain his composure before he fell into the vortex of depression and desolation.

But the not-question felt more like he was being guided into a trap like the lantern of a Hinkypunk and Harry was weary to take a step, especially when he was equipped with nothing but an answer that was a mesh of truth and lies, "I have unfinished work. I just need some time, that's all."

"You mean to say then, that the cause of sorrow that haunts your eyes is homesickness." There was a hint of disbelief in the dark voice and Harry's voice adjusted accordingly to defend him.

"I stayed longer than I would want to. I didn't want to be away for so long and sometimes it is just upsetting." Harry cringed inside, at his attempt to deceive the Slytherin's heir with a mesh of truth and lies. But he would never be the one for deceit, not the least for the engraved words in his hand.

“Mm... No. I don't think so.” And Harry gasped at the quite triumph that danced slightly in the hooded eye before being smothered. Cold trailed his heated cheek softly, accompanying words that were a sweet poison,” I remember your beautiful face crumbling as you stood on the shore of black lake. I remember tears of sorrow trembling down your pale cheeks, and I also remember absolute despair darkening your eyes. There was no anticipation, no longing for something you awaited for. Only pure devastation caused by loss. Cease your lies, lovely and tell the truth.”

The poison burned through the threads of his poise and reached his core, twisting it mercilessly.

Harry shook himself out of those arms before the cold would find his heart, to shatter it beautifully. His steps were a little unsteady, but thankfully his magic had recovered enough to give him the confidence, enough that he could walk away from this person who took pleasure in dragging his misery out. He couldn't think coherently much less be able to form a comprehensible response.

But when the man hadn't been able to break him through even a killing curse, how could he let mere words affect him any?

He spoke softly, but clearly, “I don't care whether you choose to believe me or not. Or perhaps you are trying to fish for something. It doesn't matter, because I didn't lie.”

*His* Voldemort would never believe those demure words, because such constraint was uncharacteristic of Harry Potter- the Gryffindor at heart, always wearing his heart at the sleeve. By no means, Harry Potter would accept such provoking words with bowed head, but surely he would retaliate with all the self-righteous anger.

This person, budding Dark Lord of the century might be as dangerous and frighteningly clever, but he didn't know Harry Potter.

Harry breathed in, careful not to overwhelm himself.

The Dark Wizard hummed in contemplation and Harry slightly turned his profile with the intent that should he choose to, Voldemort would no longer be in his line of sight. He was aware of the intense gaze focused upon him, but in this situation he couldn't help but indulge in the mindset of child for a while.

If he could just close his eyes and not see the monster, perhaps it didn't exist. And he would be safe.

“Maybe you didn't. Perhaps you believed the lie as the truth. I can see how you might be confused.”

Brows furrowed, Harry tried to make sense of those words. What was the manipulative wizard angling towards now?

“What?”

The mouth arched into a cruel curve,” Denial is often the first response to grief. Have you chosen to submerge yourself so completely in your delusion that it has become reality?”

Harry felt the faint stirring of knowledge in those words, words that were pleasantly cajoling and hiding the malice within, but he was already shaking his head to deny, “What in Circe’s name are you talking about?”

The despicable man merely tilted his head in curiosity, watching his restless frame as Harry strove to maintain his anxiety, “It was truthfully unpleasant when I thought you are lying to me, but I see now this deception includes you as well.”

He couldn’t take it any longer, the insinuations of something he had decided not to think of, “Stop speaking in *riddles*! What are you talking about?” Perhaps in a coherent state, he would not have made such a ghastly mistake. Now he could only hope that the wizard would choose to dismiss it rather than take it under suspicious speculation, but gave not much care to his blunder.

Eyes the shade of spilled blood narrowed, but the man apparently waved it away as a mere coincidence,” Did you not hear me, or did you choose not to understand? Your actions and your words contradict each other, however only one carried the ring of honesty. Only one I choose to believe. You speak of a temporary stay here, a place not your home. So determined you are that you refuse all living interaction. But the depth of despair I have seen, sweet angel, betrays you. Tell me truly. How temporary your stay really is. Because I cannot in right mind believe that mere longing for home is the reason for your devastation, and that you refuse to pick up new acquaintances because of the possibility that you might leave some day. It is a mundane mindset: that distance and transport matter. We are wizards, more than capable of overcoming something as trivial as physical distance. Would you truly list this as to why you shy away from my attention? Because these, lovely, are much too feeble to hold up the weight expected of them. Or...” Harry’s breath hitched and he unabashedly made to step backwards, when he saw the anticipating fingers reach towards him, and a dark shadow settled over the Dark Lord,” Have you been actually playing games with me all this time?”

Even flustered as he was, Harry couldn’t stay taciturn at such undeserving accusations. Shrugging off the hold before it could gain a firmer ground, he spoke scathingly, exactly defensive and irritated at such assumptions,” How dare you! Games with you? When ever have I sought you out even once? When did I ask for your attention? Don’t you dare heap such accusations on me, because you are worth neither the time nor the patience for it!” By the end of his little tirade, he was practically hissing the words out.

Where one was the epitome of icy aristocracy, however shaken he might be by the proximity of this siren’s thrall, the other was a ball of molten fire, very easily riled and as destructive in its ire.

Each of them were the other’s undoing. While the Dark Lord remained determined to capture and control his, the dark haired Gryffindor instead resented how easily the man seeped through the flaws of his serenity.

“That is as well.” Contrary to Harry’s rapidly diminishing control, the other remained poised in his determination, “My earlier statement was correct then. Speak to me, of your non-

existent excuses. Give them more ground to stand upon. Give me more reasons to be amused. As it is, I am going to humor you before they are discarded.”

Even as Voldemort spoke of amusement, the shadows that lurked behind the scarlet hue confided of eagerly anticipated cruelty. Some other might have been intimidated or frightened, but the once boy-savior who had seen nothing but insanity shine in those blood-red eyes accepted it as nothing more than a part of Tom Riddle.

He was however aggravated at how the man dismissed everything he said as nothing but lies. Perhaps it was, but that was not the point anyway. The man had wanted explanations. He should take what was given.

“Excuses? There are no excuses. Is it my fault you have apparently made up your mind not to believe anything I say? What use will it be even if I defend myself? You are so arrogant in your thoughts that you must be right, and I must be wrong because nothing could or would negate your beliefs. And frankly, I don’t care even if you don’t believe me; I have done my part...

Harry would never admit to himself that in his frustrated rant he was not only complaining of the Dark Lord’s latest annoying behavior, but the existence of Tom Riddle in the whole. Not even a day would be sufficient should he be allowed to voice all which had been pushed inside.

But all the indignant thoughts fell away to be replaced by nothing but the feel ignited by the trembling in his nerves. He couldn’t pay attention to anything as he became aware of his body and those singularly arresting hands. He knew his eyes must have widened in shock and breath fallen into a stuttered gasp, for despite all the times the Dark Lord took liberties with personal space he could never be familiarized with the cold that meant his agonizing proximity. Instead of recoiling as was wont with all who he ever came in contact with, he could do nothing but concentrate on those hands that so carefully cradled his face.

“Look into my eyes, lovely. Just so. And tell me now, how wrong I am. So tell me that the stains of grief I still see in you are illusory. Tell me then that you haven’t secluded yourself because of the recoil from the loss you are suffering, a self-imposed punishment, and a twisted way of torture. You are certain that you are not completely alone here, refusing to form any kind of relationship, because it might make it all the more real that perhaps this stay is not temporary after all and that it not fear that has driven you into forced isolation. Tell me you are certain the doors are not shut for you...

Harry slightly trembled from the completely even words. Afraid his body might give away while his heart remained loyal to his cause, he shook himself from the hold. The man let him be, with an amused lilt in the thin lips. Unconsciously he shook his head in an effort to deny the words from taking roots in his mind. His magic fluttered around him anxiously, trying to find the threat that was causing such unrest and Harry couldn’t take the debilitating words any more, lest they take apart every one of his defenses and lay him bare for the entire world to play at will. Or perhaps only for this wizard in particular. But he couldn’t let himself be swayed, or let the honeyed venom crumble his hopes.

“Because they are not.” His words were full of a conviction that roused from pure want rather than truth, “There might be few difficulties, but that would be all.” Then he hurried to add as he was starting to doubt his own words, “Why are you insisting upon dissuading me from what I want? Is it for your amusement of the month or are you playing with me really?”

The Dark Wizard remained cool in the face of his outburst and Harry felt his shattered control catch the edges of temper, as sidestepping his distrustful questions the man asked one of his own, “Why are you so intent upon ignoring your present and focusing upon a past that just might be lost?”

The words were unconscious, merely spoken in different context (They had to be, because Harry wouldn’t accept otherwise. The man couldn’t know...couldn’t possibly know...Harry refused to think so) and still it rocked him to his heels, “Because it was... *is* my home! I can’t... I can’t just give up on it.”

Harry felt almost like laughing hysterically at the next question, “Do you not have a house here as well? What is to say that you won’t consider it your home after a while?”

For a moment, Harry was struck silent, unable to find any words. How could he have the man who murdered more than half of his own family to understand the concept of home? How could he even expect it of this person? He had known this of course, known the lack of warmth that resided in the heart of Tom Riddle in response to emotions regarding his loved ones. He had seen in the grayness of pensieve memories the isolation of a young child as he only sought to belong. He had known the abandonment and rejection of family and kin as Tom Riddle found them while he searched for his heritage. In the end, there was only one place that had accepted his magic unscrupulously and that was Hogwarts itself. Subconsciously Voldemort had ever only accepted one place as his home, but had gone into twisted means to obtain it.

There couldn’t have been any hope; the unique set of circumstances the powerful young Slytherin heir had grown up in, without the presence of positive guiding soul, led to the rise of the most terrible of Dark Lords. In a detached way, he had understood at the time and even felt pity for the person who gave self-destruction a new meaning. But the war had been at its peak and the truth hadn’t mattered much because it didn’t change anything. It didn’t stop a madman from hunting him down obsessively.

Now though, he was reminded again of those monotonous pictures in a stone basin and his empathy with an enemy.

But this person was not really an enemy, not yet. Even his magic rolled without the hostile coils it associated with the feel of that particular dark magic. It was weary, yes, but not outright aggressive against *this* Dark Lord. Tom Riddle had never really understood home. He might have had unconsciously accepted a place as one, but he had not known to categorize correctly the feeling of immense longing, safety and acceptance.

The unruly thudding of his pulse calmed some at that thought and some of his uncharacteristically violent emotions shifted, “Home doesn’t just mean a house you can call your own, no matter how lovely it is. What makes a home so is...” Harry struggled to put

words the emotions needed,” the people that love you and who you love. With them, even a shack can be called home.”

For him however, it had been more than that. It had not been only his dearest friends and treasured family, or the beautiful manor he had self-indulgently had built. It had been more than that. But Harry didn't speak of that. For how could the man possibly understand that despite having a house for himself, the depth to which he had immersed himself, he had come to view the entire Wizarding world as his own? Having helped the Wizarding World through its stuttering steps, how could Harry possibly detach himself while he watched it heal and mature? Even with all the flaws it carried and all the suffering he had known, it had been his.

And Harry had loved it so.

There was an odd intonation in the Dark Lord's voice as he spoke,” Loved ones? You have a family back home?”

Still lost in the bittersweet memories, Harry gave a small smile, “Very much dear to heart. I never thought that I would ever miss those with bitter tongues. I suppose distance puts everything in a different perspective.”

“How desperately you must long for them to even want the worst.” Voldemort mused and Harry couldn't help but agree,” They must have made you incredibly happy to deserve such devotion of yours.”

Harry frowned slightly at the word ‘happy’. The Wizarding world was his home, including the tattered castle by the black lake that took collective effort for restoration but had broken remains of gargoyles still, the chaotic mess in the ministry because moral was still down and taints of its fall still scratched the floor and so much more. He couldn't have remained aloof to his newly constructed magical world. So he had come to love it as one cherished and felt proud over their newly renovated house. It had been his pride and joy indeed and he had been exhausted and weary with the constant work but it had been worth it. He should have been happy.

And yet Harry found he almost had to force himself to connect that particular adjective in regards to him.

Fortunately Voldemort hadn't noticed his discontent and had continued speaking aloud his observation,” So devoted indeed that you are willing to sacrifice the rest of your life chasing after futile hopes.”

It was honestly incredible how swiftly the man managed to drive Harry from feeling relieved into mindlessly frustrated.

“Futile... it is not futile... I am not chasing after something *impossible*! Do you think you can make me give up months of effort or my hopes with a few scornful words? What does it have to take so that you can give up on *your* useless attempts? Why are you so self-righteous in deciding my life when you don't have the slightest idea about what you are actually doing?”



“Perhaps because you haven’t said no to me even once. You don’t even sound convincing when you insist upon your lies. There is stubbornness yes, but there is also an acknowledgment of failure. Perhaps because you have already known the depth of your loss but refuse to accept it. How long do you think this farce of yours will last? Do you think *they* will wait for you until then?”

“You are cruel.” Harry whispered. For the words were nothing but, with each barbed hook tugging at the loose strand of insecurity in his soul. And he wished the man would just stop this, lose this interest soon.

“What is simple truth to one is harsh reality to another. I suppose for you that would be cruel.” The man spoke with a confidence that belied the fact they were essentially unknown to each other.” I see you still don’t deny my words. “

“I... What are you doing? Is there a point in this game of yours? Except to derive pleasure from another’s misery?”

“No, lovely. Not your misery. Never your misery. If I was indeed being cruel, I would have left you to your own devices, to be swallowed up with loneliness and despair. But I gave you a promise, sweet one, whether you remember it or not. I promised to take care of you. You can push me away as much as you want, delay this as long as you would like. But you must know, I would never abandon you.”

Such persuasive words.

How many wizards and witches had been charmed into being his slaves of will by such seducing words and attentive gestures? How many had believed those silky whispers only to repay it with their lives? There was one such woman he very well remembered, whose only fault was to possess two very priceless treasures and then to invite a silver tongued serpent home. Two innocent lives had been sacrificed to satisfy the malicious greed of a single person. Knowing very much of the eroding venom that accompanied the artfully coaxing words, how would he ever dare to let himself be swayed?

It would be so much easier to fall into the sweet oblivion those seductive words offered, as easy as falling asleep. And he would never even know when he would have lost his way.

But Harry was not Hepzibah Smith.

“I don’t trust you.”

For the barest moment, he saw the blood red pools darken into crimson drops.

“I am not the enemy here, little angel, contrary to any impression I might have given you. All I want is to lighten the burden, that droops your shoulder and hopefully have the pleasure of your company along the way. It is of no use, how you continue fighting me. All you do is, postpone the inevitable.”

He was aware of it, painfully so. He knew there never was truly to be an escape. He had known since the first time he had felt that cloying magic of the dark Lord saturating the air,

but Harry had chosen to indulge in a bit of selective ignorance. Foolish of him to act so knowingly evasive of the issue, but he could only hold on to a hope. He knew there never would truly be an escape. He knew more than Voldemort did truthfully.

The connection had begun to write first on the All Hallows Eve, when Dark Lord Voldemort had attacked the Potter family. It could never have been predicted, the consequence of that prophecy directed actions, least of all the possibility of a soul shard attaching itself in the young living vassal of Harry Potter. Such an extraordinary rare occurrence and for all the depravity it entailed, the connection itself was unique.

In the resurrection ritual, Voldemort had intended to connect them via blood but had accomplished so much more. His intention had been to swear them as blood-enemies but in his obsession he had chosen to overlook that the blood he had accepted was from a child of a muggle-born and all the more tainted with the protective magic from the same. He had chosen to discard all his ideals and everything the war stood for, all for the sake of one boy: so that the boy's touch might no longer repel him. Whatever his primary objective might have been, the intensity of his desire had stretched the connection from a blood-bond to something much more.

Magic had been stretched to incomparable designs between them and the results were always unpredictable.

Harry had already felt the consequences of the snare the weaving of these ties brought. It had brought him the stubborn obsession of a mad man, the unrelenting desire that the man had possessed to hunt him down when despite the apparent conquering of the Wizarding World the man had inexplicably loosened the rein of his reign which his subordinates instead controlled much to their delight while the serpentine monster concentrated on the Chosen One.

So, suffice to say Harry understood more than the other man ever would, and despaired all the more. He could never escape the entanglement wrought from the weaving of all old bonds and they could only go stronger with each interaction with this person. Whatever beliefs he might have wrapped around himself as a security illusion had shattered when the man had initiated a simple greeting and the bonds had fallen like a lead weight onto his magic.

Knit as tightly they were in the fate's design, they were either fated to be closest of allies or greatest of enemies.

The headmaster's words came to his mind. *"The Dark Lord has no friends. The death eaters are the closest he affords himself and even then he doesn't trust them."*

The future might look bleak for now, but that didn't mean he wasn't going to fight for every inch the Dark Lord breached.

"So, you are going to torment me until my excuse sounds pleasing enough for you?"

"I would not word it so. No explanation is going to please me, but it will hopefully be enough to satisfy any curiosity regarding your ambiguous nature."

“I don’t owe you anything.”

“No matter how much you hide behind your walls, your attempts to keep me out, do you think you can survive with my persistence? I am not asking for eternal obedience. Defiance looks lovely on you, but needless stubbornness is not very attractive.”

Blood rushed at his cheeks guiltily.

He had been at his most Gryffindorish and disliked trait: prideful stubbornness, in the hope that the man would tire of it soon. The stiff obduracy had managed to cut through many a Slytherin’s furnished persona, driving them to murderous rage. It had been very much effective against their pureblood, collected manners to break their facades. This person though remained largely unaffected.

Instances like these; he was forced to find even more differences between the serpentine monster and this Dark Lord.

Harry turned his back upon Voldemort, he felt quite incapable of being absolutely vulnerable when the sight of the man provoked severe fight or flight response from him.

Reluctantly he admitted,” Perhaps I am a bit farther from home than I said, certainly more than I would ever want to be.” *‘More lost than I would care to be.’*

“How far?”

His hyper-aware nerves were placated at lack of triumph in the low murmur.

“Enough that all existing paths are closed to me. I can only hope to make one of my own.”

“Why would it be so difficult? Isn’t it accessible to magical travels?”

He swiveled in frustration, hands clenched in reaction to his mounting frustration,” It is more than that! I can’t just make a portkey or find out the apparition coordinates! I am...I feel like I am a world away and I don’t even know how to start on this. I am not at all proficient in Wizarding travels...

His tightly grasping hand was taken tenderly and he was pulled closer to the tall body.

“I could help you, if you want.”

“What?”

His mind blanked for a moment. Voluntarily offering help. Either he had fallen into an alternate universe where Tom Riddle was actually a misjudged philanthropist or the man was trying really hard to win his favor. For whatever reason.

“I cannot claim expertise over Wizarding travels knowledge. But I have resources that could be helpful. You can’t hope to find everything on your own.”

It was a tempting offer, one that would directly lead onto a slippery slope.

“You don’t have to accept my offer right away. Think about it.”

“I-thank you.” It was awkward, because Harry couldn’t stop wincing at the fact that he was thanking Voldemort. *‘Merlin, his life was odd.’* “But I can’t agree to…”

But the battle had been lost from the beginning, no matter how much Harry might wish otherwise.

“Don’t be difficult now, lovely. Your point need no longer be made. However, you have yet to return your part.”

He looked rather confused at that. But the Dark Lord didn’t speak, instead released his hand to take a step backward. The scarlet stones burned with their intensity and while Harry was glad that the man had willingly moved away, it didn’t seem to be leading up to something positive.

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It had been rumored once, the tale of a child whose parents had named him Merlin after the name of the great sorcerer who had lived in the age of Avalon; how his name had crushed him with the weight of magical power before the child had had time to grow onto his own potential. It had been said with the awe for the legendary person whose power was such that even his name had been dripped with the heaviness. The tale had also carried the caution of a magical name and the consequences should its significance be ignored.

Like many things in the magical world, names held much power than ever imagined in the muggle lives. Purebloods tended to use those of ancestors’ in an attempt to heighten their child’s magic with the addition with their ancestor’s gift. Of course it also might twist the original pure magic, should they prove to be incompatible, an issue the purebloods tended to ignore as they carry more pride over their ‘untainted magic’. Muggleborns don’t have the burden that is the bliss of family magic and their names don’t even begin to be magical until they are at the prime of their second magical maturity.

So, one couldn’t just use them as recklessly as they pleased. Even the Dark Lord, who could have surely taken a new name for his persona, chose a derivative that kept the roots in his original name. Muggle it might have been, but Tom Riddle was a powerful wizard and he had lent an equal importance to his name. It would be catastrophic, should a wizard choose to discard his name after his magical maturity had already passed.

It would be unthinkable to discard his name in a favor of another. Yet, he had no other choice. It was not only the concern that when he found his way back home, the knowledge of name in this place could be used by someone to obstruct him. It was also not that a small part of him was relieved at not having to carry the weight of that name.

But the relationship between Harry Potter and Dark Lord Voldemort was something he had no desire to stir into existence again. He hadn’t thought that bonds of a dead Dark Lord could shift to his younger self so well, but it had come to be. He didn’t want the possibility of that particular connection to exist as well.

Perhaps, it would be a new beginning. Still weary, but a little anticipating as well he thought of what he would be known in this time.

But the choices were few and even less fit the requirements.

Subconsciously his head dipped a little in the apologetic pureblood gesture of unintentional delay, because his words wouldn't speak of contriteness, and Harry breathed deep in preparation.

" You may call me Hadrian." The man didn't need to know the rest of his name however, when he was not graced with the knowledge.

The Dark Wizard smiled. Such a small lilt of the thin lips, and still it managed to put a crack through the foundation that Harry relied on heavily. He was tempted to avert his eyes.

" Say my name, lovely."

His submissive hand was grasped tightly and his pulse, so very sensitive as it was to the Dark Wizard, tuned and harmonized with it, fluttered wildly and Harry swallowed so that he might not be caught vulnerable in front of this person.

It left him in a single breath, "Marvolo."

The hand was lifted to the cruel lips, and a barely there pressure left a burning imprint on his knuckles, "I regret not doing this sooner, if nothing but for hearing it from your sweet lips, *Hadrian*."

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The blue spell rushed through the air with a soft whisper and a blur of white and grey fell from the sky with a sharp cry.

Scarlet eyes burned with remembered fury as they looked upon the small body that was breathlessly struggling upon the ground dispassionately. Initially it had been mildly amusing, the manner in which his little creature continued to portray blatant defiance. The fire in those enchanting green eyes, reflecting the brightly flaring aura his magic displayed was addictive, the only reason he hadn't broken each and every one of its independent streaks thoroughly. And the naïve little being would never realize how close he had come as he prodded and poked a venomous serpent with his protests and pouts.

But the sweet blushes had distracted him several times and the feel of the deliriously soft skin just beneath a flimsy robe that could easily be torn away by a severing spell had provoked his greed.

Only those had spared the little creature from having to suffer a violent reaction. In the end his fortitude had paid off, as the little angel had succumbed to the unrelenting pressure and it was extremely entertaining to the Dark Lord that the wily creature continued to entertain delusions of freedom.

Indeed, it was true that for now he had only managed to pin one skittish feather down to his will. The flighty little creature had continued to fidget and shone bright and lovely with boldness flaring in the luminescent green eyes. It continued to desist and be utterly infuriating while trying to undermine every one of his efforts of binding the precious little treasure to his side. And the Dark Lord let it thrive in those carefully twisted illusions as he waited with endless patience, because he could already imagine how stunning the little angel would look scattered and broken as his reality crumbled to ashes around him.

Because no matter how much the precious being secured himself in the knowledge of his wings affording him the freedom of the sky, how far could he fly with a broken feather?

So, Voldemort chose to wait, breathlessly impatient for the result and cavernously enchanted while watching his prey stumble. No matter how much greed swiped spitefully at the continued time difference between obtaining his prize, he had chosen to agonizingly contain himself. The virtue of patience was almost painful and unfulfilling and only promises of a successful creature barely detained it. However, lust still swirled in his blood, hungering and refusing to be submissive under the iron control of a Dark Lord and he chose to indulge himself so. It was truly unfortunate for this little thing to be enjoying the slow breeze at the moment when a cruel man had recently returned from a place that tested his control so.

Now, the little bird cried out softly as cruel fingers sweetly pressed down on the point where it had been pinned to the ground with a narrow edged dagger and the monster laughed quietly, the sharp smile shining with a bloody edge. The ground was tainted with the hue of its life, whose only fault had been to catch the attention of a sadistic inhuman being.

It continued to pant on the ground as the white-hot dagger was removed from his wings and the other walked away without a glance

## Chapter End Notes

A/N- fair warning, it is probably going to be long.

Thank you everyone for the lovely comments and kudos!!

I am so sorry it ran so late! Never mind that it has been all that was on my mind for all this time. But I had not been satisfied with what I had, so I waited till it was something that was moderately satisfying. My story will never be forgotten, so don't fear that. I tried hard to keep it completely magical and honestly I had no idea that it would be so difficult. It may not seem so but most of the phrases and words that we use are technically muggle. Such as the word technically... There are hopefully no mistakes...

In the story, I have taken as magical as purely magical. As in, they are more magic than human. Magic is not a way of life, it is who they are. I tried to explain the bond, as much as I could without being overwhelming. Because it actually plays a huge part. There is a reason Voldemort was attracted so fast, and not just because of a pretty face. That would make him awfully fickle. Harry is more sensitive to it because he has lived with it

for such a long time and he has foreknowledge. They don't realize it, but the bond sort of makes them more honest with each other. Harry knows more than Marvolo, but even he hasn't realized all parts of the bond.

Harry sucks at lying by the way. I don't why he even tries.

He hasn't actually accepted Marvolo. In his mind it is still Tom or Voldemort. It will take him a while, not too long though.

Voldemort kisses Harry's left hand. The right hand is to declare fealty oaths. The left is for something else.. :)

It has been asked, how does Voldemort actually find Harry. He can't find him when Harry is behind wards though. Here is a hint- he took something of Harry in their first meeting. I will give the answer next chapter.

Do say how you liked it! Until then... ^.^

# Your Voice To Soothe A Starving Heart

## Chapter Summary

Dark Lords are not as omniscient as they think themselves to be or any other might expect them to be. Sometimes that ignorance includes the whispering of their hearts. Thankfully, hearts have a way of independent actions. Perhaps through a disguised courting gift?

## Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: ehh.. Harry Potter and J.K. Rowling don't belong to me.. Isn't that the way it goes? Before you hang me for the delay, read the chapter..

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tom Riddle was not unfamiliar with obsession. Poisonous coils of sweet promises lying heavily akin to a undulating serpent upon his shoulder and slithering ever so smoothly in his veins, carrying the veritable tones of Lust and Greed, whispers of *what could be, if only he could have it* igniting his very self. Whereas many would regard the destructive lyrics as a vice, Tom Riddle embraced it completely. Why would he, when to indulge meant he could claim whatsoever he wanted, regardless of the price that had to be paid? Sometimes Greed was a flash of red gleam on the surface of a gold chain and in return it had to be ferried across rivers of blood and deception. Sometimes Lust mockingly whispered a promise of forever after and Tom Riddle ruthlessly tore away the quivering soul of his, so that death might never shadow his steps. It didn't matter, even as history were to be marked with scarlet trails or vicious tearing of innocence, all that ever mattered was his own satisfaction as the prize rested inside the coils of a serpent and guarded most jealously. And all those, who would ever dare touch, would pay the price with no less than their lives.

And in the end, the hollowness inside him would remain abandoned, momentarily fuelled by the malicious promises and holding the bitter aftertaste of a triumph that never was satisfactory enough, awaiting for the next obsession that would distract it from the apathetic vortex.

Never however, a living being had come under the smothering scrutiny of his Obsession. Insignificant as they were, nothing more than the barest attention he wasted in them and something more would undoubtedly find them perished to dust. There was the bare interest, slight amusement and acceptable company, but, none so truly precious to provoke the acidic gaze of the obsessed monster.



Besides, the little creature didn't truly seem to belong to this earth either way. Ethereal in its beauty, and an endlessly pervading fascination that proved too much of a distraction sometimes; but the Dark Lord refused to notice the lapses in his concentration, so very enthralled and wrapped in the constricting coils of his newest obsession.

By the shores of the black lake and under the waning light of a summer evening, this lovely creature had caught his attention purely incidentally. Without even being aware of their audience, the being had been successful in entirely entralling in enrapturing them as surely as if there was siren blood in the green eyed outwardly being, to allure those of the land and drag them to the depth of the oceans. Perhaps it would have been better if this unearthly creature did indeed possess the mystical inhuman traits, for it would better explain the incredible thrall that had riveted a dark lord's terrible attention, perhaps it would better satisfy the conclusion that its lure had succeeded where no other non-human creature had succeeded before.

And the Dark Lord barely protested the soft lure calling his attention to the unaware creature, for no matter if it was a thrall that could have been used to enchant the mind of the Dark Lord; it was hardly him ever in any possible danger. Responding to the beautiful enticement not far from him, dark whispers had started to coil about his core, speaking to him of sweet possessions and pleasure beyond imagination. And the object of such cruel avarice was the pretty, green eyed creature fallen into the strangling net of a Dark Lord's attention from which there could never be any escape, not even if he should choose so to seek sympathy in death.

The monster had awakened at the sight and he had wondered whether it would relapse as well once its appetite was whetted. He had not cared one way or other.

Now however, in this May morning when faint mist still lingered over the magical village of Rowena's Ridge despite the sun having climbed high upon its throne, Tom Riddle thought the thirst might never be sated.

The splendidly coated grass field, tucked lovingly into the bosom of the Ridge, boasted gleefully of its picturesque beauty blossoming with the advent of the summer. And the Dark Lord callously disregarded the warm sight to focus upon the single object of his obsession, who was surrounded by a chaotically coloured ground of veritable plants still holding the evidence of night.

The fair creature was sprawled upon the grass uncaringly. Among the wildflowers that glittered in the gentle sunlight as the morning dew trembled upon their casings, the lovely one looked at once at home and exotic. The casual dress in shades of cream looked frightfully incapable of protecting the beautiful being from the sight nip that the wind carried, as fragile as its wearer. The remarkably long tresses messily bound, the likes of which he had never seen even in the traditional magical community, flowed down the back following the soft arch of a slim back.

The creature looked more delicate than the small wildflowers the curious hand was questing through, loveliest among admittedly extraordinary example of a spring day.

The self-assured and possessing an uncannily brilliant mind Tom Riddle found himself utterly riveted, every logical and rational thought driven out of him, frozen to the tips of his toes in face of such exquisite sight.

The serpent coiled sharply around him leaving the monster breathless. The calm before the storm, the wait before the lunge.

It was a déjà vu, interesting and unintentional, imitating the day he had so fatefully encountered this enchanting creature.

Déjà vu because there had been no foretelling of the force with which monstrous greed hit him, snarling in desperation.

Déjà vu because the prey remained even now unaware of the intense scrutiny with which a ruthless predator catalogued each movement obsessively, distracting an unperturbed Dark Lord so much so that for the first time he was so swayed from the pre-determined path of ruins, all for a beauty of the celestial kind.

But there was no melancholy strangulating the creature heartlessly this time, for even as it remained utterly unaware of the danger, the pale features spoke of sweet tranquillity and the magic, the magic that had flared out so bravely before, languidly simmered about instead with as much serenity.

This time no sorrow distorted the pale, perfectly chiselled features and he could still not quite find himself upon firm enough ground.

So very beautiful.

*So very lovely..So very lovely this creature...this rare gem and he couldn't wait to possess and take and simply have all for himself...*

Not enough control.

Glowing soft and golden blessed by the sun, who had peeked out in a indulgence perhaps to catch the sight of a creature whose beauty was just as rare, this being was utterly breathtaking and Tom covetously traced the alluring curves of each of its features devotedly and in slight disbelief. The creature was sprawled carelessly on the grass plain, in a manner that no pureblood would care to emulate with the long dark hair cascading in a tightly, if messily bind with the exception of the obstinate fringe falling upon the dark brows and wilful strands resolute upon escaping the hold.

Not enough breathe to draw upon.

Contentedness seeped through the air like an filthy contamination and the Dark lord felt smothered in it, even as he found himself drawn to the lazy swirls of the other's magic, unable to wrench himself away from the simple sight of the devastatingly exquisite being tucking an errant hair behind its ear as the slim fingers leisurely crept through its plait.

There were no visible changes upon Tom Riddle to warn others of the approaching of a Dark Lord, even as the eyes bled scarlet and the rationale mind was falling, fading, giving away to the blood-thirsty monster.

It was picture perfect, the delicate balance between beauty and fragility of the celestial creature, giving rise to an irrational fear that even a sharp exhale would shatter this irreparably. And such a possibility would be unthinkable, unacceptable to one after having witnessed this once. It would feel irreverent to taint such purity instead of striving towards preserving it, to freeze such in time and space so that it might only be ever looked at but would forever remain out of touch, out of possible ruin.

Tom Riddle held no such conservation, moral obligation. He sought to possess it, to taint it irreversibly, to shatter that alluring fragility and to rebuild in such a manner that he would be the one to keep it from falling apart.

There could be no escape for the ignorant creature from the strangling net of the Dark Lord's attention.

How could he then, *why would he*, want to resist the beautiful lure that was the endless possibilities whispering their sweetly twisted promises, to stop his own dark magic from seeping through the unadulterated place as he himself advanced predatorily, so very tempted to realize those monstrous needs at that very instance.

Was the creature's magic not feeling the aura of an anticipating maliciousness, the dawn of a maelstrom only barely a thread of sanity away?

He was so very consumed by the need, unable to contrive for a rationale consciousness and intoxicated as he was with the murmurs of Lust, perhaps not very willing either. The clenching claws so close to the fair face...

Then the beautiful eyes lifted, looked up at the tall figure whose icy features showed none of their internal insanity, save for the in the gleams of scarlet eyes.

And just like that the Dark Lord was mesmerized, the irrepressible voices quieted as he breathed in deep in response to the enchantingly green eyes holding his soul captive. The repetitive battering of the Beast ceased.

Because contrary to all the other times the enchanting gaze was directed at him, there were no distrust, no shadows hiding a piece of the intensity from him. There was no suspicion, no derision. The fair face was upturned slightly, open and so very plaint. Tom Riddle let himself be caught willingly in such a thrall and the memory remained sharp. He felt himself unravel at the seams, incapable of holding onto anything other than what was in front of him.

Because even as he had moved to ruin the fragile picture the sweet creature had made, he had never been really prepared to find it accepting him so beautifully. The moment felt illusory and as fleeting fine as mist. So, the Dark Lord gave no indication to his previously cruel intentions, unwilling as he was to distort this anyhow.

Its magic clenched tight as he moved unconsciously towards his treasured one and the other looked on with slight surprise in the bright green eyes, nothing else.

“Good morning.” Even the whisper was ever so accepting, welcoming, and so utterly *docile*, that the dark lord found himself torn between his unwillingness to act in such a manner that would return the slight mistrust to the incandescent green eyes and carrying out the absolute *need* to claim viciously this subconsciously submissive offering.

Almost. He had not been able to become so powerful with the self-control of an adolescent. He might choose not to restrain himself, but it was not the baser urges that controlled him. The choice would always be his. No matter how alternately seductive and delightfully destructive the sinful voices might be.

“A morning better than I could have ever anticipated.” Marvolo spoke quietly and truthfully, unwilling to break the tentative atmosphere that seemed to unsettle him in its foreignness. He should have felt triumphant at the thought that perhaps his little creature was slowly becoming more receptive to him. But no matter how much he had thought of it, perhaps he had failed to take into account his own reaction.

He had not thought how such simple gestures would steal his breath so effortlessly.

“May I?” He continued, gesturing toward the ground, needing to be closer to the creature. He was rather reluctant at sudden gestures that would threaten this precarious balance.

The lovely face turned towards the ground slightly, and uncomprehendingly Voldemort inhaled fast.

“You would lower yourself to the position to us lowly mortals?”

The Dark Lord would have frowned, had it not been for the soft smile that had graced those sweet lips.

“The things I do for you, lovely one.” He sniffed in a mock pretentious manner, “Besides, we are wizards, are we not? Mere dirt is hardly worth a thought to us.”

Green eyes rolled beneath the dark lashes as the being shifted slightly in its position. He was taken aback at how playful the creature seemed to be in contrast to the tightly coiled frame of tension it was in previous meets.

“You don’t have to. I am almost finished anyway.”

“It is not as much of a chore as you are making it out to be.” And it was indeed not. He would never care for something as superficial as dirt staining his robes, not when he had had stains more damaging often clinging to him. Stains that carried an unmistakable coppery smell and were difficult to remove completely even by magical means.

He however cared for lowering himself to the levels of other people, which now that he came to think of hadn’t been an issue with his creature. He had not found himself in want of a distraction of even in a position where he could afford one.

“What are you doing?”

“Collecting a bouquet for my house. To keep it fresh and all that.” Came the prompt reply from the petite being

The utter ridiculousness reply that were at the same time free of open rejection and aversions of the little creature had him relaxing his frame almost subconsciously and his lips relaxing into a subconscious smile, “Indeed? I didn’t know hellebore is recommended for interior decoration.

“Well you wouldn’t know if you haven’t tried yet, would you? Do you want to?” The stunning creature continued speaking in a serious tone that belied the impish words.

The Dark Lord was no less polite in his refusal.

“No thank you. I am afraid eccentricity is a virtue I do not care to possess.”

“At least you count it as one. That is progress right there.”

He smiled.

Even if the change in Hadrian’s attitude was disconcerting, it was also very welcoming and he was in equal parts pleased and wary. But mostly, he had never imagined he would come to appreciate the receptiveness of this creature so very much.

He looked absolutely outwardly, so devastatingly beautiful with the morning light heartbreakingly illuminating those darling features, as if it belonged to another world forever beyond his reach. Heart aching at the thought, he reached out to prove the fantastical thoughts wrong by capturing the wayward little angel for himself.

The little creature looked up startled when he took hold of an errant strand twisting the wild one in his fingers before tucking it behind one ear.

Pink blossomed so invitingly on those cheeks and Hadrian looked at him wide-eyed as he brushed the back of the knuckles, marvelling at the sweet warmth against his cool skin.

Predictably, the ever skittish little thing averted his face and Marvolo didn’t mourn the loss of the silky soft skin, acutely aware of the impending claim he would soon have upon it.

“It is Beltane.” Distracted as he was, he was unable to comprehend the words for a while, “I thought you would have already known.”

---foryouonlyforyouonly---

For so long he had come to desire irrepressibly this divine creature only to be met with stout defiance. For so long he had come to want the beautiful voice tilt in favour to him only to hear it be tainted in distrust. He had come to covet more than this person only, but the companionship as well. The unparalleled beauty of simple conversation and the verbal fencing he could never tire of, he was the apotheosis of Slytherin after all. And yet, he had

wanted more than the continuous suspicion filled tone. He had wanted more, but never quite managed to understand exactly what.

Seeing his little creature so wonderfully receptive, so beautifully open to him, how could he ever resist from falling in even deeper want with him?

The pretty one's words stirred a cruel thought in him, but he abandoned it in favour of maintaining the current temperament of the little creature in regards to him. He didn't want those lovely bright gems to cloud over with wry distrust. No matter how much he enjoyed breaking the fragile precipice the creature seemed to teeter over, this lovely picture he could not bear to shatter reckless actions.

*Not yet, not just yet.*

However Beltane put into context the basket that had been lying unobtrusively besides the recklessly abandoned thin robe. He could see daffodils, daisies and lilacs, lilies but he could also recognize hellebore, black dahlia and belladonna. He could be forgiven for not recognizing it as an assembled May basket at the first glance.

He fingered a delicate petal of the deadly azalea musingly, "Not appropriate for Beltane, one would think."

The sweet one looked at the little plant, the apparent focus of conversation because so long as he remained in the proximity of this burning star he could give attention to no other," Perhaps a little unconventional, but surely not inappropriate?" Despite the soft murmur, the creature didn't seem to be asking for an opinion, but rather stating its own.

He wouldn't know, not when he had never cared for this festivity that called for celebration of life and there were no rituals that he cared to harvest at the peak of summer.

But he couldn't divulge this. Not yet. The inclination of one's magic was not a dinner conversation, much less something discussed casually with a person he desired deliriously but knew nothing of.

"Perhaps, I admit I haven't given it much thought."

The little creature didn't seem inclined to continue the conversation and the Dark Lord did not insist otherwise. Companionable silence was a pleasure hard found and with no begrudging he appreciated these small instances of acceptance from Hadrian.

Perhaps mere appreciation was understating the situation. He adored it, the fact that the exotic being did no longer observe him with ill-concealed discomfort, that he was no longer being rebuffed for being in such close proximity. He craved it, recognizing it as rare, for surely once the peace of a Beltane morning leaves the docile creature there would no longer be such opportunities presenting themselves frequently. The absolute permeating through his veins could not be emphasized enough, when they at once soothed a bruised ego and stoked the ever present monster through its thin cage, the tantalizing possibility of a future viewed for a fleeting moment.

So he watched unrestrained, as the placid creature continued filling the May basket with a multitude of flowers and herbs.

He watched, suspended in a wilful illusion of timeless realm, beside the one being he could never want any less; may dewdrops clung to the dark lashes of the elegant creature and he could almost believe that Beltane dewdrops blessed this being with extraordinary beauty, except that he had seen his angel when it was sodden with the torrent of unflattering grief. And the sight hadn't marred his first impression of this magnificence.

He couldn't look away now either.

The lovely angel looked at him questioningly and he looked down, curious to what had drawn the lovely one's attention so much that it had initiated the eye contact, only to find a bunch of yellow flowers held indecisively in his own hands. He almost sneered down in pure disbelief at the innocent looking plants. Spidery long fingers that had so often nonchalantly dipped down in the still flowing warm blood and had gleefully tainted themselves with the residues of dark curses, felt ill at ease with the soft may flowers.

His magic prepared to drain the life out of those vibrant plants, leaving ashes on its wake but the astounded green eyes stayed the impulse.

How was it that this creature, who feigned ignorance and who would never oblige for any information, always so aware of his tendencies? The pretty green eyes never looked oblivious of his intentions, immediate ones any way; resigned, yes. Angry and petulant, most frequently. But never surprised.

As much as it was suspicious, it was also faintly annoying.

Either to refuse to accept this notion the creature had of him or in an ill-timed challenge accepted, he kept them in his hold. The whisper of a possible as to what to do with those accursed flowers encouraged him and he felt less disturbed at the ill-placed softness in his hand.

"Your basket seems content."

The dark head tilted to verify that yes, he indeed had more than enough and Hadrian smiled without repentance, "Have you been waiting all this time?"

Dark Lords don't do something as plebeian as shrugging, but his shoulders shifted minutely, "It was no terrible waste of time."

Previously, his reticent creature would have scoffed and perhaps retorted with, 'Don't think I am going to apologize for that.'

This time though, the creature bestowed another one of its tiny smiles, "I just need to drop this at home," He looked down at his rumpled and grass-stained trousers, "and perhaps a change of clothing as well. Would you..."

"I will be waiting here, for you. Take your time."

Hadrian seemed slightly surprised at the unexpected kindness, but merely nodded,” You understand that I would not be able to stay with you as long.”

Thin lips tightened in understanding, but no gesture of assent to be had before the slim figure turned sharply on the spot, not having waited for it.

And Tom turned to look at the beautiful landscape that throbbed with millions of flora and fauna.

---foryouonlyforyouonly---

The waiting time had been generously invested in his self-appointed task and he was not caught off-guard when a pop was announced.

A frowning mouth distastefully curled at the a wayward strand of hair that had found its way inside it in the course of apparation and Hadrian impatiently pushed the soft locks back before freezing slightly at the sight of an expectant Dark Lord.

He was patient when the sweet features paused with hesitation upon seeing his outstretched hand. He needn't verbally express the request. He didn't ask Hadrian to trust him, seeing as how he would be instantly rebuffed. It was an unknown territory the creature would be wandering into, he wondered if it would take the leap of faith.

“Wha..?”

Despite the query, his creature surely understood what he wanted; it was evident in the wide, green eyes, in the flickers of hesitation swirling through the placidity Beltane brought.

“Come, my lovely, I won't lead you astray.”

Indecision twisted the sweet lips, dithering on the edge of acceptance and denial; the weights tipping strongly to one side and the Dark Lord couldn't...wouldn't accept failure.

So he stepped closer, cooing as through to a frightened bird, “It is alright. I have not come so far to risk alienating you any further.”

Stealthily an unyielding hand encircled the narrow waist, and the beautiful creature was pushed farther into him, farther than required for side-along apparation, into a position that reminded one of mockery of a dance, except the hand holding on to the waist was less polite and more unyielding, except for the clasping hands looked less voluntary and more the sight of a trap sprung.

The lithe figure trembled in the unwilling embrace and the sweet lips parted as if to exhale the anxiety of this unknown happenstance.

So how could he be expected not to be encouraged when his exotic one responded so beautifully, so enchantingly in his arms? How could he accept the wrathful words, how could he withstand it when the sweet lies fell akin to poisonous petals from the lovely mouth, when the same lips shivered under his questing finger? How could he, when the sweet honey flavoured flesh surely could be torn with one claw?



Even if it was betrayed by the malleability of its own body, the green eyes lost none of its clarity, never lost itself in the overwhelming storm wrought every time they were in such close proximity.

“Where are we going?” And weren’t the words confident and still so beautifully accepting?

Still in the impromptu position ready for a waltz, the Dark Lord swirled them away without answering.

Hadrian looked squeamish expected from a side-along apparation, but the alert stance of the body never faltered. As he looked around the throng of crowds around them, his least worry seemed to the position he was still trapped under.

He gasped and unconsciously pressed closer to the body twined so possessively around him,” I...where are we? I can’t...can’t yet tolerate so many people.”

A sure hand soothed down the tense back, “They can’t see us.”

Still nervous green eyes looked to him for explanation, “I realized in that tea shop you seemed to favour so much, that no matter how much you force yourself to solitude, you still like to keep an illusion of people surrounding you. No matter if they can’t interact with you, you like to watch people. I suppose it gives you a feeling of not being completely alone. It was difficult finding such a place, but thankfully some wizards appreciate their privacy.” He looked down intensely at the widened green eyes, “So, don’t worry. The walls are enchanted to be only one way transparent.”

The little creature didn’t completely recover from its startled state, but enough that it realized the intimate position he was in. With some amusement, he let the slightly flailing body detach from his, but only so far. A thin wrist was held tightly in his grasp with no hope for relinquishment.

No matter how much the little creature struggled to completely separate them, he didn’t yield, merely commenting out aloud,” Do not be irrational, lovely. How would you find your way if I didn’t keep a hold of you? I wouldn’t want you to fall behind and I don’t think you wouldn’t want to be the one to follow.” The stubborn lines subsided with much reluctance.

” Where are we, then?”

Thin lips curled slightly, a charade of an amused smile. “It is a dining restaurant. Casual dining is not often seen in wizardly world unless purebloods want a once in a while change from the cooking of their house-elves.” The dark lord looked down at his beautiful companion,” If not for the company, I hope at least your taste buds will appreciate it.”

Something in his words must have amused the little creature, as he spied a barely hidden smile flirt across the expressive face. It could have been a very small thing; unfortunately however it didn’t take much to ignite the Dark wizard’s shimmering temper. Least of all when he surmised that the other person might have been taking amusement at his expense.

Nothing in his voice issued a fore-warning of the rising fury as he curiously spoke aloud, "What could it be that amuses you so, lovely one?"

"It is nothing."

"Come now, I am truly curious."

Green eyes didn't realize the warning startling red gleams brought and continued to have a merry twinkle in them anyway, "I don't have house-elves."

"I had not thought that a lunch outside will be remiss, either way." A frown rose in the Dark Lord's brows. "It was a mere assumption." Not a *mistake*, not the way his creature implied." I fail to see why it amused you so much."

The swirling greens were still freshly lit in enjoyment, and the bone white hand clenched tight.

"Nothing really. I suppose it was a little surprising." The fair face turned away and he resisted the urge to forcefully wrench towards him.

"Is that so? In what way?"

The pretty face looked at his scarlet gaze unflinchingly "In a way that normally you know everything. Like even now, the way you are insisting. "

And should such a sentence simultaneously able to be complimentary and in contrary as well as this little one managed to convey?

"That is a tall order, one that is beyond expectations for anyone." Tom Riddle was ever so demure in face of praise.

"Or perhaps enough that the lack of knowledge wouldn't you ever shame you or catch you off guard." The Dark Lord would gleefully take offense, if not for the lack of triumph in those glittering gem like eyes. The little creature spoke what it believed to be the truth, with no condescend.

"There you go, being all presumptuous about someone you are not supposed to know."

"You are just that easy to read."

"See. Such confident words would lead one to false conclusions. Or suspicious conclusions. Because in all my life, no one ever had been as astute in your observations as you, my lovely. But I will not have you worry over such on this day."

Hadrian shrugged, but seemed subsided if not appeased for the Dark Lord's lack of opposition.

Voldemort had however quieted for another reason. He had anticipated that the sweet little doe like creature would fret at the possibility of more people, and even calculated the possibility of benefits he could reap from the temporary weakness. He would not ask for

sudden change in this ongoing trait, because the Dark Lord was just as invested in keeping the little creature's attention to himself.

He had not anticipated the rage that would fracture his core, should the beautiful little angel interact with any other person. Filthy vermin that they were, not even fit to worship the hem of Hadrian's robe. It would be worrisome; this sudden lack of grasp at an already wavering control as he pulled at the thin wrist and without further ado pulled the little creature into his arms.

He snarled at the entrance where the petrified server stood swaying already under the swirling dark storm of fury, "OUT!"

Hadrian had momentarily frozen in his arms, but soon started to fidget and the tense fingers in his waist dug deeper in warning, "You wouldn't. Unless you would like to see how exactly my anger translates to another person. I do not want you to put you off of your lunch."

The wonderfully slim figure was breathlessly tremulous and confident upon having his treasured one in his possession, the monster turned its attention to its prey. Covetous fingers settled on the robes, the color of deep hues of basil that only emphasized the very exceptional shade of those eyes, with the velvetiness only characteristic of sea silk barely protecting its owner, as they curved judiciously to envelop much as possible and to sink avariciously into the deliriously soft flesh, giving the impression of molten honey flesh but thwarted by the flimsy piece of fabric.

"What happened?"

"It seems my lovely, I am much less tolerant of other people than I thought." *'Such an understatement.'*

"That is not an explanation." The annoyed words were lost in a soft gasp, when the Dark Lord lowered his head to inhale the lovely aroma. He could almost feel the wild fluttering of the pulse in the pale curve of a neck, and the stuttering of breaths in anxious wait. It would have been so easy to sink into the divine offering, to discard the designs he had carefully lined around his creature, control seemed so irrelevant at the moment... However, he persisted and drew back slightly.

It was a tragedy indeed to be separated such, but the Dark Lord was not a petulant teenager and offered his fair companion a seat before taking the one opposite.

"I do not abide others at the best of times. But it is absolutely unacceptable if they interrupt me when I am with you." The smile that he offered to Hadrian spoke of the haunting nightmares they would have suffered should they dare. Instead of being intimidated, dark brows scrunched in slight exasperation.

"How do you think we can be attended, if you chase away our servers?"

The Dark Lord sat back in his seat slightly, the remnants of cold fury still glancing across the vibrantly coloured eyes.

“They are mere decorations. There is no need for them.” He gestured down at the white table, a menu as well as plain parchment and accompanying quills were available. It wasn’t hard to discern their purposes.

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It was not until their main course was brought that the Dark Lord gave voice to the cruel thought he had had earlier.

Beltane, the celebration of life. He had been largely unfeeling towards this particular tradition: the social gathering and events continuing for days. He had been curious enough to know about it, but it had never appealed to him much.

It was interesting however that his creature would choose to celebrate such a social event all alone. Lost and abandoned, drowning itself in despair. Yet the creature wished to celebrate Beltane. However fetching it might look, blessed in the May dew and with the soft, slothful sunlight sharply emphasizing the lovely features.

He was amused at the self-inflicted misery it was choosing to indulge in, delighted to find a perfect opportunity to slip through the cracks in its core and his would be the cementing viscous fluid to hold together the pieces. The only bridge to fill the chasm, one that would bind as well as it would corrode it even more, to flow inside even more, breach it so malignantly that without his presence, it would find existence futile.

Besides, the lovely one needed to be chastised, for being so liberal with it witty mouth. No matter how tempting.

“You are celebrating Beltane.”

The viridescent gaze shifted sharply, so very attentive to him and the monster purred in pleasure, at the very fact that the prey should be distracted for anything other than him, was unacceptable.

“Is there a question somewhere or do you like paraphrasing?”

“Perhaps, depending upon whether you are inclined to answer.”

“Maybe I would, if the question were phrased correctly.”

The sweet little creature was entirely composed, so unlike the trembling beauty he had been relishing in earlier.

No matter that the creature had left itself vulnerable to attack.

“I was curious.” His voice was soft, deceptively so as his eyes lighted with cruel amusement, as to why would someone wish to celebrate such an event that is obviously meant to be ah...rather social than solitary. Why would you deliberately expose yourself to simply memories that would only remind you of what you have lost?”

“For someone who claims that they want to help me, you have a very cruel way of showing it.”

Save for a tiny tremble in the lovely voice, the little creature didn't seem to be as affected as the words implied. It was as if nothing more had been expected from him.

It irritated him, this seeming knowledge of his true nature, if understanding was not included as well.

But at the presence of the delightful creature, he was learning the exercise of patience; earning to savour the enjoyment he felt in the interaction with a person who was neither dim-witted nor overly awed. Unfortunately, his angel still retained a pinch of wariness, but it was better than absolute hostility.

“I felt any kind of falsity would be wasted on you. You seem so determined of my nature already. Being helpful actually makes you suspicious. Maybe you would appreciate blunt honesty more. It appears however, I was wrong. No matter what I do, you will always be wary of me,”

Any other person would not have succumbed to such blatant guilt-tripping, but he would utilize any method to ascertain his goal.

Even if those would leave the little precious shattered in pieces.

The pretty eyes lowered in guilt, as he knew they would. For all his caution and care, his little creature possessed such a heart of pure kindness. This being was so very kind and soft, perceptive to sharp tears a clawed hand would bring. After all, nothing was more liable to corruption than sweet purity.

The most effective factor was that even in his manipulation, he hadn't stated an absolute lie. He had stretched and twisted the truth to limits but they were true nonetheless. Why would one need the curved swipe of a deceptive attack when simple truth made for such an effective weapon?

Slim hands clenched, but no apology escaped the pretty mouth. It was alright though; he needed no verbal confirmation of surrender.

So he did, perhaps to affect his angel even more, “Perhaps I was harsher than intended. Isn't that how you see me? Isn't that how I am to you?”

“Are you any more than what I see you?”

“I will leave you to that judgement. You are afraid of initiating any bond, even a bond as insignificant as the ones with a house-elf. Such non-human creatures could have posed no such threat to your goal and yet I see you fearing even a possibility. You gave no more than a token protest to me. So tell me truly, my lovely, Is that what you truly see?”

Pressing fingers that wished to dip into soft flesh instead vented their frustration upon hard wood as the Dark Lord looked at the taciturn creature. Expressive eyes that were so incapable

of being deceitful were turned away and he resented the flimsy piece of furniture between them.

““House elves might not be human, but their bonds are equally important. Besides I am not so incompetent that I couldn’t survive without one. It is not for that reason only...so.”

““I would not dare accuse you so. Your defence of such creatures is rather passionate. Whether they deserve it or not, on the other hand, is debatable. And it surely proves my claim, is that not so?”

“I think they deserve at least one voice on their sides when people do nothing but degrade them.”

“I truly do not care. They must be grateful to you, however. It is astounding to see such devotion. What did they ever do to warrant thus?”

“They died for me.”

“House-elves give lives for their masters. That is their purpose. To serve and die for their masters.”

“He... I was not his master. He was a free elf. But even before that, all he had ever wanted was to keep H..me safe. Albeit in an unorthodox way. He kept punishing himself for disobeying his master. He didn’t care that his master would kill him for helping me. After he was a free elf, he had helped me whenever there was something I needed. And in the end, he took a knife to save me. I will never forget him. You asked why I am celebrating Beltane all alone.” The Dark Lord found himself a little startled at the passionate outburst, as the little creature continued his emotion filled speech,” We...had not been as traditional in our celebrations. Not many followed the traditions well anymore. But besides that, there were never many things to celebrate. Too many uncertainties, too much fear. After...everything was over, we came to appreciate life. Lives that were so precious, even lives that were lost, so we celebrated with what I had.

It was not just for the living. It was also in the memory of the ones dear and departed. The manner of our celebration was unconventional, but very much cherished. So, it doesn’t matter that none of them are with me. It doesn’t matter because I am still so grateful for the fact they lived. I am grateful for all the lives that were sacrificed so we could live. No matter how much it hurts me for being so far from them, I won’t let myself discard their significance ever.”

Viridescent eyes had attempted to close down for the sake of reining in their emotions, to not let sparkling evidence of sorrow escape. And they remained dry, indicative of the strong will, but not detached.

The Dark Lord did not speak, even presented so opportunistically with fissures that could be forced apart to be explored at his leisure. Shimmering green were still alight in the fire of brutal honesty and he had gleamed many a loosened edges he could pull to unravel the secretive angel, and yet he couldn’t speak.

Before he could discern the state of his mindset, the sweet voice spoke quietly, "You would stop at nothing but breaking me." The pale fingers were playing with the fork and a piece of baby asparagus and no evidence that the dish had been savoured in any way.

Confronted with the barest truth, he had had the choice of a tasteful lie leading to the disillusionment of the painful kind or the bare surface of a truth. It wasn't merely the fact that his angel accepted the truth of him, distrustfully or not, but also that he felt almost comfortable at not having to wrap shades of facade around himself.

He replied wistfully, "Would you ever yield to me otherwise?"

He did not apologize for causing for such had been his intention to slowly peel away layers of defences, to strip away each of the barriers and reach within to possess the quivering core.

He did not move to comfort either; instead the spidery long fingers picked up the silverware and cut up the smoked salmon deftly. Not giving time to protest, he slid the plate back, and asked quietly, "Tell me of your celebrations. The unorthodox way you like to do it back home."

---foryouonlyforyouonly---

The Dark Lord cut off the bit of a tiramisu on his plate, whilst listening to the impassioned description of May Day festivities. He never had to have superficial attention given; engrossed and interested as he was always to know more of his creature. At this moment however, looking at the lovely impudent lips and sparkling eyes peeking up under dark lashes, he wondered. Many a times the sweet mouth had been callously or intelligently impertinent, intending to rouse an unforgivable ire and succeeding as well. It was startling obvious the difference between Hadrian and the rest of the world, for no other would have escaped with nothing but a minor cruel reprimand.

Voldemort unforgiving and absolutely cruel in his fury would accept nothing but a throat torn from anguished screaming as suitable compensation in exchange for any perceived slight. Tom Riddle was the charming persona of a venomous serpent presenting the model of perfection. The mask was Riddle, while the monster within was Voldemort.

Marvolo was neither Voldemort nor Tom Riddle. He had honestly not thought much deep into the persona he had chosen to give to his lovely one, but somehow the distinction weren't as sharply defined any more. Somewhere along the way, Marvolo had become the cracks along the mask.

Hadrian would never know Voldemort however. He would not find clinging scarlet stains in the hem of his companion's robes. Nor would he ever see the layers of deceit and masks that was Tom Riddle. There was no need after all; the creature seemed more than proficient in tracing the silvers of truth from the Slytherin prince, whose façade had rarely ever failed him.

So, Marvolo would be the most honest he would ever get to be. There would be no open lies. No visible cage.

Instead, he would let the creature have its own world, bounded by bars that would be hidden behind an innocent beauty. Because there was still a bit of Voldemort and Tom Riddle in Marvolo, they were hardly different personalities, but merely facets exacerbated by the need of the situation.

They had departed soon after Hadrian had made a low distressed noise in his throat. Mere hours were not enough for Marvolo, however there was nothing to be had. At the edge of a grove full of Aspen trees, where they were meant to part, green eyes looked up at him with surprise when he didn't disapparate immediately, but moved closer. The slight frame frozen at his approach and he savoured this moment; while this being who looked to be as divine as one descended from the heavens, with the enthralling gaze fixed upon him in faint surprise and the pale cheeks fluttered with a faint blush, and upon the untameable dark head sat a wreath of Beltane may, bound together with the creeping branches of Myrtle.

Did Hadrian know the significance behind this gesture of being gifted a flower wreath on this day of spring solstice? Once it could have been the presentation of one's intentions, or secret affections. The Dark Lord had however pretended in his true desires.

The sweet blush spoke of how aware the little creature indeed was, but the tiny worry marring the forehead spoke of the reluctance with which it was loathe in accepting the truth.

No matter. Even if he was frightfully impatient in claiming what he believed to be rightfully to be his, the wait was made significantly sweeter by the presence of his beloved.

Slim hands lifted to clasp at the thin wreath that was more bound by his magic than true skill, but Marvolo prevented the attempt by taking the warm hands in his grasp.

The exotic beauty frowned at him, his glare absolutely futile, "What are you doing? Just because my hair is longer than usual doesn't suddenly turn me into a girl. Take this ridiculous thing off."

He could not even find in himself a trace of fury at the instant objection, the little creature looked absolutely darling, "How is it relevant even? It looks beautiful on you, which has nothing to do with whether or not you are a girl."

Impatient hands went to tug at the wreath that had suddenly bound intricately with the wild tresses and Marvolo stilled them in one compromising grasp.

He would deny that this request was not entirely a form of manipulation, "Do not reject this. I may not celebrate Beltane, but I would like for you to have this small gift." He could not understand this overwhelming rush in his core, but accompanied with the sweet blush of his most cherished, it would become one of his treasured memories.

Slim hands lowered in acceptance and those luminescent green eyes couldn't seem to hold his gaze for any longer, "Ah... I should give you something."



The Dark Lord looked at the fidgety being and whimsically played with a loose lock of raven dark hair “There is no need.”

“It is only proper.”

Upon such insistence, Marvolo tilted the beloved face with an insisting finger and spoke with absolute honesty, “The time I was afforded this morning, when you were not so abhorrent of my company was more than sufficient.” The multitude of sensation that assaulted him when thin lips touched sun warmed soft skin were as turbulent as the troubling emotions the sweet one managed to ignite inside him. He could regret neither.

## Chapter End Notes

Hey..guys..I hope you are atleast a little mellowed after reading the chapter. Or maybe it was not good enough. I was frustrated though!! Took way too long time..and way too long chapter. I cut off a whole section and still it stayed over 7k words. I gave up and posted anyway. Hang me if you want, but the late posting was not intentional. The entire world is a conspiracy, I swear!! I won't promise you a next time..but I will be hyper vigilant like Moody!!

Alright..So I am not a pagan or anything. Everything I write about Beltane is from google and my disturbed mind. I hope I am managing to convey properly the way Voldemort's mindset is changing. It was difficult but fun to write. I am trying not to make it too complicated or tedious to read. That's all, I think.

Thank you to all lovely commentors and kudoers and subscribers and bookmarkers. You guys are better than a million dollar bribe.

Please leave behind a comment for better or worse.

# I waited for you, since the beginning of time

## Chapter Summary

When Home seems the farthest thing in the mind, when once deep need has turned mere obligation and what was once never to be is now all he could think.

## Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Harry Potter and the associated literature doesn't belong to me. Oooh, if it had however...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Pieces of parchment fluttered slightly in the light breeze, few them tumbling down the small desk that was generously weighed with many scrolls, weathered tomes and relatively recent books. The frantic quill scrawls upon the parchments spoke of fevered contemplations; frayed edges betrayed furious actions borne of desperation and the broken spines of the books implied the long days spent perusing its contents. Despite their unkempt appearance, melancholic air tainted with fervent hope fairly lingered over the desk by the window to assure them how highly they were regarded by a certain person.

And yet for all the times a passionate longing had driven the contents as worn as could be, longing to simply return *home*, this person spared them none of the frantic attention they had been bestowed before, even as some of the stray parchments quivered in their places, threatening to be carried away by the insistent summer wind. So they lay as uncared as they has slowly become, from an unforgettable afternoon with the encounter with unforeseen consequences, for a jealous Dark Lord would never abide for the attention of his object of desire to be averted elsewhere.

So it was now, it was a stunningly beautiful looking wreath, inconspicuous out of context, was the one that held the dark haired person's rapt concentration.

Harry stoked a tentative finger down the swirling buds of calla lily, bound viciously with twisting Myrtles, fearful that should he press a bit further the wreath will draw blood as payment. Beltane had been long past and yet the wreath showed no indication of the slightest decay, instead blooming haughtily defying death as long as could be. The distracted mind mused softly while studying the delicate flowers, flowers that were bound with magic as was apparent from its perfection, flowers that were misleading in their implications. Harry had to believe so, because as much as it would be inconceivable for the Dark Lord to have been erroneous in any manner, it was surely even more impossible for him to use the ancient

pureblood tradition often used for informal declaration of intentions. However weary he was of Voldemort being particularly persuasive with the end result of Marking him as another death eater, it was entirely redundant subverting such a beautiful culture for self-gratification. It was hardly the unwillingness to taint a wondrous magical custom that would have stayed the cruel hand, but because there would be no need for such extensive manipulation when many willingly let themselves be enslaved for nothing but the opportunity to serve the pitiless creature, willingly letting themselves drink in the poison to appease the monster.

Yet for all his certainties, Harry still remained baffled at its uncharacteristically *tender* behavior. He still could not comprehend what the shadowed gleam bespoke in accordance to his...their future, and he could not deny either the unwavering attention upon him that had passed far long a time to be a fleeting interest, instead shifting seamlessly to be something that could no longer be hoped to be insignificant.

Knowledge he might have had, however it spared no assistance for the softening in the easily swayed heart of the once Chosen One, nor provided an effective shield against how familiar he was becoming with a presence that should arouse nothing save wary caution.

The Dark Lord was not merely a terrible calamity heralding the end of the world. He was a beautiful poison people delighted in partake in. Many a fell to the whispers of the serpent in their hearts, each had seen their darkest desire under Voldemort's coaxing, while the Dark Lord built his opulent throne upon their bloodied carcasses which they gladly submitted to, for the Dark Mark demanded no less than their life and soul.

For a moment, he let himself drift in the delusion of such a promise of affection intended for Hadrian Peverell, not Harry Potter, not the boy-who-lived, burdened with no expectation, nor the puppet stringing along the whims of prophecy. For a moment, he allowed himself the illusion of attention for his sake, nothing else.

False the name might have been, he had never been more true to himself.

'He wished, oh how he wished, for the intention behind every knot tying the flowers borne of genuine desire. How he wished for the proprietor to be one he could afford to bestow the least amount of trust ever.

His heart mourned for the innermost hope to be presented in such a tempting manner before him and Harry dared not breathe life to the dying embers lest cruel fingers douse the flickering flames callously.

How tempting it was to see Marvolo in that exotically handsome face and not see Voldemort, the cruelest of all Dark Lord. The unwavering attention he lavished upon him, the sweet promises he whispered and the secrets he pulled from his heart. How could one resist such flattering combination that could be almost mistaken for genuine emotion?

And how foolish.

He turned away from the beautiful present that *could have been something*, but in the end was nothing more than thorny deception hiding behind the fragrance of pleasing lies.

The slightly capricious thoughts slowly unfolded their clutches and Harry let his hand fall from the pale petals with a sigh.

And a small, quivering pulse warned him of the tightening noose around him, of the impending vulnerability Harry was leaving open himself to; a voice that could be easily go unheard under disbelieving conviction of the Gryffindor.

Harry turned away from his musing to turn to unintelligible parchments detailing his research and the blockages on each end, unaware that the vulnerability that the voice warned him off did not pertain to any physical self. With how adamantly he thought himself protected, it was his heart he was leaving undefended. The first evidence remained in the undestroyed piece of ornament that remained upon his living room, speaking wordlessly of the receptiveness of the perused person.

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Harry sat under gently swaying Rowan tree, having transfigured a rock into a wooden branch without any luxurious seats, faint anticipation stirring in his heart.

It was disconcerting, how he awaited the familiar presence he was rapidly becoming acquainted with. He had not known how loneliness had been slowly eroding away at his very self, not until he had been compelled by an unrelenting Dark Lord to withstand the man without any defense. He could have chosen to hide behind the wards, never coming out to greet the world or see the person who was the sole focus of his eternal confusion. It might have been for the sake of self-preservation, but belonging to the house of Brave he could not abide to retreat from a challenge. So he would hide no more.

He had two choices before him: he could be petulant and suffer the consequences as well as condemn others to the Dark Lord's rage or he could swallow his pride and manipulate the circumstance to his benefit. Looking from a mature view point the later choice was viable even if he could not quite see how he would win in a battle of wiles with the heir of Slytherin.

No matter, if he could not succeed with Slytherin cunning, he would endure with the stubbornness of Gryffindor.

He hastily rose to his feet when magic started to build in the air in synchronism with the palpitations of an anxious heart, for he could hardly abide to be in a relaxed position in front of this person, mere moments before an immaculately dressed Dark Lord stood in the midst of disturbed fallen leaves of spring. Blood-red eyes fixated upon him with an unwavering awareness and Harry barely restrained stepping away from both the intensity of the person striding towards him and the bond erupting upon their proximity.

As it was, he could escape neither.

A soft exhale escaped when a cold hand took upon its startling hold a delicate hand that remained passive in surprise and his breathing could no longer deem themselves to be unscathed when a soft greeting of lips was placed upon it, the heavy promises headily whispered into his skin; and the cold breath reminded him of the last time those cruel lips had

left behind a burning imprint on his skin, leaving him to be entirely consumed by a strange malady that bespoke of high nerves and heightened senses, of trembling voices and tantalizing memories.

His eyes dropped for no more than an instant, to keep his susceptible senses from being entirely overwhelmed, before he obstinately raised them to meet the burning gaze evenly, "Good morning."

The dark Lord was pleased, the lack of tension minutely apparent in the arch of the proud shoulders, in the unimpeded curve of a thin mouth; subtle changes in sinful pictures that Harry was perpetually tuned to. And was it not so very peculiar to see genuine satisfaction in the cold scarlet eyes without screams of victims of its cruelty, be they of physical agony or of stripped mental faculty, preceding it. Marvolo he might be called, an alter ego adopted flawlessly in favor of Voldemort for whatever reason, how could Harry discard as effortlessly decade long memories surrounding this Dark Lord, how could he disregard the stifling magic which pooled around him as of to keep him vulnerable?

Scarlet was supposed to signify passion and warmth, and yet the only warmth that Harry had ever discerned from those hauntingly intense eyes had spoken of the borrowed heat that had resided in someone's blood moments before they succumbed to crimson fury.

Even as memories of old and impressions of new struggled for dominance in his thoughts, Harry carefully separated the taunting knowledge, letting none of his dismay flicker in his clear gaze.

"A fair morning, lovely. Indeed, I had wondered if your lack of reluctance last time was a fleeting pleasure, merely the placidity of a Beltane magic." Truly, it had been. The ease and comfort with which he had spent the day in the startlingly patient company had been nothing but disquieting. Perhaps he could have been petulantly stubborn only to postpone what was inevitable, to be coerced into a corner with no escape. He had been tempted as well, in moments of rebelliousness, and yet sense had prevailed over pride.

However he might see the monstrous features that truly reflected the blackened core instead of the handsome face it currently donned, however he might find the remnants of his past cluttering his present, this willing ignorance was a netted cloth upon his eyes, enough to convince of his sight but not enough to grant him full exposure to the truth.

He had not anticipated however, the genuine bewildered pleasure that had dominated over the Dark Lord's expression the last time. It had served to further establish Marvolo as an individual, not a mere mask the Dark Lord had donned whimsically.

"It is not permanent, I assure you. I just see a lost cause when I see one. You don't think I would turn subservient to you just because I have accepted you by my side, do you?" It was as much of a statement as a question and Harry wondered even as he warned, with what purpose does the Dark Lord Voldemort pursue the insignificant wizard Hadrian Peverell, what knowledge had been acquired to warrant such determination in the cold creature.

So he sought the answer from the fathomless gaze that should have been incomprehensible to all perhaps; but in the entirety of creation Harry Potter had been the exception the Dark Lord

could never have desired and it would remain true for all time.

Darkness shifted behind the gaze and Harry had hardly a warning before his stature was almost overwhelmed by the taller being. The touch was tender, with the shadow of a warning that it could turn just as comfortably malicious, and his response could almost be explained as a burning substantiation of the bond that twirled lazily around them but Harry could find naught of the possible cause as his nerves felt as easily ignited as in the after effect of a cruciatus curse.

The low voice crooned so sweetly, the questing words in stark contrast to the tone foretelling of sinister repercussions, "Tell me truly, how it is that you make me lose my composure with mere words? All the times I had hoped for you to yield to me, it is even more gratifying in reality, especially from your sweet, sweet mouth." The dark gaze that was no less scorching as the lightly skipping fingers in his waist, insanity threatening to swallow the remaining placidity and Harry felt anxiety prickle along his shoulders at the knowledge at how truly Marvolo seemed to be balancing precariously along the edge.

His pulse hastened wildly, however not in response to fear of the shimmer of madness swirling around the bloodshed orbs, but to complement the excitement coursing through him in the face of predator. The forceful dark magic pulsed headily against to him, not to be denied and he couldn't help but wonder at the powerful reaction he could invoke in the other.

He did not feel the rightful pride however, to ignite the voracious greed of a Dark Lord was largely discouraged as a frightful burden none could bear, but the parting cracks of the masked gentleman thus offered him an assurance like no other that the Dark Wizard was no less affected by their interactions.

And he could feel the reverberations of the fractured soul through the soft voice, surprised still that the words themselves did not stutter, the unfettered touches trailing unforgettable memories in the flesh themselves. How could he abide the intimate gestures of one who once had been his enemy, when he abhorred touches from even the closest of companions? He didn't know whether the fault lied in the bond that purred happily between them urging them even closer or a more veiled reason that truly was entirely unaffected by their shared history but had been budding ever since they had been strangers to each other.

He didn't know why his magic stirred instantly upon the proximity and lazily as if deeming him no more dangerous than a by passer.

Blood flowed high near his skin and he could feel the burn of so perilous a contact, and his hand unconsciously clenched, shining pale white, to keep itself from burying in the expensive scarlet robes of the Dark Wizard, "It is a compromise. Not a surrender as you might have hoped for. If you truly desired my acquisition, you will honor my independence as well. In fact you will have to, I submit to no one." His voice held the same intonation of a callous air, even if he could almost feel the crazed beat of his heart, one that the Dark Lord was surely not unaware of seeing how often his wrist was taken captive.

The faint dark chuckle was more felt in the vibrations in the body that apprehended with a steely compassionate hold, a hold upon a fragile bird shy of constricting the soft body and surely tender of the Dark Lord and Harry shivered at the implication, "Oh my lovely, it will

not be good for you to defy me so.” Harry would have retorted more, but the cavernous shadows darkening the brilliant red eyes had him curb his inquisitive nature for now. “However the company is infinitely more amusing with your temperament. So no, I dare not curb it.”

The conceited tone fairly bristled his pride, even if he was aware that the Dark Lord was entitled to such confidence when in the future he had commandeered most of the nobility controlling Magical Britain, when the man was more than capable of inducing any man to his whimsical desires; however the flash of cruelty he had gleamed from the striking features spoke more than of self-satisfaction but of absolute annihilation of whichever was cursed with his attention. And the proud Gryffindor subsided for the moment as the vanity of the Dark Lord taunted him, indignant words that would merit mere indulgence; for the words would matter naught, even fronted as he was with the possibility of his future, and Harry had no intention of being leashed, golden collar or not.

So he smiled, with faint condescendence dripping in the sweet words,” it is fortunate that you have resigned yourself to your fate. Otherwise this would have been the shortest ... “ for a moment Harry faltered , unable to correctly identify their... relationship? Harry flinched away at the thought. Friendship? Allies? Acquaintances? “acquaintance.” It was not sufficient, what the term deemed to be. It was not sufficient with the ardor with which their lives seemed to be centered on each other. But it was all Harry could allow for the moment.

Amusement had the dark shadows retreating once more, not the sole reason the handsome face appeared even more attractive and Harry found himself out of reach of the long, spidery grip,” You are quite an optimist, are you not?”

For a moment Harry was caught off-guard at the unexpected compliment. “Thank you, I suppose.” Then his eyes narrowed in thought, ”If you think of my words as mere entertainment, I should warn you that you would not be so amused for long.”

“You mistake me. I meant nothing offensive. Instead it is quite refreshing, your optimism, and your positive attitude in the face of all despair.”

For all his words however, Harry could not help but detect the faint note of gleeful malice appearing but for a moment.

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“Come, the day grows short. My plans had to be postponed seeing how our time together was cut unexpectedly last time.” His heart gave a flinch of recoil, aware without even looking that a cold expectant hand would be extended towards him. No matter that Harry had logically accepted the unavoidable issue of their growing acquaintanceship that could neither be controlled nor be ceased, not by his will alone anyway, he couldn’t suddenly discard the age-old distrust for this Dark Wizard. No matter that he had stepped into the forbidden territory, watching as a triumphant serpent slowly curled its coils about him he couldn’t very well relax into the ensnared position he was in.

He couldn’t bear to touch the unnaturally frosty skin of his own accord, couldn’t dare accept the offer of unconditional surrender.

The Dark Wizard in contrast seemed entirely addicted to the possibility of such intimacy, moments only existed in between the respites of the possessive holds which Harry wrangled through with a desperate desire; lest he perish as the dark magic perforated his very core.

It was a plea for self-preservation not of the kind that one would develop to survive the encounter with a Dark Lord, but to keep himself submerged within the maelstrom if unyielding need.

Would it not sate his mind, should he manage to convince himself that it was the fluttering in his core that ached inside at the Dark Wizard's proximity was naught but the consequence of their bond? To hide behind the veil for a little while longer, hesitant steps teetering on the brink of an abyss, the darkness of which stole his breath away. The one step inside however was not as climatic; as easy as falling asleep. And he didn't even notice. Perhaps it was because of the shard of soul that had clung to him for seventeen long years only to be detached with the force of a killing force. Perhaps his soul realized the one it had hosted for so long. Perhaps even he had not known how the solitude had been ruining him.

His hesitation was disregarded as brutally when the awaiting hand was patient no longer, instead pulled the unresisting green eyed wizard in by a fragile wrist. Briefly his eyes shut at the quivering pulse that accelerated breathlessly at the touch he could never get used to, at the hands that settled indecently cold and firm on his lower back utterly unnecessary for a side-along apparation.

"Apparation?" The question was redundant and he was met with a breathy laugh as the hands tugged him even closer.

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The unsteady earth beneath his shoes seemed even more precarious and if it were not for the fact that the firm arms holding him never complied to claims of gravity or his own lack of off-centre balance, Harry would have surely tumbled rather ungracefully past the small tuft of rocks.

They were standing on higher ground, easily looking down upon an inconspicuous looking house and the surrounding land around it.

Harry glared at the Dark Wizard still holding him close and had it not been for the fact that there was merely enough space for one person much less two, he would have stubbornly removed himself from the inflexible grasp.

"Why didn't we apparate right down there?"

Dispassionate eyes bled intention, as they shifted their focus down to their indignant companion and spoke in an indulgent tone meant to soothe fussy children, "This is where the anti-apparation wards end."

The tone exacerbated the fury that had been shimmering alongside the embarrassment at the situation where he was dependent upon the Dark Lord even for such a minor need. He



refused to discard the notion that the vile man had orchestrated such a situation for his own amusement and the dancing light in those scarlet orbs held true to his growing confirmation.

“It is alright. Just follow my steps and you will not fall.” Harry was incensed still and the burning gaze must be all too apparent considering his control over his emotions was as abysmal as his ability to occlude, for the thin mouth twitched in anticipatory pleasure before continuing,” Or would you prefer I carry you down.”

Harry stilled, astonishment locking his body in place where anger and distress previously had it slightly trembling. “Don’t you dare. I would rather jump off of a hill.”

Red eyes danced in the torture it was inducing in the smaller male,” I did promise you help of all kind and it would be hardly charitable to abandon you at this time.”

Harry closed his eyes, barely restraining from strangle the absolutely irritating man,” Just. Lead the way.”

The light hearted delight diminished gradually and the scarlet tendrils brightened with an unknown knowledge,” Forgive me for provoking you in such a manner, but the steps are more than a little tricky and not generous to intruders. It will not be wise to let go of my hand.”

Harry turned away from the insistent voice and eyed the bottom of the slope. If he could dampen the landing with a cushioning spell, perhaps he could indeed jump directly from the stiff rise.

The foreign touch of the other retreated some, but the strength with which his magic encompassed him so very adoringly varied naught and Harry did not speak as the Dark Lord fluidly moved to the next slant, the cold hand a heavy burden upon his heart.

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Harry never even realized when he had fallen into such easy comfort with the man he was supposed to be cautious of, but each and every one of his relaxed part curled in tension when he entered the darkly lit shop and was greeted with an increased volume of his surrounding, courtesy of the curious animals and birds in their enclosures.

The man noticed his faltering pace and the arched brows frowned lightly,”You don’t have to worry about any *human* presence.”

Harry didn’t even hear him correctly, memories of old assaulting him such that all he sought was to leave or simply cover his ears with his hands with a hope that the clamor will cease tormenting him.

“Why have you brought me here?”

The pale countenance was intently observant, no doubt seeking and cataloguing every one of his emotions betrayed; Harry could care less in the moment, let the man revel in small triumphs.

The Dark Wizard mused with slight casual air that belied the perception in the shadowed gaze, "I have no desire to share you with the rest of the world even for the smallest bit of attention or even to give them a shard of my prioritized attention instead of you. If I could, I would burn the entire world around us to save us from the incessant interruptions. Unfortunately, such a notion is not entirely viable."

"What are you talking about?" The man seemed to be deliberately stalling, but Harry could feel the nauseating realization settling heavily onto his heart.

The Dark Lord made a small sound in his throat, "It is not enough these meetings, however frequently as I could make them to be. I wish for our exchanges not to be confined by these encounters only."

It was not a request or an outright demand but surely more than a polite enquiry, considering the man had brought him into the pet shop with deliberate intention and Harry didn't wish to appear so terribly ignorant of the implication, "If you insist upon increasing our interaction, I will not refuse unless I have a legitimate reason." It was not something he wanted, for the Dark presence to be so prevailing in his life and it would not take much long for it to be stifling but there was another worry that dominated his thoughts for the moment.

The Dark Lord looked at him with faint displeasure at his deliberate ambivalent answer, and Harry honestly cared naught to satisfy, "Animals are not really fond of me."

Harry could not fault the poor creatures, "Be that as it may, perhaps our journey here had been for naught." Without waiting for an answer, he strode out of the slightly dark interior, to get out of the range where the cries of the animals could be heard no longer.

Before he could completely cross the porch however, a bruising grasp had him gasp out loud and his tread was roughly interrupted as his body was swung towards the enraged figure of a Dark Lord, "Tell me lovely one, why must you fight me for every inch, however needlessly? What excuse have you found now? Perhaps you will consent once to tell the truth. Is it because you are afraid of a measly familiar bond with an owl or is it that you truly balk from simply writing a letter to me."

The ache in his heart overpowered the throb in his wrist, for even as he fought to reclaim his hand the grip was much too willful, and the grief kept him from being submerged the darkening aura of Lord Voldemort. "The truth, you arrogant man, is that I lost my first familiar and since her I can't take any other as a replacement. The world doesn't revolve around you. Especially not my world. Do you even understand the concept of that grief, you who so easily mocks any bond that is not between humans? I don't care what you believe, but don't you dare scoff at what I held precious to my heart." His words were not as eloquent as he would have liked, not when he felt so emotionally wrung.

At the indication of the thickening of his voice he had turned away, afraid that the burn in his eyes could only indicate vulnerability to the wretched man.

Harry didn't care that his arms were not relinquished, much too engulfed in a catastrophic combination of grief, rage and unconditional love. He well remembered his beautiful snowy companion of seven long years, his truest of all friends, and the relief from insanity when he

languished at his infernal childhood abode. He had felt an aching severance of a steady connection and the lack of her soothing company whenever he longed for an unbiased companion. And out of loyalty to her, he had never once entertained the thought of replacing her. And he never would, not the least for this person.

The quiet words brought him out of the reverie and Harry tensed in anticipation of more callous response,” It is true, rarely do I ever feel grief over a living person. And I certainly don’t understand the way you seem to revere the bonds with an animal or a house-elf. As such I had not anticipated such when I was trying to understand your behavior. Nevertheless my reaction was deplorable.”

Harry listened to the words that were not quite apologies for the Dark Lord was never the person to say he was in the wrong. Perhaps it was as well, as Harry would never believe them either. It was the fact that the Dark Lord sounded honest that his temper soothed somehow.

As he persisted in keeping his eyes averted from the seeking scarlet gaze however, a cold hand slid tenderly up his cheek to gently turn it forward, ”Look at me, beautiful.” He could hardly raise his eyes in fear that the shimmering drops in the dark lashes might quiver and fall, but at the compelling tone he dared take such a risk,” I never meant to hurt you, you must believe that. I find it loathsome to have your beautiful eyes swimming in sorrows of betrayal.”

Oh, how wickedly beautiful the words were, they tasted of warmth and settled as comfortably in his heart. When were they going to harden into ice shards and tear him from inside out? Surely, surely Hadrian Peverell had done nothing to warrant such declarations, such devoted appreciations? Surely the Dark Lord could hardly claim to know him in such duration to be persuaded into such charisma.

The emotional fog cleared and he stepped back from the now hesitant hold, the arms sliding away from him and leaving him strangely bereft.

Past his minor emotional outburst, the previous ease didn't return and Harry was left to wonder his emotional stability or the lack of it when it came to the Dark Lord. He had more than enough experience at being subjected to vicious attacks concerning all the matters he considered dear to heart and while he was enraged he never felt the need to justify himself or divulge personal information so easily.

Perhaps it was the presence of the bond that made them so very vulnerable to each other, for Harry hadn’t failed to notice the uncharacteristic honesty the Dark Lord displayed in accordance to thoughts or actions. Lord Voldemort didn’t care for any public perception, but this person was not as cruel in temperament either; if not genuine regret it was something comparable he had seen resonate in the cruel eyes.

Whatever the reason might be, Harry found himself exceptionally sensitive to the minutest change in the shift of emotions reflected in the twisting aura of the Dark Lord, much less shield himself from the words that reached his core with a precise incision. In combination to the apparent emotional vulnerability, the topics of such treasured memories never failed to rile his adamant fury.

His internal grumbling was cut through by the low voice of the person in discussion itself, "Very well then, I will not ask you. However, I want to keep a written communication with you and I won't be swayed from this."

Fury that stemmed mostly from his embarrassment and the indignation at being the one always being compromised, Harry crossed his arms resolutely, "No."

It was a disbelieving purr, the question, "No?"

"Is it not perfectly beneficial to you, how you claim secrets from me? This is how you prefer it to be too." And Harry could see how comfortable the man seemed to be in the assumed position of superiority, the one having the most control. He hadn't wanted to be involved in this game, considering none alive knew the Dark Lord as he did, but without deliberately involving himself, he could not afford to use any knowledge for his benefit either, not if he did not want to appear as a threat to the Dark Lord.

The rejection of active participation had implied as much as failure would and he could no longer afford to have the Dark Lord carry all the higher stakes.

The Dark Lord tilted his head slightly, the dark hair falling from its immaculate state, "You understand it doesn't show you in a favorable light."

Harry winced slightly, the statement only serving to prove how much he had handed the reins of control to a sadistic creature "I realized that. So perhaps it is your turn to repay that favor."

As he had expected, however the man might have been anticipating the conclusion to the buildup, perhaps he still had not calculated the insolence with which any would ever dare demand the Dark Lord in turn.

There was no trace of amusement in the raised brows, only a storm brewing mildly, "And how do you propose I do that?"

Harry watched with the patience of one who had weathered much more than a tantrum of a Dark Lord, "It will be a shame to your intellect if you haven't already figured it out. But for clarity's sake, for every favor you ask of me, there would be a price. I will decide the suitability of that compensation."

The Dark Lord chuckled and were it not for the Gryffindor bravery, Harry would have preferred to have a support behind him to rest his staggering body, even as the mocking echoes roused irritation at being so easily dismissed.

Could he have expected any less though? Would the Dark Lord ever consent agreeably to have his soul bared to any?

It did not matter. He had seen the Dark Lord's soul and there was nothing that could startle him untoward. However, he would not continue letting the Dark Lord assume an intangible power over him.

A power that he was reminded when he was forced to meet the scarlet gaze, face forced upward courtesy of a cold grasp, "How very confident of you, my sweet, to assume that I will be asking you a favor and you will have a choice indeed."

For all his daring, he dared not initiate contact. Instead his hands lay limp by his side. However his eyes were resolute in their decision and met the burning intensity evenly, "I am not the one who is entreating to be trusted in their intention. I can't...I won't trust you if I don't know you."

The twin orbs flickered imperceptibly.

"And what precisely do you seek in this instance?"

The sigh of relief was disguised as a soft exhale, "Tell me something about yourself, something I don't know yet."

"I am a parselmouth." It was as well that the Dark Lord cataloguing every shift of emotion in his expressive eyes did not probe deeper, when green eyes widened in surprise, "I take it you are not entirely unaware of what that means."

Harry did not try to dampen his astonishment at the fact that Voldemort had chosen that to be the least important information for him to have, "Somewhat."

A cold finger caressed his face gently, in contemplation, and Harry wanted to violently flinch away at the sheer avarice in the cruel features, "Indeed. I will have to take your lack of knowledge the cause of your nonchalance. Never had I one who had replied to my parsel ability so...dispassionately. Unless of course your reaction has been delayed in shock."

Or perhaps, because he had been privy to this information at the age of twelve. It was nothing new, this information, but the novelty lay in knowing the Dark Lord's experiences.

Curiously he asked, "What is the normal attitude people show you then?"

"There were some who fell to my feet when mere days ago they were scorning my existence. Some felt I was the embodiment of evil. It has always been extreme..how people see the ability. Your indifference is...disconcerting. Tell me, did you suspect me of being Parsel mouth? I see no surprise in your eyes. You did not even accuse me of lies. What are you thinking?"

His amusement at the scenarios faded at the cavernous gaze and Harry could hardly offer any defense, vulnerable in front of a skilled Legilimens without a shard of occlumency talent shielding him.

In his trepidation, Harry did what he was wont to do, being absolutely honest with his mouth, "Can't you just rip them off of my mind?" No sooner than he uttered the words, Harry cringed. Why must he give Voldemort opportunities to exploit him, when he was being quite successful without his input.

“It is unfortunate to be accused in such a manner when I gave not the slightest preference or indication to this. That would be much too ordinary. Besides I suspect I would drown in the chaos that would be your mind. It would be much more enjoyable to hear them from your sweet mouth. Tell me then.”

He murmured his reply, “I do not think you will want to claim to be something that you are not. You do not need to do that.” ‘Not when you are so much more’, Uncomfortable with the thought, Harry redirected his mind to other topics, “So I am curious...curious as to what is it about speaking to other snakes that asks for such reaction.”

The Dark Lord readily obliged, “Parsel tongue is revered in Wizarding world because that means the speaker is of the Slytherin’s blood. No other bloodline carries this trait. However people might dislike it, there is a certain awe and respect it invokes, because being a parsel speaker means they are descended from one of the founders.”

Astounded from the words that were bare facts with not a hint of personal association, Harry asked, “That is it?”

The man moved in a gesture of dismissal, “The fear is mostly because people are instinctually afraid of the way it sounds. It is the sound of a snake after all. No one can contain their flinches from serpent language.”

Truly, Harry remembered the violent reactions that had erupted past the exposure of him being Parseltongue in Hogwarts. Speaking of which, he wondered if the heir of Slytherin could solve a puzzle that had been plaguing him since the Second War.

“So, there is no way for one to have it despite not being one of Salazar’s?”

He regretted the decision as soon as he asked when the Dark wizard smirked in response, “Why Hadrian, are you perhaps interested in possessing this ability? It is rather exotic. I thought you would find it eerie. However I am afraid, it is strictly a bloodline trait. Bloodline means the carrier must carry the same blood as the original gifted.”

Even past his cheeks burning in embarrassment, Harry persisted, unwilling to divulge the depth of his interest but the opportunity much too potent to pass by, “Do you know, I know about bloodline traits, but I have not been able to gather much information.”

A dark head inclined in acquisition, “That is not much of a surprise. Many Wizarding families prefer to keep their inheritance a secret. You sound curious.”

He hurried to downplay the importance of the information, “It is more of a puzzle really. What exactly does blood inheritance entail? Is the gift really in the blood or is it in the magic? Can someone else have it if they were to have the gifted blood?”

“You have curious beliefs, Hadrian. I would fear for my life, but I should perhaps remind you that Wizards and Witches never intake blood of another. There is a reason Blood replenishing potion exists and not just to be convenient. Magicals are unable to take others’ blood without severe repercussion. Their magic would violently rebel against the foreign substance and sometimes it might even kill the recipient.”

Harry clenched his hands, "I know that! I am just...trying to solve a puzzle." Much to his frustration, he could not elaborate on his questions unless he wanted to be seen quite suspicious.

The Dark Lord watched him curiously before gesturing with his hand, "Shall we go in now?"

Harry snapped up to present, his answer ready upon his lips even before he understood the topic of conversation.

"I am not going to buy an owl."

"I will not be denied."

It was with a slightly less despairing tone that Harry replied, "Then go buy yourself an owl."

"You are going to choose for me."

Before Harry could finish the slightly bewildered sound he made, he was ushered back into the Menagerie of Mellobovv's.

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The noise was oddly enough less than Harry had known in his Hogwarts years whenever he ventured into the Owl emporium.

"Where is the owner?"

"I convinced him to relax at home for the day."

Harry rolled his eyes at the unrepentant tone of the Dark Lord, unwilling to closely appreciate the fact that Marvolo made such an arrangement due to his reluctance to interact with people much less closely associate.

He was already tempting fate as such, there was no need to teeter much closer with his impulsiveness.

"He must have high faith in your virtue then."

Even as he spoke, Harry resisted biting his lips in a show of consternation, aware as he was of young Tom riddle's tendency to covet which hardly ever belonged to him, and to compensate those unfortunate souls with scarlet tainted price, and Harry wished he could retract those words of a potential future.

His trepidation melted and a bubble of surprised laughter rose high, when he saw the almost annoyed look on the Dark Lord and he could contain it no longer when the man spoke with a disdainful sound, "I cannot imagine anyone would even want one of these feathery balls?"

At that derisive tone, many of the winged creatures let out indignant hoots and Harry smiled while raising a hand to placate them, "Oh hush. No wonder they don't like you when you treat them like that. Do you have a preference?"

Dark Brows in aggravated scorn at the continued noise, the scrabbling inside their cages,” I don’t see any difference between one and any other.”

Harry looked up from cooing at the cute grey owls at the Dark Lord who clearly had no heart, “Well then, it is better that you want me to choose for you. Just, don’t say anything to make this even worse.”

Turning away his face to hide his amusement at the stunned face the man made, he finally picked one and held out the eagle owl to the Dark Lord. At the glimpse of the red eyes however, the owl screeched and clamored back into the cage.

The next five attempts were the same and Harry finally carefully looked around the shop to see the cages unusually quiet with their occupants trying to make themselves invisible or struggling to keep as much of a distance between the man and themselves.

“Huh. They really don’t like you.” It was more than that. The animals looked terrified of the man.

He looked at the man to see him looking utterly expressionless and detached.”I did try to tell you.”

“So you never had a pet even as a kid?”

“They didn’t react as...intensely, but even then they preferred to die than be mine.”

It was understandable; the present reaction of the animals considering the heavy layered Dark Magic the man was draped in. There could be no denied the surge of pity for the once lonely boy however.

He stubbornly dashed that emotion, aware that the man in front would despise pity directed at him and instead chirped in an overly-optimistic manner.” We just need to find the perfect one for you, that is all.”

Harry turned his observation to the multitude of the owls that lay in their enclosure, even the grief had retreated some upon the fresh emotion embroiling in his soul. Belatedly he wondered if the need to keep his status quo uplifted were worth the unexpected tremors his core must experience; for all that he knew the Dark Lord much more than any could ever boast of, detachment had protected him so far. And now compassion was familiar in its roused state, yet entirely foreign in the identity to whom it was directed at.

The man was in the section where snakes undulated in their terrariums and watching them without naught an expression. Before he could open his mouth, the man turned and his whole attention was riveted upon him,” Have you chosen then?”

“Of a sort. Here, look.”

Harry didn’t know whether to laugh or apologize. The man had lazily looked at the assortment of birds he had chosen, before he could make a contemptuous remark however, a



grayish blue blur had shot towards the man and would have proceeded to attack the man had it not been for the lightening fast reflex catching it bodily.

“I am sorry! Well, at least it is not afraid of you.”

“Indeed not.”

Red eyes gleamed and Harry’s smile wavered a little when he thought of the bird’s fate at having attacked a Dark Lord.

So he blurted out, “I like it.”

The malicious gaze didn’t narrow in disappointment and instead lit up more, “Excellent. In fact it reminds of you. So *defiant*.”

Before Harry could indignantly complain about being compared with an owl of all things, the man looked back at the struggling thing in his hand, “In the end however, it should be his decision.” Harry watched uncomprehendingly as the man brought the owl up to his eye level and spoke quietly, “What say you, do you wish your life to be forfeit or agree to be the carrier between me and this lovely angel here.” Golden, intelligent orbs swiveled to regard bewildered green for a second and then fought no more against its imprisonment, “Good boy.”

The baffling picture of a Dark Lord blackmailing a tiny if adorable specimen of an owl served efficiently to strike Harry entirely speechless, as the former proceeded to purchase and dispatch the newly bought pet.

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Being by the side of the Dark Lord afforded no luxury for stray thoughts, be it the paths they were casually strolling upon or even the searing ache that slowly travelled down his legs; the conversation was singularly fascinating and the company infinitely more endurable than any of the fickle-minded masses he had ever tolerated.

“Tell me about your familiar.” Even if every syllables that fell from the charming mouth were observed with severe scrutiny.

“Why?” And each of his distrust was received with a patience he would never expect of the Dark Lord.

“As I said, I have no such experiences to make me able to empathize. It doesn’t mean I am no less interested in knowing yours, perhaps something I can understand through you. Besides, I will never not want to know more about you.” Perhaps it was sheer experience that made those words so very effective and yet, Harry could not help but comply; if not but for the fact that it was entirely exotic, these interests in Harry Potter encouraged not from his status as the Savior of the Wizarding World, but purely by his own merit.

“She was called Hedwig, my snowy owl. And she was beautiful...”

But he was not so reserved not to have the Dark Lord participate as much in their conversations.

“If you are a parsel tongue, why haven’t you had a snake as a pet?”

The sharp glimmer in the handsome features warned him of the Dark Lord’s attentiveness to his aim, and yet it was not mere the desire to maintain his standing that encouraged these queries, but genuine interest.

“I might be able to speak to snakes, but they are not great conversationalists. They are like any other animals with basic instincts.” Perhaps his honest curiosity was what elicited the Dark Lord’s willing responses.

“So, other than speaking to snakes it is nothing more special?”

“How you wound my ego, my dear.” The Dark Lord hardly looked as wounded.

And sometimes, simple conversations unexpectedly turned to cavernous snares that he could not have predicted, much less prepared an escape from.

Curiosity shushed the warning signs in the brightened scarlet gaze.

“Would you tell me?”

The quiet footfalls upon dry leaves littering the abandoned path came to a stop and Harry remained unaware as he turned to regard his companion with intrigue lighting his face.

“Should I?”

“I can say that the price my admission required was not sufficiently appeased.” It was effortless enough to draw deeper for even as preservation instincts warned him, even as darkness spelled threat Harry could hardly abstain from exploring the danger.

“*You* will not be able to pay the price this information requires, my lovely angel.”

Unconsciously a step was taken closer to the Dark Wizard, as Harry thought of the solemn expression his headmaster had had upon learning his Parseltongue ability, of the intense reaction it had invoked, of the instinctual flinches and the unceasing accusations and he had the right to *know*.

“I am sure I can. Tell me.”

He had not known that the distance the man had maintained was not so willing and the restraint snapped with the fragility of a thread as his slight frame was instantly overshadowed with persistent arms, a hand burying contentedly in the chaotic mess of his tied hair.

“Could you? Could you know the truth and pay the price I will demand? Could you accept me in favor of everything else, forsake the world in favor of *me*? Tell me, would you bear my touch as well after knowing the truth? Or would you turn away like every others, in disgust because I wouldn’t defer to the normal perception of human beings?”

Hysterical laughter rose in his chest. He bore the monster's proximity when he knew the man would commit countless of crimes. He did not turn away from the man who would not much longer in the future be his assailant, be the person who would deprive him of a loving childhood. He did not feel disgust from the touches of the person who reveled in the blood of innocence, who had mutilated his souls so much that even his appearance could no longer remain unaffected.

Perhaps he was a monster himself for not treating the Dark Lord with the hatred he undoubtedly deserved.

"Do you think I am so ignorant that I would not have the knowledge of what you truly are, what you have done when I look at your eyes? You should not even deserve a chance, much less from me, and yet I did. I should loathe you for what you are, and yet I don't. You still think you are as well hidden from me?"

If it were not for the heightened emotions churning in his bloodstream, Harry would have felt apprehension at the abrupt hunger that appeared unhindered in the stunning face. The cold hand circling the slim waist tightened even further, forcing the two forms to meld irreverently.

"Enigmatic and absolutely enchanting, you are. So dearly tempting my control. However flattering your words are, I need more than such a verbal assurance. I need to know you will never leave me by side. Could you ever vow it? Could you even say it?"

His hand unconsciously rose to grasp at the robes, for the world surely had no more significance than in the wizard with the captivating gaze.

"I will never make any magical oath to you."

Disappoint did not mar the heavy atmosphere, instead the Dark Lord caressed his dark curls with a tenderness obsessive words did not reflect.

"No. Binding oaths would imply my lack of trust in your words. I need to be sure that you will prioritize me above the entire world. So, I will wait, till you see only me."

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## Chapter End Notes

My darling readers!! I tried to do the update a little bit faster and shorter. Still the length would not budge any less and I am keeping my fingers crossed on the basis that some of you did not mind the long chapters so much.. Aaanywaay, this is Harry's turn again. I know many are impatient with his slow reactions, but it was kind of one of point I wanted to keep. Tom fell hard for Harry, while the feelings would develop slowly in

Harry. I wanted to highlight that contrast and as such Harry might seem subdued while compared to Tom's passion. I think from this chapter henceforth he will be a little more attentive to the fact that there is a freaking dark lord obsessing over him. And Tom might have the unhealthy obsession in the beginning, but the emotional factor would slowly creep in. I hope you guys would not be disappointed for that.

Do tell me of your ruses and delights. I would love to hear them all.

And thanks to everyone who viewed my work and gave their opinions...:) :)

# **An Angel to Fall From the paradise**

## Chapter Summary

It was with good intentions that nobility was led astray, no matter that the so called good intentions instead tore at Harry with their viciousness.

## Chapter Notes

Disclaimer- I do not own Harry Potter or associated. These words are all mine though.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A peripheral glance roused the Peverell descendant from his slightly dazed state that he was lately susceptible to, for the encounters with the Heir of Slytherin tended lingered long after the physical presence faded away, and the dark head turned to see small pieces of parchments fluttering lightly on the window sill in the gentle bridge of a calm afternoon, having been coaxed from the desk where they belonged. Withdrawing the one step that had already carried over the threshold, Harry went around the side of the small house to retrieve those who had been carried away via a callously opened window, even as they drew away even farther. He could have summoned them all, but the dazed mind wouldn't comply to be attentive with the present task and instead resorted to manually picking them up from the ground, near the flowering beds and some well beyond the fence.

How could he hope to retain his sensibility, when the very ground upon his identity was based upon slowly replaced by the sly hand of a Slytherin?

How could he hope to remain coldly unaffected when the very days were so adoringly filled with the insistent warmth of an imperturbable Dark Lord? When the Dark Magic that he had once grown to abhor so instead encompassed him entirely with its singular awareness?

Perhaps he could have brushed the zealous attentions of this Dark Wizard as callously as he had regarded so many others, the adoring masses who would jealously guard each and every glimpse of their Savior: Harry Potter.

But this Dark Lord's gaze had never strayed to his forehead.

No matter that his infamous mark was well hidden by his untamed mess of hair, the notion remained.

He remembered in the pale pensieve, the dark wisps of memories, memories of a charmingly handsome Tom Riddle and he remembered having scoffed at the gullible people letting themselves be swayed by words that were not even promises.

He remembered his Dark Lord Voldemort, a heartless monster who unwaveringly focused upon him, darkened orbs whispering sweetly of cruel intentions.

And despite it all, he could not help but be progressively *pleased* with the other's continuous and frankly determined presence. The chiseled features were not the ones to captivate him, no matter they might have been facilitating the process, but the fascinating personality, the rarest glimpse into the heart of a Dark Lord.

He had seen the soul and it had only invoked horrified pity.

The glimpses only provoked further interest, a reckless gesture to stroll into the serpent's lair.

Combined with such, the overwhelming attention he was brazenly spared could not be merely ignored, even as he might try to resist such. And the Dark Lord was attentive indeed, for every word that might spill from Hadrian's mouth, every argument that countered the other's belief.

No matter how much he reminded himself it was not to be...*not wanted at all*...

The chaotic mess remained upon his desk to whence Harry had returned the small pieces, curled and wretched they lay and meticulously they were straightened with a hand that spoke of practice in fastidiousness rather than true consideration, pausing infrequently to tuck a particularly rebellious piece of strand from the rest of his loosened tied hair, a result of frequent apparating no doubt, until a name written in insignificant blue ink stood out from the rest.

It was nothing unusual from the rest of the notes; an abstract notation he would have liked to explore and yet no venue had unexpectedly opened up for him, not least when he was disinclined to use his name in the ministry. A mere scrawl under which no details remained and his eyes lost their dazed state, fixated upon 'Hermione's Time Turner'.

His thoughts stuttered and as gleefully turned upon his person, consistent with their traitorous behavior.

Guilt and shame were all consuming, avariciously devouring his soul, condemning him for all the despicable infractions and he let himself be punished by his own heart for having betrayed his family for the sake of a *Dark Lord*.

Had he let himself be indulged by some empty words in such a manner so as to disregard his friends? How could an acquaintance of mere months ever compare to the deep bonds he had with his true family, how could he have been so callous with his soul, so easily allowing a trespasser to spread their desired influence?

Even as the contamination smugly caressed his core when even after the sharp self-condemnation, his heart did not suddenly revert to its safely undamaged self.

But the Dark Lord was hardly as...faithful to his objects of interest. He had the deceptive gentleness of afternoon breeze that would whisper sweetly of seductive promises, to coax those fragile spring leaves into parting from their tenuous holds. It would speak passionately of faraway lands and magical mirages.

And the fragile leaves would resist such temptations the best they could, even as some succumbed to the enthralling fantasies. Few indeed were carried away up so high they could almost feel the heavens upon themselves. But in the end all of them fell, for the wind is ever so capricious, its heart belonging to none and the fleeting emotions varying as wildly as it pleased. So the winds swept throughout the world, cajoling many to forsake their homes and beliefs to satisfy its own brief infatuations. But they all fell behind as the wind never really paused; never really found a place to belong. Fickle in its attractions and maliciously unsympathetic in its attentions. It would be a fool indeed who would ever dare to catch the wind.

The Dark Lord was perhaps not as casual in his attentions, but more deliberate. He was a force of nature, cruel and destructive in his intentions, for those who encounter him in his path must be swept away in the whirlwind, must find themselves uprooted from all beliefs they had embraced before. They must be prepared to face the fall that would come when the Dark Lord released them from his insistent hold. Or they would never survive the storm that was this Wizard.

For all the repercussions he had seen upon so many unfortunate beings, the madness that would erupt, and the loss of identity one underwent after placing their trust at the feet of this handsome persona. They were all but an extension to the presence that was spreading through the magical world like a mutating creature and no one could stay neutral to its effects. Either they must run before they too would succumb or be too late to expect for a chance for the storm to pass without being swept through.

Perhaps he was the only person who had such a fore-warning and yet he was no better than those weak minded fools.

To deny such for any longer would only lead to oblivion from where even the sun would no longer inspire safety.

The path was adorned with soft roses and nothing but welcoming, but he knew all it would lead to was a thorny cage. But the sincere words that a dark voice whispered into his ears were not ineffective and knowing the fall once the wind released its hold mattered naught to the thrilled part of his. Even if such a plunge should prove fatal.

The rationale fit for Slytherin mind would hold no sway over the Gryffindor heart, as receptive as it was to forming new bonds, especially true for Harry who had been very quick to form bonds and steadfast in maintaining them throughout his life. No matter should his easy acceptance might be offered to the undeserved and his trust might not come as quick but they retained their strength. For once he forswore his loyalty it was unbreakable.

He feared even as his mind maintained stubbornly his independence, even as he already felt parts of him tilt dangerously to the edge, even as he couldn't resist the constant seductive

force that was the Dark Lord. The devious words spoke of eternity in their devotions, of enthrallment that the Dark Lord didn't seem to want to deny.

But more than that, more than any honeyed words that proved to be far more effective than the crude imperious, so much so that Hadrian felt justified in his belief that the Dark Lord never needed to use that particular unforgiveable curse for his wishes to be carried out, it was the actions that rendered him helpless. Even as he turned away his head in an attempt to shield himself against the intensity in those scarlet eyes, he could do naught about what Marvolo did and more that any intimate gestures they stole his breath.

The bonds were there: undeniable and swirling in frightening intensity. They drove them to each other and neither of them could refute the influence as they were exposed much more honestly each other. There was nothing to be done for one would always be of much importance in the other's life. Their lives might or might not revolve around the other, but they were forever bound together and neither of them could remain ignorant of the other. Their bond guaranteed such, but nothing more than that.

They could have been the bitterest of enemies, the most controversial of acquaintances, fiercest of rivals. And yet, what they had was convoluted, complicated and something he was afraid to identify. Afraid that should he give it a conscious recognition, it would grow with a viral behavior outpacing any magical disease easily.

The hold Marvolo held upon his soul hitched at his sudden denial, at his grieving determination and the one that was Harry Potter sentenced him to the execution of a deserter.

Harry threw himself desperately into his research as he soon felt the entire reason of his existence starting to shift, his universe starting to tilt in its axis and he was eager to find a solution before the change became irrevocable. His world had been perfectly satisfactory for him. It might have contained some unsavory characters he could do without, some challenges that were more often than not exhausting with few rewards. But they didn't threaten to engulf in whole. They didn't threaten his sanity. They didn't hold captive to his soul. He felt frightened, for soon he would cease to protest it.

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The highlands sky was bereft in its loss and mourned such appropriately by covering itself with darkened clouds.

In the gloomy surrounding which laid all to their bare reflections, his beautiful little treasure was utterly unaffected, breathtaking as it was in its glorious divinity and dressed in an off-white robe that only emphasize the fairness of the creature, no matter that the clothing did not quite settle enviably upon the frame.

However the darling creature *was* rather petite; so often he had felt the flimsy body absolutely overwhelmed on his arms and oblivious as it was utterly to the state of its own that the truth of the luscious being was hardly ever veiled for long, and thus without the proper charm to fit it to its frame, the material instead lay long over the pale fingers, even more emphasizing the slightness of the pretty one.



Even so, even without the casual attitude Hadrian had towards proper clothing, no pureblood could claim as much charm as this being exuded with scarce no effort.

Such enviable shade of eyes, that shone with preternaturally woven enchantment.

Such dark hair that was long even by pureblood standards, that he longed to run his finger unrestrained was kept tied rigidly save the chaotic fringe.

Such beauty, fit to be worshiped, to be adored.

Now, however ruined by this scathing temper the creature was favoring today.

The angelic features were subdued and every word from the lovely mouth were defensive, a barbed tongue to wound or perhaps to save itself from being wounded.

Voldemort had wondered if he could tear the reason from deep within, much as he had inflicted upon courageous souls who had ever *dared* deny him, leaving a shell broken enough to no longer resist his advances. However, such a thought was no longer vaulted with majority approval.

Amusement as he might have felt once, was absent in his understanding. He had experienced the pleasure that was the lovely angel's unbridled receptive behavior, to find him subjected to the times whence the lovely green eyes could not look at him without consternation clouding the eyes, when the lithe body was more acquiesced to flight from his very presence. And incomprehensibly he could hardly tolerate such anymore.

His fingers had touched more than the enchanting beauty, somehow even his mind had been taken captive.

To have the taste of such an intelligent mind and then to be denied without cause was no longer even acceptable to be entertained.

The only empathetic indication to his virulently turbulent emotions, his innate Dark Magic, rolled ominously around the duo with the promise of a murky cloud, even when his tone might have been to disguise such.

"How goes your research?"

The stillness in its posture only served to verify what he suspected and the possessive creature that haunted his core at the presence of his lovely being, snarled in refutation.

Must the lovely doe crave freedom so ardently?

"My research? I don't believe it is any of your business."

His reply was a soft murmur that contrasted the violent gleam shadowing his gaze and it was as well that his treasured one avoided his gaze, in futile hope to disguise its intentions, lest the pretty creature be warned of the calamity," I did promise you my assistance, did I not?"

The scoff of incredulity was undesirable, not at all suited to the lovely mouth,” Yes well, forgive me for not trusting your intentions.” not especially when it was him subjected to such derision.

From the very first time he had gazed upon the incredibly delectable creature, there had not been any other intention save to crown this exquisite being as the most precious gem of his court, the subdued aura might have warded off any other but only had served to invoke a strange desire to have the lovely creature *fall* as beautifully at his feet, to see the lovely green eyes broken with despair and none in the world would ever be needed besides him.

He had not anticipated the unexpectedly defiance that had lurked unbidden in the deceptively pliant creature and it had surprised him, the opposition, for none had ever lasted against his cajoling magic. It was not unexpected but not unwanted; the idle predator had been provoked into a pursuit. Did the quarry not know how it would arouse the blood of a monster when thus denied an easy surrender?

All the steady resolution however had fallen inconsequentially, clinically cold tactics scattered akin to ashes as it was no more a simple conquer but a constant battle not to lose however small ground he might have gained against this passionate being.

Possessive and perfectionist as he was, he would hardly acquiesce what was his no matter if the sweet *Hadrian* might want to shy away for whichever reason.

The lovely defiance might be amusing, as long as his cherished reached no higher than it was allowed.

There never would be any escape and he would gladly remove the taint from Hadrian’s vision to demonstrate exactly how far the fences of his cage allowed, if it were not for the fact that he must give the frantic creature a degree of freedom to fly lest it strangle itself in the cord itself.

“That is enough I think.” And to remind it the limits being skirted currently a cold hand harshly took hold of *his* angelic creature, drawing a gasp from impertinently gorgeous mouth , whether of pain or shock he cared naught and in the blink of a moment he had the creature judiciously (not adequate, never so) in the confines of his arms.

Entirely expectedly Hadrian fought against his hold with increasing hyperventilation, only to be discarded with the sheer physical advantage the Dark Lord was afforded, and he could feel the stuttering gasps his captive took when his firm grasp encompassed the slim waist to rise even higher, curiously greedy in nature.

“S-stop.”

He didn’t know when he had closed his eyes, the avaricious monster purring in the scintillating sensation that the precious creature invoked with every tremble, every touch he took as discourteously.

And he knew he had been much too liberal with his brutal intentions, that the fragile being could not survive being subjected to with its ruthless intensity, more so without adequate

preparation; for the dilated red eyes looked upon the beautifully green orbs and saw fear.

Fear that would sufficiently induce his prey from taking flight and never looking back.

Fear that he might enjoy in anyone else and yet struck trepidation in his heart.

For he would not abide losing this creature, not the least because he could not contain his greed as adequately.

“Should I? Should I not satisfy this image you have of me, a monstrous vision superimposing anything I might do or say?”

It was a reluctant gamble, one that he was not certain of yet but needed to excuse his behavior.

The firm grasp he had upon his creature would not let the pretty features be hidden from him; the least was all Hadrian could do by hiding the disconcertion with averted eyes, “You are being ridiculous.”

“Your actions *compel* me to be illogical, when you look at me such distrust in your eyes. Never I have encountered a person treating me with disgust and not be compensated with my suitable reaction. No matter how much I might strive to gain your trust, unconsciously you wait for the moment I would fail to your smug knowledge.”

Wished as he might, there was no satisfaction to be had upon the confirmation he saw in the guilty brows of the frowning creature. Impatience warring with caution, he forced the declined head towards him.

Hadrian did not look remotely abashed, meeting the inhuman gaze of the Dark Wizard with insolence bright in those verdant orbs.

“Why don’t you then? Treat me like any other who would hurt your ego.”

It was almost fascinating to see self-righteous fury attempting to curtail the lurking fear, which returned as vehemently when the Dark Lord harshly gripped the beautifully bunched dark mane and pulled lightly to keep the face upturned.

The shade of those eyes were indeed enchantingly exotic, the purity of the green comparable to creation of neither nature nor wizard. No non-magical could enumerate the vividly colored eyes of a magical, for magic that remained tightly coiled within their soul, their blood, were hinted with the brilliant shine of their eyes.

And yet, it was singular, the beautiful lush green swirling underneath those dark lashes, clear in its intensity and the purity that invited to be corrupted.

He was tempted.

Tempted to delve into the undoubtedly chaotic thoughts of his possession and trace whatever he sought, to employ the very method his angel accused him of so often. No resistance could

ever have deterred him from what he wanted, not the least because he could see in the vividly honest and wonderfully unguarded eyes that Hadrian was not at all protected by occlumency.

To sink into that delicacy he was continuously tempted with and give no regard whatsoever to the wretched ruin he would leave behind.

The memory of that melancholic lidded eyes had aroused him, incited him to bruise the lovely picture, to possess the lovely being and break it irrevocably so that no else might want it.

And yet, for all those clouded thoughts he could no more mar the fiery personality than break the strong defiance.

Besides, it was nothing more than what the creature sorely expected most resolutely and he would not care to live up to such expectations.

So, the only bruise that would perhaps ruin the pretty angel would remain skin-deep.

“And prove you true?” He laughed, empty of humor.” You will not be rid of me, no matter with an acerbic tongue or your continuous attempt to distance yourself from me. So, stop trying.” It was no more amusing, the continuous struggles Hadrian would futilely attempt and his tone reflected as much,” It is only prudent though, that I know the reason behind such behavior. I deserve much more, least of all would be an explanation.”

The reluctance was soft in the trembling pulse and the Dark Lord was not inclined to show mercy. He spoke no more however, instead watched as the rigid rebelliousness drained out of the rigid shoulders

It was an obsessive attention that remained fixated upon every one of the shift in those delicate features, and a tightening arm around the deliriously firm waist reminded his little pretty the importance of a response.

“If you think so, take whatever explanation that would satisfy you. I however am not going to give you one.”

The sweet mouth pressed together stubbornly, *begging* to be taught submission and a white knuckle brushed against the soft cheeks caressingly, taking care so that no claw might draw any blood as of yet.

“I will give you some time to think over your response properly. Until then...”

\*\*\*\*\*dearesttreasureofmyheart\*\*\*\*\*

He was gracefully beautiful, even in his oblivious wandering; the curious little creature that the Dark Lord had brought with him. Soft steps would fall callously upon each unexplored ground, no uncertainty arising from the novel experience of being unescorted; because the Dark Lord remained a fair distance apart, intent smoldering in the crimson gaze but the pale hands not quite so instantly capable of reaching their objective. None of the previous worries seemingly weighing upon the petite curve of shoulders, no hesitation marred the fluid

movement of the lovely siren, assured as it was with the certainty of its freedom and thus callously disregarded what must be absolute.

A sense of absolution that a Dark Lord was currently toying with just as much care.

What would it matter, should he carefully coax the agitated little wild one into his submission or *take* his rightful treasure, no matter if he had had to clip the capricious wings? What would it matter, for the few droplets of bloods to stain the ground or the devious monster the darling angel must find itself with?

And he was tempted so very much, when the little alluring creature fled just past his reach, the ethereal beauty breathtakingly irresistible and not at all inspiring patience of any kind.

The temptation was heady, the resistance at times meaningless.

And yet, for all his frustrating waiting he must endure, each little acts of surrender were all the more precious, all the more satisfying in these little victories. The triumphs were minuscule and at times the price paid would seem obnoxious and yet the precise time the lovely green eyes trembled down in acquiescence, every single time, it was incredible and joyful and unnaturally breathtaking.

It had been an obsession at first, an indulgence of the ever unsatisfied monster. He didn't know when need covered the want with the urgency of a dying man's thirst, when his early desire had mutated such.

More than the angelic beauty however, he was utterly captivated with the singular flame that would seethe at the core of this creature, with the dare to defy even the curious reach of a Dark Lord.

Every treasure he had coveted was secreted behind wards of old and intricate, jealously guarded from unbiased gaze of sun and this obsession should not have been an exception.

Yet, as he watched the small smile enumerating the enchanting beauty even more, such measures were no longer feasible. He was no more enamored only with the stunning angel, but also the emotions he sometimes invoked in him.

"It is really big."

Wonder had the gorgeous eyes widened appreciably, and the Dark Lord smiled indulgently," It includes the facility for hunting also, not just archery practice."

The distance between them was excruciating; barely was he ever able to restrain himself to reduce them to non-existence.

And yet, there was this deep satisfaction, astonishing in its presence, that skittish creature lit up so sweetly with a delight that he had invoked.

His body remained in place, betraying none of the effort it had required.

His pretty one briefly pulled the lower lip into its mouth in concern, and *oh sweet Merlin surely the control he exercised must be extraordinary*, “It is really beautiful...but I don’t really know archery.”

How was it, that he treasured the most inconsequential facets uncovered off of his beautiful one so adoringly, this unflustered Dark Lord who regarded every other witches and wizards with a disdain deserving as they did with their pitiful inferiority?

The antithesis to the very life he led, the incredible exception to all the truth that were vowed, the Dark Lord savored this little piece of the entity he so adored with the deserving voracity.

“It is alright, I will teach you.”

For any assistance he offered, the fidgety limbs would falter with the instincts of a doe and underneath dark, dark lashes sparkling eyes would narrow in concentration. The Dark Lord would thus be tempted to utterly hunt down such an enchanting prey for his own self-indulgent pleasure only.

And predictably his statement was not as well received and the dark haired angel sought the flaws; any that would discredit him.

“Aren’t there supposed to be instructors for these kinds of things?” He wondered, whether the ever wary pretty would indeed prefer the presence of another in place of him, even if he cared naught for company of any kind apparently.

It was inexcusable. Unfathomable, this notion.

A truth that would soon be accepted as absolutely by his cherished.

So, he stood with a casual stance, the dark build up of his magic anything but, “There are.”

A dark brow lifted somewhat incredulously, “And yet none are here. You didn’t just bring me here to show off your one of many skills, did you?”

And just as easily his fury disappeared in favor of deep amusement. Marvolo could no longer maintain his distance. His creature observed the rapid approach with slight trepidation but did not try to resist what was unavoidable; merely a soft exhale marked the instant when a cold finger affectionately lifted a stubborn chin to bring their faces closer, buoyed even farther by the support firm at the waist and the beautiful one was slightly lifted to his toes, “I am not really prone to...displaying, my angel. I don’t need to. Archery is one of my preferred indulgences and I did not truthfully know whether you knew it or not.” No, mere pretentious show he cared for none, for his traps would more subtle.

Much as he desired, the supple skin a mere grasp away the Dark Lord did not possess it again, instead preferring to stoke his hunger with intentional provocation by starving himself of partaking in the delicious offering. “Besides being an agreeable sport, it demands a certain level of attentiveness. And I felt, you were in need of a distraction.

However many denials may sprout from the soft mouth, here in his arms as the lithe body trembled slightly with a pulse raging high and demanding in his knowing grasp and the adoring caresses of his magic, the little creature was hardly ever unaffected by his proximity.

And such responses were wildly inviting to incite some more. Were they not?

So, his hands lingered a bit longer than needed before he had had to relinquish his hold.

“First we find your choice of weapon.”

His chosen companion shivered as he recovered gradually from its dazed state, and Marvolo held the sheltered palm in his grasp before starting for their intended destination.

“Choice of... you said archery. Teaching me *Archery*. Not hunting.”

Looking back at the frowning creature, he agreed,” That I did. But not all bows are same.”

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Hadrian looked at the variety of bows and arrows decorated on the walls, some displayed on carved desks, the frown still present in the fair visage. The interior was wide to accommodate more and Marvolo knew the darkened background led to the workshop where the smith worked on custom bows.

Greum, the skulking old man was flittering from one to another, aware of his customers but still as insolent as he remembered.

It was only the soft pressure that still lay in his grasp that held a curse leaving his yew wand.

“If we could have your attention now.”

From behind a curvature, the huffy man shambled out, annoyance very clear in its twisted expression. Any spiteful words that would have left his mouth however died the instant his eyes found malevolent storms of red.

“M-my..

His wand snapped out the spell before the fool could mumble out his rightful title, but a truth he had chosen to hide from his darling one.

“It would be more appreciated if you would actually start doing what you are supposed to.”

Incompetence was not something he could casually tolerate, especially when the consequences were directed towards him. Thankfully many had come to recognize this before any more examples had to be made, however, it seemed his self-exile from Wizarding Britain had soothed them all into despicable complacency.

This time however it was unforgivable for daring to mar any perfection he had planned for his angel. For incompetence of those answerable to him, was openly reflected upon the Dark Lord himself, a humiliation he had never such been confronted with.

The said living perfection had worriedly asked for his attention and the fury that swirled maliciously in his vindictive magic, the terror that he could already see in the lowly mortal were dismissed for later perusal when he only gladly gave the creature all it asked and some more, "It is alright. Don't be so impatient."

Perhaps, his little one had anticipated the end of tolerance that must result in anguish of another and initiated conversation with Greum.

Surreptitiously, Silencing spell was lifted from the stout man and scarlet eyes kept intent gaze upon this *intruder* lest he dared wreck any of his progress with carelessly uttered words.

"Can I see some of the bows now? I have never seen one up close. Well, I have but I was more concentrated upon the arrow that was aimed at me."

As Greum scrambled to gather a few without answering (as he *ought not dare*), he let himself be absorbed in the lovely features, "Is there a story in it too?"

The dark head shifted a bit, a soft smile playing sweetly, perhaps invoked by fond memories, "Less of a story, more of a cautionary tale you could say. I had wandered into centaur territory. They were not very welcoming."

Leaning against the counter, he resisted reaching out to play with the one unruly strand that was begging for his attention, far be it from him to have such intimate gestures witnessed by unfaithful eyes "Centaurians are not very fond of wizards in general. Very hostile should they find one in their territory, *however* did you survive it?"

Hadrian spoke quite primly, the sweet curve of the pretty mouth in contrary to the precise tone, "Care should be taken that you don't accidentally insult them, you know like call them half-breeds or monsters." The memory must have been really good, for the lovely eyes lit up in curious delight, "Plus, they aren't as aggressive towards children, just really intimidating."

As enchanted he was by his exotic petite, its joy was even more enthralling, and further he fell into the unfathomable allure to induce such beautiful sight even more. The slight teasing tone was barely imperceptible, "Is that from your personal experience as well? You have gotten into quite a bit of adventures haven't you?"

But as always, Hadrian was quite versed in every nuance that the Dark Lord spoke in.

Fair cheeks blossomed beautifully in embarrassment and the creature's less gracious companion breathed in deep to keep himself in restraint in front of possible audience, "I was a kid. People in that age tend to wander off a little."

Very well countered.

But he had wished to see blood blossom to the surface, to taint it so dark that he could almost savor the metallic taste in his mouth(surely the purity of this exotic one would linger as vehemently in its very essence) and the constraint that held him from appreciating such a lovely phenomenon bred discontent.



“In the forbidden forest of Hogwarts, there is a herd of centaurs living as well. Or so rumors say. And in my seven years of studying I don’t recall many who wandered off towards there.”

With pleasure curling in his mouth, he watched the dark lashes fluttering to shade those brilliant eyes and even as the bottom teeth was pulled briefly to ebb further mortification, it bloomed vividly on smooth skin.

Enthralled, he stoked knuckled lightly across the heated skin, control no more feasible at the proximity of this exquisite being and opportunities that would rapidly wink him by could no longer be discarded.

“You are a curious little angel, lovely one. That was interesting to know.” *‘It was a pleasure to know.’*

Greedy blue eyes were watching the casual interaction, wandering at the significance, wandering at the possible benefit to himself, only for gleaming scarlet gaze to lock his cunning mind into place and reminding it the cost of such betrayal.

Terrified the man stumbled in place, knocking a wooden piece to the ground. Hastily he picked it up before hurrying to their side, while sweat dotted the brows of the unfortunate man.

“Here then, my Lords.” The man’s quick voice was in contrast to the solid frame, as he spread five of the bows before them.

Hadrian looked at them with open wonder, thin fingers lightly gliding upon them as if not quite daring to touch.

“You can touch them if you like.” Greum wetted his lips in quick response when he was inadvertently the focus of two powerful individuals.

The Dark Lord curled his lips lightly, loathing having the vermin speak so candidly to his pretty one. When Hadrian’s concentration was back upon the arched weapons, a sharp curse was all that ensured Greum would go scuttling back to *elsewhere*.

A cold hand carrying the cavernous need upon its questing fingers lightly stopped the smaller hand from following the string too intimately, the warmth in the delicate one all the more consuming” Careful now. It has a slight bite.”

His angel did not turn to see how closely his shadows must envelop its slight frame entirely,” You have been a server once. Even a salesman. Are you going to sell this to me as well?”

Undoubtedly the feisty creature was referring to how often he had denied help, instead choosing never to share its precious attention. He never regretted the time such spent or effort well given, even should the primary recipient of all such troubles scoff at him in such a manner.

He could have chosen to take this offence, but he was aware that the little angel was actively seeking his antagonism and thus he only murmured in the sensitive ears of his withdrawn if

fiery angel,” Are all my efforts so undeserving of the slightest appreciation?” He didn’t give him a chance for rebuttal, instead his voice shifting to an even baritone,” Greum can make these, but he doesn’t care about fitting a wizard with one properly. First choice is important, unless you want to end up with sore fingers and come back up here again.”

“And you do, know how to that is?”

Marvolo gave a soft caress to the slim waist before continuing,” Have some faith, why don’t you? Take your time with them. Feel every part of them. Now, try out your grip. You will find your point of comfort.”

“This is curious.” Hadrian spoke with wonder.

“What is?” Admittedly, Marvolo was more focused on the delicate hand he was adjusting the grip of.

“Wizards actually doing archery. I have never heard of it.”

“It is less wizardry and more elite pureblood indulgence. A luxury some chose to pass their time. This establishment is not per say ministry approved, so I dare say not everyone is privy to such things.”

This was information that should not be given so openly, however, deceit was not something he could ever imagine being able to have a place in such an expressive clarity, further restrictions were not something Dark Lords abide by. Hadrian looked at him with a mute questioning gaze.

“Bows and arrows are not the dominion of wizards, as you might have already noticed. Like many other creatures, Centaurs had kept their rights to these weapons along with the right to establish permanently on chosen places. They had lost many things to creature rights, but they did have exclusivity to bows.”

He could almost feel the hesitation in the lithe body from such information, his pure angel who would no more assume another’s belonging than condone it.

The grip loosened slightly around the centre of the bow and he hastened to close his own fingers above the lax grip.

“Hush, lovely. It is merely a recreational pastime.”

Hadrian murmured in faint bemusement,” Yes. Because wizards are not afforded the secret to the magic that the centaurs have and they probably never would. Just as they are refused the right to wands.”

“You are aware of it then. We can charm these as much as we want, but they would never have the semi-sentient ability the centaurs’ seem to have.”

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The rarest jewel in his possession, in his arms and no place else it could ever be allowed to be.

The supple figure remained placid in his control; tiniest of shivers travelling through the petite frame to counter the effect he must be having on this lost angel and he savored the burn as such temptation could only ignite the basest of desires.

Perhaps such intimacy that could be rewarded in guise of archery lesson had predominantly lingered in his mind when he had initially proposed such an outing.

Cold hands lay superficially upon uncertain grips and adjusted the stance of the beginner archer.

“Eyes on the target. Good. Now, clear your mind.”

Almost instantaneously the tension in the enviable frame beneath his hands morphed into a tension of another kind.

Distress.

Distress had the ability to rouse compassion in others by the gift of their empathy. For a dispassionate creature such as the Dark Lord holding a portion of soul only, what would that entail?

Avarice at the opportunity to have another of the other’s weakness at *his* disposal.

Desire at the broken countenance to be exploited at *his* pleasure.

And perhaps wrath towards the one who could be in *his* treasure’s memories to invoke such caution and sorrow.

With misplaced anger, the creature turned to regard him,” And how am I supposed to do that?” the bow slightly lowered.

It was a strange dilemma, for he knew should he choose to pursue this topic right this instance, the tranquility would shatter into non-existence, not to be regained any time soon.

It was a debate between the desire to know each and every facet of his little angel and the pure greed of keep holding on to the relatively pliant frame in his embrace for a while more.

Buried as he was in the extraordinary softness of the sweet flesh just beneath his palms, parted so very flimsily, he chose not to unravel the placidity of the creature by the means of this thread of opportunity he had been handed.

Not now at least.

So his touch was sweetly persuasive and his smile so much charming, the nonchalant picture broken only by the darkened orbs bleeding red, dilated so very much with the strength of his desire, “For a creature as expressive as you, the suppression of emotions might be a touch difficult. But not impossible. So think of the moment when your mind is focused on only one

thing.” The open curve of the pretty neck was tantalizing, as lovely as it was tempting and he barely restrained from tasting exactly how delicious it must be,” When nothing else matters. When nothing else can distract you.”

He wondered whether it was the same for his angel as it was for him; whether the entire world dies down to a singularity whenever he was with this person.

“Close your eyes and think.” It was fortunate that the little creature seemed so very distracted otherwise he would have balked at such an instruction.

While he minutely mourned that the incredible eyes were shaded from his gaze, the ravenous monster chose this time to display the forceful need it had to consume the oblivious prey in front of him entirely. Trailing burning eyes upon the entirety of the lithe body, relaxed in his touch and as the sweet glimpses only teased his senses, evoked his desire, coveting hands followed the frame of the creature, not yet touching but absolutely desirous. When his fingers trailed over the heated lips, he could not help but linger, could not help but close that minute distance to feel that delicious softness for himself.

Petrified green eyes snapped open.

His hands fell reluctantly, but no remorse was evident in his soul or in his gesture, “Can you think of such a moment?”

Still reeled with astonishment, his angel replied softly, “F-flying.”

At once satisfying and disappointing.

“Very well then.” He turned the weekly resisting body towards the target and positioned wand arm properly, “Now look at the target. Let your mind fall into the same state as when you fly. And let it go.”

The arrow did not strike true, but considerably well since it was only their first lesson.

Their conversation remained impersonal, and yet subtly prying. For the Dark Lord devoured the tiniest scrap information with the veracity of a fanatic and the doe-eyed creature was not conscious of how even the small debate of pureblood practice of archery could be construed to reflect anything intimate.

It was not until there day was drawing to a close that Marvolo sought to find out the cause of the other’s earlier distress. The taciturn creature remained characteristically uncooperative.

“There is nothing important to tell.”

“That is for me to decide. Instead of continuing to hold all your worries inside, is it not better to have a sympathetic ear?”

“It is none of your business.”

“Yes, it is. Everything that makes you wary is my business. Everything that anyway matters to you makes it my concern. Surely, I don’t have to reiterate my words.”

And yet he would have to, the unimpressed look upon the fair face only the most obvious indication of his incredulity.

Those were clearly not enough, the caressing words subtly asking for submission. The little creature still remained cognizant of the pitfalls of falling into the serpent coils so easily.

So he let the heavy magic embrace the little angel, submerge its senses with the knowledge of only him, guarded from the rest of the world by a pair of possessive arms and yet, left vulnerable to the only true catastrophe.

His voice was low, whispers of a fall to be sounding seductive and all too tempting as he crooned at his wild one, "I only ever seek you to be content, my one. Anything that troubles, I cannot avoid."

Its breath trembled in the pulsating heart, he could feel. A little stuttering mess he could easily crush in his palm.

The consequence should have been inevitable.

"There was a man who had made my life a living nightmare ever since I was born, perhaps before so. He was manipulative, charismatic and very powerful. He had no feelings of his own, but he pretended really well, or at least until it did not matter anymore. Do you know how else you remind me of him? He too, had red eyes."

*Ah.*

They could have been *lies*, but the glittering gems were incapable of such feigns and surprise slackened his grasp of the delicate creature, but the bold beauty did not move away.

Those expressive features were filled with a strange emotion, anticipation heightening the glint in the darkly lidded eyes.

But the Dark Lord wouldn't heed the warning.

"A terrible coincidence."

Hadrian shifted slightly, but not as defensive as he had been for past some time.

"One I can't just ignore however. Now you see why I can't trust you."

Indeed. For all that Marvolo had wondered about, a *ghost* haunting his steps was not one.

"So now I have been prosecuted without even a chance of defense."

And it was terrible, emotions spiked and webbed in response to his chaotically swirling mind.

His features were an unavoidable consequence to the darkest of Magic he had saturated himself with. How could Hadrian have encountered such a dedicatedly Dark Wizard by himself, when few ever dared trespass upon the forbidden path of magic and delve into the Darkest of Rituals?

None so ever had gone down the path which he had made on his own, the path littered with forgotten sacrifices and rarest of possessions: the road to immortality.

It was impossible, inconceivable and *unacceptable*, this notion another Dark Wizard could have coveted *his* angel just as hungrily, for surely none could deny the brilliance of this creature.

He was torn between rage and disbelief that he was ever comparable to another wizard, that another could ever have *dared* laid claim to what belonged to *him*.

"Is that what you think? You have been given plenty of chances to lay your defense."

*'And yet, he had not been even aware that he was being tried for a crime that he did not commit!'*

Righteous condemnation lit up those verdant eyes, his creature so utterly convinced of the judgment already. He could have vehemently denied such accusations, but such would lead to naught that would benefit him.

Only a fool would try to fight which was not his war. Not without sufficient information at least.

And Marvolo asked without the fury in his syllables the willful creature no doubt sought.

"What did this man do, to deserve your condemnation?"

The disappointment that he had thought would cloud the expectant features did not dawn. Instead the usual taciturn creature remained oddly animated.

"He... Tried to take away everything I loved and many times he succeeded."

*'Did he now?'*

"Perhaps he was jealous of sharing your attention." *'Perhaps he could not abide those lovely eyes looking elsewhere either'*. It was equal part empathy and fury that fought for his attention.

The sweet laugh rang out in scorn, "More like was jealous of my existence. Because he tried to kill me as well."

*This* was however unforgivable.

"Oh? And what remained of this one's fate?" It would be of his absolute pleasure to eliminate this that had known his creature and could not quite tolerate its radiance.

"I survived."

Undoubtedly his chosen one was even more worthy than he had ever fathomed.

"To endure what must be a, from what I presume, a powerful threat; it is commendable."

Whatever confidence might have been gained unexpectedly were not so immune against his words, for Hadrian blushed as beautifully as he had ever known, as enchantingly as he had drawn the Dark Lord, from embarrassment or discomfort. Yet, the Dark Lord cared naught, the lovely picture only managing to steal his breath as powerfully as the first time and he only provoked the image time and again for his own pleasure.

“Ah...I had help. He was as much of a pest for me as everyone else.”

Marvolo frowned, “That sounds more than a threat.”

Hadrian nodded affirmatively, “He was a monster, a brilliant one, and that made it all the more worst.”

“And yet, it was you he focused upon primarily. I cannot fathom how anybody would wish to harm you.” He could only marvel at the utter foolishness of that person who would rather choose to destroy such a precious gem instead of imprisoning it in the privacy of their abode.

Sweet lips parted to hide behind another of lie that could hardly hope to deceive a Dark Lord, no matter how much they aspire so high, “Who knows a madman's mind? He did not discriminate between his victims, but there was a special regard for any with muggle heritage.” For every lie the creature spoke, the candor of those green eyes betrayed self by trying to hide behind dark lashes.

He would have wondered at the secret the creature was harboring, for Hadrian knew precisely the reason behind this singular behavior, but at the next words all those carefully curving webs fell like ashes.

“My blood was too dirty for him.”

For a few moments, Marvolo was unable to comprehend the significance of that sentence.

“Beg your pardon?”

“He could not bear anyone who carried a less than pure blood in their veins. I was not an exception, especially with my mother who was the first witch in the family.”

The Dark Lord should have heeded the unholy sparkle in those beautiful eyes he so adored, the vindictive glee that was entirely unbecoming those fair features.

However the disgust that rose in him, the anger at being deceived in such a manner and at the disbelief that such an exquisite creature, his chosen one could not be less than pure rather overwhelmed rationality.

Truthfully, rationality generally ceased to exist at the presence of his angel.

“Impossible.”

For the first time Hadrian moved a step towards him and unbeknownst his feet moved away, “Oh but it is not. Have you been presumptuous once again? Deluding yourself with the

notion that the one you devoted so much attention upon must carry the purest of blood in his veins? The reality must be harsh then. Because I am practically *drenched* in it.”

He wished Hadrian was hardly able to affect him with few words, and yet the maelstrom that must devastate him only was roused with ruthless efficiency.

“You go far in your attempt to deter me. Do you truly claim that possessing of a diluted bloodline you came to live in such a traditional community? They wouldn’t allow any...” ‘mudblood’. The slur hung precariously in his mouth, but managed not to do a irreversible damage possible only through words.” They wouldn’t allow one of any other particular ancestry.”

“I am magical.” The soft mouth curved in a mockery of smile, and he would have snarled at the non-answer but Hadrian was being enthusiastically forth-coming, “The house is more of a...ah...bequeathal than inheritance. Truthfully, it doesn’t belong of me. One with *purser* claim can take it easily.”

His creature was close, too close to the snarling predator and should blame none but its own arrogance when claw like fingers entwined themselves in his long tresses and cruelly dragged it closer, delighting in the small whimper that escaped the stubborn being.

“So have you been enough satisfied by managing to deceive me so far?!”

Hadrian fairly snarled at him.

“Me? I was not the one who threatened to burn down an entire village! I was not the one who stalked down anywhere I dared to go! I was not the one who wanted company! Look at yourself, before you start speaking of deceit and lies! Now let go of me or do you enjoy touching filth like me?”

He stepped away with the disgust of a serpent who had found the blood of its prey contaminated.

Hadrian chuckled quietly, stepping away himself and the Dark Lord applauded his instincts. Did he understand now, the danger it was provoking so recklessly, for his magic was impatient and his wand was glowing faintly?

And yet the creature was apparently foolish enough to incite the brewing fury,” Is my presence despicable now, after the months you dedicated after this, after *me*?”

With the rage of a wounded animal, a bruise he couldn’t identify so far but which inflamed this ire, the Dark Magic swirled and pounced hungrily, to bring this creature to submission, like so many who would fall to their knees under its wrath and hardly could he wait to show the little beauty...

Only to have its prey elude him with agility.

He had felt the creature’s magic, agitated as with the expressive ways of its master but so very pliant otherwise. Compared to the malignant feel of his own magic, the other was placid,



the innocence of an untamed creature very much evident in its flowing impression. Powerful it might have been, he had always been certain that it could hardly resist his coaxing if dominating magic.

And yet, now when his magic had sought to capture Hadrian, when he was reluctant to hold him physically, the other's magic had escaped under the hold like a flimsy illusion.

A delighted laugh interrupted his disbelieving attempts.

"You have been working under a lot of assumptions, it seems."

The Dark Lord's magic lunged again and again, desperation seeping through the denial.

The whisper lanced through his furious thoughts.

"Perhaps you are no different than the monster in my nightmares after all."

Much too far from his hold, physically or magically, the Dark Lord could do naught as Hadrian disappeared from his view. And the fury of the most terrible of all Dark Wizards broke with the strength of a thunder storm.

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## Chapter End Notes

I am not satisfied with this chapter much. But truthfully I was exhausted. It was long and I could not curtail without leaving off some essential pieces. I feel like you all must feel tired just looking at the length. But...

The first Lover's quarrel! Harry intentionally let that information out. If Marvolo wouldn't give him an out, he would force the man to do it himself. That's what Harry thought. I hoped to show their conflicting and increasing feelings. Did I succeed? Is it too much? Do give your feedbacks and I might pm you the answers!!

I am trying not to leave things open-ended..or too boring.. just please review any thing that gets too extended and not worth reading or something.

I did not elaborate on the Dark Lord's thoughts towards the end, because he himself didn't quite understand what he was feeling.

Until next time!!

# Into My Arms, More Precious than All Stars

## Chapter Summary

To choose between pride and need, between logic and sheer stupidity. The road to happiness lay with his choices, and Harry didn't know which was which anymore.

## Chapter Notes

For clarification: The pretty writing means it is written by Marvolo. The other one is Harry's. The text is slightly altered. As in both Harry and Marvolo's pov are included intermittently. They are mixed together and it might be a little difficult to keep one's head straight on. Normal text belongs to Harry, while the italic refers to Marvolo. I meant to include both their impressions, because I just wanted to show the difference between Harry's thoughts and reality, it all became a mess. I apologize beforehand for the sheer illegibility. Sorry!!

The usual disclaimers- Harry Potter is the property of that lucky girl who snagged him first aka J.K. Rowling.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Slouched in a lounge entirely disarrayed, brows furrowed and with lips nibbled to no end, a dark haired wizard was the epitome of heavy frustration surrounded by parchments that varied from being mere scraps to imposing lengths littering the ground as well the study table, upon which exhausted limbs rested. Knuckles clenched tight from aggravation and a quill hovered uncertainly before settling down firmly. The remaining parts of the house showed even less care than the wizard had afforded himself and it should have been worrying as well, the negligence as well a matter of concern as the frantic disposition.

Save the lounge and the small study, the rest of the house hardly looked inhabited. An air of negligence hanged dominantly in the cold bedroom and the guest rooms whose door handles had not been even turned.

It was disappointing indeed, for it had been a rather respectable house, while not adequate for the pride of a pureblood, sufficed as a summer gateway to the highlands by the Lord of the house. Betraying the incredulity from a faithless that it might have invoked by being dreadfully slight in its architecture, the Peverell cottage hosted a library, three guest rooms, and a lounge. The pantry was accessible only to the house elf, as was proper, which also had been quite the moment of disgruntlement when the current, if reluctant, owner of the Peverell Cottage had searched around for the kitchen only to find that the house had been appropriated as per a traditional specification.

But beyond the barest necessity, the young wizard had not cared more for his comfort. Instead, the man had preferred to spend his time by the generous windows spanning the floor to ceiling, looking out the cluster of Rowan trees circling his yard and such was a reason the study was preferred as well for such a favorable position.

To see as the daylight would fade marking the end of a day and a desolate wizard would mutely observe another failure of his task.

The determination through which he smothered himself with the complexity of magical theory and the utter difficulty of reviewing each magical tome only to gather not a single piece of relevant citation should be commendable, if not for the fact that such resolve not entirely involved his desire to be home the soonest possible.

The strain to a darkened brow lay with the effort he laid not to have his thoughts trail to a particular person.

The quill snapped in half with vexed despair, when the tapping on the window deprived him off that blissful silence where he had stayed secluded even for a while, a relief from the thoughts traitorous.

For despair that flooded had not been for the unwanted interruption by this little grayish blue owl, the one he had been coerced into assisting its master in the purchase for, but the resignation and not so insignificant, breathless anticipation coiling through him.

A few moments later, a small parchment fluttered down his hand with a sigh.

Green eyes shut tightly in chagrin as he attempted to regain the shred of will to ignore this in favor of the parchment he had earlier been writing diligently, excerpts from a dreadfully dry tome, only to realize the futility of the exercise.

Was he not a fool indeed, to be expecting a different reaction from himself?

A disgraceful resistance was all he spared before succumbing to the temptation.

How had it come to this? The stubborn Gryffindor who never had even submitted upon being tortured by the unforgivable curse of Cruciatus, whose will not the most forbidden Imperius could even command, not the least that the Dark Lord Voldemort should wield them.

Perhaps such had been his mistake, to mistake one soul for another.

Prophesized enemies they had been declared, yet how was it that since the inception of awareness of one, the other had been all the world had contracted to? Magic had bound them so intimately together, that at the time of final battle Harry had no hopeful notion of his survival. His blood had birthed the Dark Lord and the latter's soul had nestled onto a newly orphaned child. The Killing Curse had forever marked Harry Potter as the Dark Lord's, and not merely the equal he would never anticipate.

The rules of Magic no more confined them and each had become the other's exception. Should the Dark Lord have stepped away from the fatal intent he carried for the Boy savior,

the strength of a convoluted magical connection would have perhaps entirely re-aligned the course of war.

But it had not been so, and the Second War had ended with the defeat of the Darkest Wizard of their time.

And so...so perhaps while Harry had been weary of creating another homicidal and irrational enemy, he had not wondered at the consequences their connections might mean.

Their fates were entwined together for eternity, as much as Harry would like to scoff at the idea of pre-destined and such. The bonds that held the two wizards together were frightening in its intensity and yet, this Dark Lord had no intention of ignoring it any time soon. There could have been no choice on his end when it came to their relationship, and it was becoming quite evident that the charismatic wizard was as adept in charming Harry Potter as he had many others.

Harry had never spoken of the frightening loneliness he had felt to have lost the shard of a soul, however parasitic; an emptiness he could not have predicted and had despaired for so long.

Marvolo carried the lost part that had been wrenched from him once, was it thus familiarity that his soul echoed upon every encounter of theirs? A sense of belonging Harry did not wish to accept, yet could find no way to turn away from?

It had been an attempt that was born of the non-existent self-preservation he might have had, besides it being an anxious endeavor to assuage the guilt assaulting him whenever he thought of *home*.

And thus, via blatant manipulation he had managed to force the Dark Lord to do what he himself couldn't: end whatever affinity they had. It had not been particularly strenuous either. Because no matter that Professor Dumbledore might have known Tom Riddle the best, he had not the ability to understand him or recognize the monster Riddle had turned into beyond the observations from an unguarded childhood.

But Harry had truly been the one to *know* Tom Riddle, to observe the transience to become a terrible future of the Dark Lord, to empathize as few could ever fathom.

And because Harry had sheltered a shard of soul within him, had spent unwanted amounts of time in Voldemort's mind and had been one person the Dark Lord had obsessed over in his late times.

He had understood than most.

That Voldemort had been a hypocrite, a powerful being born of a despicable and abandoned birth, the muggle legacy of his carrying only shameful scorn. Thus the man had sought to eliminate any remainder that would stem from such a past. Half-blood he himself might have been, but perhaps the discovery of Slytherin heritage had more than compensated his otherwise lacking status.

In addition to which, Tom Riddle would cringe away from whichever remainder that may be associated with the muggle father who had forsaken his son and a pureblood mother who had chosen death over a newborn. None had wanted the child more.

Upon becoming a Dark Lord, as per his own admission, Tom Riddle had transcended the limits of a wizard or even Dark wizard would dare and thus he considered himself beyond such; beyond the mortal limits of magical or the other.

Harry had exploited this knowledge, aware that the Dark Lord could no longer tolerate the stench of a tainted blood, that the unsteady soul could not carry the burdens of a rationale mind.

Mere a smattering of people ever had the ability to fluster the unflappable Dark Lord and he knew that to the Dark Lord of this strange time, Hadrian would be one unexplainable phenomena. But it mattered naught, the rejection lone would bring him sufficient apathy from this person.

He himself had not anticipated for his non-subtle manipulation to cause such outcome. Perhaps in this battle of wills, he had an unfair advantage, the once soul bearer of the oblivious Dark Lord and before he had not called upon it in a misplaced sense of what ? Chivalry?

Only for desperation to chive away the righteousness of a compassionate soul.

Harry felt no compunction for having dared influence a Dark Lord in such a manner, no regret whatsoever. No such, for all he had sought was to alleviate churning guilt. He still felt as if to reprove his very self and perhaps to a greater degree it had been such a despairing venture to detangle himself from the chaotic trap he had befallen into. The bond that simmered between the two wizards had, was no more than smothering coils coaxing him into its hold.

For all the fateful auguries, that he had known the consequences of a fall into this rift and yet Harry could not let his feet be dissuaded from the edge of the great veil. He had been alarmed indeed to find his resolve faltering so as it did for this Dark Wizard with an astringent magic.

He had known Voldemort and the Dark Lord would never have accepted that *his* favor had thus been instead to a less worthy. *He* would never have thought himself to have erred in judgment; instead the person would have been obliterated instead for having dared to deceive the Dark Lord himself.

Hence Harry had gathered the impromptu opportunity, had coaxed the flickers of unforgivable flame in those scarlet orbs even higher, had seen the retribution in the insanity coating pale visage.

It had been the correct path.

*Why then* no satisfaction remained to be seen soon as his well-executed action seemed to invoke the necessary prompt from the Dark Lord?

What right did he have to feel betrayal stirring unforgivably when Marvolo had *flinched* away from his approach?

Why...*why* must the palpitations of his heart be erratic in such a manner when he had only been successful in what was the intended?

His lips had moved in a mocking smirk, while his eyes had remained vulnerable to the disgust emanating so clearly from the Dark Lord.

Why had it *ached* so, when the cruel lips appropriately curled in a sneer, the Dark Magic moving to overcome what it perceived clearly a pathetic target? His own magic had moved involuntarily to protect him, while Harry could not help the faint anguish from the unannounced attack.

And the gleeful triumph had fallen off the fair face with haste the instant Harry had left the astounded Dark Wizard behind, while the numbed limbs dragged lightly with an unknown hope, the senses all too sensitive to the familiar magic of his Dark Wizard.

*Hope that perhaps his steps would be stopped by so familiar a voice, so resolute a magic...*

Then he had crossed the wards of his house, blood barring all but Peverell with his personal modification taking care of the rest and the regretful wishes had to be suppressed and his research had to be resumed.

It was for the best, he had worked so on convincing himself.

But then the first letter had come tied to the small owl belonging to Marvolo, and Harry had recognized the piercing ache inside his chest as longing, and along with many of the blind enchantments he had woven upon himself had broken as well. Despite his caution, the lingering purrs of the serpentine tongue had had craved their path inside his core so very comfortably. Because, while Harry had waited a battering ram to force his defenses down, the Heir Of Slytherin had coaxed them into placidity instead.

It was sheer stubbornness that had held his trembling fingers from quilling a reply to the charming and despicable person.

*'Poisonous words that fell from lips as lovely as roses and clover...'*

And at that time, Harry understood many things. That he never had the need to physically defend himself from the Dark Lord, for it was not his physical self that had ever been left vulnerable.

That he would perhaps never be free of the terrible wizard, no matter how much the shy heart of his flinched at showing trust in such a person.

Perhaps this Dark Wizard was not Voldemort at all, not even with eyes the shade of innocence blood split, at the very least not the madness driven Dark Lord that he had known so confidently.

Not the person either that he would feel obliged to despise lest his guilty conscience strangle him with tortured memories.

A blame-free conscience was however not the deciding factor, not so benevolent and selfless, the sly part of his mind whispered.

The same voice had been delighted with vindictive satisfaction at the wonderfully curved annotations that only let the same fiery pulsations trace through his veins as cuttingly as the ever caressing tones of Marvolo had been capable of.

*“ A singular occasion, where you caught me off guard with a moment I generally should be strongly disinclined and your ill-executed plan would have the desired result. However, your admirable efforts were rather in vain. ”*

The words could almost be perceived to be deprived of any and all emotions. But the tone with which the words were whispered to him, it was not...

The coldness was reminiscent of Lord Voldemort, and yet Harry could not help the flush that rose to his fair skin. The parchment protested at his tight grasp.

Voldemort never could have abided this by; the deceit or the deceiver. It could not be the Dark Lord he remembered in the grey shadows of his memories to have commanded this message, who gave no inclination to favor the least the unfortunate in the blood status, no matter their magical power or intelligence.

He knew not how this came by, for the Dark Lord to not be affected at all by a premise that had been the very foundation of the last terrible war.

*(The man reserved to whimpers under the flaying curse, and the scarlet eyes narrowed in displeasure. He wanted the man to scream, to drown out under the cacophony of chaos the internal madness coalescing in his mind.*

*His death eaters remained unanimous by his side, unmoving from their positions without his leave. His loyal knights, who did not have to learn the lesson of obedience unlike the freshly initiated taken blindly by his power, even as their frames fairly trembled from being overloaded with bloodlust and provoked even further by his own malignant aura.*

*A chosen few, the crème la crème of Wizarding world, none who could ever be suspected to descend onto the dirty pavilions of a muggle world to taint their hands, pride of purebloods.*

*“Crucio.”*

*The sniveling man moaned pathetically and Lord Voldemort snarled in annoyance.*

*“This is where filth like these belong, my friends. They will learn the lesson soon.”*

*Blood trailed heavily and reluctantly on the finely carpeted floor, lining the hem of his robes as if to plead for mercy. And the Dark Lord moved away, filled with disgust at the filth that tainted him even now.)*

---

Hidden behind the shadows of a palm, Harry denied the rest of the word the reluctant smile that was pulled from him upon the familiar short taps against his window.

Wide, orange eyes looked at him reproachfully as if to blame him for its long journeys.

“You are cute. But your master is bit of a...

The owl hooted.

“Sorry, I should let you in before starting my rant.”

But his beguiled eyes had already shifted towards the rolled parchment within its talons. Pulling his lower lip into a blossomed state, Harry gently unburdened it off the responsibility.

*“For once, however I shall let the decision lie upon you, a choice that I have not afforded to you before. Perhaps this shall bring me your favor as few ever did.”*

Might the syllables been dipped in a confounding potion before being allowed to be swirled onto the aged piece of parchment? Marvolo had fairly forced upon him a company that had been so unwanted, and yet the begrudging knowledge was being foreshadowed by this apparent self-depreciation.

Harry chuckled lightly, breathlessness announced however he might have tried to hide, and confided in his solitary audience.

“Your master is quite crafty, isn’t he?” Harry stoked the dark body,” He won’t be getting a reply this time either, though. You may leave.”

Instead, the tiny body burrowed into his caresses.

“I wonder whether he has named you yet.”

*(One glance was all it had taken before an enraged Dark Lord had punished the messenger with a crude spell and the disgraced owl had bounced harshly against the wall to fall open the unforgiving floor. The malicious magic had proven to be the greater threat though and no matter that the amber eyes seemed so brave other times, it cowered as its life tangled precariously.*

*Poisonous intent darkened the room, bleeding through gleaming orbs but the Dark Lord Voldemort only sneered at the pathetic thing.*

*“How unfortunate, he seems to be fond of you.”*

*Spared it might have been, however as a pet of the Dark Lord hardly had been considered worthy of its station.)*

--



*D isjointed thoughts harshly edged with insanity refused to fall into cognizance, futilely devastated echoing perhaps the dissonance of a tormented soul. Perhaps such chaos had always slumbered within this Dark Wizard, cultivated so very callously by scarlet stained vindictive fingers to trace the tremulous veins of his control to ruinous abandon and the Dark Lord had been no more concerned for the consequences, never lingered over the consequences whenever he would heed the plea of insanity, and yet here he lay upon a convenient chaise smothered by the anarchy of scattered remains of his once powerful mind, disrupted violently as he was from everything he had once believed firmly about himself.*

*Disrupted because of the presence of the ethereal creature.*

*The exclamation to his otherwise rigid structure that he wouldn't have been swayed from before.*

*Blood, the very foundation of magical community, which for dear to heart was discarded, families were broken, children were foresworn, and war was waged. It was the pride of many, shame of others and government rose and fell as they tried to combat such.*

*The world that he had envisioned, the fate of the Wizarding world to writhe gasping under his grasp and to be rebuilt upon the promise of power; for there was no sanctuary for the weak and vulnerability was to invite none of the mercy. The question of blood was not a mere a philosophical debate, but a very real concern and he had never had any compassion for those unfortunate.*

*He, for whom power remained the lone deciding factor, who had seen how mudbloods would fumble into the Wizarding world with the gracefulness of newborn Thestrals, as invisible to others and just as despised and slinking furtively in the shadows of the purebloods' power, he had nothing more than utter contempt.*

*There had been no debate.*

*But all those had been intellectual basis that supported his belief. For the truth had been that he could never care for those that resided on the other side of the world, memories of a past he had long since abandoned vehemently.*

*Of betrayal, loneliness and fear.*

*Of weakness.*

*Tom Riddle had been weighted by weaknesses.*

*As Lord Voldemort he had painstakingly removed each and every one of them.*

*And Marvolo had been confronted with all that he had thought once vanquished. The staggering disbelief he had felt at Hadrian's proud declaration of the despicable ancestry and his uncontrollable rage at the seeming deception. The pride had hardly damped when the furious Dark Lord had longed to see the creature submit to him, the desire no more the passivity of earlier amusement, surely no one that could belong to such parentage could dare boast a true escape from his magic.*

*All had fallen before him, prostrate with the declarations of fealty and loyalty. Least to acknowledge true and power. All, that had been the glorious examples of a magical blood. And he had wanted to see this creature bow to him as well.*

*Only to find himself unable to capture the only one he had ever desired so ardently.*

*A lovely distraction, an unending frustration, a rising exception; for once he had believed the demure creature to be not more than born to belong in the shrine of his empire, even when sometimes those green eyes, the shade of unflinching enchantment, would gaze upon him boldly to his never ending enjoyment.*

*Even when the commendable magic of this creature would fill the entire grounds of the lovely valley, trailing fragrance of sweet innocence on its wake as if to seek the malicious gaze of the Darkest Wizard irreverently, so that it may be corrupted irreversibly but no more; for the compliance with which the placid sweetness lingered only invited lustful notions, and behind the deceptive fragility lay the strength to defy even a Dark Lord.*

*For so long he had been under the smug assumption that no matter should his precious treasure ever be strongly opposed to their relationship, the delicate beauty could hardly be expected to persist under the crushing weight of his power, and would ultimately fall at his leisure as all did.*

*The shroud of his vanity had not lifted till there was no more advantage that Marvolo could commend, leaving him a mere spectator.*

*For Hadrian was powerful, his magic subtly fleeting in stark contrast to the fiery personality, slyly flirting and never once giving any indication whatsoever to the true measure of his power.*

*The one exception.*

*The absolute realization of that fleeting moment preceding their separation, of the exception who could not be expected to comply with the rest of the world.*

---

It was the subject to much contrition, the never ending flow of letters which were at once cajoling and at times violently delirious. No matter the stream of time the current world cohabited with, the Dark Lord surely could never be beseeching to one and he was not either; but Harry could almost discern a touch of desperation in the beautiful calligraphy.

And so he wished to be as convincing that he was not as affected by their continued distance, that he was not as tempted to take up a parchment and write even a thread of reply to Marvolo.

Because he feared so that the breathtaking attention of the Dark Lord could be deadly ephemeral; a brilliant instant of brightness that would light the sky upon a stormy night leaving all blind to everything else.

*“Explanations would imply excuses, thus I shall not offer any. Nevertheless you have ensured my punishment by your non-commitment. It is impossible however, that thoughts of you do not consume me and all that I could do to rid myself of the desire to show you the markings of this inferno.”*

Sharp indentations remained upon the blood-flushed lips as Harry let the parchment be among many. The curled piece an anomalous among all the others, curved articulation spied among the flat pieces of papers, for so well perused they were by the dark haired wizard. And even as it was left alone in fear of the syllables carrying the strength to ensnare an innocent heart, the untamed creature could not avoid for long.

*(He was consumed indeed, the dire flames of this inferno unforgiving and he longed to let the entire world be devoured as well, the smothering ashes be the sole claim one would have to the once vibrant existence. The control that he might have deluded himself into being snarled in defiance, for the contrasting voices struggled for dominance. But perhaps the fight had been lost since the very beginning.*

*The very instant that he had seen the triumph flare in those green, green the flush of unplucked gems, and inflame it also did the fury in his veins at the lies those must be ; and the lurking shadows had hooded the brilliance when Marvolo had recoiled from his creature.*

*He would care not, indeed perhaps had never, the fleeting emotions of another. But the soul of Hadrian, while beautiful in its intensity, was veritably vulnerable to each and every curiosity through those unguarded verdant shades. He needed only part them a fraction to see the regret, the hurt.*

*The obsessive monster that had lusted after this untainted creature unfailingly would have rejoiced at the fact that his prey had undoubtedly been affected to some extent, but his breath had hitched as well in mirroring discomfort.*

*Manipulating it might have been, had he not promised his treasure no sorrow shall touch the beautiful eyes?*

*And the Dark Lord let his wand swing in a sharp arc, let sharp glance of blood coat his cheeks. Another victim fell to the floor in a breathless relief, death more enviable for this little fool.)*

---

In the Wizarding World, many paths laid to reaching the desired solution. Of course, this was no less inappropriate for non-magicals either. But in the Wizarding world, the answers laid in the form of exotic potions, a yet to be crafted spell, or perhaps a magically spun instrument. The paths varied and the challenge remained in turning back from a path that would lead to dead-end and turn back with unhampered resolve they once held.

It was much to the growing distress of the stranded time-traveler of roughly fifty years in the past that he was rapidly exhausting the area of his expertise to solve his particular dilemma. Harry Potter had been a genius when it came to Defense Against the Dark Arts and consequently he had taken interest into formulating new spells for his repertoire. With the

instinctual knowledge in Magic, he had not bothered with going with the proper route of crafting a spell architecture by taking Arithmancy calculations. The very same instinct had him discarding the possibility of creating a spell that would create a divergence in the time-stream.

Potions were discarded as well, for his abysmal performance in them. He dared not attempt a complicated, experimental brew when the basic pepper up would be deemed too hazardous to be asked from Harry Potter.

He simply had not the patience and the precise focus necessary.

The rest options included an instrument or a ritual. Harry was not so proficient about either them, but the fact remained that there such a time-turner existed with the capability to revert time. While he had not the opportunity to study them well, by dedicated hours of speculation and studying he had framed a reluctant idea.

It would have been much better if he had had a time-turner to confirm his theory.

As it remained, the glasses had contained sands of time. But Harry tried not to think about the impossibility of procuring this and instead focused on the possible runes that must ground the person as well stimulate the event.

He could not say he was as familiar with runes either.

Harry tried very hard not to slump into his study chair in defeat.

Did not the universe understand the absolute urgency to this endeavor? Should not time itself be trying to correct this anomaly, this threat?

Or perhaps...

After all removing the threat would perhaps be easier than attempting to recreate an incident that was even non-existent in the Wizarding world. And the lone threat to disruption of the balance only lied with him-Harry Potter.

Harry looked at his hand, the skin tone losing a healthy shine and the appearance reminding him of the summers of an unblessed childhood. But Harry had not been so conscious of his health lately, driven into a distraction regarding his time related problem.

Not to mention a Dark Lord who...

*Oh...*

Harry blinked in confusion at the irate bird holding out its leg. How had he not even noticed the owl?

Absent-mindedly he unburdened it of its message, still riled with unease of the tangent of thoughts.

Only the second time he had traced the well-known hand-writing did the words became more intelligible to his confounded mind.

*“Distance is such a muggle notion, a worry no wizards could ever entertain the notion of. Somehow, I have contacted this strange delirium. Now it would be exacerbated even more. I am leaving for Germany tomorrow and likely to spend few days there. While distance is inconsequential to wizards, it is not so to owls, even magical owls.*

*It is said that the Nürn Archive surpasses capacity of multitudes of extension charm. No matter your disgruntlement towards me, I will sincerely oblige any literature needs you might have.”*

The pulsating beats skipped lightly at the faint farewell, the implication that owling would be stalled for fair few time.

He should feel gratified for the respite.

He should...

But he could no more raise his disbelieving eyes from the first paragraph, where the startling words lay, where the Dark Lord spoke so intimately of the emotions that he himself felt and was it not frightening that he should so empathize with the Dark Lord no matter what the situation might entail?

It was merely a visit to another country, perhaps more than a single apparation or floo, but no more.

Yet, why the violent aches of loss resonate in his core so?

Harry arched in a despairing stretch upon the settee he had chosen to rest upon while pursuing this latest correspondence, let the ends of the enviable long hair gather on the floor, free from its constraints in the privacy of his solitude.

But the phantom presence of the powerful dark wizard continued to haunt him. Green eyes fluttered open, unseeingly towards the peach ceiling, plea to an unknown power shadowing the effervescent gleam.

Thoughts of no other flirted his attention.

When had that person started to hold so much importance in his sheltered heart? The traitorous thoughts had already begun their wicked whispers carrying to a susceptible soul, but when had that presence had coalesced to be so tangible in his every breath, that the absence was felt so acutely as if a physical loss.

Loneliness had never been so terrible, and the gasp of distress was all the more understating to his true emotion, for it had been Harry himself who had imposed this cruel punishment and the Dark Wizard had only been waiting patiently.

The letters were formal and restrained by a thread it seemed in its articulation. Marvolo did not care for an honest expression in a letter that could be intercepted, no matter how

minuscule the chance might have been. However the cold, impersonal format he might have attempted, it could not disguise the tint of passion nonetheless carried, could not conceal the darkly imbued words where the quill might have been pressed harder.

It had not been enough. A mere shadow of the Dark Lord. Where the wizard would purr titillating words with the intensity such that the low voice itself seemed to petrify, where the powerful magic kept Harry completely aware with every shift, where the cold and intruding touch could blaze his very essence; how could a parchment dare to satisfy one so well-spoilt?

It had been only a teasing caress, a sincere promise. So that Harry could not help but be reminded again and again, how much he...

But pride had time and over stalled his hand.

A person, who had always been driven by sheer impulses, could hardly be expected to have rationality dictate while the *want* in his core quivered with stress so.

"I might be in need of some rune books."

A very surprised owl had carried away the rolled parchment, a single line of seemingly impersonal request. Harry remained looking out at the horizon after the bird, well aware of the heavy implications.

It would take only a single action to unravel the efforts of months.

Had he not foresworn to sever all connections with this Dark Lord of present? Perhaps this had been doomed ever since the idea had once begun. It might not have been so, if Harry had been consorting with Lord Voldemort, the nerves of a madman easily excitable only to foretell an ignition the proportion of catastrophe.

He could not find a shard of regret for his actions, but at the inference only.

With an inconsolable air, the young wizard ventured out to his yard.

The flowering beds in the yard were pitiful, precious few and neglected. It was no more distracting than going out for a fresh walk. But the Dark Lord had ruined the beautiful place of Rowena's Bridge for him, for no matter where he chose the silhouette of his companions lingered.

It only made the echo harsh in his breast.

Thus he would rather seclude himself within the confines of his house, a self-imposed exile that was frustrating even more so at the remainder that Marvolo must seep into each facet of his life so deeply to be entrenched that Harry could no longer take a step without glancing to the side for his companion.

The remaining unease left with an exhale when his only other mute companion returned with a reply.

---

Humans are ever so fond of tying blindfolds over their own eyes. The need to see what they want to see superimposes any other matter. It does not matter that they would be blind to the reality and it does no matter that they might be trying to avoid the world but reality doesn't move around their fearful desires.

Every time those self-imposed illusions shatter, it is more painful than they can bear.

---

*(Magische Bücherei Von Nürnberg was surprisingly unaffected by the Grindelwald devastation. Spanning floors that ascended high to the sky and requiring an attendant per shelf to ensure proper maintenance and security, the library was comprised of every Ravenclaw's dream and more. The archive rooms lay beyond the main hall and with dedicated lovers of knowledge to indulge the weathered tomes as they deserved.*

*It was incredibly beautiful and no matter how many times he had visited the Nürn Archive, he was no less content. A veritable and unending well of knowledge, yet his lovely had made such an inconspicuous request, one that could have been fulfilled in Diagon Alley even.*

*But his angel deserved much more than the trinkets of road side vagaries, did he not?*

*There were books in this place that was forbidden to read but for highly privileged, all were precious in their knowledge. However, Marvolo could not help the small voice of dissatisfaction escape his throat even after he had gathered selected few works.*

*His companions had stayed to persuade certain people, while Marvolo had ventured out to indulge the wishes of his Hadrian, for the better as well because the Knights would have surely wondered.)*

---

*"Would you be so ruthless, my dear, not even to perchance spare a second glance?"*

After Marvolo's short visit to Germany, the letters had somehow changed while remaining unchanged, perhaps the bravery born off an encouragement that Harry had replied after all, no matter how impersonal it might have been. The message underlying the words however had spoke of his favoring countenance and Marvolo apparently had received it too well.

The dark words could never be less than what they ever meant to deliver, but lately they were liberally flushed with passionate sway.

They should have been deterrent in their overwhelming intensity, any ordinary mortal so very easily crushed under the demanding scrutiny.

Harry could hardly be called immune to such enchantments, but stubbornness had been his saving grace.

He had been surprised and somewhat perplexed to find advanced application of Magical Runes, the sacred tomes rather intimidating. Perhaps he should have worded the request better, as rune books for absolute novices, because no matter how impressive the books

seemed to be he was wholly incapable of appreciating their true worth, understanding their true essence without the fundamentals. However the beautiful gift had been breath-taking in its generosity and embarrassment at his inability to appreciate them had colored Harry's stilted response. He had merely thanked Marvolo, and shared none of the difficulties.

Instead, addressing other concerns of a certain wizard.

"Are you asking me to forget how quickly you stepped away from my filthy blood?"

*(The corner of the thin piece of parchment crumbled as the person meant to receive such an inflammatory message could not tolerate being reminded of his failure so rashly.*

*Despite all their fascinating conversations, despite their probing questions somehow he had quite managed to keep himself from being rather detached the monster that prowled so gleefully awaiting it's chosen. Nevertheless that avarice must remain one of his vile virtues, no matter that the obsession had been so objectives, his Hadrian seemed no longer content with challenging the mere indulgence.*

*The reason he had been so captivated by this particular person did not lie only with how physically appealing Hadrian was, but the hint of a fiery soul that had trickled through the melancholic impression of the first time.*

*Even he had not known the kind of perfection he sought, before it had been presented to him.*

*Until he had met Hadrian.*

*Perfection was not flawless. It was contrary, and liable to rouse his frustration often.*

*His creature remained oblivious how harshly he was commanding the entire attention of the one he had sought to divert so faithlessly.*

*The brutalized message was carefully straightened and the Dark Lord let a soft chuckle favor the insolent beauty.*

*'Could you bear this, what you have accidentally started? '*

---

*"I will not be apologizing for what I believe in. It would be a lie I cannot accept."*

Why must the wizard be so unnaturally honest? Why must he leave no fallacy with which Harry could find a comfort that ulterior motive ought to lay in the inflexible attention, and it must, Harry could still not trust completely the Dark Lord could ever abandon his faith.

The faint hope of salvation was shaky at best to be torn down again at the undeniable declaration.

The Dark Lord had not been out of character after all, firmness evident in the strong lines.

Why then... why must he still pursue the one so against?



However more the awakening voices in his mind might speak candidly of the truth, Harry could not so well let himself be vulnerable at the Dark Wizard's perusal.

“What do you call this then?”

*(He was in the middle of a meeting with his Knights when the small owl fluttered in. Whence such a happenstance would have been unacceptable in any other scenario, the message it carried upon its talons held lesser precedence to none else.*

*Cold fingers were reluctant to leave the message unopened, even the scorching words ever so welcome in the almost unintelligible writing.*

*But he was very much aware of his lack of control around that chaotic creature, hence all the more cautious not to lose guard even in front of his most trusted.*

*Hadrian was a treasure he was not willing to share, or expose to questing eyes.*

*His angel that he had thought ever so perfect, the most enchanting star adorning the night sky and yet by and by the veils were lifted as well as he got nearer the chimera mirage, the distorted beauty letting the flawed reality instead settling in.*

*The creature hardly was any less spectacular, merely his notion of perfection was redefined.*

*Worryingly thin fingers trailed over the folded parchment with the bemused wonder that only this creature could stimulate in him.)*

---

*"An exception. One that I could never have imagined possible. An exception of the rarest kind you are, the loveliest of them. It was not a choice really. Can you claim the same?"*

*Oh.*

Harry murmured to the feathery companion who was engaged in nibbling at his wings, “Did you know, your master is quite a sweet-talker? One word from him and people will bring out their hearts to lay down at his feet.”

The casual sentence did not reflect on the warm blush highlighting the pale skin. Nibbling at the pads of his fingers, Harry crossed out a few lines before writing his edited reply, with a hope that the faint note of wishful plea carried none. To ensure, to just know for sure...

“How can I believe you? When you detest the very origin of me?”

---

*"I treasure it, as I have treasured you. However, this has been thousands of years in the making. It is not an argument of yesterday that we can resolve today. Can you accept this?"*

The words were poison, seeping through his skin and veins already and utterly devastating his very existence.

The Gryffindor that he had been would have reacted violently at that, to ever let the prejudice go on as it always had, even after the war-weary boy had seen shades of grey instead of merely monochromes around him. Still he had been surprisingly naïve, even as he had entered the Magical Government with the intent to repair and reform.

Harry had been rudely woken from his idyllic dream on the very first day. It was alarming that a great war had just ended and yet, the blood prejudice had not been affected in the least. Perhaps purebloods were a little less honest with their opinions, while the muggle-born had developed bigotry of their own.

Harry had lamented the foolishness of his peers, until he had gone into another magical community as a liaison.

His expectation for a utopia had been brutally strangled, but Harry had tried so hard not to give up for the very least a concession.

But the philosophical or political discussion was not intended here. No, what Marvolo had asked was to ignore the very subject relating them. Or perhaps more appropriately, merely accept that Marvolo had a different belief than him.

Did he not see? how could he ignore something that was in the very blood of them? No matter that Marvolo had assured him that he would be an exception.

Yet again, the question he had been asked was different. But to merely agree would send another message.

“I agree that it is not something that can be solved today or tomorrow. However, I will never stand aside in the face of prejudice.”

Because he could not, the ideal Wizarding world as he had imagined might never come to be, but he would not change himself to benefit the norm.

--

*(The one exception . The one weakness.*

*The realization of which had raged an unforgivable fury and was it not fortunate indeed that a little innocent pretty-eyed creature was far from his grasp.*

*Because he had wanted to consume which consumed him. To possess this rare and vexing creature for his own. The little treasure shall languid upon the highest of the towers, far away from the sun whence none might reach and the Dark Lord shall have him for his own. Marks of possession shall bloom stricken upon soft skin, the marks of a monster...*

*So, the Lord had let streams of mud blood flow down his hallway, irrationally frightened of the effect this exotic being was having upon his heart.*

*How vexing.*

*For the little angel not to remain unconcerned regarding relative strangers but to declare a bold stance in such a manner to the Dark Lord who was never going to care for other.*

*How amusing.*

*For the sweet treasure to assert his leadership over the poor undefended. )*

---

The fall had already been pre-destined. Even without the bond, none of them had the ability to ever stray from the other for long.

*“Let me have the opportunity to absolve myself.”*

Not for the first time that Marvolo had asked so, not for the first time Harry had been tempted to do away with all the pretenses.

But the fall would take only one step, no matter how tentative.

The response was short, and took a long time, the period at the end of which, a condemned sentence.

For it was no more a mere compliance, but confirmation to already what had been.

---

It would have been so much easier, for the two conversing duo to carry out this strange conversation by the use of a communication journal perhaps. Instead, magical genius as they were neither of them entertained the thought of this more efficient method and instead continued with this strange form of a reluctant courting, where either of the participants was oblivious to the ancient tradition they were participating in. Each day, a reply would be eagerly anticipated and every scrap of parchment carefully conserved. Even after the intended had agreed to be resume their disrupted meetings, somehow the letters did not stop entirely.

And the only witness remained a faithful owl who favored the one other than his master.

## Chapter End Notes

Let me give the credit properly where it belongs. There is a line “roses on clover.” That is an expression I lifted directly from the song Mr. Sandman. I would not claim literary originality where I don’t deserve it.

So I may have taken some literature liberties as well. I am sorry. Quilling is not a word, but we can make pen a verb, and I sort of expounded? Grammatically my writing would be very vexing, but it is an odd mixture of poetic dark romance and so I twist all the

conventional rules. It is horrible I know.

I wanted to show many things in the chapter. Harry's emotions relating to Marvolo. It is unavoidable really, how can it be otherwise when he is spoiled emotionally like that?

And he might be a little uh..emotionally slow but not unaffected and I won't be having him like that anymore. I wanted to show how absolutely unstable Marvolo's mindset is.

It is easy perhaps to think of his reaction from our view point, but I can't begin to fathom the insanity of a piece of a soul. He might think like normal in one instance, only to lose all control and go on a rampage. He is screaming mad, but just enough. I wanted to show many things, don't know how many could have been noticed.

The letters that are shown are not all the communication between them. I showed selected few only. In my mind, it was pretty and sweet and romantic and everything...

The old way of writing letters.

But I am sorry..that this might be so not satisfactory. I tried to do something, and it all maybe backfired on me. Sigh..

Do give reviews and thanks for reading.

# I Waited For You, For That Touch Alchemy

## Chapter Summary

Dark Lord tried for normalcy, a genuine attempt to recognize Hadrian as what he really was. Harry reaches out to dissolve the illusion to find reality instead, and he is not prepared, no matter the resolve.

## Chapter Notes

Disclaimer- An attempt to put right to an otherwise awesome story of J.K. Rowling. Seriously, how did they ever keep these two apart?

This chapter has been beta'd by this incredible and kind and awesome person. Lets all give a round of applause to Lord Mushie who saved me when I was more or less floating in another world.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilfred Rosier was an anomaly among the pureblood society. For all his rather untamed behavior, however, none could deny that he did not observe the proper tradition when it was called for and his charming mouth had smoothened over many frowning brows. In fact, in the primary assemble under the heir of Slytherin, his lip had more often than not brought amusement when his companions would shy from what they called a Gryffindor mouth.

Wilfred had laughed at them, not deigning to remind them the color adorning the lining of his robes. Hadn't reminded them that it was him, who was one of the very few favored of the heir of Slytherin, who had been powerful by his own right to deserve that envied position and had never stepped out of his bounds, instead heeding the warning in that seductive magic.

He had never truly cared for the Lordship position, but it had vexed him still when his older brother would be preferred over him whenever it had come to be the person of significance.

He sank down upon one knee; head bowed in true reverence of his chosen master, "My Lord."

"Wilfred." The deceptively light tone was almost beguiling and were it not for the magic that coiled around his body with a malicious eagerness, he might have relaxed at the cordial greeting. The Dark Lord could hardly be ever comprehended, the shimmering fury no less frightening than the undisturbed rage.

The middle son of the house of Rosier was a Slytherin, as such the self-preservation should have prevailed. Whereas his older brother was favored for being the heir apparent, for the power he would inherit soon; Wilfred surprised dismissive persons with his quick charm and sharp wit. Perhaps this one with Rowena's blessing had been infected with arrogance still, to be interested in challenging his mental aptitude.

Perhaps it was the arrogance that had led to inviting the attention of the powerful Dark Wizard, but Wilfred had not bowed down to the incessant pressure to prove himself- to maintain his status quo in the house. Even more so, his eyes would linger for awhile before dropping in submission.

There might have been some truth in what his peers had once thought, but he had proved his worth still and his heart swelled with pride as he took his position beside this powerful Dark Lord, whose magic he could feel to be lingering near the bookcase; the dark aura turned its attention upon him and Wilfred bade the unspoken demand.

A single scarf of parchment was placed upon the ebony dark table.

"This report looks rather lacking, doesn't it?"

It did not happen often, the fear of failure a terrible epiphany instead of a disappointment; an indication of a terrible mood of the Dark Lord. Barely a glimpse had been spared before the parchment was put upon the desk sparing him of immediate fury almost gently.

The pale yet classically handsome face rested upon long knuckles of a balanced hand, tilted slightly. The reflection of patience everlasting.

Wilfred felt as if a weight had settled down his throat, the thread of his life tied to the glibness of his tongue.

"Forgive me, My Lord. I am entirely positive that this is basically all the information the ministry has about Wizarding establishment."

Brave, but foolish enough to cling to his own beliefs rather than bow to the unflinching magic pressing down his neck. No matter how detached the Dark Lord might have been with the newer initiates, no matter how much his magic urged obedience, the closest confidants had enjoyed the novelty of being more than the first Knights of his cause.

Even so, Rosier remained wary of the mercurial Dark Lord of late.

Contrary to his belief, his master's wand did not maim the fool.

"So, it is the ministry who seems to have the incomplete information. Is it?"

Even pleasantly spell-cooled, the room with open archways did not relent with its heavy atmosphere, "I lifted it directly off of the ministry archive, My Lord."

"I do not fault your efforts; I suppose I expected more from our esteemed administration."

The pale brows of Rosier furrowed in contemplation, hardly off his guard but involved, "May I ask, My Lord, how are you so certain?"

The Dark Lord looked down at him in amusement, "Brave, are you not, Wilfred? I have come across a place, a purely Wizarding settlement, uncorrupted by muggle influences and yet now I seem to find its name nowhere near Ministry knowledge. How curious."

His Lord had gotten up at some point and for an indulgent moment, Rosier allowed himself to think about when his Lord had been but an heir apparent, of a warm fireplace in the Slytherin common room when his impatience had been visible to his peers beyond the polite mask.

When once they could have perhaps claimed their Lord as a human still.

He respected his Lord, yes, feared and was in awe of him. But, Rosier loved him as well and the affection surged unexpectedly at the nostalgic reminder.

"The Ministry of Magic or even the preceding Wizarding Council had been established with the sole focus of conforming to the Statute of Secrecy after all. At that time for us, purebloods, such separation had become necessary, not just desired. People like Wendelin were the exception, those who *delight* in venturing out to the muggle world and make a fool out of themselves. It would have been successful as well if it were not for the continuous stream of mudbloods and the blood traitors who delighted in taking in muggles like pets." Rosier would have built up to an enraged rant, but a sharp glance in his direction from the exasperated Dark Lord had him clearing his throat instead," What I mean is that after the initial...rapport, the minds were divided when the ministry laws stopped being entertaining and started to *intrude*. My grandfather rants well enough about a government that dares control us. So maybe wizards of similar mindset didn't bother to affiliate with the ministry, magical that chose to remain unconcerned because they were not breaking the Statue anyway with their isolation." He paused before swallowing the curious words threatening his common sense.

But the Knights held higher favor than any had ever known, and through fear it was genuine desire to assist his Lord that asked the question," Has it caught your notice, My Lord?"

Because he was truly curious, considering the Dark Lord had prohibited any foolish games with muggles at the moment, instead all attention was being spared towards infiltration and recruitment. Because their Master had issued the command to not to bring the attention yet... instead, whispers trailed in the Darker shades of Wizarding alleys and the shadows of night strengthened still. But the commencement was delayed.

The scarlet eyes had understood his inner confusion, however. For the first time since he had known the Dark Lord, Rosier watched an emotion unnamed hood the striking features and the wizard lingered by the Runic section of the library before speaking in a muted tone.

"It is no matter to be concerned by the death eaters. Merely a personal project of mine."

---

His magic was quivering with a cavernous hunger, to decimate and triumph, but the Dark Lord did not heed the insistent press of the Darkness that lingered in the vicinity of his affront perceived; his vision was consumed instead by the clouded shades of enchanting green, the exotic gaze of an equally confounding creature. Had he wondered, perhaps once or twice (many times) of the thrall this unknown being wrecked upon his occluded mind, upon his very soul no matter that it had been shredded so mercilessly to be a mere mockery of humanity. He had sometimes to the shimmering ire of his, acknowledged the absolute irrationality with which his senses were ensnared in presence of this person, to such extent as to devote time often lost, time that could have been spared for the foundation of his empire, and efforts that were instead rebuked with derision.

Perhaps moments of lucidity to hours of insanity, within which Marvolo was capable of observing the absurdity of his behavior in a detached manner.

He had wondered at a possible duplicity. And yet, for consequences that could have been of an illusory lattice meant to derail his very being, the Dark Lord felt rejuvenated like none but precious few of his treasures could offer.

For, in the end, it was this creature, knowing and yet ever so innocent, who remained in the eye of the storm, unaffected so long as the intent of a Dark Wizard shifted not far from favorable.

He had perhaps felt the disgust and wondered once or twice (many times) to be rid of this lovely distraction, to let his mind be detangled from this enchantment and should it not be alarming already, that a great mind such as his, was so very susceptible to this slip of a person. He had thus thought of letting the ties of this disastrous creature be severed before his feet carried of their own volition to the edge of the fathomless cavern.

But the coherent thoughts had lingered for mere a moment before his soul had screeched in protest violently, as it had opposed to be harshly torn from being; the agony that the Dark Lord had inflicted upon himself into the very soul in pursuit of immortality would have shattered any human, and it had been the powerful will of the wizard thus capable of withstanding the pleading of a tortured soul. He had torn his soul without the slightest regret; unheeding of the pleading cries.

However, when it came to this lovely little thing, with a mind hardly motivated to approve reason and a soul as adamantly non-cooperative, how could such thoughts be deemed acceptable?

The beastly need to possess this absolute treasure, that devoured his sanity with a smothering spell was not appeased either, growing into a terrifying proportion to annihilate all and more.

Even within those wrathful moments, moments where the lovely one incited his tolerance so, where he had craved the blood in his mouth, been taken with the urge to taste the blood so proudly the little angel had claimed to be tainted, to discard and abandon one no more worthy, a sliver of awareness had restrained his impetuous action.

Because to release the leash upon an untamed creature, even for that tempestuous moment, would be all that fleet-footed beauty would need to arm itself and flee far, farther than even



the shadows a vindictive Dark Lord could claim.

And the mere possibility had effectively marred any of his understated fury, a forceful shower of cold knowledge upon fiendish rage.

Now at this moment, as the divine vision stood with its enviable gaze fixated solely upon him, the lithe figure only the beloved art of a creator as enchanted with its creation, Marvolo could hardly regard such an impossibility anymore viable.

Patience had never been virtue he could ever boast of, even more so when he had been denied his most desired treasure for so long a time.

He moved to take a step, but the defensive magic-enforced itself almost to a corporeal form, the lightest shimmer of a shield denying him of satiating his irrepressible need. The air breathed laboriously, as the magic with a deceptively airy feel coalesced and strengthened to permit no trespasser and his ever loyal magic soared once again to viciously tear, *wrench* this purity that offended thus to his superiority.

But the Dark Magic, however ardent to protest his honor, had no more permission to act by the Dark Wizard and Marvolo would not take a step, literal or metaphorical, to encourage any more distance between them.

He waited, approbating neither defense nor offense but the acceptance of a slighted beauty.

Instead, he kept his eyes unwaveringly upon the anguish filled lovely shadows, the torment equally scathing in his soul, until the flare of wandless magic dissipated slowly, the presence fading away as if to nothingness and yet remaining observant to defend its wizard he was sure.

The weather was grumbling sullenly, and the hint of refreshed earth permeated the air. In the edge of this Aspen Grove the stillness broke periodically by the gentlest breeze stirring, and cries of predatory animals. For him, however, the senses were dominated by only one being and Marvolo resisted the urge to apparate to the side of his creature directly.

His strides were low, the little creature seemingly neither receptive nor accusative, until he was close enough.

*To touch, to affirm, to know.*

Long fingers rose with the trembling need trailing in his veins, to trace the perfection. The still frame watched him with careful breaths, but Marvolo kept his magic from attacking what it deemed to be an unacceptable offense to the Dark Lord.

The cruel fingers, that far too often indulged in blank inked misery they could inflict, were overwhelmed with the need to caress those lovely features so adoringly ingrained in his thoughts, to let them be so tainted by veins of his own darkness through touch alone.

It was not simply a sole desire, to worship this being of perfection, which must be satisfied. It was not only the lore of malicious claim, of a cruel monster pacing in his rigidly carved

control, and all the more exacerbated by such sweet innocence. Or even the heavy intrigue, which the young wizard inflamed with such a powerful, yet leashed magic; for each factor were individually capable of making this creature a sweet promise to the dark wizard.

In its entirety, the wretchedly chaotic mess held his soul unpardonably captive, perhaps as a weakness, or maybe a threat; surely none that would augur well for the solitary creature's destiny in the grasp of Marvolo.

And surely, for all the wise and prudent, it would imply such a terrible fate to be endured by an innocent, to be the most treasured of a Dark Lord, and no more. The venerated beauty that Lord Voldemort would cherish, to be protected and beloved and no more. To be donned as the loveliest jewel in his dominion, and no more.

To be loveliest in the kingdom, and shine *no more*, for a soul could no more survive such false affection.

Yet, such a future that could have been, would no more come to pass, not the least when the Dark Lord had seen the knowledge tremor in the luminous pools of verdant; for all that he had thought to be the one to have corroded the lovely one's defenses, it had not been so after all.

How could he have won the war, when the intended had been anticipating him already, when it knew the consequences of failure already? Even more, when it was absolutely capable of sufficient defense already?

Because Hadrian had truly granted him entrance to his life, and all that had tolerated the overtures of an ambitious Dark Wizard had been the kindness of a compassionate heart.

Because the seemingly fragile creature could very well have let an array of magic be the veil to spare it of his touch. Because he had been permitted to wander thus far into the land of this taciturn person, trusted even as Marvolo had been entirely callous with his behavior thus far.

Hadrian could have been all the more resentful and yet he had tolerated the irreverence. Marvolo had been an exception after all, not as sweet syllables from that pretty mouth would have demurred, but an exception nonetheless.

It would not be enough.

But Marvolo would acknowledge the favors he had been blessed with no matter.

And so, with avarice corroding the control, long fingers reached out excruciatingly slow, his observant features letting the choice, to deny or stand, be with the creature, and let it trail upon skin far warmer than his. Disbelieving knuckles brushed down to lie upon the stubborn jaw and green eyes fluttered at the gentleness.

"You look as lovely as I remember you, but such exhaustion was not present last time."

Indeed his angel was paler than ever, dark circles underlining the brilliant, if tired looking eyes. Eyes that were previously hooded with emotion, but at this moment glowered at him for

his observation, annoyance that only painted his treasured golden.

Marvolo traced the hints of ill-health in the beautiful face discontentedly, before Hadrian turned away.

“It is alright, nothing life-threatening.”

“I do hope you wouldn’t let it go that far either.”

In contrast to his nonchalant comment, Marvolo carefully noted the aversive gesture and uneasiness stirred at this careless gesture of his most cherished.

Hadrian sighed in resignation,” It is nothing really. My work is getting really complicated. That is all.”

“And here I had hoped, it was my absence you suffered from.” Marvolo gave him no more opportunity to retort however and instead reached into the fold of a pocket,” Speaking of work, I have something for you.”

Hadrian was surprised momentarily, ascertained by wide eyes, and Marvolo enlarged the shrunken packet with a murmur.

“I have only removed the shrinking charm, the feather-light still holds. I know you might be frustrated by the complex runes book I bought you.” Marvolo shushed the embarrassed protests of the younger wizard,” They are rare ones, and I intended for you to have them. However, the fundamental books that you would need, took some time to gather.”

Hadrian accepted the miniature gift-wrapped box tentatively, and Marvolo refrained from telling him the truth. That no matter the purchases from the Nürn Library were unparalleled, he was not satisfied at all. He had not been able to stifle the urge to let presents, wrapped with a personal notation, be given to his cherished one, and he had not understood why the priceless purchases had been unable to quench, whereas he was more appeased by the personal tomes that had been pursued thoroughly by him before, which were singularly marked as his belonging. But he spoke none of it, even if Hadrian would realize it anyhow, the moment it would be unsealed in the privacy of his home.

Perhaps the first of many gifts of appropriate bribery to soothe the hurt he had caused this being of radiance.

Perhaps to soothe this need of his that he could not yet understand.

Marvolo discarded such thoughts and called Hadrian’s attention with a long-fingered grasp encircling a small wrist.

“Put them away, I have somewhere I wish for us to go.”

Hadrian frowned before complying and Marvolo chose not to notice.

“Tell me, Hadrian, do you ride?”

He smirked at the look of utter incomprehension.

---

Let this moment be forever guarded most precious in the ever endless time and space, this embodiment of unsurpassed beauty, as treasured as it would be in the heart of an enthralled Dark Wizard.

For he was beautiful, this creature of exquisite magnificence, even more so in its childish delight as the Abraxan soared high with reckless abandonment, spurred by the enthused joy of its lovely rider and Marvolo was captivated by the sound of such enchanting laughter resonating in the clouds.

He shone pure and unbearably lovely upon the mythical Abraxan, as divine as the Goddess to whisper the shimmer of dew onto a slumbering earth. Delight lit brilliantly shaded green, the aftermath of fresh rain upon lush green and Marvolo curled his fist as if to strangle the need to simply reach out to this lovely thing and utterly devour all that was offered however unconsciously.

Hadrian smiled at him perhaps with gratitude for delivering this present, perhaps the thrilling joy still reflected from the dazzling green beyond dark lashes.

And the world might well have fallen numb to stupefied adoration, as had the untouched heart of a dark lord, as had the vile monster momentarily petrified by the stunning sight. And Hadrian danced happily in the air, unaware of the Dark Lord frozen stiff upon his pliant ride, for the divine creature singularly arrested his attention and more. His mare beat its commendable wings to keep them in the air, as the other frolicked high and low.

Unwilling to have this exceptional purity be dimmed for whichever darkness might linger in the earth below.

But Marvolo waited after letting his ride be herded back to the stables, as the lovely companion of his strode up to him with infused delight, lovely with the royal blue trimmed open robe trailing behind. Hadrian looked very much ruffled, the dark hair gleefully framing the elfin face even as the ends were still somewhat contained, and the previously pale skin was suffused liberally with joyful health.

“Thank you! I haven’t enjoyed myself like this since...well, what feels like forever.”

Marvolo gave a close-mouthed smile, the clench in jaws of the clawing wounds into the throat of this monster locked upon its prey, and the brilliant glow in the most coveted of green did not help any.

“Looks like you enjoyed it.”

“Enjoyed it?” Hadrian looked fairly flabbergasted, and at the honest expression the tightness in his throat receded some, “You have no idea how much I...” Focus sharpened the doe eyes and the unfiltered delight dimmed, Marvolo regretted it some, “Actually you don’t, do you?”

Marvolo was about to wave away the accusations in the observant features, but the unimpressed arch of the dark brows had his mouth quirking in amusement instead, "Perhaps. It is not important anyway."

But his devious angel would not be deterred so and Hadrian took a resolute step forward," Oh no, you are not brushing this off. I am not letting you."

"No?"

Truly he did not consider this matter of any significance. He had never enjoyed flying, or more accurately he was fairly apathetic to it. He had loathed brooms ever since the flying lessons in the first year of Hogwarts; the transfer of control into a semi-sentient thing had him unsettled. Resolved to never be at the mercy of an easily manipulated thing, he had learned to fly by the power of his own magic.

Hadrian was not irate, but the determination had strengthened the slumped shoulders and he looked magnificent. It was even more riveting considering the fact that such confidence was hardly unwarranted either, but rather Hadrian chose so to be understated rather than bask in his true glory.

His angel tilted his head slightly in consideration, "Or you wouldn't, should you be interested in getting any information out of me in future. Fair exchange, remember?"

Marvolo had to laugh, "Making up for lost time, are we?"

Light dusting of pink highlighted his cheekbones, and Marvolo had to bite the inside of his mouth to withstand the urge of exploring such tempting warmth with his mouth.

He turned away instead, lest the claws be bared to the innocent eyes of his angel," I don't like flying much, no."

"Why not?"

Marvolo shrugged," I don't know. I have never cared for it."

He never cared for many things his peers did. Tom Riddle might have been superior in knowledge and sheer power; but even without he would not have been able to blend with his fellow mates. Instead cold, grey eyes would speculate upon the screams of delight from the Quidditch stands, the ruckus in the common room where Slytherins played Gobstones and Exploding snaps, and the unbridled laughter would stream towards the coveted seat by the fireplace but Tom Riddle would remain entirely unconcerned, not even curious to the feelings that must be coursing in them which he himself seemed to lack.

Mere inches would separate his peers physically, yet Tom could hardly identify with them by even gulfs apart.

Indeed, he never cared for it, at least until he had experienced the unadulterated joy the little angel seemed to be flushed with and found himself entirely unable to share in any manner.

He could already see the curious gaze of the little creature upon him, but Marvolo didn't quite know how to express his own lack of such inclination.

"Ah." Marvolo looked curiously at the discomfited visage of his little angel, "You must find me absolutely foolish then, the way I seemed to..." Hadrian gestured helplessly to the previously wild frolics, "romp about."

"No." And he wondered how the creature cared never for the absolute distance, the detachment that had once invited mockery of the foolish and ignorant, but never once he saw the same scorn at his obvious impassivity. How is it that despite all the differences between them, no other could sate his soul like this creature?" Your delight was what I had hoped for. I am pleased that my choice was received so positively."

Surely, surely considering the absolutely contrasting personalities should imply either unending conflict or one overshadowing the other. And yet, Marvolo could find no other more perfect to be chosen at his side.

"You have yet to go wrong."

Hadrian had looked away, the confession as pleasing to Marvolo as it was mortifying for the petite being. He was being uncharacteristically sincere or perhaps the little creature had always been honest and had rather not been confided in the Dark Lord.

How would he like to reward the naturally taciturn being by suffusing him with indulgent touches...

*Not yet...*

"Was it your best experience in the air then?" It should have been, there are few as fleet-paced as Abraxan and if he was indeed correct about the fact that Hadrian adored speed then there were few as comparable.

But the sweet mouth had opened instinctively to be snapped shut again and the fair features were drowned in light guilt.

The contentedness deserted him rapidly as he realized that the memories of him very well might have come second to another.

"Tell me the truth, I merely wish to know. You don't have to fear me."

*Lies.*

"It was not at all bad really, far from that. However, my favorite was with the broom once gifted to me." A thin finger twirled with ends of his hair, with a wistful look upon his face.

How could a measly stick ever compare with the might of such a majestic creature, a creature that was said to be chariots of high heavens? An exotic creature even considered singular by Wizarding standards. With such high maintenance, few ever had the financial capacity to afford their keep, fewer still could be blessed with a tolerable ride upon these. No matter that

he cared naught for such indulgence, he was well aware of the significance of a single creature.

“It was faster than an Abraxan?” Disbelief colored his tone.

Again indecision twisted the rosy mouth, “No, it might not have been faster than an Abraxan. That didn’t matter at all, I love it due to sentimental reasons more really.”

Hadrian fell silent, and Marvolo ruthlessly stifled the desire to encourage him from talking, the instinctive urge to do that, which had befallen many a stubborn mouth before. He tasted blood in his mouth from the brutal control, as surely had his many victims when persuasion had to be wrought from his wand.

“Have I...made you uncomfortable?”

Slightly startled visage turned to him as if beyond the horizon they had instead been attentive to another.

Jealousy was unbecoming of polite society, but the Dark Lord could hardly ever be expected to conform ever.

“No. It is just that...it seems no matter how much time passes, he will always be a raw memory anyway.”

A memory he was barely resisting from leaving none but torn scraps of, because the fondness with which Hadrian spoke of this person was not only inflammatory to the snarling possessive monster in his core, but also a resounding echo in the yearning emptiness of his soul.

“He must be extraordinary then, to have warranted such significance in your heart.” The false compliment, did it show the hollowness he felt within?

“I don’t think you would have liked him at all.” Hadrian laughed and for a moment Marvolo floundered with his occluded mind to understand however this person could have known the inner musing of a Dark Lord. “He was the complete opposite of the typical pureblood. Not at all serious and stubborn to boot. He was a pureblood and he preferred muggle shirts over robes.”

Marvolo swallowed his instinctive flinch, to see the pensive expression on Hadrian, “Are you being deliberate even now, lovely?”

His *Lovely* seemed entirely unrepentant, “Perhaps. Words could be misleading after all.”

More than the fact Hadrian had wished to verify the reassurance Marvolo had wrote in the letters, the truth also remained that the flighty creature had been reluctant to part with the memories of this person. The distraction would have worked as well, had it not been for the fact that his rage at this unknown was far greater than the mention of blood-traitor purebloods.

He mentioned none of this to his fidgeting creature,” I could try to argue on that, but you are right. Actions are more telling, aren’t they, my sweet angel?”

Eyes narrowed, the beautiful creature replied,” Words could be revealing as well. Tell me, Marvolo, the one so obstinately loathing everything muggle and associated, how come you are using muggle expressions, then?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Angel. The one you seemed to favor over my name. It is not a word true wizards should know.”

Marvolo stilled. Had he forgotten that it was indeed a muggle expression, a childhood tale had ingrained so inconspicuously, such that he had hardly paid any attention to the origin of this knowledge? And it was worrisome; he had never been so expressive in front of others. Being precise and nothing more. Being chatty in the house of Slytherin was an act of foolishness, for it could never be certain what simple nuances could have been absorbed by others and which could, later on, be used against you. No one had ever known he had called a muggle orphanage home for better half of his Hogwarts years and before. No one had known that Tom Riddle was indeed a name of a muggle, sure it had been suspected and once or twice people had dared call him with derogatory names until he had revisited upon their desire to live.

Now, inexplicably, he had slipped in front of this one, of whom he had hardly any true knowledge.

And there were the looks of suspicious disbelief even from this being, that he had known would entail from his true heritage.

Magic rolled in disturbed sleep and Marvolo turned away, unable to comprehend the extent to which he had left himself exposed.

The discontented twitch of magic abruptly stiffened when a hesitant hand covered his tight knuckles, gentle in its unfamiliarity. “Marvolo.” There was an audible swallow before the other continued,” No matter how it might have seemed, it was not...I did not say it with malicious intent. I don’t care, I don’t care what backgrounds people might come from. I don’t care who they were before, only just who they are now. So it doesn’t matter how you knew it. But you are being incredibly hypocritical in damning muggles and then accepting them wherever they might suit your purpose.”

The rage could have thrown off the person so insolent as to mock, the person so daring as to touch and Marvolo turned to take that person’s hand in his grasp, pulled the surprised body closer.

His eyes were closed, futilely trying to direct the swirling mess of emotions and memories throbbing in his pulse. His forehead dropped to touch the soothing of a dark head and he felt a surprised exhale but no more resistance.



The treasured hand he held with reverence, and remarked by the stuttered beats he conveyed his adoration to the smooth palm with his mouth.

"I cannot. I cannot accept them, cannot tolerate their presence, their remainder. But it seems no matter how much I try, the memories wouldn't leave. All the time I spent there, the lone spot of brightness I recall is the stories, of angels and fairies. When I first saw you, you were just as radiant and I couldn't help but think of you as an angel, one that belongs high up in the heavens."

He didn't see the fluttering of surprised lashes, but felt the heat that arose at such an unabashed compliment.

"However, now I can't very well go on using it, can I? Now that I know."

He didn't see the frustrated nibble of tempting mouth, but heard the unconvinced words. "I didn't... I don't mind if you do continue to call me that. Just, Hadrian is my name too, you know." The words ended with a pouting complaint in the pleasing voice.

Marvolo let a surprised laugh escape, neither confirming nor denying, "I know, lovely."

He laughed even more, when Hadrian turned away with an exasperated sound.

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Spelled tresses of tolerable obedience swiveled around a lower back as Hadrian dithered indecisively on his heels. Crimson eyes looked on in amusement as the creature looked at the impending gauntlet with biting doubt.

"Come Hadrian. It is unbecoming of a wizard to worry over such a thing."

Green eyes flashed venomously at the other wizard. Darkness saturated the moonless night, with the twinkling efforts of stars their only guides. The gloom of cloudy light had long departed, but the darkness had not left their company.

"I am merely exercising simple caution."

"When magic can put that caution to rest, it becomes unnecessary. A simple spell, sweet one and after that you won't know the difference."

"But *I* will know the truth and let me tell you I don't want to take a bath in the middle of the night."

"You sound as if you don't trust your magic."

"I do...I just can't stop thinking about it."

Marvolo looked at the stubborn creature with ill-hidden enjoyment. Their light argument had already passed quite some time, but he had been resolutely lenient. The tense figure was a curious mixture of intrigue and anxiety. Had it been anyone else impatience would have forced his hand already; but under the darkness of new moon, the little angel glowed akin to

an ethereal creature, a brilliant ring of green blessed with vibrancy whereas the rest of the world had fallen into unwavering obscurity and the little mouth was pulled periodically to nibble on and a pale hand pulled at the sleeves as if to hide more.

They stood by the edges of the lake. For sure it was not denied to the muggles, as many magical lands were. But the time dominated by magical creatures had it shrouded by an impenetrable fog, or at the very least deterrent to all, save those of Magic. Hadrian had been surprised at the concealing charm that Magic had provided on its own, rather than by the interference of wizards.

But such had been how the two worlds had stayed apart so far.

He turned back to the task at hand, watching Hadrian frowning at the lake. To walk upon the unfrozen water was not an impossible feat for any wizard and Marvolo had spoken of a stroll upon the lake. But he had left the choice for Hadrian to take, the first step if he would choose, aware that their time inside the fog where he had to be dependent upon Marvolo for any direction had left the fiery creature unsettled.

He could have been impatient, had he not been utterly taken by even the minutest gesture his creature displayed.

But he had given ample time already; surely he could be forgiven for waiting no longer for the decision to lie upon his reluctant companion.

“Come, my lovely.” The little angel looked at him askance, but no matter how much Marvolo would remain contrite for upsetting Hadrian, he would not cease adoring his creature by words or by action.

“You are kidding me.” Beneath the disbelieving tone, there lay a very reasonable worry as lovely eyes took in the vastness of the lake, solemn still and nothing but as if to reflect the magnificence of the sky.

Their path resembled as if they would be stepping upon the stars themselves, soft ripples the only distortion of the image.

His palm remained inviting, for the warmth of his angel to settle within. And he didn’t revoke the request, no matter that the strain travelled up his shoulders as Hadrian was not so easily convinced.

Easier perhaps would have been to decimate the hesitation non-consensually, but his unspoken vow had been to offer his angel a choice. Not merely a compliance wherever the Dark Lord would direct, but actual consent to fall in step with him.

No more a disguised accusation Hadrian would benefit from, no more an excuse of dubious willingness he could slide behind.

Tentative fingers slipped into the slot of his openly extended hand and the skipped beat echoed equally in their shared breaths.

Marvolo gently pulled his creature to his secure purchase,” I won’t let you fall, I promise.”

*‘Because I won’t let you be far from my arms.’*

Their progress was tentative, because Hadrian remained wary of the fact that they were practically walking on open water. No matter how much Marvolo wished to devour the darling mouth chewed to swollen rose, this distracted countenance would not be acceptable.

“Hadrian.” Anxious eyes snapped to him, and Marvolo smiled to soothe the racing pulse of the creature,” Have faith in my magic.” *In me.*

“I know. It’s foolish because we *are* wizards and...”

“However, you are letting your practicality blind you, unlike wizards.”

Hadrian scowled at him and Marvolo let their bodies drift a bit farther. There was a hitched inhalation and the tightening grasp upon his wrist. Marvolo hid his satisfied smile and pulled his little wizard close. Hadrian moved without hesitation, tiny trembles subsiding as he burrowed into the secure hold.

Marvolo frowned and lifted the withdrawn features to be savored. The fear in those shrouded eyes was very real, as was the abashed discomfort burning in the pale skin. Gently he cooed to soothe the trembling in the pretty lips,” Hadrian...”

“I had fallen into a lake once.” Marvolo looked at the wizard who was determinedly looking far off into the distance,” I remember the cold. I remember the water burning in my lungs. I remember how I couldn’t breathe...couldn’t do anything before sinking down to the bottom. Sometimes being a wizard isn’t enough.”

“I am here now, and I will change all your haunting nightmares into beautiful memories.”

Hadrian looked at him with a strange expression, in a surprised revelation, but confided none of his thoughts.

Marvolo turned the pensieve figure in his arms, so that the back of the petite figure was clutched to his chest, let lie a hand that held onto the slim waist and he whispered to his dearly adored, ”Don’t let the thoughts of your past cloud the present. I can’t abide it. Open your eyes, and look at the beauty surrounding you. Hear the laughter of life rejoicing. Do not think of what is lost, be with me at this moment, be with me to savor one of the most beautiful sights in this world.”

And Marvolo twirled his wand lighting up the bottom of the lake into brilliant light letting the seemingly abandoned water body burst into a myriad of activities. He knew Hadrian was enchanted already at the sheer natural beauty of the innocuous lake, because behind colorful anemones small fairies darted out to chase after fishes far bigger, because even the plants were alive and thrumming in the viscous life, because the lake seemed to breathe with the incomparable beauty of magic.

Hadrian needed no prompting as he was led deeper upon the lake and they saw disgruntled mermaids looking up at them. Many creatures were befuddled at the strange light suddenly emanating from the floor, but others mostly shrugged and continued on. Marvolo let himself be immersed at every sparkle of delight, every gasp of alarm, every precious expression flickering across the fair face.

“It is beautiful.”

Marvolo smiled. “It is indeed, however not the only thing I have brought you here for.”

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“Can you hear it?”

Baffled gaze turned to him, before understanding lit in the expressive countenance and Hadrian turned towards the centre of the lake from where the softest hums of music emanated, the incredible harmony of tinkling bells and deeper beats, the pretty mouth parted slightly for a soundless *oh*.

No prompting was necessary, and Marvolo led a curious Hadrian deeper into the lake, their footsteps leaving the slightest of ripples upon undisturbed water. The charm had thrown the great body of water into sheer brilliance.

Despite the thrumming curiosity about the mysterious tune, his beautiful companion did not rush so and their steps were slow, for Hadrian would often stop at and exclaim quietly, quite taken with the magical world of underwater colonies. In such a dark night, in the silence of all things nocturnal, only their breaths crowded the thin air and their clasped hands remained a heady weight upon his serenity, the vision of this enchanting creature, divinity of the land.

Hadrian didn’t ask what the creatures were, vicious ones that lurked in trembling weeds glaring balefully at them or the misshapen objects occasionally swimming by. He didn’t ask, perhaps entirely taken by the perplexing system, and Marvolo didn’t volunteer any information, preoccupied as he was in savoring the minutest turn that transformed his face, in the slightest arc of brows and curls of the sweet mouth, surrounded entirely by the presence of *Hadrian* in the stale air.

Pulsating with the luminosity that exposed the underwater body into its intricate kaleidoscopic system, so utterly lovely that nature must preen with the art created, the rarest of sights blessed to few undaunted and confident, but the translation was lost upon the Dark Lord who looked upon the loving crafts that nature wove to create this magnificence with unsympathetic care.

He admired this beauty instead, one that successfully captivated him, surpassed all that he had ever known and assumed. One that had far too long evaded his need, and his hunger had turned upon itself, to sate the greed leaving gouging wounds upon whichever composure that could have existed within the Dark Wizard.

He tightened his grip on the infinitely precious treasure, shy of smothering and let himself be called and bound to this creature of irredeemable avarice, to be consumed in the sparkling

brush of riveting verdant, the radiance upon warm skin and the enticing curves on which a dark braid would dance provocatively.

He knew they had reached their destination, when the captive hand within his covetous grip jerked in surprised exhilaration, wishing to be closer to this astounding creation of magic.

Deep under the lake breathed a flower most exquisite, in darkness the petals would open, blushing velvety red and lovely. The five petals would then spread wide, reaching farther than assumed with the deceptive width, and floated gently in the apathetic breeze near the base of the lake. The tiny bells, so diminutive akin to mere sparkles of a wand and shade of brilliant sunlight cradled in the centre of the beautiful flower, the gentle movement of which accounted for an enchanting melody that would reach farther than logically acceptable.

But little sprites playing within the cavern of anemones would swim closer, abandoning their capers, and they would sway to the shivers of the tune, their delighted giggling a seemingly lovely melody in itself. They would alight upon the smooth petals far larger than their body and their little feet would move lightly upon the carpeted ballroom.

It was a lovely sight; one could devote days without feeling exhausted to this phenomenon of outstanding magic.

And Hadrian appreciated the wonders thus with sighs of pleasure escaping the unguarded mouth, as he himself never could care for, but was bothered none to instead cherish the late hours of a dark night beside his beautiful one.

Patiently he waited, a steady support behind his little creature, intoxicated with the smell of startling purity. And he waited, long fingers grazing the twists of the intricate braid falling nearly down to the waist. The sprites danced still, moving together and falling apart, in unpredictable rhythms and delightful symphony. The music wrote its magic still, and Hadrian peered unblinkingly down, the look of fascinated wonder reflected in the verdant gleam.

He waited still, unbothered and undaunted, an uncharacteristic gesture seeing how the Dark Wizard could never abide the attention of his lovely one diverted thus to another, living or not. But he closed his eyes, and inhaled the singular fragrance of his company, let himself be assured by the steady pulse foreign to his own that laid limp to his command, and let the heady knowledge of this being by his side perforate the gaping wails of his wounded soul.

And the little creatures became drowsy with fatigue. Feet dragged and translucent wings fluttered dazedly as they wavered. Unwilling to abandon the silky paradise, they laid down then and there, curling with hands beneath their heads, dots of innocence scattered around the benevolent petals.

Hadrian started to draw back in disappointment when last of them fell, but never could have predicted the next moment while Marvolo smiled with anticipation.

The petals curled inward, with gentle movements, until there was no escape to be had, vines that had been overlooked previously moved with demonic intentions and Hadrian gasped when the flower crumpled deeper still, tightened even more and the implication could not have been taken any other way.

But perhaps the most terrible would be the aftermath and Marvolo caught the startled creature in his safe embrace, as it flinched violently when the flower unfurled after mere moments, a healthy flush upon the lovely scarlet blooms, no trace of the merry little dancers remained. And the brightest sheen upon the petals seemed lovelier still, the brilliance of magical blood spilled.

Dazed and horrified, his precious stayed still as the Dark Lord crooned to him the tale of lovely Moonshade,” Moonshade, a misleading name since it would never open where moonlight still favors the earth. A very coveted plant in potions, rarest of potions. Sometimes it is also called the siren flower, because of how it attracts victims with a musical voice. But the thrall is very weak, even so, I have heard of one or two potion makers who have drowned in blind enchantment.”

His stupefied beauty came out of its frozen state and turned to him in horror, “Why? Why would you show me this?”

He knew not when precisely his perceptions had shifted thus, when the desire to enfold this divine beauty in the falsely comforting prison everything soft and beautiful to something more real. He had only intended to graze a dark stain upon such a pure soul, to coax the lovely into a fallacy of freedom, and the world this creature would perceive would have roused with his intention alone. Perhaps he had gathered from the exquisite green eyes, upon which no shades of malevolent veils dared dim the brilliance, that the innocence thus of this exotic soul had not been for the remarkable ignorance of reality, but resilience instead.

And perhaps the rigid rein upon himself had to be relaxed some, as Hadrian would no more be sated with the sweetly charming evasion of a skilled serpent when the little angel prodded the vulnerable underbelly with nary a care to the defensive snarls of the predator.

For the first time ever, hesitation marred the confident tones of the Dark Lord, no matter that his chosen companion could not perceive so and Marvolo gathered reassurance from caressing the sweet rhythms of a slim wrist.

“I have always been fascinated by this flower.” Marvolo gazed upon the flower unaffected, at the dancing bells of golden hues, “It is coveted for rare potions and even if Potioneers feel rather revolted it would be precious to them.”

Hadrian shifted away, away from the beautiful thing he had been admiring not a moment earlier, “Potions are not my thing, really...”

But that had not been his intention truly. Of course, it would have very much welcome to know the little bit information of his companion no matter his companion had any inclinations or not. But that had not been his intention.

However, he was not going to waste this opportunity to gather the rarest of ingredients, one that would not be so readily available again and he trusted none to pluck this plant without magic and keep it intact in its original self.

Marvolo gave a reassuring pressure upon the other’s hand, before tangling them even tighter and Hadrian looked at him with confusion, “Neither mine, however, I need it all the same. I

need to gather it manually. And I did promise, did I not? To never let go?”

And he waited, for possible protests and reluctant struggles, but Hadrian voiced none of the conflicting expression playing across the fair face.

“*Vicet*”

The water parted on either side to let them through. They could have gone through the water but Marvolo had no intention of getting his robes wet at the late hour.

The division stopped in the vicinity of the Moonshade. He could have plucked it by using a severing and summoning charm. But for an ingredient to remain passive in the brewing except for when it was needed, it was necessary to have no external magical residues lingering upon it. And hence, the harvest would be a little complicated but not pain-staking.

He couldn't use magic on the plant itself, but he could manipulate the surrounding. With gouging charms on the earth, the vines were relatively easy to unearth and finally, he reached inside the watery container to pluck the flower by its stem.

There was a sharp inhale by his side when he touched the flower, but no sudden movement broke his concentration.

After which it was a simple process of putting it into a glass cage filled with water from the lake and letting the entire ensemble be dropped into a package with a mouth magically extended.

His companion was silent by his side when they returned to the surface, and he knew not whether the young wizard was inclined towards abhorrence still, but the thought was directed towards the now deserted rock still.

“You said you found it fascinating.”

He had not thought that Hadrian would initiate the conversation on his own, but a shred of disbelief passed the verdant shades in contemplative wait.

And Marvolo laughed lightly, humor not the least coating his voice,” But you found it horrifying, didn't you? Revolting, even. Of course, wizards normally wouldn't care about it as long as it doesn't start eating them. But they do care that this plant is a crucial ingredient in sacrificial rituals.” He wondered how Hadrian would react to the indirect confession about what he was intending to use the plant for,” What do you think, sweet one, do you think it should be regulated as it is now, have it cleansed off of the surface of the earth for being so vile?”

But the beautiful face didn't scrunch in absolute spurn, merely looked at him with introspective wait.

“What do you mean to say exactly?”

And the Dark Wizard could not return the patient look of the little angel, for it had not been quite an impulse that had him invite Hadrian to this place, but not quite a well thought-out

decision either. At this moment, he seemed to be uncertain of his own intentions, or perhaps reluctant to acknowledge the precise nature of it.

Marvolo felt strangely exhausted, and for a second the scarlet eyes retreated beneath lids laden with fatigue, "Perhaps I shouldn't have brought you here. Not exactly the perfect ending of a day I had wanted, is it?"

The pliant hand so far in his sensitized grip stirred, however, and a shy response tugged at his finger. Marvolo looked back at his exquisite companion with strained breaths, convinced of the downturned and resentful visage he was sure to be presented. But Hadrian was determined, with blood staining velvety skin at the voluntary contact.

"I want to stay a little longer. Can we?"

He knew not of this strange weight that had been straining his shoulders, had been staining his poise, but at the stubborn if bashful words, his returning smile was a bit more relaxed. He turned to the darling creature and tugged him close, letting the unoccupied hand lie carefully upon the arch of an enviable hip. Their joined hands curved as well to rest upon the midriff of the frozen being.

Moments passed slowly before the stiff frame started to relax and Marvolo closed his eyes letting the silent comfort wash over him.

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Harry closed his eyes to the gentle maneuvers by the Dark Wizard; the touches were shy as opposed to previously when they had been arrogantly self-serving. But no matter the tones behind the lingering grazes, the Dark Lord had reason to be so confident for the caresses rained chaos upon his tremulous pulse.

Yet, it had not been the electrifying proximity encouraged so by the heady magic of this person that had his mind in stormy ruin.

The body behind his back remained resolute and secure, a promise he couldn't say ever had been granted to him in such a manner and Harry resisted leaning into the embrace.

Resisted turning around and looking into the troubling gaze a bleeding red that had no right being so human.

He mentally pleaded for the Dark Wizard to let his feet be striding upon reality, for this person to not be so very fantastical so that no matter how Harry might have realized the difference between past and present, he could not protect himself from being utterly overwhelmed. Perhaps he had bowed to the relentless longing already after so many deliberations and had come to accept the insistent words of Marvolo while nursing a lingering hurt. Perhaps he had expected the smug undertone of a conquering Dark Lord who would never accept faults to be wrought from his hand, would never apologize to even forever silenced victims, wouldn't regret and no matter that Marvolo had been persistently occupying all his attention, Harry had determined already to no more be passive.



Even if he had been knowingly oblivious to protect himself, a futile effort to let no more bonds be forged between two powerful beings lest they shatter the foundations of all that existed.

Futile indeed it had been, and a fool would only attempt again to expect a different result.

To let the glimpses into his life be exposed in such a manner had been difficult and vulnerability had Harry even more defensive than usual. Malice had crept into the fearful wizard, had demanded from Dark Lord the truth of which none had ever been confided to.

And the realization had Harry stunned and confused, but perhaps pleased as well. As well as a little ashamed, for never had he exploited a person so callously, so bluntly with none so regard but soon he had consoled himself that the Dark Wizard could hardly be surprised when this treatment was what he suffered to another.

No matter how convincing his cautious mind might have been, Harry was not so cruel to ignore the darkened glimpses of the crimson gaze.

But perhaps the most perplexing of it all had been when Marvolo had taken him to this deadly magical plant of Moonshade with such enthusiasm, yet had all but retreated within himself, not offering any valid explanation.

Harry had been understandably not so accepting of the once lovely flower once he had seen the dreadful massacre, couldn't stomach seeing innocent magical blood spilled. But he had been compassionate to all creatures, no matter their origins and the war had hardly increased the capability to withstand the end of any life.

But he had not been as repulsed as Marvolo assumed.

Because in the magical world, there are few plants that are not dangerous in one way or another. Whether to protect itself from being hunted or being consumed by predators, the majority of magical fauna carried a defense mechanism. Perhaps it stemmed from a need to protect itself from the ignorant muggles. After all, those were rather few in quantity and Magic must protect its own. They are dangerous in the sense to protect their heritage and encourage their offspring to live. Few examples could be taken: Devil's Snare, Babotuber, Mandrake. Some have no purpose whatsoever but are a nuisance all the same.

However, moonshade, a plant he had not been aware of earlier, seemed to be dangerous in a more malevolent manner. Few magical plants he could think of that actually ingested magical creatures. Sure many tricked and led creatures to their death. But an active consumption he had never known of. Considering how he was uncaring of all things potion, however, perhaps it was to be expected.

But the Dark Lord's reaction had been curious. The Moonshade had no redeeming quality that could excuse it of the intelligent viciousness. Harry had been horrified to see the glistening petals in the aftermath of a sated Moonshade, even more so when he realized that it must be the blood of the poor elves thus giving such a beautiful sheen. Seeing how it was perhaps used in not so redeeming manner, he could understand the general appalling interest any could have for this thing.

But he would never think that the dark nature of a Moonshade warranted execution of the worse kind, that it was no more deserving of existing than any other.

Thus he wondered, with the cold hand of Marvolo a constant reminder, whether the Dark Wizard had not empathized with the solitary bloom indeed. To be dark in nature, and forsaken thus by all, as a suspicious headmaster had once done. To be the only one to be trusted by self, and accepted irrespective of the true nature.

Perhaps Marvolo had found his crimson gaze reflected upon the vibrant petals and found the one thing who had been born as devoid of sympathy as he had been.

But Harry would never resent either one of them for existing.

He said nothing to the revelation that surely condemned countless many to their premature ends, but instead covered the joined hands with a lightest of faith and mere a pressure could he spare to hopefully convey what his throat refused to.

He let out a trembling gasp, when the dark head of Marvolo lowered down with rarest of acquiescence, as if the Dark Wizard borrowed strength from his quivering frame and Harry shut his eyes tightly at the quiet breaths that caress his nape as Marvolo rested the head upon his shoulders. The petrified hand would have fallen, but Marvolo didn't give him the opportunity.

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It was as well that his lovely companion was turned away from him, however in his grasp, for the vulnerability that shredded the imperturbable Dark Lord could not be forgiven. The light grip upon his cherished one tightened further, let the pliant body be pressed so very indecently to his body and he cared naught for the increasing shivers stirring his captive.

Marvolo remained bowed upon the so very forgiving neck, the rapid pulses of which he could so easily stroke but resisted, as he let his internal struggles dissipate slowly, stretched as he was within his mind, unable to gather coherency. But the submission of his beautiful intended more than grounded him, an anchor the Dark Lord almost recoiled from; such a weakness, such a vulnerability.

Unforgivable and yet inescapable.

Unable to quell the urge, he inhaled the sweet scent of *Hadrian* from the pale curve that sheltered him so, the lightness permeating his senses.

“Forgive me.”

The supple body in his arms stiffened with surprise and Marvolo let his overwhelmed self be suffused in his ultimate need.

*‘Forgive me for hurting you.’*

*‘Forgive me for I can never return your kindness.’*

Because he had tried, had he not? To rest the choices however small, however excruciating the distance had been. He had tried to honor thus, the beseeching green eyes however he could, for normality is but an illusion upon the twisted reality.

For however much respect Hadrian might invoke, nothing shall forestall the inevitable.

*'Never let you go.'*

"How I have missed you."

His Hadrian was pliant in his hold; the slim hand clenched his arm with resigned acceptance.

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## Chapter End Notes

My dearest readers, first of all ,yea I probably broke my record of longest chapter. At this point, apologies are mute anyway. So I am sorry, or not sorry depending on how you take it. I have recently taken to binge eating manga and shounen-ai anime, so mostly my imagination had been running around chibi harry and cute head tilts and big manga eyes. I tried very hard not to let it affect my writing.

Now, for tiny trivias: Rosier was said to be one of the original death eaters, I took that one from canon. The name Wilfred however I coined. It means desiring peace and felt ironical I guess? the vicet spell- I sort of made it from the latin verb Vicis meaning part and est. It divides your target evenly, a very mild spell.

I admit, I was a little disappointed with the responses lately. But that's ok! The ones that do review are so heartwarmingly beautiful and detailed, I need only visit my inbox to be inspired. Loves to everyone who has left kudos, subscribed or left a comment. Leave behind a review if you have a question. Leave behind a review if you feel like running behind after my darlings screaming kawaii. Leave one even if you don't. :)  
See you next chapter

# For The Ashes To Burst New Life

## Chapter Summary

The fragrance of a rose entices one never to mind the malice beneath the lovely petals. The love of a rose is deceptively gentle, viciously retributive. And the poor fool who must rise so eagerly for the crimson caresses, should heed that the stain is not from his own blood.

## Chapter Notes

It has been a long time. Aaaanyway the chapter got out of hand( you will see just how much...). I tried damage control, unfortunately even see where my story has gotten to. Apologies to everyone. I am not sure my readers are still there, but hi!!

This story is long. Longer than the rest. Seems to be the first thing I say every time. I will warn one more time still. It is loooong..

The usual disclaimers apply and I am so very sorry that I can't push my lovely darlings into a closet together.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Atop a mountain of no particular importance tottered a proud stone castle raising its impatient turrets as if to grasp the sky, absurdly preternatural in its sprawled abandon and mended thus by magic alone. Perhaps it could not satisfy its ambitious sighs of reaching the stars; but clouds did frost the four towers guarding each horizon.

No matter its strive to conquer, it did not per say linger upon the hazardous cliff that overlooked the subterranean Scottish moor- didn't quite dare; instead there was a stumbling path to be had that led from the side entrance of the castle to the edge. Few pillars were thrown rather randomly around the winding path around protruding stones, as if the citadel meant to lay claim upon the high drop no matter the caution.

The castle was of a long and impressive history, few bloody trails even leading away from the otherwise noble ancestry. At least that was what Harry had gathered from the avid tales of long buried dead that had been whispered to him by Marvolo. There was a reason he had been taken to this castle, he was sure; an abandoned hospitality carrying the erstwhile footfalls that still resounded in the corridors. He was sure that it must have been very interesting.

But they had sounded so impersonal, as if quoted from archives of purebloods and the cool words had instead been lost to the wind as Harry was far more committed with gleaning the tales of his curious companion.

They were not exploring the castle. Instead somewhere along the way they had broken away from the ruin and walked along the narrow path to stand over the very precarious cliff. Sometimes they would lean against the dilapidated pillars dotting that place, sometimes Harry would swing his legs over the perilous high with the much disapproving look directed at him and the very reckless wizard would laugh at the scarlet gleam that would have terrified many( *should have terrified this one as well* ).

Once or twice he had opened his mouth to ask Marvolo the reason for these excursions. Beautiful they might be, these places of unnatural beauty and delight the Dark Wizard spoiled him with, they also perplexed him to no end with how much *he* must take his comfort into consideration. There could have been no debate that they *were* meant for the amusement of one wizard; after all had not the man admitted his general disinclination towards flying overall or even the so called pureblood indulgences. They were very thoughtful as well, taking careful note not to involve any other person lest they weary his mind.

But perhaps that which had burdened his heart the heaviest were the ones where Marvolo did take him to the places the Dark Wizard truly cared for. And it was not the beauty which had arrested him, but the rarest shade that fell upon the truth of *Marvolo's* soul.

The questions thus scratched, curious and afraid, in the back of his mind. And they lingered so shy in the back of his throat, choking him with the indelible want to know, flinching away at the thought that Marvolo was perhaps treating their time together as the rarity it truly was. That the man was ever so keen in showing him everything worthy to make this world unforgettable and beautiful, a silent gesture so that Harry might not forsake it quite so readily.

Forsake *him* quite so easily.

Whether or not that was the intention of this wizard, he didn't know. Perhaps he was overstating his own significance to this wizard. Perhaps he was merely an objective that *could be* an asset in *his* war. Or might the man have taken himself to be a gracious host of this new world, this land known yet not quite, deigning his company to soothe his melancholy? It did not matter because the thought of leaving had, *somehow* , started to become oddly painful, an otherwise weight upon his longing for *home* .

So he chose not to dwell on it. Tried not to think of the *probability* , the fatalistic *knowledge*, one that should have been a determined drive instead of this... Because somehow...

Going *home* seemed to be as much nostalgic as agonizing.

( *why* )

So he chose to stay at this moment. With this person.

It was not difficult either...to be lost...to be so *absorbed* . But unlike so many who got intoxicated in the seductive power and their greed for it, or those who got swayed by the

classically striking features and their lust for it; Harry was absorbed in the being that was *Marvolo* .

Marvolo who was brilliant like no other he had known. He had of course *known* this objectively, but had not quite allowed himself to truly understand. The melancholic wizard was reminded of a very clever friend of his, whose name he could hardly bear in the presence of this Dark Lord without the deadened weight of guilt off-setting his tranquillity.

But Marvolo was more than clever, more than a very intelligent wizard who should have been a Ravenclaw instead of Slytherin. While the man might favour books, due to the powerful knowledge it might offer, they had been a mere tool for him. Marvolo had not allowed them to cripple his brilliance as many had, hadn't cared to for he *understood* Magic as few ever did. This extraordinary person traipsed through intricate magical applications with an enviable instinct.

Marvolo, who was proclaimed to be the most powerful wizard in his time and yet Harry was coming to realize that it was not the sheer intensity of power alone that made him so formidable. He had been *thrilled* to find a person who wielded magic in such a manner, who didn't stick to the laid out laws of magic; one that would empathize with his own atypical handling.

He could *talk* to this person, without simply being talked to.

Marvolo was insatiable in his curiosity. It had not only been the thirst for power that had driven him to the Magic Forbidden, but a deep scholarly inquisitiveness combined with the ever condemning arrogance in self.

Harry didn't turn away from either of the facets of his companion uncovered so timidly.

He would listen with rapt fascinations instead as his companion spoke with quite the mouth of a storyteller; of the impromptu adventures in the deserts and the cultural shocks in the deep east end of the world.

He never even attempted a posture of feigned disinterest. Instead, his eyes were bright with humour and his magic purred with lethargy.

"Were you really in the Oriental countries?"

Marvolo hadn't denied the honest curiosity of his companion, "I was. You seem particularly interested in them."

Harry had nodded happily. They had been sitting rather inadvertently down on the fragile crops of weeds that surrounded the nearby pillars, resting against them so conveniently, but Harry had leaned forward to better present his enthusiasm.

"As the ambassador of my *land* , fortunately or unfortunately depending upon the individual, I met a bunch of interesting people. Including one representative of the Eastern Kingdoms. However unlike with others I had no opportunity to experience their culture first hand. So, *tell* me."

The dark wizard had chuckled, the mirth a brilliant transformation upon cruel features that the thrums of his pulse couldn't familiarize with, "They were particularly famous with precise spell crafting. Unlike the Europeans, however, they are relaxed with magical Arts. That is to say the muggles are not inclined to condemn each and every hint of magic they can find. So the ruling Monarch is normally relaxed in the need to uphold the Secrecy as rigidly. They use their magic in a different manner however. If you are planning to face a Sorcerer of Eastern origin, make sure to put particular attention to powerful shielding, because they are very accurate and *very* empathetic in their casting."

Harry had laughed, the sound carrying away to the mountains, "Why do I feel like you found that out the hard way?"

Strong wind blew in their faces, carrying a nip in caprice and Harry swept the fringe away from his eyes for the umpteenth time.

The two wizards lost their voices to each other and to the wind, shifted and fidgeted, but neither focused away from the other.

There had been no reason to help him down the stone spaced path when they finally deigned to descend no reason for the hands to interlink and lead into the castle, but Marvolo pretended to act very much chivalrous and Harry through narrow-eyed annoyance at being treated thus didn't refuse him.

Even if he shouldn't tolerate having his pulse seized in another's mercy for long.

Harry slowed his steps as Marvolo navigated the long corridors to return to the entryway. He had not cared before, absorbed as he had been in his companion, but now he could hear the walls whispering decades old laughter and cries. Like so many magical abodes, this castle had inhaled the essence of its inhabitants and Harry realized in the grooves upon protruding brattices that the abandoned place was still in mourning.

"Who lived here again?"

Marvolo paused where he had strode ahead and waited as Harry slowly covered their distance. Then only the wizard resumed his walk, but slower.

"The Edeirnions." Harry looked up curious at the unheard name, but Marvolo was staring straight ahead, "They were once a very influential family. *Very* influential, as you can assume from the Castle. Of course generations of power didn't matter when the entire family chose to follow a Lord with least sense of preservation."

Harry could agree on the influence, because from the architecture it was evident that the family had lived decades, perhaps centuries ago even. To have been capable of indulging in a castle of frivolous space was surely either an evidence of power or insanity. Carrying magic might have leeway for both of the possibilities, but Harry believed the stoic tone of his companion.

As his eyes travelled up to trace the high archways and the caricatures upon the ceiling, he couldn't help but be reminded of another noble family who had descended into notoriety

because they had chosen to cater to a megalomaniac Dark Lord; one that had been so assured in their arrogance and when the war had ended there had been broken pride littering instead.

Now when Marvolo had spoken of the late lineage with such fervent disdain, Harry wondered if the Slytherin heir despised them for the simple reason that they had lost in whichever gamble of life they had played.

He waited a while, but when no words were forthcoming he had to prompt the other,” Marvolo?”

“House Edeirnion followed the Lord of the northern islands, one of many who at that time governed over smaller pieces of the Isles. It was the time before even the Wizarding Council was founded. I can say that this history in particular was hosted around the early 7th century. There were no absolute government, no absolute power but many powerful families had seized the obedience of vassal houses by favours: financial or otherwise. At that time power more or less referred to how many houses one could boast of. As you can see, if a vassal family is as influential as Edeirnion, how proud the governing Lord might be.”

They had reached a large gallery room where instead of portraits; there were stone carvings of stern Lords and demurring Ladies. Marvolo paused, looking over the legacy eternally etched but no descendants to bequeath it to. This was another evidence of the antiquity of the place, to have flourished before a time when magical portraits were invented.

“Of course conflict was to be had wherever greed concentrated- wherever power reigned. No Lord could boast of a long inheritance of reign and often they fell to their hubris. When the northern Lord of their time was overpowered by usurpers, everything that belonged to the defeated one was surrendered to the Victor. Except of course House Edeirnion. They refused. Perhaps they didn’t approve of their new Lord, perhaps they were far too loyal. Whichever the reason, the head of the house challenged the new Lord and they duelled to the end. But still they didn’t surrender. One by one each member declared their defiance until none survived. Even the younger ones, of ten odd years, followed in the elders’ path.

*Oh .*

Harry looked at the proud faces and understood why the house would mourn them in such a manner when time had eroded the sprawling castle to such devastation.

Marvolo came to stand by his side, the cold face showing only disdain over such foolish actions; but Harry didn’t speak immediately, overwhelmed as he was.

*An entire family walking to their death.*

They stood in silence as Harry looked over with alternate sorrow and delight at the small etchings describing the carved figure. Sometime later he could feel that Marvolo had switched the attention from the gallery to his face and Harry bit the inside of his cheek in silent recognition but didn’t acknowledge otherwise.

A small smile played upon his lips as he traced the words beneath another proud Pater familia: ‘ *ad honorem* ’ .



“Maybe for them, preserving one’s dignity was more important than self-preservation. They lived by honour. So, they chose death instead of a life full of shame and regret.” Harry spoke as much as a reply as a statement.

“To the end that they would allow their families to be destroyed? They could have waited, even escaped if they were so afraid of condemnation, if they were so horrified at the new Lord. In a new land where no one would be present to scorn them. Now what remains of them is a couple of dilapidated walls as relics and no one even remembers their names.”

There was a sneer on the thin lips and repugnance in the features that seemed so pale, that would be surely as icy cold to touch as the long fingers had been. Harry averted his face rapidly, unwilling to draw upon why exactly he had been so inclined to find out if it would indeed be so.

Open condescension would be all that one would know while gazing upon this aloof wizard but Harry took a step farther, not caring should his feet encounter quicksand and drown upon oblivion, and saw the sheer perplexity of the Dark Lord at the human nuance, the incomprehension thus as he witnessed the consequence of emotions.

Whichever reasoning that would lead one to *choose* death over life.

The Dark Wizard had hardly bared the truth of the emptiness in his soul, hardly would he dare let himself be vulnerable in such a manner no matter the person, but Harry saw nonetheless and instead of recoil, the empathetic wizard was compelled to sooth the ache the void must bring. For a moment his hand lifted as if to offer the turbulent emotions throttling him, to compensate for what the other lacked and the need was such that Harry had to forcibly step away.

So his passionate words attempted to embed where *he* couldn’t...couldn’t let himself, “No one other than their own reflection, that would be the worst fate for them, I think. It would be a half life, a *cursed* life. How can one bear to live in such a manner where they must die a little every day? “

*Someone* had, in another time, in another *life*. A time when the person he knew as Marvolo existed no more, only a condemned creature did. Assured in his immortality and yet fearful even as he had attempted to eliminate all threats to his life, created safeguards in the cost of his soul and humanity, but in truth had merely inched forward to Death’s claim.

Now the same fear somehow writhed upon him, fear that one day this brilliant Dark Wizard would lose himself to insanity as well. And, *oh* , for a moment he was besieged with the idea to drag his companion away with him lest time erode this brilliant person to a mere distorted reflection. Shaken by the powerful desire, Harry twirled a shaking hand through his sleeves, letting them be occupied for fear that they reach forward.

“Is the honour worth letting their family be sacrificed for? I cannot comprehend it.”

His breath hitched, the words far too close to comfort. And he couldn’t...

“Sometimes I don’t either.” Marvolo looked at him slightly baffled. Harry smiled, tainted with harsh memories, “I don’t understand it when people choose to walk away from their families into the war without looking back. When they choose to forget the newborn at home because they must fight for their belief, or when they happily abandon their family for that. They say it is for the sake of a better future and yet they have brought those very innocent into such conflict, have they not? I can’t *bear* it. Except to accept and hope...”

His words were imbued by bitter memories of old and he wondered if the Dark Wizard cared for the odd inflections.

So he blushed lightly, at how self-absorbed he had been and turned to the scarlet off eyes,” But that is my prerogative, I digress. What I meant was that to survive didn’t imply living. I can’t say that it was right of the Head of this House to let his family be destroyed for the sake of a concept. In the end however it was their choice, wasn’t it? That was what made them human, flawed or perfect, instead of mindless beasts incapable of anything except surviving.”

His words were swirling muddles, as was the effort to persist on the present issue so as to rouse no suspicion while hoping that the Dark Lord should *understand* .

He didn’t know when the notion of an insane Dark Lord meant for him less the horrifying history to follow, but rather the agony of that soul forced to split again. He didn’t know when the sorrow for this person had started to monopolize his attention, but as such the Gryffindor couldn’t help but act as he had always done. What his dear friend had once referred to as a bleeding heart, what one Dark Lord had scoffed as quite foolish sentiments.

So he couldn’t help but insist, couldn’t help but unflinchingly plead at the surprised Marvolo of the dire consequence that must be, couldn’t help but impart the understanding of emotions.

And with as much urgency he almost stepped back, for emotions did flicker in the inhuman gaze and they spoke of a threadbare control, of the anticipatory stance of a serpent moments before it must wind the noxious scales around the prey. The hooded shadows rose swiftly and fingers so *gentle* , traced the blood that rose upon his cheeks in discomfort.

“You are far too passionate in defence of a people you hadn’t heard of until few moments before, sweet one.”

Harry tried not to let the guilt flare, but be it in the downturned lashes or the parting of lips the expressive wizard could no more suppress his true emotions than the other could *feel* them.

Marvolo chuckled and Harry felt indignant when the former wound a persistent limb around his waist, and soon that annoyance too drowned when he was confronted with a face that spoke as much of wonder as it clearly did of hunger.

“Go on then. Tell me what you think about them.”

Was this a thinly veiled challenge issued forth that he might not speak his mind when the abominable wizard idly twirled a strand of his long hair, that his voice might stutter when the icy hand caressed a single point on his spine?

The truth of his breathlessness didn't matter and with narrowed mouth he swallowed his gasps lest he stumble," I think I have no right to judge when I may or may not have all the facts. The head of the house might have acted based on his personal pride but even after that the others didn't have to follow his path in such a manner. They were loyal, and...and" Harry inhaled a little as the gentle finger dipped onto his nape." I can't help but respect them. And if it is indeed the truth, they must have been so brave walking to their end, without even knowing what might await them. That is the true strength of a soul, I feel."

Harry might have drifted quite far, aspiring as he did to inspire the same emotions in the Dark Wizard however passively. So he spoke, with righteous fire in his words, imploring and needing, until he quite realized he had carried on far too long and with an admonishing nip to the inside of his mouth, he stilled his diatribe.

Bravely did the Gryffindor rise up to meet the Medusa gaze and asked," What do you think? Do you still think of the fact they had chosen other attributes instead of self-preservation as a weakness?"

"Oh, I dare not. How can I, when you stand as their bolstered champion?"

Harry scowled at the mocking drawl and ignorant, or perhaps uncaring, of the sibilant croons surrounding him, and the previously limp hands rose to push at the arrogant body.

But this person was not just arrogant, was he? The dark wizard was opportunistic, heeding of the favours that destiny might abandon beside his path and very much ravenous to partake each and every prospect at unsettling the younger wizard.

So suddenly the green ire shifted to paralyzed ache, when the involuntarily offered hand was taken into a grasp and cold breath traced the blue veins, reverberations of which travelled along his hysterical pulse.

Astonished and alarmed, the wizard of untainted virtue tried pulling the hand back from the tight grip of the other but before he could whisper a yelp at the constricting hold, Marvolo thought aloud, an amused gaze alight upon his struggle," I find that, I don't care very much for these..hmm..noble attributes. Or more precisely, I don't care for these outstanding examples of Wizards and witches. The fact that they sacrificed so much for the sake of honour doesn't impress me. That they chose pride over survival is not something that will matter too much in few moment's past. If you were trying to convert me with such an enthusiastic debate, it was a poor waste of time on your part."

Had he been so very much idealistic as to assume that the Dark Lord would certainly feel sympathy, perhaps a modicum of pity, when years long human association had hardly matter any? Perhaps so. He might have hoped in vain, but surely this was better than as the path an old Headmaster had once chosen: of merely accepting what he considered inevitable.

And Harry dared not think, dared not accept that the future was inevitable after all. That this charming wizard would no more smile out of sheer pleasure alone, that this wizard would no more be perplexing and vexing and in his entirety a fond chaotic mess. Harry dared not imagine that he would lose this person so surely to a future as the history undoubtedly would be quilled with inkpots coloured crimson.

So he might have started to tentatively care for this troublesome wizard, who had slithered so into his bloodstream.

*(When had this started, this foolish hope of his soul.)*

So he might be minutely anxious over the relative well-being of Marvolo and *of course* all his efforts would be returned with ridicule.

Temper flared and eyes narrowed. Green eyes weren't the least amused but didn't choose to hide from the dishonesty even if Harry felt mortified thus at the callous words, "What about your time then? Wasn't that a waste as well?"

He was not going to apologize for that even if the tedious man did admit to such. He was not...

"Don't be offended so, dearest one." And his irritation melted quick when the arrogant stance of the wizard, who embraced him sans no permission, gentled so and the previously frenzied heartbeat *fluttered* as Marvolo softly brushed few of his fringes away." It can never be a waste of time to be with you, to see the fire blaze so pretty in your eyes. Of course I am grateful, for now I can perhaps understand their objectives a little better. I suppose however, your intention had been to more than make me understand in which you failed."

Marvolo smiled and cupped his face so tenderly, Harry grasped his robes desperate for a sense of stability and the man cooed to him, sweet and enticing, "You are the only one I see. The only one I would ever *care* to see. My lovely one, you would lend me your warmth wouldn't you? The passion that burns so fiery in your soul."

His eyes burned unexpectedly, his chest tightened considerably and Harry felt the shortness in his breath as he thought of the ramification.

Yet he fought still as he felt the threat to be devoured thus as the avaricious creature sought to dispel the cold in the withered soul by drowning in another. He fought still, brave and stubborn, "Why?"

The Dark Wizard hummed, letting each touch imprint upon his burning skin, "I don't know."

*And wasn't that a mystery still.*

"For a long time I thought you were in possession of a rare enchantment, to commend my attention in this manner. But you don't appear to have that kind of self-destructive tendency." His loveliest creature frowned and scowled at the assumption and Marvolo soothed his indignant treasure, dazed still as he was in the softness of the enviable flesh.

Did his innocent beauty truly understand the significance of his admission? He had not lied to sweet Hadrian earlier, but perhaps the wizard had not understood the sheer extent of it. Marvolo had always found human emotions deplorable, a hindrance from reaching the pinnacle of glory. Perhaps it was his brilliance that set him aside, or the natural apathy but he had lost interest in ever indulging them. Soon he had started to fail in understanding them as well.

But, of course, then Hadrian had blazed into his life, his antithesis in every way, everything he was not and he would never be. Yet it had only serve to enrapture him more.

The sweet twists at each expression that the lovely one could never hide with indifference, the unearthly smoulder in those exotic eyes, each enthralled him and he never forbore to caution the other consequences of such interest.

*Which should not have been possible in the first place.*

Most of all, however, before he had watched the creature with such transparency light with the brilliance of his soul , he had never realized the emptiness of his own. Never had he been so aware of what he was not and perhaps such was the subconscious desire to see the world as he never could, had been what prompted him to bring Hadrian to this place.

To whence the lingering remnants of foolishness warned of others the consequence of being so very noble.

He had been here before, wondering and never understanding, never caring, just as it had never mattered the empty shells of other people shuffling by, a monochromatic world that he had already been so apathetic of. Until Hadrian that is.

Perhaps he had, subconsciously, wished to borrow the eyes of this beautiful creature.

However his intended purpose had resulted in nothing but reinforcing the knowledge that while the colours would blaze in the exotic shade of green, he himself could never be affected thus.

He could only possess this creature of irresistible charm.

Could only adore...gasp in the essence...let himself drown... He inhaled the timid fragrance from the unruly darkness.

His creature was trembling in his arms already, and he wished to purr in contentment, but made himself placid with soothing touches upon the dark hair, down the pale skin and he asked, truly curious, ““What do you believe in, my Hadrian?”

Lost he might be in gross uncertainty, Harry still maintained his composure to shake the fog off of this presence and answered to his pseudo-identity without hesitation, “I beg your pardon?”

“When you were speaking so enthusiastically of the...ancient wizards, you were respectful but didn’t speak of your prerogative. And now, I wonder what is it that *you* believe in.”

Harry mused under the heavy weight of the curious hands around his waist, questing and wondrous and the wizard didn’t pause to think of the familiarity in the touches that had his magic utterly unconcerned, ached as he did when the old scars in his heart bled again.

Surprised thus Harry opened his mouth, but was unable to find a suitable reply. What did he believe in? Years long he had fought and struggled, had he not? For survival? Perhaps it had started out so, but then, where had he lost himself?

When the answer did make itself known, Harry longed for the warmth of a fire to counter the sudden cold that offset him.

And he never realized how with a shudder he had moved closer to one whose core was scorching *cold*. . *should never be able to soothe and console...*

With a hum, the hand on the small of his back pressed delightedly closer.

“I don’t know. Far too long I have protected others’ beliefs. Now, though...”

With a far way look, Harry could no longer see the face of a survivor or even an accomplished Gryffindor. Only the unsure look of a child still ignorant of his place in the world.

Beyond them, the sky darkened promisingly and heavy moisture clogged the air. So high a place, the cold got harsher, and the stone castle attempted to warm as it had once done before chill overwhelmed it.

*He wanted to despise the man who looked at him with blank curiosity, unheeding of the bruises he thus revived.*

“Once I believed in family, to protect and preserve.”

*He wanted to loathe, but the Dark Lord he had once known had been so very scornful of warmth that was the mind of Harry Potter, unguarded for wilful invasion. Voldemort had loathed any form of sentiments and everything that had come with it.*

“And now?”

*Marvolo however, even with tainted magic and fractured soul, merely didn’t care for the banal human frailty until it came to Hadrian.*

“I don’t know.”

*No, Marvolo actively sought out his dearly coveted memories. Reminding Harry of the crippling loneliness instead, both past and present.*

Harry should spurn him for that, but the wizard conveniently remained in a place to put him back together after he had been shattered to pieces.

And the wizard was starting to lose himself in a sea of uncertainties.

But perhaps this was progress, after all Voldemort had not endured the raw pour of emotions at all, yet Marvolo was hardly repulsed. So perhaps it was alright, and Harry dared not think whether everything he was would be devoured as the avaricious creature sought to dispel the cold in the soul.

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Harry James Potter was no stranger to blind adulation. As the boy who survived the Dark Lord and later as the man who had been the saviour of the Wizarding world, he had been venerated judiciously in the magical isles of Britain and even further. In his capacity of councillor and ambassador of the Wizarding world, he had the opportunity to greet many from foreign lands, beyond the reach of his home. Even when his fame had often preceded him those carrying light scepticism quickly found him desirable.

But no matter, Harry had seen the lust for power in their eyes. He had known that his entire worth had been restricted to the faded mark on his forehead.

So he had been worshipped so very often, desired and courted, that Harry found himself entirely detached. After all, those covetous glances had been reserved for the man who vanquished the Dark Lord, not the young wizard scarred and so very dubious of every helping hand.

Those outstretched hands had longed for his power, and beseeching eyes had strayed far too often to his forehead.

And Harry had felt naught in the seductive murmurs or the teasing touches, for they had not been meant for him after all.

Thus *these* sensations wrought upon him were entirely unknown, far too overwhelming. They left him with sensitized skin upon which memories of a light stroke still prevailed, upon which the scorching gaze of this unfathomable person left behind gasping impression.

Harry had resigned himself to the presence of the Dark Lord in his life, however long he must linger in this timeline, with reluctance and strange anticipation. He could hardly resent his ultimate decision to yield somewhat to the insistent wizard, when the man was a veritable archive in knowledge and magic, much more brilliant than any he had encountered in his life.

It would have been so much more convenient, if that was all Harry must find himself enthralled with. But the fascination hadn't ceased to be a mere clinical interest.

It could have been afforded as well to find Marvolo as a very sufficient companion, temperamental and often contrary perhaps, but very much attentive.

But they would never be *friends*, comfortable with each other's presence and loyal.

They could not be, for mere proximity ignited havoc in their very essence, tuned finely with the yearning in the other's soul. They could not stay side by side and fill the silence with simple company with thoughts allowed to dwell on other else than the one beside. Their magic would never settle in serenity while the other's magic must hover predatorily.

They could not cultivate something as precious and beautiful as friendship.

*They were far too aware of each other.*

And Harry wished, how he wished, that it would not be so. That his heart would not palpitate at every attention Marvolo lavished upon him, that his core would not feel so cherished and

adored by this Dark Wizard.

He wished so, that the Dark wizard would not caress his face with such reverence in the cold eyes, that Marvolo would not hush his often reluctant demeanour with croons liberal with endearments. And he wished so, that the dark magic would not be so attentive to his every movement.

That Marvolo would cease the wilful eyes with which he must leave behind faint shivers in the wake of a questing hand.

And he wished so, that his *own* eyes would not be so called to attention by the charismatic features that were at once beautiful and terrible, that he would not be enthralled so with this gorgeous creature with the soul of a monster and the mind of a brilliant wizard, of endless facets that left him curious to uncover more. He should be inclined to horror rather than be so fascinated at the endless faces unwinding gradually as time trailed past.

He wished, thus, that it was not a sigh of belonging with which every embrace of the Dark Wizard was reciprocated with, that even the hard tone of that physique should not so resonate with yearning, replaced from the unyielding bars of a cage he had once been so frightened of. That he would not desire so the worshipful gestures of this Dark Wizard.

Illusions they must be, borne of desperation of a lost soul. Despicable he must be, to seek solace thus in the arms of this wizard, deceitful however intriguing.

Fantastic ways that could be once desired so, but strangely in the truth of two wizards, one sly in manners of manipulating loyalty and the other longing for the safety of home.

It was this conviction that occasionally muted the yearning to share all of import with this wizard, who was rapidly threatening the contour of his heart. Marvolo said naught when Harry was silent in matters close to his heart and the silence rang on either end sharper than any world could have dared.

He wished for the yearning to dissipate as Marvolo would swiftly change the topic; another reigniting of wrathful debate.

Harry was able to carve a piece of his smoked Salmon. 'Twas the fact that he was *able* to pay any attention to his plate without any interruptions that he raised an inquiring, if slightly teasing, brow.

Very rarely was he permitted to indulge in the meal without the Dark Wizard arresting his entire attention with conversation of a questing nature. Harry didn't begrudge this, while the food was an infinitely better choice than the continuous pepper up potions he had been inhaling lately, it could never be prioritized over his companion.

Marvolo smiled in fond acknowledgement, but no repentance.

"I am wondering, if I could persuade you for a favour."

"You won't know until you are brave enough to try."



They had spoken of many things: some seemingly secrets to be whispered, others of sweet aftertaste. They had spoken lightly of the Hogwarts houses, with Harry contributing none beyond the assumption that Marvolo had still believed he had not been to the famed castle for his education. Marvolo had not spoken of his personal experiences which Harry hadn't begrudged him about; after all home was always quite a sensitive issue to be had and Harry had *hardly* been generous with topics of the heart to demand any such. The Dark Wizard had instead chosen to float on casual matters, and Harry had inferred many a thing from the light tones ( *through the sly knowledge of another time* ) and a general disapproval towards the house of bravery had been one of them.

And like every time, Marvolo was momentarily surprised at his observation; the ease with which Harry noted the crease of his tone, disdain or otherwise. Perhaps as surprised as Harry, who could never claim to be to the most insightful wizard when it came to expressions and understanding.

But unlike other times, Marvolo merely allowed an amused glance and hummed around Wiltshire firm steak (pride of the chef of this place).

"I admit, I myself am not terribly enthusiastic about this either."

Harry let his gaze upon the silverware stall his instant reply. He wondered, quite clinically, of the matter that made this confident wizard dither in this manner.

"I have never known you to be less than straight-forward in any way, Marvolo."

Was that not something that startled him every single time? For someone who treaded carefully on a path sprinkled liberally with lies old and new, deceptions spiralling long since his birth, it had been breath-taking to have such a person who made his wishes so very vocal. Perhaps there would be indolent traps still dilating along his path. Harry could hardly dare to trust the scarlet hues of indomitable intentions, but Marvolo never denied his sly nature either.

It had been comfortable...in an odd manner.

So, this pondering managed to unsettle the Gryffindor.

"There has been an invitation to a Masquerade ball, hosted by a friendly acquaintance of mine. I would like you to come with me."

Whatever Marvolo might have expected, it was not the sudden fleeing of all expressions from his companion's face. It must have worried him some, but the man remained placid.

"May I?"

"Of course."

Marvolo placed the gleaming white envelope upon the table.

The calligraphy upon it was bold and beautiful, if very much succinct.

Harry had a sudden impulse to laugh. Was it not fitting that he should think of the possibility to trust this person, and have the truth reminded to him in such a stark manner?

“A friendly acquaintance you say?”

*They prided themselves on being the closest friends to Lord Voldemort. But the Dark Lord didn't have friends, only acquaintances.*

***Servants .***

“Are you going to run into any of your *friendly* acquaintances there?”

“Perhaps.”

Did the man realize the storm embroiling in his soul thus, of the fury claiming his rationality thus, fury that was a warmth against the hurt in his chest?

Maybe he saw only the flame sparking in his forced calm facade, for he could feel the answering pulse of violent strength from the dark magic as well.

His fingers trembled almost at the strength with which he restrained himself and merely nodded in acquiescence.

“There doesn't seem to be any details of the events in this invitation.”

The invitation had been from the illustrious house of Abraxas *Malfoy* and Harry stilled his shiver at the unwanted memories, allowing them to coax his fury instead.

Marvolo was absolutely attentive to him, the tension having stilled his movements however, “The schedule shall appear after I have signed my acceptance.”

Harry spoke still so calmly, the wretched anger gnashing in his teeth.

“That is a lot of precaution considering it is a social event, or is it a private one?”

“It is a social call at their house. The invitation might have been sent to many, if nothing but for social obligation but not all will accept it. In the end this will be one among selected few.”

He snorted, derision seeping out ever so slightly, “Is that not an honour, afforded to me, considering I don't think my presence will be anticipated.” Marvolo exhaled lightly and with an infuriated patience Harry waited for the answer. When he did reply, Harry was slightly startled at the honest request.

“Why don't you tell me what you are thinking about, hmm? Then perhaps we might think of the nuances.”

And the irascible Gryffindor, wounded and defensive, didn't disappoint the expectant Dark Lord.

“Why don’t you tell me what is *your* true intention with this? Perhaps *this* time you will favour the truth instead of trying to mellow me with charming words and expensive excursions. My opinion of you won’t change, but at least you would have known that all such efforts would be *wasted* .”

The damnable man laid a thoughtful face on interlinked fingers and watched him with fallen lids, “What exactly justified this reaction? I admit I am confused when I have done nothing except to ask you to be my companion at a social event.”

The wizard might have continued more, but Harry could hear no more the tranquillity in that low voice, when rage brewed thus in his vein, a strange ache making itself known. But Harry waved away the melancholic hurt with a pursuit of fury.

“Yes, to an event to make me familiar with all your dear *friends* .” Marvolo might have stiffened and Harry never felt triumphant at that admission, “Are you truly saying that it had not been your intention all along? You took such great care that we would be interrupted by no wizards at any time we went out and now suddenly you have deemed your friends, of whom I know nothing by the way, are people I can bear? You might have been someone I had come to tolerate, but clearly I trusted far too soon. Just because I didn’t turn you away, just because I didn’t curse you outright doesn’t mean you have the right to dictate anything in my life. To have the audacity to assume you can include me in your circle of *friends* , of a particular magical inclination. I am not a pureblood! Just because I follow a few traditions does *not* make me a traditional. And I definitely am not sharing the views of yours or your exalted friends! I might not have protested as one should at your Dark Magic (and I can feel it), it doesn’t make *me* malleable. I let you stay because I *could* , not because I had to. Don’t take it as my weakness, as your right to command me.”

“Which I never did!” Marvolo stood up as well with a rough gesture, the creamy table cover finally scrambling down at the violent movement. Harry took a startled step back even as he realized that some time during his tirade he had risen to his feet, pushing his chair screeching back.

Cold fury burnt in the cruel eyes and Harry didn’t avert his eyes, furious and rightfully stubborn.

Marvolo hissed, not quite Parseltongue but the anger lisping through frighteningly clenched teeth, “I never took your compassion as your weakness, but something of a blessing. If nothing because it enabled me to have your attention. It is true that I can never share your interest with any, never bear that any other look upon your face and the precise reason I even considered this proposal is because the invitation is to a masquerade. Your identity is entirely at your discretion and I could have ensured your physical security.

But that is not the concern here, is it? Time and again I have tolerated all your distrusts, all the suspicions. At first it might have amused me, your suspicion of me as the evil *incarnate* , your automatic rejection due to my Dark Magic. Far too long I have bore it; far too often I have defended myself. I will never say I am benevolent, but I won’t any more accept such blind accusations where I *must* remain the villain on account of nothing except my Dark Magic. So much so that even the insinuation of being any closer to me is so *loathing* to you.

Speaking of my friends, as you are so adamant not to be included as one, you shall never have the *misfortune* of meeting them if that is your will. It was a *suggestion* , but clearly I overstepped my boundaries with simple words.”

Marvolo took a deep breath and lifted his hand from the damaged table that had had burning imprints carved onto them. The contents of the table were strewn upon the floor and the heaviness in the air dissipated slowly. Harry watched with increasing horror when the wizard grimaced at the blisters that had covered the palms. The Dark Lord murmured and the evidence dissipated as swiftly as his rage apparently did.

With a cool glance directed at him, the man finished calmly, “Forgive me for interrupting your lunch. I will escort you to the Ridge after you are finished.”

And Harry couldn’t quite speak through his clogged mouth, couldn’t protest otherwise when Marvolo demanded another intact plate for him and a glass of wine.

The man didn’t walk away from the table, nor did he sit stiffly while sipping the wine. No, outwardly the man remained entirely composed, swirling the wine glass while looking out the opaque glass that he must bemoan now.

It was Harry who was entirely uncomfortable.

He had...jumped into conclusions. In hindsight perhaps he had done so eagerly, the instinct to escape this Wizard still remaining strong. It had not been pleasant, harbouring the suspicion and acting so harsh, the mere possibility of it being truth had raced burning poison through his vein.

Not to speak of the very names of the ones who had once paraded with half cold masks of bone white still cautioned him so. He might have approached them in a manner neutral after the war, but in this time, in this place, where the anarchy bided its reign, where his own importance to this wizard seemed disbelieving, how could he not conclude otherwise? After all he had knowledge of a charming Dark Wizard taking in besotted fools as his loyal servants alone, nothing more.

It didn’t matter right now though, did it?

Because somehow the apparently detached manner with which Marvolo carried himself at this moment was even more *painful* . Was it thus that he had been far too spoiled with the treasuring attention he had been lavished so generously and the withdrawal he could no more bear coherently? Was it only guilt that laid far too much weight to each swallow of the delicious meringue he must force upon himself, bile in his mouth? In the end, he could care no longer even as Marvolo contentedly had his fill.

*But the man never looked at him even once.*

Harry knew of his rather...insensitive temperate; it had caused much grief in the foolishness of youth. He had been forced to bear down, recognising it as utter futility and rather degrading his mentality and he had accomplished far more with mild rationality. It had been particularly essential when he had had to speak with people of far too sensitive personality.

But...this time he couldn't help the rather juvenile reaction when he was not even equipped with the pertinent facts. So why was it that he had not had the patience to hear even?

*Because he had been afraid.*

Harry pushed away his plate at length in disgust. Marvolo never questioned, but made his way outside the reception door. The man escorted him courteously; a light gesture on the small of his back and Harry felt nothing but hollow emotion there within even the apparent placid exterior.

He blinked however when the entrance led to the most unpleasant welcome. There was the most adamant downpour and accompanied by an equally enthusiastic wind it had the appearance of a fog that must engulf the entirety of England. Muddy little streams happily lined the stoned streets and the sheltered fronts were heavily jostled with people.

There was an audible exhale beside him and Harry turned to look at Marvolo observing the rain with faint disapproval. The frustration was not etched in invisible frown, for the aristocratic face was hardly generous with confiding others with the secrets they harboured, but in the dusting of narrowed lashes upon brilliant red and the inward turn of an upper lip and a prominent vein below the jaw.

And in that instance he knew, knew when he saw this wizard how no other sentient being could claim to, knew with the thump of dawning realization and when Marvolo reached for a stronger hold on his elbow, intending no doubt to apparate safely, Harry twisted away from the grasp.

Even with the unfortunate epiphany he had at that moment, even with the shattering realization that made the ache in his core so, Harry smiled faintly at his surprised companion. He hid his jubilation at the shaded confusion, at the shuttered frustration; the understanding that he had broken through the masked coolness was a joyful curse and Harry didn't linger much on it.

He stepped back again, this time onto the street and right under the heavy downpour. But rain didn't touch him, for a bone white wand had flashed decisively the instant Harry had chosen to be whimsical.

"What are you doing?"

A steady curtain of water separated them, muted their words some but didn't completely turn them unintelligible.

Harry looked at the unimpressed wizard and tried not to fidget at his decision that had seemed so very mature a moment ago.

"I am trying to get you to listen."

"We could not do it somewhere dry? For example, *right here*."

Sure they could. They could cast a privacy charm and speak as if the presence of the other patrons on the sidewalk had no effect anyway. He could have accepted the apparation to the Ridge and let the solitude temper his embarrassment.

But Marvolo was still so courteous and attentive, of indifference and hidden coldness; of which Harry had been the cause.

“Only toddlers whine at getting wet.” His trembling smile erased the attempt at humour and bravely he grasped the cold wrist to pull him onto the pavement. “Are you a wizard, or not?”

Marvolo frowned in disinterest at the phrase, but didn’t speak otherwise. Harry hadn’t relinquished his grasp on the smooth hem, instead looking down upon his own audacity with faint surprise.

Marvolo didn’t prompt him. Didn’t shake him off. Merely waited with a cold silence until Harry could no longer care for the ice. It would be easier to whisper his fallibility rather than withstand this stranger beside him.

“It is never about you being a Dark Wizard. Of course I can hardly accept the extent to which you have chosen to submerge into the forbidden arts, but that is not because it disgusts me. Not *only* because it disgusts me, but also because what you are doing to your own soul.” Harry did not see the flare of fury in the exotic features, wrapped as he was in the contours of the hand he was tentatively grasping. So long as Marvolo upheld the *Impervius!* to shield them from getting utterly drenched, the man could not apparate himself or them out without cancelling the charm first. Harry was counting on his sensibilities here.

“But that is not the issue here.” Harry closed his eyes briefly to take a proverbial deep breath, before raising them stubbornly to meet the frozen scarlet stare and he did not cower even if he might have stumbled some, “Because I am the one responsible for making accusations where they might or might not have any cause to support. So long I have been noticed not because of who I am, but for what I could do for them, for how useful I could be that I have long lost the blind faith of a child. I have perhaps lost a part of my identity, in the end however I cannot anymore see anyone’s intention to be any less than self-serving.”

He had not spoken out when he had had to abandon his dreams and desires because the Wizarding World had been nothing but a tottering child barely talking its first walk after long years of inactivity. He had felt responsible yes, but he had not had to be involved if there were any less instances of intolerance and violence in the aftermath.

He had resigned himself mostly.

Now he offered a tremulous smile at the man who had not interrupted by words or action, “That is however no excuse for lashing out at you as I did. No matter that you still remind me of the person who would sooner kill me than anything.” The last sentence was muttered in the hope that Marvolo might discard the pitiful words.

His courage had fallen, but Harry was not such a coward to flee from his actions.

However he was not equipped with defending himself from the snarling lunges from a predator either. The intense gaze burned scarlet and his hold was already being manipulated, the features were already distorting and for *once* Harry didn't deny his instinct to flee.

With the perspicuity of a cornered doe, he twisted from the hold yet to frighten, and apparated *away* with a tentative destination.

But he had *forgotten* how readily the man was never to be refused. Thus he had only gained his bearings in the grove he had chosen, one that was frightfully so close to his place, when the magical residue sipped into the air.

The still breath trembled harsh, and the Dark Lord stepped out immaculate from his apparation.

Harry was frozen to the ground, frozen in the captivating gaze of the venomous serpent as the mesmerized preys are often wont to do. And the undulating serpent slithered near slowly. How could this man ever been taken as the apathetic dark Lord, when emotions swirled akin to firestorms in those striking features, as they threatened to confine any and all in their amusement?

But it was not amusement that glistened in those irresistible if discomfiting shades, but a strange whirl of wonder and something that could only be a glance of frightening future.

Marvolo moved closer still, with infinite gentleness rather than the merciless impatience of a famished serpent, but Harry didn't flee anymore. No matter that his pulse threatened lightheadedness, no matter that his heart paused in fright, no matter that his very soul should recoil in true horror, it was the *anticipation* that truly made his breath catch.

Marvolo gave him sufficient time as if to take a step back, as if to gather his senses or perhaps by the simple absence of refutable action alone would indicate his willingness.

And the Dark wizard softly stroked the reserved features; stark pale in the cold wind but the retreating finger left a trail of numb flame. The hands that were cruel with its gentle gestures cupped his blushing face, caressing the edge of his cheekbones.

And Harry couldn't help but almost let out a trembling gasp, couldn't help but grasp the velvety charcoal robes with desperation, couldn't help but close his eyes as Marvolo stepped even closer, leaving nary an offending distance between the two warm bodies.

Thin lips captured the single drop of rain arrested in the dark lashes fluttering in fright. They pressed down minutely with hidden craving, but raised no more alarm instead giving the flighty creature a moment of composure.

“So irresistible, my lovely.”

Harry should protest this most furiously. He should shake the man to earthly rationality till the man could provide an answer to this behaviour that affected him in such a deplorable manner. He should...

But courage abandoned the once epitome of Gryffindor house, for the man who had so been a victim of pretentious affections only and now to be worshipped in such a manner with subtlety and lack of such with equal emphasis, Harry could hardly dare ponder the honesty behind this in a sensible mind.

The intensity with which Marvolo had kept him ensnared receded some and Harry could dare breathe without fearing a collapse. The wizard let a tiny smile bloom in response to the green eyes that attempted to scowl but were still wide with astonishment.

“I wasn’t able to keep you as free of rain as I had hoped.”

This time the scowl broke free of the enchantment this accursed wizard had wrought.

“That is a terrible excuse.”

“That is what you are looking for.”

Harry looked away, discomfited with how easily Marvolo had read him when he himself had been all but manipulating his thoughts around it in any way. But he felt relieved as well; that as aware as Marvolo seemed to be, he had chosen to let it be so that neither of the embarrassments need be revisited.

Thus it was rather unexpected when his breath left in the aftermath of a violent manipulation of his body and Harry gasped at the answering pulse that had *twisted* his hands to rend captive behind his back most dismissively with one hand. His shoulders protested at the position with sheer discomfort as his body was forced into an arc thereby.

His breath fluttered, and he struggled, but his face was turned aside and warm breath generously caressed his vulnerable neck.

*(Vulnerable because he could feel his wrists straining, warped so harsh behind him.)*

“I don’t know who has broken your faith. It doesn’t matter anymore. Because I will rebuild *each* piece of the broken self-esteem you have. I will build your trust in me until it has *seeped* into your bloodstream.” Harry suppressed his cry when cold fingers dug into his skin ruthlessly, as if to drive the point deep inside, “I will forgive you, because you are learning still. And soon, my sweet Hadrian, you will find the *one* thing you would believe in no matter what. Trust me with that. Until then, however, you will not speak of slanders with such a pretty mouth, will you?”

Harry was hardly a fragile creature to be callously treated in such a manner. Nay, he could never allow to be controlled, never endure the high smirks of arrogant wizards. So he twisted his wrists to free himself but the hand wrapped around his thin ones tightened to leave a throbbing bruise and even as he kept his pained yelps silent and his determination indignant, the man seemed to read the sting behind wide green eyes.

With neither the wand nor his body being supportive in such a precarious position, he defied still livid verdant, “I will try not to lay baseless accusations in the future. Nothing however gives you the permission for *this* . Granted I might have been more restrained in my reaction,



but the answer wouldn't have changed anyway. *It is still a no!* Intimidation is not suddenly going to make me change my mind." Harry snarled, righteous and fiery, "Release me. Now."

The Dark Lord tilted his head in contemplation and the writhing wizard felt a shiver through his frame at the animalistic gesture, and for a moment Harry faltered, but the man only murmured, "You didn't expect your behaviour to be accepted with no rebuttal, did you? Perhaps now you might understand what it *could* be" wilful fingers grasped his jaw tight, little swipes of emphasis, "instead of what it is." The grip onto him didn't slacken, but the dark crooning voice lost its timber and it was almost as if the thoughts were instead fluttering around him, "Patience is not something I care for, unless it comes to you sweet one. Even still, you try me so. I wish I could stay, my lovely, but my anger is an ugly thing to witness."

And as swiftly as the whirlwind had caught him, so sharply did it leave him behind, to sprawl among the wilderness.

Harry Potter remained crumpled on the wet grass, his heart pleading for a strength to counter the blooming aches.

## Chapter End Notes

I love the awesome reviews that has been left in my inbox. Each of them were capable of lighting up one whole day!!

I feel guilty though, for bringing you such a late chapter. So there is a surprise. I might have said this before, but ahem.. no one wants Harry and Tom to be so.. virtuous. Least of all the writer. You won't believe the amount of UST I had to deal with when I was writing it. They might be stubborn little idiots, but I needed a release! So, I might have written something smutty?

Fair warning, it is not something that happens in the story. It is a fantasy of mine..I meant Tom's. He is a normal hot-blooded male, okay?

So, it will be a separate ficlet in this story. Anyone who is interested can check it out.

It is ok if I have low views or anything. But reviews help me be sure that I am going on the right path. Bear with me and leave behind whatever comes to your mind.

PS- I have gotten crazy for studio ghibli the last couple of months. From Up On Poppy hill might not be as rated as the others, but I still loved the track- Sayonara no natsu. And I really want to learn Japanese. Wish me luck?

Thank you again everyone for being so awesome with your thoughtful words and kudos and subscribes and bookmarks and just for taking the time to read my story. xoxo



# I Waited For You, To Open Your Eyes

## Chapter Summary

Veils are lifted and delusions have dissipated. Truth is never the one hopes, but something that many prefer to be without. The heroes of this story are however strong enough to accept it.  
Aren't they?

## Chapter Notes

It is late I know. I would tell you about how this was my final year ( finished with that!) and about sadist life etc..etc.. however I am still sorry. ☐ The story was due to be just edited for last some months and I just couldn't find the time!! Gahh..!! But I promised I would never leave you guys, didn't I?

Disclaimer- Harry Potter was never mine and he never will be. He belongs with Tommy anyway. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Rowena's Ridge was a brilliant illustration of Wizarding pride: confident in its vilification of muggles and ministry alike. Why must they bow, they wondered, to a government that curtsied so readily with filth that would never understand magic? Why ever must they indulge the sensitive temperaments of those who never belonged in their world anyway? The consequence didn't matter to them; these esteemed wizards and witches of so pure lineages that they preferred the company of none but their own. They had thrived for centuries, annealing the very stones of the mute mountain with their magic.

There had been no premonition whatsoever, no harbinger that heralded the malice in the sunset. So the indolent inhabitants remained ignorant to the darkness hovering over the horizon until cries borne of a vindictive fire woke them.

Were they not powerful, these noble creatures of magic? Were they not proud of their skill, these descendants of blood untainted? Had they not defied the norm and defended themselves from the arrogant European Dark Lord from violating their sanctuary?

Why then did they cower so, at this moment, when their home was being ravished and their children were crying?

Perhaps because they recognized this person as one belonging to nightmares; dark fears that had never materialized truly even in dreams. What else could it be, this shadow of

inhumanity that yielded Fiendfyre with unparalleled ease, this creature stood unflinching as dark magic licked at its skin lovingly? In the middle of bleeding innocence, the monstrous being rose as a sign of mockery.

*His* servants shrieked with glee at such devastation, and peace in the Ridge was shredded at the whim of those rushing shadows. Even as the pillars crackled with their curses, none could avert their attention for long from the one who stood at the core of this desolation.

They cried. They fought for their life. They shielded their children and the women. They begged and pleaded.

Yet somehow, their souls had already known.

For the powerful creatures under *his* command brought any and all hopes to be immolated at the altar of their Lord. They dragged broken remains of pride to sate *his* cavernous fury.

Cruelty understood no pleas and only sought the validation of the one crueller than them all.

But the Dark Wizard never looked away from the tear-streaked horizon, anticipation the lone emotion obvious in the crimson gaze.

*Had he not promised thusly, to his lovely one, had he not vowed honestly that there could never be a relief for the one he treasured and cherished above most? Had he not proved himself capable of holding by any oaths he had sworn, magical or otherwise? Why must then, the little one be so confident in its assumption that he would not burn the faithless world to seek the frightened little doe?*

*Was Marvolo repentant of the ashes that lingered in place of the bountiful valley that had once thrived?*

*It was not a thought worth considering, for no matter how charming the lovely one might have been in his defence of all nobility and goodness, he held no such sentiments. The remainder only served to gleefully cater to the wrath of a Dark Lord.*

*And the Dark Lord was wrathful indeed, resplendent in his malevolence that scaled high to shriek to the heavens, of the fate that must befall the ones slighting this Lord of Magic. Violence rioted even in the hums of his silence and the world writhed and pleaded before him.*

*For once, however, these were not enough to speak to his attention or satisfy the hollow throbbing of his soul.*

*The village burned around him, his death eaters at once passionate and hesitant, yet the Dark Wizard spared none a glance to one other than his little treasure, dancing away in the periphery of his touch and dooming them all to such despair.*

They called him Lord Voldemort. “Bow down before your Lord,” They said, lying behind their masks of death. “You may be granted mercy.”

And the proud heads of noble families trembled in righteous indignation, did not matter that their splendourous houses were clutched in the mercy of malignant beasts still. Did not matter

that their hearts flinched away from the scarlet inhumanity.

“He is not *my* Lord.” Cried one defiant wizard, grey eyes locked upon the monster; the soft cries of his wife, his reserved companion of decades, and the pale skin of his lone heir twisting in his mind and manipulating his control.

But the cruel monster cared naught for the emotion in his declaration, nor did he note the desperate curse leaving one trembling wand. For all the hopes stirring in the hearts of the fools, the blood-boiling curse never even touched *him*. A white hand had brushed it away so carelessly, so casual this display of unfathomable power, and the last of House Vale soon shrieked under the unforgivable.

Whispery thin was the promise floating to him, “Maybe your screams will reach him. So scream louder and maybe your saviour will end your agony.”

Marius Vale had not even realized when he had fallen to the ground screaming and clawing. The wizard certainly did not comprehend the unintended declaration. At the truth hinted that he refused to accept: of being merely the pawns to the games of another, a sacrificial gamble to lure out the Queen and the Dark King seemingly vexed to have his manoeuvre for naught.

How could any expect leniency from this ruthless Master, recognizant only upon the award and naught upon the rest left to bleed upon the path?

--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--

*The screams did not bring him gratification. The bleeding anguish in the faces of so many helpless and fearful did not speak to him of victory.*

*Because the lovely vision of a dark-haired creature remained a mirage.*

*Careless even in casting an Unforgivable, the Dark Lord did not merge himself in the cloying Dark Magic and chose instead the last memory of his sweet one: the exotic jewels in high bred features that had blinked up at him with unshed disbelief, the silent reproof of his gentle creature for the violent misappropriation of a permission. So sweetly the innocent creature had censured his rough behaviour, lips trembling but the face so expressive.*

*And an unknown burning clogged his breath so, as he wondered, wondered if he had perhaps turned the dear one away, perhaps frightened the casually impulsive soul of his and Hadrian could no longer bear the truth of a smothering companion entwined with him.*

*But had not the creature of infernal mysteries known already, of the monster behind the charisma? Perhaps the lovely mouth had persisted with defiance and determination but had not the sweet contradiction stayed still by his side?*

*Such had been the wonder that had incapacitated the most powerful wizard of the century, the wonder of this creature when no other thrall could ever hope to seduce him. The taciturn wizard had ensnared his cruel attention when no other could survive it. He had trapped himself within the yawning maws, even disinclined as Hadrian was with the interest of a powerful being any other would covet.*

*This wondrous creation, an unfathomable confusion, who shied from the persona that Marvolo had enchanted, but lingered by the fissures in his soul. And his little treasure would approach thus at each glimpse of his truth and would not deny it. Reprimand him perhaps, but never turn away with disgust.*

*Never deny him.*

*And the fury of a discontented Dark Lord rose higher still as he scrambled, bereft in his loss.*

*--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--*

Grief and mourning tore the eve of a pitiless death, but the powerful wizard cared naught for what his cruelty bore. And the despondent wizards and witches, fleeing from the ravenous inferno or flailing in the contemptible mercy of the wretched ones called Death Eaters, cried out in despair.

For the monster seemed not to care for the victory that it was in bringing a long line of ancient blood onto their submission, cared naught for innocence sacrificed for his worship. They cried thus, wondering what would truly palliate this creature, what would grant them life for another moment.

“Have mercy!” They cried, clutching the lost children to their bosoms.

“Forgive us!” They pleaded, unsure of their sin yet repentant all the same.

The village burned and the monster looked rapt with the shadows of light being played, bringing forth images unknown, but did not turn to their pleas.

*--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--*

*How had the creature of sweet magic corrupted him, how had he spoiled him, that the vision of endless anarchy was not quite enough anymore? The scarlet stains of his indulgence did not satisfy him anymore?*

*They did not fill the longing left behind in the wake of a precious person.*

*A person who would slip past his lunging grasp every other time despite the repercussions that must be borne.*

*This divine example of exasperation and twisting emotions, which vexed and snared the Dark Lord so callously, of breathtaking loveliness and sarcasm and wit...*

*Hadrian...Hadrian...**Hadrian...***

*The splintered soul of a wizard shrieked and unbidden to himself his lips whispered, the forbidden knowledge thankfully lost to every other in the midst of chaos.*

*This was insanity, even as he acknowledged, a treachery upon his idealism for the sake of a pretty one... And yet that was not the least of the concerns, was it?*

*Perhaps delicate brows and honey-sweet lips had so prettily called for his attention that first time and every other instance henceforth, but they were not what reduced a Dark Lord to an unwanted intruder in another's life.*

*Marvolo had not been merely tempted by the dew-kissed gaze that met his inhuman scarlet every time. Wreaked havoc with the greed in his cavernous core perhaps, but the hunger could have been so easily cajoled by devouring the little lovely one sans remorse.*

*(The hollow ache in him might never have been filled, if he had indeed wrecked the exotic stranger for pleasant indulgence, never would have been healed. It would have sated him but for a moment and then the beauty would have been forgotten like so many. And He would have never known what he had held and lost already.)*

*It might have been the disastrous fate of the naive wizard, had the Dark Lord managed to truly understand the unexpected beauty he stumbled upon. Or any other time he had returned, anxious to detangle at least one other strand of this mystic creature.*

*But for every flash of knowledge, Marvolo was left to ponder upon thousands of other questions. Marvolo watched as the taints of melancholy so very often hooded the beguiled eyes, watched as Hadrian rose gloriously in instances of unbridled fury, as the wizard remained shadowed in contrasting shades but the lovely eyes spoke nothing but the truth.*

*He watched the sweet one and let himself falter from his singular greed of monstrous appetite.*

*He let his dark magic of malice wrap around the sweet heart and watched with bewilderment as he failed again and again.*

*The Heir of Slytherin had so fluidly peeked into the heart of many and murmured words that would surely arouse the rigid longing that had been kept therewithin. He had been the master of seduction and no matter his own broken soul, had ensnared so many others' for his amusement.*

*Should he not be satisfied with this verified claim of superiority? Should he not be, no matter that only one singular beauty had once denied him?*

*Perfectionist he might not have been, but it was not arrogance that was bruised by this creature that appeared in the fringe of his dreams with a whisper. Who turned away uncaringly from the attention of such a powerful being, impressed not in the slightest that had devoured many a soul, seduced not with the devastating charm that was adored for so long.*

*Not at all.*

*Yet for all his reticence from the innocent (relatively) persona that Marvolo was, the petite one would linger by the truth in the fragile mask the dark wizard had crudely written. For all his rebukes, his little treasure would look at him with such innocent disappointment. But never true disgust.*

*Understanding, but never disgust.*

*How could then, Marvolo ever hope to, ever want to, allow this creature his freedom or any opportunity to flee so far. How could he ever, the monster who had never thought to have the attention of such a pure divinity, be in any way generous to this soul?*

*Caught in an exorable fascination, Marvolo had cultivated the cherished one's attention with much sedulous effort: devotion to such extent, when the young Dark Lord had ever needed to only smile the sweetness of Adonis.*

*How could he ever, deny himself the sweetest of delight within this strange vicissitude he had found himself? Contrary to the sceptical murmurs of his mind, Marvolo had been entirely embroiled, absolutely enraptured, be it the exotic parlance Hadrian carried in his accent or imputed to the casual acceptance Hadrian persisted no matter the minor grumble.*

*The lust never was truly tamed by the gentle voice of its intended, but such kind acceptance it had never savoured and the monster coiled around the placidity, parched for even more.*

*And now, now as the sweet presence was torn away, by the foolishness of this being itself... The affronted being of nightmare could not evoke mercy. Not for the treacherous wizard, no matter how much his excuses might resound. Not the least for the place that dared to conceal **his** possession.*

*--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--*

Marcus Rowle watched calmly as the fury of his master left behind crimson memories upon the once naive ground. Sometimes it was the splatter from a bleeding victim of dark curses; sometimes it was the roar of delighted monsters of fire that ravaged the hapless village. But the rage did not abate.

The Death Eaters were equally as helpless as the people who were screaming their agony to an uncaring Lord. It was hidden behind the gleaming malice and the blood-thirsty smiles, but they were uneasy nonetheless.

It was not a matter of debate that their master wished to conquer a place that was hidden from the eyes of the ministry. A rather brilliant strategy that none others had deducted; the ministry could hardly protect one away from its jurisdiction and a wave of noble families would fall thus due to their pride.

But this facile victory did not seem to be their Lord's attention. Besides which, the fire raged with the glee of its creator's need.

This was no mere victory, but something more.

Caught in the realization that the Dark Lord was not content, the unease spread farther among his comrades. Even when they watched as the dark gaze never left the horizon and they wondered at the true prey when the distraction languished in its miserable existence.

And loyal as they were, the faithful servants of Lord Voldemort, they pushed each wizard and witch onto forced submission, forced them onto their knee and spilled their blood just so their master might glean a moment of amusement.



They wrenched each beloved treasure from the hearts of these condemned, they demanded not blood but loyalty when the former their Master did not favour and waited with bated breaths as the Dark Lord pondered.

They would laud their Lord with everything and anything to show their devotion, let their souls bleed dark to worship their vengeful master.

If only the inferno in those eyes would be soothed.

--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--

*His faithful ones were weary, he knew. Irrespective of the voracious want of the elusive creature, he was not unaware of the fluttering emotions around him.*

*He was aware, with nary a care.*

*With despairing loyalty, they forewent their own bleeding desires, instead of cleansing the ground with the blood of those they believed had offended their Lord thus. With devoted souls, they discarded their own hesitation and let it be tainted with magic old and vile. This fidelity to such extent, satisfying and conforming, should it not have been enough to grant this Dark Lord enough pleasure?*

*And yet he turned away from the expectant faces, from the powerful beings who had submitted to him, who had pledged soul and magic to him. Because the mocking whisper of his desired one would not let be.*

*The Dark Lord mused upon the caricature of a ruined world to savour to his delight and yet he could not help but linger upon the memories of this exotic creature: sweet flesh that trembled so upon all his touches thus and yet defied him still. Denied him still.*

*One Beltane morning an ethereal creature had smiled upon him so placid, so sweetly accepting. And now the surrender of the entire world seemed to fade into shades of grey before the memory.*

*And Marvolo shuddered from recalling the delicate of flesh he so often realized beyond the barrier of robes. Raged within as he withheld from temptation, even as his lovely, even as his sweet one trembled from all his touches thus, no matter that he must deny all his attention from a misplaced sense of loyalty.*

*A loyalty not centred upon him. The darkened lips would flutter with the flame that Marvolo ignited in him, yet the eyes would not turn to him. Nay, it would seek another far off. Seek another to soothe his heart.*

*The realization had jarred the Dark Lord more than he could have ever fathomed.*

*The intensity was even more condemning when the powerful wizards bowed before him declaring their willing allegiance when the defeated Lords of noble families kneeled before him accepting his Lordship and the Dark Lord found no pleasure in this victory.*

--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--

Scorched fingers shakily offered the parchment: an innocuous torn piece but which would document forever the proof of their destroyed pride. One by one each who had ever laid a claim on the Rowena's Ridge yielded their right to stand upon the ground. They protested and nonchalant figures whispered dark curses so playfully. They protested still, their pride in their blood fraying and but mercy was non-existent. They yielded before their family was left to survive only on the pages of history.

Claws tore at the parchment, the one that pretentiously declared Lord Voldemort as the holder of Rowena's Ridge. No attention was however spared by the dark wizard. It was after all a superficial declaration, the magical vows would hold; the Wizarding ownership not bounded by any written syllables but essence.

The edges smouldered slightly, caught in the infernal rage of the Dark Lord.

It had been a long time his lovely one had been petulant. Oblivious or perhaps uncaring of his snarling need. Irreverent of the vows Lord Voldemort had sworn. He had been spurned again and again; the patience of the Lord Voldemort had exhausted itself when the measly bird had returned with its burden not accepted.

Long pale fingers twisted around the yew wand, the gesture so deceptively placid and yet the enraged magic spat vengeful manifestation, the picture of calm harshly broken.

It was not grief that was suffocating Marvolo. It was not the loss that swore a burden upon his veins. It was not longing that stifled his breaths.

For a Dark Wizard who never cared for emotions, wrath was all that he could understand when his twisted and split; his magic rose cloyingly searching for the offense to its master, any excuse to flagellate, to bathe his feet in worshipful blood.

It had breathed cursed fire, unforgiving, to devour all within its malicious maw, and yet the cavernous hunger was hardly sated.

The creature so very righteous in its defense of a measly house, so very indignant at the fissure within the magical world remained elusive even as a gifted village burned in his ire; and yet the screams of Rowena's Ridge remained unanswered as it burned for *him*.

And Lord Voldemort would have mocked the hypocrisy, had it not been his devoted desire to coax out the shy little creature from its sanctuary.

Besides, he had promised, had he not, to burn the world around him should Hadrian deny him his claim?

It mattered not anymore, for his intended remained veiled from his sight still.

It mattered not...

Lord Voldemort turned his inquisitive gaze to the survivors, fearful still and smiled at the flinches.

There were some who struggled and sneered, weakly perhaps but defiant nonetheless.

But the scarlet gaze had no more patience and they shifted from the fiery horizon with much reluctance.

The mirage of his creature wouldn't lift.

It mattered not... for now he possessed the Rowena's Ridge itself. His creature could no more hide. Rowena's Ridge might not be vast, but it was magical. Every wizard and witch that held a claim to the land had been shielded by their wards.

Hadrian had taken advantage of the fact that as long as all the residents have not submitted their claims, he shall not be discovered. Did he truly think that the Lord Voldemort would be so benevolent as to spare the foolish mortals that dared shelter his desired one from his gaze?

The first act of a terrible Wizarding war would remain largely unseen, unannounced. Perhaps it wasn't the heralding statement the faithful death eaters had anticipated. Truly it wasn't; blazed as it was with a flame of vengeance and obsession, spurred as it was with rejection.

Rowena's Ridge had mourned and screamed, unaware of the one person responsible as saviour as well as the speaker of death.

But the arrogance of the Dark Lord remained a satire, for the one who must be one to douse the fiendish fire, hardly appeared.

*It mattered not*, the Dark Lord mused as the ancient house was forced from its denial of the claim and the last sanctuary of his elusive creature was conquered. With victory finally lightening his rage, the gate to a lovely cottage was blasted aside. Fragile plants were trampled underneath determined steps and the anticipation to claim, destroy, possess had flared to malicious heights.

Near the front door, his greed steadied and an *alohomora* granted him entrance rather than a *reducto*. Wishing to keep his arrival somewhat startling, the Dark Lord stepped past the threshold. (But his lovely one must already have known his ward having fallen, must already know his home being breached.)

He wondered whether the prey would be unknowing of the trap having enclosed upon its pretty throat, or whether it would be cowering in the corner already.

Lord Voldemort must remember the bitter taste of disappointment, mocking the greatest wizard of all time.

For when the wizard found the oblivious one, the lovely creature, his enchanting companion of months, his vexing delight lied still and caught unaware upon a claimed divan, so sweetly dreaming as the vile wraith shuffled closer in lust and wrath.

He dreamed still when the Dark Lord watched with inhuman need etched upon the pale features; stayed unresponsive when an eager hand brushed over the smooth skin with delight. Hadrian remained in the sweet bliss of darkness, even when his body was lifted uncaring by a longing wizard, unheeding of the indecent way the hands stayed low or the alarming manner in which the sleeping one rolled its head. He lay in a graceless arc upon the arms of a

suddenly concerned Marvolo. He stayed sweet and unaware, even as he was tapped lightly and then incessantly, a desperate call for attention, while a supporting hand bruised his nape with unconscious alarm.

But he stayed sweet and unaware of the chaos thus rending a Dark Lord's emotion ad nauseam.

--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--

Lord Voldemort watched with insanity dominating his void soul, aggravated even more at the painting so placid, violently in contrast to the mutiny within his mind. He looked at the enthralling shade of green so enraptured, insensible as the creature was to its own precarious position.

For here lied the one entity that roused the singular fear he had thought put to rest forever. And the Lord Voldemort was petrified, furious in this anxiety foreign and yet so familiar.

There was loathing.

There was fear.

There was desperation.

But the lovely creature sat up with brows furrowed while the Dark Lord remained frigid in a threadbare control, lest he is driven to put this creature of infinite confusion into absolute decimation.

Lest he is drowned at the whim of this strange suffocation that threatened his breath so. His fingers itched with intention of such cruelty. His magic writhed between obeying the need of its master that fluctuated so fiercely.

“Marvolo...” The whisper was soft and distracting in its plaintiveness. Lovely even its quiet confusion. Inciting in its divine vision and Marvolo was dearly tempted to sink into a worshipful kneel in front of the pale beauty. The remnants of sleep clung prettily to the beloved: uncertain sweeps of the dark lashes so sweetly, *so sweetly* damning.

The Dark Lord withheld a snarl at this seemingly innocent creature; this exotic creature that must trail its ignorant whispers across the darkest secrets of all. There would not be mere glimpses of a knowing glance either, would not tease so with whispers of knowledge forbidden; no, the beautiful one would blaze across secrets in hidden depths, must reach to the weakly shivering core of the most powerful man and toy so carelessly.

Lord Voldemort had refused the fall into time and Death, he had refused to bow before which all had and he would suffer for eternity rather than lose himself in void. He would not be defeated by mere man, he would not be vanquished by Death either and under the poisonous guards of treasures beat his most coveted of darkness.

All for that he might never know the ever encompassing fear ever; fear that he might soar higher than any and all, but must fall to the irredeemable grasp of Death, fear that one day

Lord Voldemort would be turned away upon the wan pages of the past.

A fear he had not cared to explore more than declaring it as a weakness. Lord Voldemort was not weak.

Irrefutable logic but for the entrance of one man who danced muddled pools into his once organized life. Who carved fresh wounds onto the already bleeding chasms of a broken soul and accomplished in his disdainful ignorance the most fatal of offenses.

Could the monster be blamed for loathing this person who had appeared before him thus: a beautiful salvation, a wilful devastation?

He had guarded his soul away, had he not? From the cruelty of death, he had shielded himself with the courage of Darkest of Magic. And yet, it quivered with the vulnerability he had believed to have crushed for eternity.

For it was Hadrian who had seemed so unnervingly to be offering itself to the voracious claim of death and yet, how was it that Marvolo had felt the putrid breath of Death upon his soul?

So the spitting serpent lazily paced the floor, all the while keeping nebulous control upon its venom, "So weak. If I had known the true nature of one such as you, I wouldn't have wasted my time with you."

(Lord Voldemort had no weakness. And the Dark Wizard wished to destroy this *thing* that threatened to be one.)

Hadrian hummed a dazed acknowledgement of his presence merely, casting instead an assessing glance around the room-letting the thin fingers twine through the long hair in his distraction and succeeding oh so well in stealing a soft breath from Marvolo.

Green eyes flittered uncertain and bewildered. Yet when they returned to the inhuman creature anticipating its devastation, the luminous gaze didn't cower. Clear and honest they said, "There are many things you despise about me. Despite all your...complaints, you still stayed." The words were a hoarse whisper, and Marvolo mused about the water by the bedside but didn't volunteer to soothe the ache.

Because the Dark Lord cared nary a thing for this creature's comfort. This docile creature in the centre of his bed; a vision that should have incited, provoked him so, however, utterly discarded as his fury spiralled. The lovely creature was unforgivably dishevelled, dark tresses that were so resolutely regimented flowed even and swaying upon soft sheets, a gloomy barrier against all that might trespass. He shone paler than ever, blood having fled the callous man in its malnourishment. In the desertion the bright gaze spoke brighter still, swirling with life no matter that it had come so very close to a dull glaze of *death*.

The remainder was enough to spite the Dark Lord and he despised this person undeniably. Was it not enough that Hadrian had become more significant than he expected, wanted even? Was it not enough that he had accepted already the entwined destiny they must share? Was it

not enough that he had known Hadrian would never be what any others might be, would be forever defiant and lovely, would be the one exception he could not tame? Was it not enough?

But the foolish thing was ever so complacent in the grasp of a monster, utterly decadent in his domain.

A sweet temptation that would bring about his end.

And the once powerful Dark Lord responded as well to this threat, with the need to obliterate before he himself might be devoured.

“No.” Voldemort smiled, madness saturating his poisonous words, “Do you think I would have stayed still if I had known that beneath your show of strength hid a pathetic thing? Do you think I would have willingly touched you if I had known? To have magic and yet you are no worse, no stronger than a filthy muggle. How is it,” The Dark Lord tilted his head with mock contemplation, “How is it that you managed to deceive a powerful wizard?”

Hadrian blinked at him. Marvolo marvelled at this creature that remained uncaring as anarchy screeched behind the unflinching facade of a composed Lord.

But then the truth potion that had been forced upon an unconscious Hadrian also contained a sprig of bloodroot, a primary ingredient in calming draughts.

Awareness dawned upon the fair being and Voldemort waited with vengeful anticipation.

“Ah. I became careless.” Hadrian exclaimed quietly gazing fascinated at his thin wrists. “I really should have kept track of how many times I was using pepper up and girding.”

Surely the monster could be commended for keeping its peace for so long. Surely it could be forgiven for the surrender made to the feral fury within. The feigned civility was discarded and the taunting creature should not be offended when claws grabbed its bare arms none too gentle.

Hadrian grasped and the Dark Lord hissed, “You dare call this mere carelessness? You poisoned yourself. A mature person might be expected to recognise the needs of their body and the sustenance. You had exhausted your strength and then the subsequent excess of pepper up potion forced your body to keep burning even when it had no fuel. In time, it would feed upon your life itself if your mind had not shut itself from the strain. In other words, you didn’t care whether you lived or died. Stubborn fool, as if anyone might have found your corpse if I had not looked for you! Seeing how you don’t care, however, perhaps I should have made your grave anyway, hmm?”

He was so close. The stunned gaze at the dark fury, the frail flesh under his command. The fury didn’t dissipate. Perhaps once he would have allowed himself to be swept away instead; perhaps when the petite wizard hadn’t vexed him so.

The pretty creature couldn’t manipulate his emotions now, as he was wont to do with a mere glance of inquisitive verdant, but Marvolo was at least no longer brutally needful of seeing the pretty one whimper for daring to play with his emotions so.

“I am sorry for making you worry.”

There was a pause to allow for a stuttering heart.

Lord Voldemort pushed away Hadrian with a disgusted sound, looked away from the befuddled beauty, eyes full of wonder (he loathed so, loathed that his pulse beat in answer to the guile), and spat in answer, “I kept my promise. Granted I was not aware of who exactly I was pledging to.” He spared a revolted glance to the bed, “In a world where power shall rule, I am not going to be bound by people who would be happy to fall and stay fallen. Who would succumb to weakness rather than try to survive.” With vehemence, he leaned forward to watch the kaleidoscope of emotions upon the creature, “Who had magic but wouldn’t care to save themselves from vulnerabilities. I failed somehow because one had slipped past my notice anyway.”

Hadrian tarried with the warm comforter and irrelevant to the rage within Marvolo couldn’t help but see what the creature had noted before, of the stark nothingness he had chosen to surround himself with. Materialistic possessions had failed to be a thought when he had chosen to lead a war. And thus his room resembled a stone prison with the exception of the very beautiful bed. But even that had been the last moment transfiguration for the sake of his Hadrian.

Hadrian who looked at him with such empathy, as if he could peer into the battered soul of his.

A step was taken back, anxious as he was suddenly from the tranquil gaze. His fury had hardly stirred a lock in the wilderness of dark hair and yet the simple placidity of this person managed to scramble him so. Perhaps, Lord Voldemort thought, the truth wouldn’t be as desirable as he had supposed.

Time wouldn’t favour him today, wouldn’t turn back to seize his hand from pouring the potion down an unconscious throat.

“I didn’t do it intentionally. You must know that, don’t you.” The man’s head tilted at him as he continued the dazed reach of a strung marionette. The sweet voice dropped and the Dark Lord was petrified in place as a soft hand soothingly laid upon his face, “I am sorry. I am sorry that she wasn’t strong enough. But that doesn’t mean I was doing the same.”

His magic wouldn’t stir, Voldemort didn’t even think of his magic anyway before encircling the pretty throat a fatal grip. He didn’t care for the astounded gasp or the bewildered potion-drunk being. Desperately, thin hands struggled for freedom.

But the pretty eyes never surrendered. They looked undaunted at the scarlet madness and didn’t waver. Marvolo felt the fluttering of pulse against his hold, felt the unfamiliar ache in *his heart* at the pain in the beautiful verdant.

So he hurt his Hadrian the only way he was capable of now. “At least no one else paid for her mistake.”

The struggle against his grasp had dimmed and the other wizard had been roused faintly from the potion stupor from the blood rush in his veins. But at his words, the spell flailed and lush gaze found itself confused upon the triumph deep within the monster.

“Marvolo, what?”

The Dark Lord spoke gleefully. “Surely you should have expected it already. I warned you, did I not, to be wary of provoking me? I told you, did I not, that I would burn the world around you to find you? I kept my promise. That is all.”

A thin hand was wrapped across his staining knuckles and for the first time, plea bled into the stubborn green.” Please tell me you didn’t.”

“You should not have defied me.”

There was desperation in the sweet voice, in the wide eyes and Voldemort devoured the rightful vindication with satisfaction soothing his frazzled mind, “What did you do?

“I kept my word. That I would burn the world around you to smoke you out from wherever you might have fled to.” Malicious glee lit upon at the devastation he was causing this treacherous creature. The darling face crumpled the more he spoke, and he didn’t stop. He didn’t stop and yet, this ache in his soul didn’t subdue even as he wrecked the very cause. “You should have heard their screams, pleading to be saved, begging for mercy. They didn’t know however, it was nary their fault. They didn’t know that their blood must pay the debt of another.”

Hadrian freed himself from his grasp with a determination that his strength could never have carried in its fragility and the Dark Lord watched his ascension to brilliance with an admiration shielded beneath his contempt.

He was shaking his head as if to shrug off the words, but in the end he crumpled, “You! You loathsome... I can’t believe... If you must, have the decency to admit the truth! I did not defy you, not intentionally. No, I was only an excuse. A convenient *excuse* for you to let your true nature show and indulge to the best.”

And the Dark Lord turned to the other even more wrathful, unheeding of the warning his soul screeched at him.

“I would have if that had been the truth. No, the sole reason had been you. To draw you out through the screams for their savior and the smoke of despair. It was unfortunate that no one truly knew of you, perhaps their agony would have ended soon. The only reason was to find you. That is the truth.”

Brilliant wet sparkles turned the lovely eyes into effervescent splendour. He didn’t stop tearing all that he had cultivated so carefully into unrecognizable shreds.

“You horrible...horrible monster...”

He held no regret.



Furious Magic, as it had not been when he was holding its wizard in an unforgivable grasp, caught him unaware and threw him clear across the open door. Barely a grunt was spared because his dark magic shielded him from the worst of the fall.

The creature was divine in its righteous anger, as it stumbled towards him with hands clenched and magic trembling.

*How he longed, as he watched the perfect beauty shatter so in agony, how he longed to ruin it entirely.*

“I did not do it for the sake of defying you. But it was only an excuse wasn’t it? You would have done the same anyway because the darkness within you cannot do anything else but destroy.”

Marvolo felt his mask splinter as with a sweep of the yew wand dust was removed from his robes. And then the cruel eyes looked at his antithesis.

Each syllable that fell from that mouth could wound as sweetly as any Dark Curse. And the Dark Lord proudly wielded it.

“You expected it. You knew of it. Of who I am. But you didn’t care anyway. Were you truly concerned, you wouldn’t have made finding you so difficult. You might *hate* me all you wish; I never gave you false illusion of who I truly am.” Marvolo walked forward, fury in his veins swirling still. “So tell me, sweet one, who is the true monster?”

The Dark Lord was prepared for many things, anticipating the hunger that must be sated by forcing this wilful creature to submission by magic or might. He was not prepared however for the emptiness that cleared the expressive features, the void that wrapped his passionate creature. For the few feet that separated the two seemed no longer so because somehow Hadrian was *lost* to him.

And the detached being in front him acquiesced to him, “What a thought to wonder about! You will excuse me for taking my leave, wouldn’t you?”

With sharp turn of a heel, Hadrian left, leaving behind tattered remains of a ward carefully designed by the most powerful dark wizard of the century.

*--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--*

He had not realised quite that he was barefoot; horror had overridden his reason and he had fled through a forced calm. He had fled far and uncaring to a place unplanned, even as grief greedily started to devour his steps. When the trembling wizard fell for the uncountable number of time onto the treacherous terrain he could not gather enough will to get up once more and stumble on.

And the lone wizard stayed kneeling, writhing in shock and sorrow. The dishevelled wizard wrapped thin arms around his shivering figure, heavier sleeves than he was used to sliding past his fingers.

The scent of another entwined with his own, slowly but surely overwhelming his very essence.

The wizard gasped desperately in a miasma of horror, captive in a storm of emotions that surrendered themselves to extinguishing his fluttering strength.

And wasn't how this should be expected anyway?

Had he not known in the dark mouth of the sweetly cajoling serpent, the malice of its venom even as he had let it slither up his palm, let it rest leisurely its languorous coil? Had he not known of the tempestuous devastation as it truly existed beyond the charming facade?

Was he not, staying faithful to such argument, complicit as well? It did not matter that his hands remained cold and pale in the reflection of the moonlit night. Harry felt the slyness of blood in his palm.

Naked fingers carved agony upon the frigid soil.

He had let himself stay captivated as the noxious being grew in stealth and expounded its territory. Harry had not even noticed when the undulating evil had become colossal enough to engulf him.

That soon he would have had nothing of himself left.

In this exotic world that he had stumbled upon, equally familiar and strange, where he was afraid of leaving behind even the ghost of his footfalls, least the sands of time be forever altered on their path. Yet he had been waylaid by a charming man nonetheless. Every uncertain step encouraged subtly by this dark wizard. Every transgression flouted carefully out of his notice.

And the unorthodox traveller had foolishly reassured himself that it was reversible yet. That he would be gone with the next whisper and Marvolo would no longer need a mask to separate himself from Voldemort.

That there was still space for forgiveness, not for the Dark Lord. For himself. For indulging himself thus. For deceiving himself thus.

But it never had been a mask truly, had it? Despite his confidence, his time spent inside a gleaming pensieve and his observations from afar, he had never been prepared enough for the Dark Lord himself as he had so very arrogantly believed.

The price of his callous behaviour had been in the form of ravaged peace, a historical community crumbled at the whimsical swish of a yew wand. The witches and wizards must have lamented their unbidden guilt as their home was destroyed, unaware of the true emissary who had invited sentient evil upon them.

The once saviour of the Wizarding world had traipsed horrified upon the ruin, upon the ashes that dusted the greenery of Rowena's Ridge. He could no more bear the sight and without caring to see what must remain of the cottage he had called its own, he had fled the place.

He had forgotten in his arrogance that Tom Riddle had been an heir of Peverell as well.

It didn't matter that in the future he had known, Rowena's ridge had been affected in the war anyway, the placid mountains had known the fury of the Dark Lord anyway and the last heir of Peverell had mourned the loss of his ancestral, however superfluous home in that future. Harry wouldn't foist his responsibility onto the passage of time. He couldn't.

A choked exhale was forced out as if the scrambling wizard had begged for forgiveness but wouldn't let himself.

Guilt seeped onto his veins, unforgiving and demanding his very soul as retribution.

Harry shivered again, pinpricks of cold jolting his body. It was far colder this night, colder even than nights with the moon abandoned. Harry refused to think of the warmth and rubbed arms into forced comfort.

Refused to think of this place he had apparated in his better memories, of the once beauty of water creatures that had greeted him.

Refused to care for the warmth in his soul and grieved still.

He curled into himself upon the cold ground, inhaling the musk that still carried the touch of a Dark Wizard.

Had he not known the terrible fate of Marvolo? In the preternatural long fingers that must have drawn indulgent, scarlet caricatures upon the lives it must have brushed by? In the cruel curve of mouth with a taste for mottled violence?

Or had he perhaps fled to his sanctuary at the end of the day, soothed his fluttering heart in the absence of the seductive magic?

It had been a sanctuary indeed, the faintest trail of hope to assure him from the cavernous reaches from a monster. The one place warded well by faithful blood that even as the hypnotizing gaze of the dark wizard tempted so, there still held a place where he might hold his scattered thoughts about at the end of the day.

Where there must be evidence of his research, evidence to remind him of his true self and the thoughts might have no defence; at the very least the very air shouldn't carry *his* memories.

And Harry had believed blood because faith had not been able to deter the nightmare that had come prowling upon Godric's Hollow so many Samhain past(future?), a memory that felt as convoluted as it was displaced out of time. But now as Harry stood trembling with no place to call his own, he realised that perhaps the Dark Lord had been humouring him all this time after all.

He was filled with acute horror and betrayal; unwanted feelings calling his debilitating heart a home no matter that he had so very often proclaimed himself uncaring to Marvolo.

Wretched he was Harry turned to earth in despair; most despicable, he clutched at the harshly wrapped hair so cruel.

The monster he was, he realized the Dark Wizard's words as naught but the truth, for even now... even now when the truth of the Dark Lord lay so starkly in front of him... even now... he thought of the dread within the callous air Marvolo had breathed. With a hand clutched desperate to his chest, Harry exhaled the lies he had cocooned himself in.

For the truth had been that as horrified with Voldemort's action, his heart still reached out to soothe the Dark Lord in his chaotic emotions.

In the desperate ignorance, he had seen in the dark gleams. For no matter how much he might turn away, no matter what the cruel mouth must speak of, the inhuman eyes had spoken of tortured fear.

For he must have fallen rather far that even now his battered heart whispered words of longing and care for the dark wizard.

He had fallen.

He had fallen after all.

He could not suppress, could not care enough to, the wrenching cry of his soul. Bruised fingers swiped desperately at the earth to counter the pain that must be, to have fallen for a Dark Lord who loathed the mere promise of emotions.

The ache grew sharper and Harry wanted to tear apart the capricious thing, but could only stare mindlessly onto the ground upon which he lay shattered. He had fallen for a wizard who amused himself with lives of others, the unwavering belief of his followers and the sentiments of those who dared thought themselves his equal.

He has fallen for Marvolo, who had attended him so diligently from the very first time they had met. The wizard had promised him on the grounds of Black Lake when his hope had been cruelly torn by the centaurs, that Harry would never find himself bereft of company, or suffocated with loneliness. The man had stood by the promise that had not been wanted, through accusations and disinterests.

Bare fingers curled at the humourless ground, and the strongest wizard writhed helplessly, the agony cruelly tearing away all the blinders he had forced on himself, all the denials he had chosen as his sanctuary and instead engulfed with the burning longing.

How could he...

His self-inflicted torture would have continued for quite some time, had he not been aware of a flash of white in a peripheral view. His pulse rose treacherously at the wish that Marvolo had come for him, as he always had.

But the dark wizard would never taint himself with white.

It was a soft light fluttering above the ground, the brilliance of a Patronus but far too miniature to deem it even the attempt of an untried.

Brushing away the slight wetness from his cheeks, Harry reached out with hollow curiosity and cautiousness abandoned with alacrity.

It was warm. Not the soft warmth of fire, nor was it the reassuring heat of the Patronus. His fingers dipped into the little-disfigured ball of light with the slightest pulse as if verifying its existence.

As soon as it had tasted him, it flickered off to appear off the beaten path.

Harry had followed much worse, with fewer instructions. His tendency to be foolishly callous as once upon the youth had abated. But it had not disappeared.

Besides, he was hardly undefended when his faithful holly wand was with him.

His heart cared naught for reasons. Such a fickle little being. Or perhaps, with his most recent realization, he had come to understand caution didn't matter anymore anyway.

He hurried, determinedly not looking at the tranquil lake, carefully stepping away from the path as he followed the Willow's Lantern.

He wondered about the ones who carried a message for him, wondered uncaring of whether they meant foul intentions.

Flinching through the hardness that dug through his soles and feet, Harry walked on for long he didn't care to count and didn't notice them until a voice aroused his distracted self.

"Harry Potter. We have been waiting for you."

--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--

Marvolo waited, waited for his wayward treasure to return. He waited irreverent of the cold that had descended with the darkness. The house remained unlit, a dark mass impotent behind the Dark Wizard. Patience had been a virtue he had ever idolized. Yet when he must entrap the most agnostic wizard, he had learnt to savour the absolutely delicious reward for every agonizing wait he must endure. He waited, his thoughts straying no further than must be allowed.

After all, there was nowhere else that his creature could run to, could seek solace from. Marvolo had exhausted every memory that the lovely one could cling for sanctuary. He had tainted, had seeped into its very pulse.

His triumph would be so very sweet to savour. The end was so very near; perhaps it was prompted unconventionally, unexpectedly, but Lord Voldemort rapidly found his voracity scent the air for the lovely fragrance of his prey. There could be no more escape, no more excuses and each secret that the spring bright gaze refused to say would be spilled with the betrayed tears.

*I am sorry she wasn't strong enough.*

--tob--ew--ith—outu—myl--ove--

Once upon a time a lovely, little doe had found itself straying from its herd, was lost and bewildered in a land unfamiliar. Disoriented, it did seek its fellow brethren and yet, stumbling steps brought it no closer to them. Despondent, it obscured itself within a haven fortune granted and let its days be filled with dreams of *home*.

Once upon a time, a monster came upon an exotic beauty, forlorn beyond the dark tresses it had hidden and the gluttonous being felt its greed command a deceptively gentle smile. The core was as rotten as the scarlet madness declared and with forgotten skills reclaimed the nightmarish being cajoled the skittish doe.

With fresh hues of sweet spring, the slender creature noted the approach heart fluttering and yet, never downed its bold gaze. And the being draped so lovingly in darkness, the one that had meant to guide the little creature into a trap so welcoming, had meant to sample the sweet delicacy so exotic before devouring to sate its selfish appetite, found itself enthralled with a charm flushed with naivety.

Surprised at this unexpected delight, it pursued the serene creature with singular interest. Docile it might have been, the doe cared naught for the promise of power flouted thus. Dispassionate it might have been it easily resisted the darkness that caressed its skin so possessive in its intent.

The monster might have been delighted thus at the treasure it found, might have been, had it not been the casual power he found slumbering in the placidity. In the most unexpected manner the doe gently chipped the pieces away and he knew not the pretence had fallen. He knew not when the monster had merged with the human.

Every triumph he must declare as a monster as he had once intended, but did not quite track the stumbling steps into this unbidden territory.

Yet, gloat he did still, in the superiority of his strength, in the submissive visage of the sweet one that would one day fall to him.

In his power, he rested assured, in the darkness that never failed him before. Despite the lingering discomfort at the strength with which the divine creature perforated his belief and his mind, he persisted still.

And benevolently did he grant the growing attachment, the convoluting bond between two magical beings. He discarded the obsessive devotion, the overwhelming affinity with which one creature of no slyness could claim his attention so.

For no matter the threat of these... emotions... so unfamiliar, the little beauty would forever be in his grasp. He might allow himself faint adjustments because the other shall succumb one day; his beloved treasure would claim its true place at his feet.

No matter the blaze in the shade of Death itself. The creature would bow.

Then the innocent one, his sweetest desire had spoken with a voice glazed with divine nectar, murmured so with gentle hands cradling his face.

And the Dark Lord had perhaps truly understood. Understood that the poison had been in the very air this deceptive creature breathed, in every pulse that sighed. Raw display of power wasn't needed, nor did the creature need to be magically seductive being to threaten his existence.

If that would have been so, Lord Voldemort would have long wrecked such audacity, would have taken vicious amusement.

The creature had never needed vicious power to defend it, for his words were as capable of dismantling one's sanity as he himself would boast of.

Every tale gone untold, gone neglected for the Dark Lord had deemed *unnecessary* now spoke of not reticence of a wayward traveller, but of taunts a fatal secret bore. And Lord Voldemort wouldn't forgive. ..Wouldn't forget the whispered words. Couldn't ignore... couldn't help but remember the reluctant trails spilled from an oblivious mouth.

Couldn't ignore the realization of that first glance at the edge of the black lake, not of horror at the presence of a stranger, but recognition.

How arrogant he had been in his superiority, how self-assured! How stupendously foolish at the knowing glances, at the resigned acceptance...

There had been no charade for the benefit of the innocence he had perceived. They had seen Tom Riddle at honestly they had known Marvolo.

Unforgivable... for had not the Dark Lord scrubbed the history from ever remembering Tom Riddle, had he not removed the stench of this muggle father, the shame of his mother, the despair of his family? Had he not cleansed his hands with the blood of his own?

But for this anomaly, who must dare mock him as if his soul was transparent to this being. Such a wayward thought, yet it terrified him more than conceivable. And such threats could easily be identified. Could it not? Hadrian shall write them so faithfully for him, drawn in his own blood.

The monster longed to extend a claw and draw the lovely menace to his side so that it might kneel in supplication.

But he waited, patient as it had never been advocated as his preference. He waited, for the world had been laid bare and no shelter the creature could claim as a refuge. So he granted mercifully for it to lament and cry.

And waited for his prey to realize its cage.

*He* arrived with a quiet storm, step a stumble out of apparation.

The Dark Lord was prepared for many a thing.

Had anticipated with vindictive intent.

Laced with fury and malice.

And yet, he looked at the being still and blank and at the next exhale, he couldn't bring back the malignity.

The little treasure had returned, as he had known; had nowhere left to run, he had known.

And yet, the triumph that he must relieve had been replaced by a strange restlessness. He had conquered the ever reticent creature, had he not? Why then, there seemed to be an abyss torn between them?

Why did it feel as if Hadrian became more chimerical, more fantastic by the minute?

“Marvolo?”

The Dark Lord searched with urgency for the duplicity in the exotic face. In a moment he abandoned it, merely to pursue the loveliness alone.

The ache in his core startled him and he wished to take a step forward, to touch, to admire, to rage and spite. The previous satisfaction felt sour upon his tongue. The vindication instead seemed to have turned traitor. He didn't understand, not the blooming bruise deep inside his core.

They were numb, his fingers.

“Hadrian.” The barest attempt to swallow the snarling ache in his throat.

Hadrian smiled and the Dark Lord flinched. This was not what he wanted. He wanted the defiance to bloom, for it to be crushed at his whim. He wished for tears to purify the lovely one's sins.

He didn't care for this mockery of expression that must never lie upon this person, this person of the untainted soul.

He cared naught for this strange acceptance in so desirable a face. It cared naught that Hadrian accepted his brutal action.

Let there be condemnations! Let there be blood.

They remained frozen at their spots, their breaths could condense together and yet so far.

And the lovely green he cherished so, remained empty of life.

“I did not thank you for taking care of me earlier. I am grateful for your help, Marvolo.”

So very distant. So very callous and Marvolo called out bewildered at the loss echoing in his soul as Hadrian was turning away already. A strange farewell that throttled remnant of his thoughts.

“Shall I see you on Mabon, then?” It was anxious indeed, his call. The Dark Lord clenched his fist in unknown worry and the words remained ever so polite.



Hadrian turned back minutely and Marvolo found wetness clinging to the dark lashes. Found a remnant of desperation in his soul and sought so curiously for it to be reflected in the others' gaze and yet the pale canvas spoke nothing of but loveliness.

"I suppose it does not matter any way. I will see you one more time." He despised the prophetic words, but Hadrian gave him another smile carrying naught of emotions, "Good bye."

Marvolo had scarcely had to take a breath before darkness was his only companion.

## Chapter End Notes

I wanted to say something real quick. I know my update rate is slow and the pace of the story is even slower. This is not a thriller where adventure need be in every page. I just..loved Tom and Harry. Loved their story and their romance. (Okay, I know nothing like that actually happened, but the possibilities!!!). It just.. feels really discouraging when people sign off my story like that. One would think after the support of so many lovely readers, I am a bit more confident now..\*sigh\* . I admit I felt a little down-hearted.

My story is my horcrux, okay! And thank you everyone who has so sweetly supported my darling little things. You guys are more amazing than I can describe.

Ohkies than for little trivia time:

So Tommy got really mad when Harry ignored his letters, because first Harry was actually upset and then because like an idiot he overdosed on potions. Tommy threw a tantrum and then found a sleeping beauty. Had a plan to find the truth but hey! That backfired on him! Both are a little mad at the other now but Harry got unexpected new and then whole dynamics shifted again.

1. The cottage was under blood ward. Voldemort didn't know that. When he thought he owned the place Hadrian owned, simply by owning the land he was actually wrong.

2. Girding is a potion I lifted from HP fandom. It is meant to increase endurance but advisable in small quantities.

3. The truth potion that Voldemort had given Harry had a bit of calming effect and that made Harry really loose-tongued for a while.

4. Willow's Lantern is actually sort of will'o the wisps. Sort of anyway. They are a kind of call. Whether you answer it or not, your choice. They are pure of heart and they have been used very often by creatures to summon someone. The creatures however may or may not have kind intentions.

That's it I think.

I am sorry it is repetitive and slow-paced and probably boring. Hope you like it anyway guys. Do leave a review if you wanna? That will be awesome.

# See the truth and finally know

## Chapter Summary

The evening of Mabon was spent in the castle of lies, rose-tinted reflections of two wizards soothing wounded hearts. They walked confidently upon with brittle composure and upon the frayed edges did their flesh catch often lending crimson blood colour to their path. In their souls they would weep, but never did thoughts stray from the other.

## Chapter Notes

Blanket disclaimer. Sorry for the delay everyone! Please see the end notes for my apology. :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Old Nobles honoured their magic with traditions and rituals as they must, but perhaps they were not as evenly biased as they should have been.

Perhaps for the folks who lived off-land, who preferred the sway of ocean over rigidity of dry land, praying for gentle wind upon their sails on Litha was more prudent. Perhaps Beltane brought much more joy to the youth drunk on the wine of spring. Nonetheless it remained true that the Autumn Equinox was sacred to *all* wizards and witches; this moment when the world tottered on the cusp of transition and contemplated on the balance, mere moments before it must fall to the darkness. Wizards and witches around the world would bow in thankfulness for the bounty of summer they were generously offered, thankful for the last blessing before their lands would relapse to sere fields.

The House of Malfoy never reneged from its responsibilities, not so vain to take the recognition of all their fortunes and stayed proper where they must be. Virtuously they recognised the Gods and Goddesses of old, the bounties that they had been blessed with, for the successes in harvests of fields or life and never turned away from the Magic's claim, lest their heirs suffer from the foolishness of one arrogant Lord.

The traditionalist house honoured the day as was appropriate of course, but they didn't squander the opportunity, this convenient prospect, to *display* as only the entitled would either. Faithfully did they follow the celebration, but also with the sly intention to show the world just how blessed they were.

Hence, every year their communal, unrestricted revelry remained a word of delight, a hint of envy on the bittersweet mouth of the participants. Every year, the house flared brighter than

before with smug satisfaction and never failed to invite all equal and less for the opportunity to glow under their charm.

The Lady of Wiltshire had never shirked in her duty as a wife, a mother or as a Malfoy. With pride and confidence, she orchestrated each and every detail of the festivities they hosted. She prepared for the expected and the unexpected. The Malfoy house had been sent to an organized tizzy during the last few months, but the Lady of the House never faltered in her duty.

Hence was why she was a touch miffed when her Lord took such interest in the Masquerade ball, as if her hands were incapable of this task. It had simply been never his obligation and hadn't his wife borne her burdens well for all these years? Her husband knew it very well and yet...

Her lips pursed as she watched the threadbare anxiety in her Lord's countenance.

"Abraxas. Pray tell, what do you find so lacking?" She frowned when her caustic tone didn't affect her husband a bit.

Her hands caught the wrist that was shuffling through a sheaf of parchment frantically. He looked up and her voice eased at the desperation trembling through her grasp, "If you have a reason to worry, I will not be caught wandless."

The Lord Malfoy didn't want to. But his vanity may very well lead to his fall and Abraxas couldn't afford a failure this time.

"Yes, I suppose I must."

Her duty had been to protect and understand nothing more and nothing less. Thus, hours later of a whispered conversation, she went to fortify her preparation in such a manner that there would be no blood split at the end of the night.

---Evernevernever----evernevernever ----

Apathy brought sluggishness to the hands that were supposed to tame wilderness of a Potter inheritance. Instead, the wizard gazed out the windows forbidding him the freedom beyond. The brush for a while now had been merely resting on his robe-clad thigh, but Harry Potter didn't quite pay it any mind.

It was an intentional knock on the doorway of the study that roused his attention and perhaps he should have expected it; after all the Dark Lord enjoyed the privilege of owning an ancient, magical land and he might very well savour the benefits by ignoring a cottage ward anytime he pleased. Frustration didn't darken the voice of once Gryffindor despite this intrusion, for lethargy prejudiced the glazed green and he greeted his discourteous visitor with a sigh, "Here".

Only when there was no reply to be had for quite some time, that thin curiosity turned his eyes to the doorway. There stood the greatest of Dark Lord to reign upon the Magical Lands,

the one who held tattered remains of all that he had thought as his own. There he stood, the man who took and took, and paid no heed to the sanctity of any soul it ruined.

The man who commanded his heart so, oblivious and cruel, already the winter that had safeguarded him since that fateful day past seemed to give away in the wrathful disposition of Dark Magic. How could he have hoped to shield himself for this final time, however desperately, to fortify himself within walls of icy indifference, not the least voluntary? Nay, the winter had nipped his heels ever since he had willingly torn himself away from the Dark Lord.

*(Now, the shields tore with the efficacy of silk against claws.)*

The Dark Lord, who was so still, and oddly enough, remained leaning against the entrance of the room. Crimson eyes held fast to his inquisitive gaze and Harry frowned at the naked emotion underneath.

"Marvolo? I am not late, am I?"

The Dark Wizard shook himself from whichever stupor he had fallen into and glided softly into the study room converted in a manner of his comfort, eyes at once taking in everything before devotedly returning to the figure before the fall windows.

"We are not late, no," Marvolo murmured softly and he did hesitate a moment before dropping to his knees before him. His breath stilted and Harry could barely claim any reign upon his heart before his left hand the other had taken so courteously. The back of his hand seared with soft fire but it was the worshipful posture that harshly ruled his emotions. "I wished to give you something before we leave, hence the rude visit. Forgive me."

Harry huffed a little, emotions gliding past the icy cage he had forced upon them "It does not matter though, does it now?"

The wizard remained kneeling in apology or supplication, he cared not, "Your permission does matter, Hadrian, even if I were to be a surprise."

Harry turned away only for a moment from the softly spoken words and contrite gestures. When his attention returned to the man, a bejewelled box lied upon his dresser. The Dark Lord rose to his feet, rose to dominion as he was meant to and Harry didn't linger upon the unbelievable image of a Dark Lord *who bowed before him* anymore.

Familiar annoyance returned when he touched the artfully painted, and rather obviously exotic box that lied before him. It was of slight height, moderate size and no matter how beautiful he might have been declared before, (many a time and not just by this wizard, yet only *his* words remained in memory) Harry felt the need to defend his masculinity, "It belongs in the powder room of a Lady, Marvolo. It seems a very good gift for the Lady Malfoy, perhaps on an occasion other than today?"

Marvolo laughed. Unconstrained and in slight disbelief of this unexpected flippancy, and Harry had to keep a hard and fast hold on his irritation. Before he could make another sharp comment, the dark wizard fought for control and subsided with a chuckle or two.

"Yes, the appearance is a little deceiving, isn't it? Go on, open the box."

With a dubious glance to his bewildering companion, Harry relieved the latch.

It was... Harry tilted his head as if the shift in angle would change what he must see before him, but they helped him nary a bit. It was long, collapsing to a sharp point. The other end was, however, quite beautifully twisted so. In the end, it looked like...

"Is it a kind of an ornamental weapon?" Harry never could understand the rationality between making a weapon pretty as opposed to simply efficient.

*Although it couldn't be.* It hardly resembled a dagger, and the end might gleam in sunlight but it was only sharp enough to defend him from perhaps garden gnomes.

Marvolo chuckled again but thankfully devolved no further. "Well, it *is* ornamental. May I?" Thoroughly mystified, Harry nodded only to freeze at the cold fingers delving deep into the insanity his hair boasted of.

So often, so very often, the Dark wizard had taken him into his arms. So very often he had trembled under the cold touch placed irreverent upon his reluctant body. So very often he had been a mannequin under the perverse intention of a Dark Wizard.

And yet, somehow *this* minimal touch breached another unconscious wall of intimacy. Conquering another defense with intrepid hands.

The hands upon which blood must have pooled so gleefully, the same hand that had wrenched peace from a non-offending village. And curse his imagination, but the gentleness of those hands brought the illusion of blood soothing his dark hair.

He remained frozen in eternal recoil and surely the brilliant Lord did realize, for the hands stuttered but a moment before turning swift and mechanical. Harry allowed himself a breath when he could no longer feel the foreign touch and revelled for several more before he had had to turn.

Marvolo...the Dark Lord was placid in contemplation, but the magic roiling at his feet betrayed his agitation, betrayed the yearning when each dark trails ventured to feel and yet dared not, fearful of the aversion it might feel.

Or worse, the apathy that it might endure.

"Forgive me, but I must ask," Harry found himself surprised that the wizard might dare break the unspoken pact of polite distance they carried and steeled himself so." I have known few wizards who wear their hair as long as you do, at your age and power especially. It looks lovely on you, of course, but is it a custom in your land?"

Distractions.

It was not the first time someone had asked this; the long hair that was hardly suitable for a Lord, for a prestigious house Head. Some had been curious and disdainful. More had

gleefully called the arrogant saviour whimsical of his heritage. Few had deserved the truth and Harry had been quite stringent with the ones he truly trusted.

Strange how the concept of confidentiality warped when met with this particular wizard.

Habit guided an absent hand to his hair, only to be reminded of the foreign knot they carried. Harry forced them back to their laps and didn't look at his companion, content to let nostalgia carry him far.

"This..is in the memory of a person very dear to me. He used to have such long hair, openly breaking the tradition of how a Lord must be. I was his heir, irrespective of blood or magical ties. Gave me his house, everything he had inherited and accumulated. Everything material, but nothing truly that reminded of him. So, I chose to keep a piece of his memory with me all the time."

No. 12 Grimmauld place had only forced resentful memories on Sirius, a despicable childhood he couldn't escape even after years in Azkaban. The room of the young marauder had been not as cherished either and in his grief perhaps Harry had not noticed. He had only realized that in the end, Sirius had had nothing to remember him by, or at least nothing that wouldn't bring blood and pain upon touching it. (Grimmauld place was a wretched place filled with cursed items and biting doorknobs)

The tentative touch that placed a rebellious curl behind his ear aroused him from the descent into nostalgia and Harry startled.

He had not meant to divulge so much. Perhaps a line or two. Certainly, he had not meant to saturate each word with the love he still felt for his Godfather.

A rustle of cloak and Marvolo moved from his periphery to take up all his attention. And Harry lamented at the quiet corner of his mind that after everything, he still never hesitated in offering the truth of his soul in front of this person.

"How very fortunate he was." The quiet murmur should remind him of how Sirius was never fortunate, but Marvolo could not know anyway. "To have your faithful regards."

For the bitterest moment, the once lonely boy was reminded that the regards were hardly reciprocated. But then was it perhaps fated of Hadrian to care for such trouble wizards who saw a different facade when looking at him?

Lips grimaced and parted, but the wizards bit back a surly retort. He wouldn't. The day would be intolerable were he to stay honest with his frantic thoughts, cumbered even more by the heart of his.

They would be the perfect gentle wizards, contrary to the history they shared; a history of barbed words and hidden intentions. The Stranger to the land would stay quiet to the sub-vocal protests, would say nary a word referring to the fateful day. The Master of the Valley would say naught of the secrets the other had but shown a glimpse of and would query not, even if it was his secrets the other seemed to own so carelessly.

So Harry thought, this decisive clarity unfolding before him with every step they took beyond the Peverell cottage.

It would be an uneasy truce, for one night alone. One night alone, because it wouldn't matter past midnight. The illusion would unravel and the participants must exit the stage gracefully. It wouldn't *matter* anymore, for the end was closer than Marvolo would ever know.

So, Hadrian no more deserved to demand the apology for that unforgivable offense, as was his right. Harry had no more time left to be obstinate and shake this fool of a Lord from his illusions of narcissism. He had no more right to demand *anything* of his faithful companion, who would be the one left behind in the end.

The festering fury left his throat burning while indelible melancholy kept his steps heavy. But the Gryffindor showed nary of the despair that was leaving him eroded and instead walked steadily beside his Dark Wizard.

He would hold true to this unspoken truce, he swore. There would be none of the bitterness to taint this night.

*(None to spoil this memory of last.)*

In the loathsome silence, Hadrian Peverell thus reminded himself, again and again, fists clenched against his mutinous heart.

The Mabon tradition decreed for the offering to be from their orchards, as none of them had a harvest of their own. Nonetheless, there was sage and grapes from the vines that had crept high upon the cottage and Marvolo had brought with him an amber basket with Pomegranates already inside. The rest of the bounties they would have from the flora around the Ridge.

But now as the offerings were plucked fresh and sweet for the Mabon's spread, the disquieted wizard rejected another one, pettily captious despite himself.

The restless thoughts stuttered at the cold touch to his wrist. And the fractious wizard turned ignorant, not at all prepared for taller wizard shading him from the world beyond.

Not at all prepared for the quiet determination when they had so willingly accepted the silent if unresolved reconciliation. *(Well, at least that was he had thought)*

"I cannot take your forgiveness when I have taken so many things from you already. I can only *ask* for it, and it is yours to give. I dare not list the many ways I have slighted you, I have hurt you. But, Hadrian..." Contrary to his belief, Marvolo did not touch him again even as he moved forward with that intensity.

He could not when Hadrian flinched away from the moon pale hands. Hardly the first time that his touch had been rejected thus, Marvolo having been rebuffed from the very beginning. Yet, perhaps the discomfort had by now devolved to real repugnance and the arrogance of a wizard was left in the wake of the disaster as sympathetic ashes. Hands curled inward, clenching tight so vulnerable.



The young wizard had so far corralled his emotions with ruthless apathy. The rigid barrage shattered with the quiet words, at the distressed visage (*false, nothing but lies*) and the fury could not be quietened.

“What for? You needed a monster to be your equal. I cannot fault you if that was what you saw in me. You found what you wanted. Wasn’t it fascinating though, the way you never said a lie?” The vindictive wizard did not speak thorough gritted teeth, a false wonder ending his words. Yet, winter crept through the foliage, in the pursuit of numbing an ache when no other antidote could be found.

Contrary to the rage that had once marked a tempestuous youth, his ire held frost in its breath eyeing the stupefied dark wizard. Unwilling to ever be swayed.

Marvolo knelt upon the chaotic wilderness in determination and green eyes widened. Frost thawed in response to absolute confusion and denial, “What...”

The Dark Wizard looked up at him with nary consternation, “What use is vanity if it costs me you? That is what it has done so far, hasn’t it?”

But the proud saviour held rigid to his detached façade, he must, lest there be devastation only left when the dark magic of the = supplicant(insincere it must be) found itself none to anchor.

Trees groaned as the wind rose in disgruntlement, the highland creatures tittered and screeched in bewilderment. In the chaos, two wizards stood uncaring even as the world begged for their compassion.

Harry watched it all, the Dark Lord caught in the strange agony of helplessness and the magic that tore viciously at everything and nothing because that was all it had ever known and he gave voice none to the strange delight that might bring about ill-begotten hope to his eternally cursed soul. Ruthlessly did he repress it, this possibility that perhaps ...

*No.*

The Dark Lord recognized novelty in exotic people and the amusement that they bought. He would allow some leeway for satisfying said amusement. Would he give more than that? Would he allow Harry any more than blood-stained hands and apology in the aftermath of fire and ashes?

*No.*

Harry was perhaps stunned at the reckless taunts flung at him, but he was hardly the connoisseur of calm temperament and the words were not as guilty as Marvolo believed.

"How can you ask me? How can you ever ask me to condone your actions?" He whispered. (*Yet they were guilty, spoken by Marvolo as they were.*)

Mentally the wizard collected the pieces of his wretched self. It didn't matter! It didn't matter at all, the ifs and pleases, because it was time for him to go *home*.

*(He had no more right).*

So he thought no more of the dwindling wishes, no more of the trails of hope that reached out towards Marvolo in frantic desperation.

Thought no more of the fact that the apology *mattered*! It mattered because this was the Dark wizard who had a few months ago hardly looked at the life crushed under his stride; who had never known, never cared for the emotions that would twist his purpose further out of reach.

(Thought no more of the wrecks in his heart as he tore out each hope twitching with the last gasp)

In contrast to his desolate magic, Marvolo was utterly still, "No. No, I am not asking you to condone my actions. I just need to..." His voice trailed off and a hand unclenched slightly to reach out only for despair to leave it wilted. With a self-deprecating laugh he continued, "I suppose there is no counter-curse to words once spoken."

And the fool of a besotted wizard longed to sooth this writhing creature, longed to draw away the pain, despite everything. The fool of a heart still reeling from the sting of betrayal lunged at the offender.

A soft exhale hid the sound of something breaking inside him and the indomitable facade loosened some. Harry took a small step forward, ever so hopeless against this wizard, and asked, "Will you help me prepare the spread?"

He could not stay, but *this* he would grant.

Dark scarlet contracted in surprise, but Harry had the gratification of seeing the tense shoulders relax minutely.

It was customary to bring something to your host's porch, it was not however so proper to share the gift when not of the same family. Harry could hardly care for propriety, not when he was so *tired*. (Tired of fighting against himself *and what was he even fighting against?*)

The world fell again to still silence when contentment lightened the hearts upon these wizards. And when finally their basket overflowed so with berries and twining honeysuckles, heavy with apples and pumpkins, asters and ferns leaving the offering finally wholesome; the burden carefully arranged by a fretting and another amused wizard, it had been time.

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Malfoy Manor had shimmered in the pale light of dusk, powerful and so very grand; the frontispiece of Malfoy Pride. Wards would keep the sounds of celebration from trailing beyond the manor, would keep envious curiosity of meddlesome villages from being aroused, but even spells and charm could not quite pale the heaviness of the air on Mabon night.

Each inhale had the clinging smell of fresh hay burning and dripping onto the earth in quiet surrender.

Two wizards stopped in front of the sprawling gates of Wiltshire Manor. One shifted and turned away from acrid memories; the other hesitated for reasons entirely different.

The recollection of a dreadful time had perhaps blanched as better time had come to plead dominance and yet, even after all this time they stayed starkly in contrast. With an aggrieved sigh, the young wizard murmured and a no-descript mask coalesced onto his hand.

"Hadrian."

The Dark Lord Voldemort would one day ascend to the pinnacle of all that was glorious and magnificent, his stride on the crushed dignity and flayed flesh, might it be the apex of infamy and as well, and the immortal Lord will have his kingdom,

Certainly, he would not skulk into a celebration, anonymously and no less mundane than another wizard. Certainly, he would not tolerate the stilted conversations with insipid beings he cared not a whit for, each and all sovereign in the pedestrian mentality.

And yet, he *shall* and Lord Voldemort found himself not at all caring at the indignity that might have piqued him previously.

Especially not now, not when the dark wizard watched his frowning companion. Sweltered in starlight and the slender neck laid bare as all the dark trails ambitiously tied in one knot; he clenched his hand against caressing such a lovely yield.

His thoughts were darkly yearning and his jaws remained rigid to his passion, for his own carelessness had now tainted the purity of his desire and the Dark Wizard had felt never so helpless and repentant.

"Marvolo?"

Sparkles of beauty in all of the crude creation and how he longed to be sheathed in all of the bright loveliness, to worship this stunning creation. And yet, his breath now shuttered at the fresh stigma to the sweet ones, brought upon by his own doing, and his cold hands trembled as they wept inky stains of the guilt.

None of the muddled thoughts cracked the composed countenance and Marvolo (Yes, he was Marvolo now, was he not, not just to his lovely one either) smiled hopelessly at the bewitching picture.

Hesitate did he some, glancing down at the mask, docile and beautiful in his hands, slivers of blue on an otherwise non-descript ash-grey base. Simple it might have been, but immaculately and thoughtfully crafted. Perfectly understated in a manner for someone who would rather prefer anonymity.

Hadrian waited for him.

"None shall see you in there. They will not know you. Perfect strangers, until you choose not to be. Of course, I am not speaking for those who have been friends and acquaintances. But everyone will respect the traditions. No one shall ask you unmasked, figuratively or literally.

His Hadrian was of endless patience, as he had never been and did no more than giving a nod of understanding.

"Perfect strangers to everyone," Marvolo repeated hollowly. "*Except*, I had not thought to bear in mind, that it would include me as well."

And the dear one tilted his head, not quite understanding, "We will know each other, Marvolo."

"Yes, but I will not see you. You will not see me. Forgive me, but I will not have you a stranger in any shape or form." Breathing anticipation, he held up the compromise." Conjured by my magic, you will still be masked to all except for me."

An offer when before it would have been insistent fingers shushing any protest from pretty, questioning lips and taking the right as his own already.

A compromise, for no longer could he assert the claim so very vehemently on his creature, complacent in his feigned superiority as he was.

Still, he waited, with an uncertainty that was so foreign to his thoughts, for his chosen one to disapprove and discard it.

The acute knot that had shackled his breath left in sudden stupefaction and Marvolo found himself jarred for entirely another reason, because there bloomed the delicate shade of titillated blood upon the pale beauty of *his* Hadrian, the loveliest of wonder that could be granted to the dark wizard. His companion had turned away as if to contemplate, but even the caustic give of starlight couldn't hide the truth.

In his hubris, Marvolo had not thought of what he could lose, had not thought until there had been a very real possibility of loathsome indifference and apathy.

Yet the astounded monster watched as, even after all this, Hadrian bloomed so alluringly under his attention, regardless of the bruises he had left again upon his cherished, the malicious hurt he had knowingly provoked.

It had been terrible, the despair of this dark being, the mourning howls of this monster when it had knelt wretched upon the ashes of the ruin that it had brought upon itself. Devastating in its implication when the dark magic writhed to *heal* and couldn't, for the cruel hands had only ever known the texture of obliteration.

Now that the hope sprouted fresh and clinging, a delicate thing in the moors of desperation, the monster still knew not to be gentle with it. But the veneer of careful civility did and the innocent creature would never see the ravenous devotion, the horrifying obsession never sated but stoked to new heights evermore.

There had never been a great tectonic shift, a dynamic change of great improbability. They were instead a culmination of fractures that twisted that which had once been his reality and throughout it all Lord Voldemort walked upon the path with resolute if faltering steps.

Hadrian had finished conjuring a burnt umber mask and mutely raised it in a question.

None of the naked desire contorted his face and with a smile, he asked, "May I?"

Thankfully Marvolo was perfunctory while fastening the mask around him, otherwise his mortification would add another decoration to the Malfoy entrance, Harry thought.

Upon their arrival, the young wizard was thankful, very much so, that his entrance to the Wizarding world of this era long gone would remain silent and uncelebrated, shielded by the mask of anonymity. As it was the months of self-inflicted isolation in the Rowena's ridge and away from the crowd had left him with much reluctance and it was this that left a defensive aura around the two of them, Harry unable to settle despite the reassurance of his powerful companion and even wrapped as they were in the cloaking magic of their Masquerade masks.

The sharp contours of Bellatrix Lestrange and the Malfoys, of torture and blood, of Dobby were of a murky nightmare. The jubilation of a festive manor remained utterly alien and Harry was thankful that the familiarity of a distorted time didn't guide his steps, he was thankful that Marvolo never saw the flinches when they passed the hallway.

The celebration was already past the tentative beginning when they entered the ballroom under the sway of soft music. Marvolo had made no overtures to meet their hosts and Harry had made no suggestion to keep oblige to propriety and decorum. The Mabon gifts of the guests were left to the elves.

The decoration was subtle to the purebloods and garish to the less fortunate, ornately designed to cater to the guests' entertainments. The ballroom was massive enough to accommodate comfortably, letting sparing them all the comfort of their own space even with the orchestra that kept on playing and the grandiose elaborate displays.

The guests mingled with each other, hesitation hardly there and conversations occasional a loud bout no matter that some remained strangers to one another all along. They passed these strange new invitees who skirted the crowd, who leaned away from any advances and entered *together* even if it was frowned upon.

Yet the two wizards had no care for the much distinguished celebration to which the invitation was much envied. They cared not to welcome any other into their company either and Harry remained sheltered in the crimson glare comfortably, wrapped in a casual discussion of a wizard with the mask adorned by the feathers of a possibly illegal creature, brazenly taking the advantage which on any other day would have been an invitation to Azkaban, the British Wizarding Prison.

They shared their amusement, noted the architecture behind the overlapping embellishments, entirely absorbed with each other; miles away from the throbbing cacophony even while standing in the middle of it.

There were no refreshments yet, not until the Lord had given the offering to the Magic and the guests lounged upon settees or moved languidly on the ballroom to the soft music.

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"What?"

The query was admittedly redundant, as the answer was clearly written in the upturned hand that remained expectant in the air, an invitation to be taken in his discretion. But even notwithstanding the gazes that bore into them from Lords and Ladies alike, the voices muted as exhalations were almost suppressed violently; but even ignoring such things embarrassment left flaming streaks his face.

Marvolo was patient as he waited for a dizzy wizard, but he *couldn't*. Harry *couldn't*. Even excluding the fact that dancing was an art best left to those who had an aptitude for it, who wouldn't likely ruin the entire night by creating a farce, he couldn't.

"Marvolo..."

It was a plea. Plea for what? To retreat perhaps, to take that step back that he himself couldn't.

"I won't let you fall."

One time another, those words had been spoken to him: one moonless night when Harry had dithered so vulnerable in front of a Dark Wizard who could have taken gleeful advantage. But the scarlet stains had not shown any maliciousness then, had been unendingly patient, breathtakingly tender.

And Harry wordlessly cursed Marvolo, this twisted sample of a Dark Lord, who would tear his heart to shreds. Especially now that the course of future had been set and Harry felt the ache digging sharp because he would not be by the side of his unexpected companion anymore.

The agony by and by transcended fury, until the faded sample of the later was left. The ache by and by consumed this wizard until the green grace was glazed only want.

Marvolo would remain unaware until he wouldn't anymore, until time settled to coherency once again.

Perhaps it was nostalgic sorrow, perhaps a longing that could not be suppressed but foolishly did he accept that hand.

His heart was being torn asunder, so near to his desire and yet not at all, and Harry thought it to be an apt punishment, this terrible bruise that he could feel with each breath, for loving as he did this terrible wizard.

Surely... surely he could be forgiven a single night's lapse?

His heart rejoiced as it did weep, cradled in the dark magic of its beloved and Harry let himself be drawn closer to Marvolo. He closed his eyes, savouring the precious few moments that he was afforded. Closed his eyes in submission and did not think of the ramifications that must be borne by his soul.

For *one* night only, he shall indulge.

This time when he opened his eyes, intense crimson met him equally, as it always had. This time the recalcitrant wizard did not shy away from the quivers of his pulse, did not deny that which always had been his want. This time he did not draw blood in the inside of his mouth so that he might suppress all emotions from the cavorting gaze of Marvolo.

Hadrian looked at him, saw Marvolo not Voldemort. Hadrian let the present charm cloud his judgement not the fear of future nor the darkness of a past. It was not Harry Potter Marvolo had known for the last months.

And Hadrian Peverell smiled, albeit bashfully as he admitted, "I am not at all a good dancer, Marvolo. I can't guarantee that your feet will stay unscathed tonight."

A pause was all the dark wizard granted himself for this pleasant surprise and the cruel eyes shone receptively and Harry didn't know why he felt grief at the contentedness in Marvolo.

Marvolo was careful as he approached him, as a gentle hand smoothed down a wayward curl and when found no protest, long fingers caressed his face.

Murmuring softly with a faint trace of wonder, he held his companion in an embrace that was admittedly not necessary in any dance, "We will start out slow. Don't fret, Hadrian."

Tad irritated, the impertinent wizard opened his mouth to convey he was *not* fretting when Marvolo manipulated his waist to take that first step.

They did start out slow. Their steps did not match the soft notes of a waltz. Quite often they confounded other dancers who found themselves stepping out of rhythm whenever they cared to watch them. Marvolo found his shoes smudged from when Harry had trod on them once. Or twice. The contrite wizard found quite a few reasons that he had to apologize for but Marvolo only smiled at him.

Harry didn't realize it when the dark wizard was slowly taking him through the basic moves and then higher. At least not until he found himself at the end of a twirl and found a surprised laugh burst out of him as Marvolo pulled him close once again. Flushed quite assuredly, Harry looked up eagerly for the next lesson but found his partner frozen instead.

Before he could frown even, long fingers cradled him so reverently in its hold and Harry almost gasped at the ill-hinted desperation behind the grip on his waist, "Are you happy, Hadrian?"

Was he? Was this happiness when every breath seemed to suffocate him, when every glance of this wizard caught his pulse irreverently? Was he happy, when he felt as if he was dying and if he might not live to see the sun tomorrow, he would dance away his last breaths in this embrace of cold and darkness? Let his eyes see the crimson one more time before it must close forever?

He was exactly where he wanted to be and nowhere else.

He wanted to say it all. He wanted to cling to the man and unveil his fraught words that clogged his throat. He looked at the man who was unaware still and only could dare confess,

"Yes."

Marvolo moved again and Harry turned slightly to hide the growing wetness in his eyes.

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No matter how much he appreciated his newly found tolerance for dancing, perhaps one that could be accredited to his partner alone, his feet smothered in polite shoes soon grumbled their displeasure. Marvolo gave no more room for his exhaustion to grow; the first grimace had him ushering his companion promptly to a nearby sofa and hailing a house-elf for some water.

Green eyes turned closed briefly from deep mortification even if the lone witness to the ridiculous scene was a house-elf wringing its hands and wondering how it might help.

"Don't make an unnecessary fuss, Marvolo." Harry hissed at the other wizard, mindful of the eyes occasionally straying to them.

The wizard was briefly startled at the whispered rebuke before being amused, "Be thankful that I am not putting a salve personally on your feet."

Fire licking indignantly, barely could he stop himself from pinching the vexing man. "Really now. Won't that prickle your darling ego?"

"It is not my ego I hold so dear to me."

Hadrian would have taken it for the competent repartee it was meant to be if not for the softness that the Dark wizard laid bare for him alone and he had been unable to breathe past a throat clogged with emotions.

"Marvolo..."

At this moment there was naught a thought of a twisted creature in his dilemma. No nightmare of a past lost distorted this picture. The reflection of light didn't bring back painful nostalgia. Harry Potter looked at the wizard sitting beside him on the sofa and saw no other. His happiness remained untouched by the agony of twining memories, memories that seemed so coherent, not clouded with a barely clear line to separate the discrepancy.

His present had the resolute glint stained crimson that attended his every need so. His present gifted him with a companion that he should...could never have co-existed with but mutual destruction. After all, hadn't had the fates once decreed once.. *Neither could live when the other survives..?*

Yet nothing mattered now. The longing didn't abate, these trails arcing away from him and reaching towards the other, hardly ever rational.

Neither of them was a fool but in presence of the other, they acted no better.

For a moment did he suppress his need, but...



He *had* allowed himself this, had he not? That for just tonight he would let his eyes speak the truth, but his lips will not raise hope when there was none to be had.

And trembling fingers, hesitant and so fragile in vulnerable yearning, rose to trace the inhuman features that seemed as if it was sculpted from porcelain, pale and cold; he didn't retreat when the touch encountered the lifeless mask shielding the other instead.

Hadrian was not thinking about the unnatural of them. Tearing at the soft insides of his mouth in anxiety, at the terrible craving this person must ignite inside him, he gently rebuked the other wizard, "Must you always have the last word?" *Don't say such things.*

*You will be the death of my heart.*

But Marvolo was not really cognizant of the light teasing of his words, his voice of rationality apparently lost. There was no vindication at seeing Marvolo pale and frozen, as one might have hoped of the wizard who had found himself stupefied in this way many a times, and Harry started to move away.

He was not permitted, however.

Swift and despondent a cold hand held him a prisoner, kept his hand pressed to the cold illusion and the dark wizard turned as if to inhale the headiness of a sweet pulse.

His cheeks were burning, he already knew, scarlet blossoms of embarrassment at his own boldness and timid at this escalation, the Gryffindor ever so reticent from emotions and its ilk. Marvolo didn't let his mortification mutate, didn't nurture it with the sadistic delight as Hadrian expected and let him draw away with a final touch. Reluctance was lucid on the clenched jaws and Harry didn't doubt the stress of that unwillingness, for the penchant of his Dark Wizard to possess and keep he was very well aware of.

Yet, Marvolo let him go at the simple sign of his discomfort.

Not a moment too soon either, when both the wizards turned simultaneously towards the magical aura that was steadily approaching them.

Dark eyes glittered behind the simple mask and the wizard gestured forward the trembling elf; the wretched creature anxiously brought forward the tray with a glass and potion vial.

Polite and pleasant were the words of the intruder, "The potion has young petals of arnica. A gathering of this kind requires one to be refreshed once in a while; it might take a while for the host to break his fast properly."

Hadrian gave a cursory glance to his companion, but Marvolo didn't offer false permission to this unknown. The Dark Lord was instead carved from cold stone, long knuckles clenched bloodless that the minute perusal allowed him to see.

Seeing that Marvolo cared for no contribution, whatsoever, Hadrian accepted the kind offering to be placed on a spindly table, "I thank you for the kindness, but I would have been fine with just water."

The wizards acquiesced but bowed low to Marvolo instead, "Forgive me then for taking liberties, My Lord."

*Ah.*

Wished he could say that this was entirely unexpected, but the cynical Gryffindor could not be so naïve. He did not turn to the still wizard beside him but instead was amused at the Slytherin uninvited. Wondered at the veiled intention of this Death Eater, "Your Lord?"

Dark eyes shifted to him and for once Harry was so curious to unveil the mask from these wolves and snakes, "Pardon me, I should have said *our* Lord."

Harry leaned back, no longer tolerant or unaware of the insinuations, and abruptly *enraged* but for the harsh magic that had suddenly coiled beside him in companionable fury.

"You are being presumptuous, my dear fellow." An unknown voice interjected and Harry felt the acute discomfort at being seated when the interlopers towered above him so. "He could have been one of the Gryffindors for all you know."

The stomach-churning feeling shifted to confusion and before Harry could do more than make a small sound, this wizard bowed shallowly and introduced himself, "Abraxas Malfoy." The host, the only person the entirely of the Masquerade Ball must know, as was his right this night. "Forgive my fellow mate; Slytherins are generally more in attendance than any other house. He perhaps could not help the assumption, especially when you are seated with Lord Slytherin himself."

The words were deliberately misleading and convincing. Perhaps anyone else might accept the honey bitter words of pardon, but not the one who wouldn't be led astray like a child.

Yet Harry let the patronizing words flow, curious as to their purpose, and let his sweet smile saturate his wondering tone, "Thank you for clearing that up, Lord Malfoy. It is good that you are chaperoning your friend here. After all, without lessons on proper courtesy the young Heir might have carried on making offenses the whole night long. "The ivory smile upon the mask was fixed and Harry tilted his head in mock admission, "I had heard of your benevolence, but it is quite nice to see it in person."

The Host could do no better than incline his head in humble acceptance of the praise, even as the unknown others' magic boiled with ill-humour. Green blaze did not flinch away from the spitting magic, for his quiet rage still snarled, but before he could speak the predator beside him uncoiled.

"Offenses indeed. My mask has been reduced to worth naught before the first hour is gone." The words were barely audible in their sibilant imitation but both of the wizards flinched violently. It was the most appalling blunder in the Masquerade, to bandy about another's identity without their permission and graver still when committed with the host's participation.

Harry eyed his companion in his peripheral vision, wondering at the reason that the indignation almost compared to his but corralling it for later, before looking back at the

petrified wizards. His tone held sweet innocence and his lips remained cruel, “. It is remarkable though that the both of you could know your Lord even under the Masking Magic. Lord Slytherin, did you say?”

The once Ambassador watched the recoils of two Slytherins as they understood the faux pas they had committed while covering up another mistake, watched the cringe of a Dark Lord but couldn't fathom the reason among the many, but reacted none and sat back to watch the muddled response to the disaster.

It was but the glimpse of white that reminded him of the callous monster beside him, that beneath the facade remained one who would care for naught before letting the entirety of this room be sacrificed to the Magic on Mabon.

It was not conscious per say or hesitant, his touch, when he let it fall upon dark robes and let the warm weight anchor Marvolo.

It was Lord Malfoy who recovered first, surprisingly or not, and bowed fully in apology and spoke with a tremulous tone, “My behaviour was entirely unbecoming as a host and a Lord, especially when I was under the same fault of being presumptuous.” The man cleared his throat before continuing slowly, “In Hogwarts, we had been in the House of Slytherin you see. It was not only a moniker, but our house was also our family. So you might understand the deference we would show the descendant of our House Patron, Lord Slytherin.” Malfoy nodded to indicate his companion.

Hadrian acquiesced with understanding, false and humouring (were any of the cunning Slytherins fooled?), "I see. So this Slytherin magic is more powerful than Mabon?" He mused softly, innocent eyes curling at the minute stiffness in all the three wizards. Green beyond the non-expressive mask carrying all the mischief of a Slytherin, but the two wizards saw nothing save naive curiosity unexpectedly stumbling upon truth.

The wizard watched, bit of true humour returning; not at all guilty that he was the only one in possession of each and every of the truth and beyond.

"His Magic is rather unforgettable. But I am afraid we have occupied you for too long now." Malfoy indicated the potion, “For a night as long as this, it will keep you less wear if you wish to." Skilfully the Lord gave a nary chance for the other wizard to interject, "We will leave you to your peace now."

Harry watched, with stunned delight as the conniving Slytherin made a hasty and not so subtle retreat.

Satisfaction a soft breath leaving his lips, the wizard didn't think about how he had so carelessly comported, flippant of the strong impressions he might leave behind when anonymity was what he had cradled close.

After all, it didn't matter. Soon his name, his person would not leave behind even a footprint on edges of history.

---Evernevernever----evernevernever

## Chapter End Notes

A/N-

Their little world together is coming to an end, and the world won't care that Tom would rather no one lays their eyes upon his precious. Aaanywayy..

What happened, you ask? Well..

Me- Now that's over and done with I think.

Fic- \*Writes a few pages more.\*

Me-Dang it. I have to edit this again. Alright done and over with. Yay!

Fic- Wait. \*Writes a few thousand words

Me-Ugh. Okay fine..

Fic-It seems incomplete somehow..

Me-It does?

Fic-\*Write a whole another thing\*

Me-The heck? Where did this come from even?!

Fic-\*MADLY OBSESSING OVER PERFECTION\*

Me-Hold up now. Calm down. Nice and easy.

Fic-\*Blows up\*

Me-\*Give up\*

Et voila! We have two new chapters instead of one! The next chapter will be out in a day or two, even less maybe. Yay! So, am I forgiven yet? Please leave your honest reviews, I love them! They are the perfect rewards of all I ever do. I add a lot of silly little things, mostly to make the fic a bit more wholesome and sometimes I don't know if I have given enough explanations. Any queries, ask in the comment lines.

# That I will still wait for you

## Chapter Summary

One dreads the end of the path as it comes upon them. Another has hardly looked upon it, confident to the fault of arrogance. Both desire nothing but solitude and the world thinks they have had enough of it.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

A pale hand rested broodingly upon the narrow rails, looking out to the silent night. The celebrations were left behind, the muted affair no more than a lingering background to his senses. Instead, he was overwhelmingly assailed by the presence who had been his escort of the night.

Magic soared in the distance as the night grew and the faithful surrendered their bounty in gratitude. It didn't ruffle his attention in the slightest.

How could it, when the darkest of Magic surrounded him so devotedly?

Harry didn't turn, didn't acknowledge the other. For the moment he let the silence soothe the frantic chaos of his mind.

The Dark Lord gave nothing that could prompt either into surrender.

"Are you going to pretend still, Marvolo, *Lord Slytherin*?"

The Dark Magic flinched at his words, and Harry wondered at the reaction before returning to placidity. There was no hesitation to be had in his thoughts, no bitterness.

Perhaps the softness was what drew the predator curious, brought it closer when antagonism would have begged for claws instead. It circled him, stayed at a distance still, however, weary at this unexpected thing.

Perhaps Harry should heed the warning in the unspoken questions, should think of the repercussions of displaying the truth of who he was.

But the young wizard was far too resigned, much too casual in his mounting melancholy, in the knowledge that it didn't matter in the least that the Dark Lord should find him an unforgivable liability. One last time would he see his adored, and Harry didn't want it tainted in lies and deceit. (*What else was there to lose anyway, it was all a matter of time.*)

"Are you really going to deny who you are? Hasn't it been all that you have been proud of?" Tread softly, Harry Potter. But the Gryffindor stayed true to his house, impudent and irreverent of foregone conclusions.

Mostly he was simply tired. Perhaps the Dark Lord would defend his territory and eliminate this concern that kept on escalating its level of threat. Perhaps he was foolishly surrounding himself by a horde of eager predators.

Ones who mistook his caution for cowardice of a prey.

Perhaps...

The indolent limb upon the banister was covered with a frosty hand that was harsher than humanity, so much tender than night; this cold that spread swift inside his veins, yet settled something deep within him. The Dark Lord didn't pulverize the ill-begotten limb in his grasp, didn't turn wrathful gaze upon him. Shadows no longer sheltered his companion, and the young wizard was left to ponder the still side-profile presented to him.

Harry turned back to the soft breeze caressing the moon.

"You would never approve of it." The quiet words were unexpected. The heaviness behind it was even more still. The hope that it roused was terrible even more.

His fortitude wobbled, as his soul did beside this person. He couldn't however...*couldn't* let himself be swayed by words alone... So forgive him for the callous words and the desolate shield because his heart still *cared*.

"Of course not." Green eyes fluttered when the hand covering him stiffened and not so unsubtly started to draw away.

*Forgive me for being so cruel. For being true to who I am.*

Tender and broken-hearted as he was, Harry clasped on to the withdrawing wizard, unyielding in his intent.

He didn't know what to say, the ill solicitude leaving no space to be astounded at his own boldness. Yet it had brought the attention of his Marvolo, passive in its thrall however might the scarlet gaze speak of untold screams.

They left agony behind them in their incongruity and perhaps the appeal in those eyes were twisted and stained in madness, perhaps so, but Harry was pulled nonetheless. Swifter than when the pale lips had dripped honey shaded lies to his senses.

But here was this powerful wizard, vulnerable and longing, and Harry could hardly know from truth and lies. He went nonetheless.

Their roles were reversed in a way, with gentle hands a steady anchor on the cuffs and a sweet voice unsympathetic in its honesty, "Come now, you want approval? Rebuild what you destroyed." The bold Gryffindor said, "It is very easy to destroy, isn't it? Try your hand for once on creation and people will love you instead of being afraid of you."

And scarlet blazed in response to the challenge, in the dark of the harvest moon, confidence and assurance soothing the cracks in the humble mien and the dark monster that had been permitted onto the premises raised its head high in confirmation.

The gentle wizard did not flinch at the transformation. He was not in love with a cracked facade, labours of an illusionist.

The vicious sneer said exactly what it cared for people and the Dark Wizard didn't trouble himself for elegant diplomacy now when all the facades were dropped, metaphorical or otherwise, "What do I care for their adoration?"

Harry shifted away from the proximity, leaning back against the balustrade. Utterly unaffected by the teetering edge of insanity his Dark Wizard often traipsed upon, unaffected and unafraid as only few could be, and wondered carelessly, "But you care for mine?"

Chin tilted defiantly such, he had perhaps thought that Marvolo would realize the fallacy in his argument.

But contrary to his expectation of a returning ire, cold treasured his face so tentatively instead and the young wizard found himself susceptible to the passionate Lord no matter. Gentle and firm fingers persuading the wrecked wizard to sweetly rest against a chest, behind which pulse rushed so; the body accomplished to lies as the wizard was. (*The impotent Masks left to dangle somewhere*)

There was nary a need for words to be spoken, to reassure and coax.

Harry breathed deep.

He was already condemned anyway.

No escape was to be had so he could have blissfully stayed in ignorance and the quiet reply shattered him anyway, "That I do."

Fingers curled into the dress of his companion, digging deep in imitation of claws flaring and Harry refused to address the pain in his heart, "Don't insult my intelligence. My concerns don't matter either."

"I don't..." For a moment Harry looked up from his perception to glare at the automatic defence, and the pointed look made the other chuckle hollowly.

The fleeting indignation had stayed so far, and Harry continued with a tone most incredulous, "Would you honestly forsake yourself, *Dark Lord Voldemort*, because I won't *approve*?"

How duplicitous this intimate scene might occur to another person, the adoring arms and the murmuring gentleness and the pliant surrender when the words were anything but.

Marvolo lowered until their temples kissed softly and the blazing crimson looked down at the verdant inferno, neither of them stifled in their lies.

"No, because to do so would have me cease being myself, but I am under no delusion of what it would cost me." And just as swiftly the darkness was smothered behind a painful nonchalance.

"I am Lord Voldemort for the world, just as they once had Tom Marvolo Riddle. But that is not all I am with you."

Tender and yielding that his heart was, it broke under the agony of his love that petrified his emotions. Stubborn and cruel, he did not allow Marvolo the sanctuary beneath the cold eyes.

Because the scarlet eyes never cowered, never could shutter away the pain in the words uttered because Marvolo cared not the condemnation even as he proudly stood by his claim and Harry tightened the grasp on the other. If the masks must be shed...

"It is not who you are, but what you do that I don't condone." The murmur was soft and clear, the tenacity of the young wizard utterly exhausted.

Palms resting against the strength in front of him, a flimsy defence against falling entirely, the pulse that vibrated against his hand remained the only thing to anchor him when Harry felt a soft pressure upon his forehead.

Noise filtered his drowning senses and Harry started to draw away from the embrace. Marvolo didn't stop him.

Nothing was resolved, but the truth of all that was laid there in stark colours.

--

Under the mask of a brooding scavenger, Antonin tilted his head sideways, all his attention fixated on Atticus who strode forward so gracefully, foolishly disregarding of the frozen grace of his Lord. Beside him, his companion was equally observant and Antonin turned, cautious despite his glee.

"You are quite confident that his wrath won't turn to you."

Wilfred Rosier hummed noncommittally, with the laziness of a predator that knew where the waterhole lay. The wizard was not confident at all, not that Antonin with all his vanity could know that. But he was curious, enough to stoke a bit of lovely strife and be complicit in the punishment that might doled out later.

It was troublesome that his Lord had to be Masked as did this mysterious *companion*, troublesome that it had to be on this day. He would have much preferred it better if he had had the opportunity to see them *un-Masked*. But the cold illusion stayed as did the lazy veil upon their true magic. Troublesome indeed, but Rosier could not be patient enough to wait for another opportunity.

To his fellow knights, it was strange already that the Dark Lord had forbidden any direct contact with the wizard he would be bringing along, had forbidden even a casual mention referring to the Lord Voldemort. They were discomfited that they were to address their Lord



as *Marvolo*, not to mention the affront and envy that had played in their minds. And no one had understood the why.

Wilfred had merely exacerbated the slough of suspicion and pride in dear Atticus Avery and stayed quiet in his niche of connivance, sole intention to note the repercussions.

The Dark Lord had spoken to none of his interest in Rowena's ridge, and Wilfred might have discarded it as a small enigma his Lord had caught if not for the acrimonious rage that had befallen the small community.

An impulsive strike that didn't need to be. More was to be gained from such a thriving place if it were to be conquered. Rosier was forever devoted to his Lord, but he was not *mindless*.

He had, however, seen the distracted visage of his Lord as the dark fury scoured the horizon. Even the absolute victory had not mattered.

Wilfred didn't forget either the strange absence of the Dark Lord or the discordant in the aftermath. For all of that devastation, in the end it had seemed to be a side entertainment.

And this night when they had hidden the shiver when their Lord had walked in, they had not expected this unknown who walked beside their Lord. They had bristled upon seeing the casual familiarity the man drew; and they had been confused that their Lord allowed this travesty.

His peers had watched the intimate dance, *their* rippling delight with murmurs of scandal and their confusion had only grown. Surely even if their Lord might have procured another wizard for their circle, he would have taught the man the humility of being favoured by Lord Voldemort?

Some had snickered quietly at the seduction of another knight, at the naive way the wizard must be arrogant thus at having the benevolence of such a great wizard, but Wilfred alone saw the pre-emptive claim.

As such he alone was not struck mute with perplexed bemusement when the pureblood knights stood over the serene masks and not few moments had gone by before Abraxas bowed in solemn plea to the person comfortable upon the settee. They watched the wizards' composure tremble with fear and rage, barely kept their own when their Dark Marks snarled in fury in response to their Lords'.

Chaos writhed and threatened to end the night in crimson delight and it all ended with that simple gesture.

An *insolent* gesture.

Antonin hissed, "How dare he?! Hasn't he learned his place yet?"

Rosier said nary a thing to dissuade his friend, but simply watched and adjusted his own perception. If he were to be offered an advantage over the others, why would the Slytherin care to be magnanimous?

--

"Masters?" A tiny voice squeaked and yelped as dark magic towered over it in fury. But for a calming hand and imploring "Marvolo", the elf trembled unharmed, but for sheer terror freezing its tongue.

Besides the demon, the other master smiled at it, "What have you for us?" The elf itched to edge closer to safety, to the kind one. But the delivery was meant for the other. Large, inhuman eyes skittered, "Master Malfoy be asking Tildy to give this to Lord Slytherin."

It didn't stay for another moment when it had done what it must.

Marvolo smiled a bit at the others' exasperation, "Elf or human, they would have suffered the same for the interruption," was the concession offered.

Hadrian shook his head and turned away, ostensibly to offer him privacy. The string of marionette fettered in Marvolo's chest tugged accordingly and he leaned against the terrace railing closer to the silent man before breaking the seal.

"Hn."

At the soft sound, interest hummed even as courtesy kept its distance, only to be demolished as Marvolo nonchalantly offered the opened envelope. A moment of perusal later, he turned to the other, "Well, they could have crowned you the Harvest King."

The charmed laughter was unexpectedly forced out of Marvolo and he looked at his impish darling with affection, "Yes, not being sacrificed on their fields to be served as the fertilizer for next year's paddy is a *very* good thing and the aim I should not look to fill in life, hmm?"

Hadrian tsked at the sarcasm, "Now now, do not turn up your nose at such an ancient tradition when you are already going with another."

Marvolo smiled, utterly delighted, "Very well then. Can I at least count on *your* token protests should such an event occur?"

And the mischievous beauty nodded most seriously, "Also I swear to honour the soul cakes the best I can. If you sacrifice yourself for the sake of a generous harvest, "The sweet face turned solemn in his feigned innocence," the least I can do is enjoy your fruits of labour."

The cold of the night was forgotten when this person invaded Hadrian instead, warmth leeches by a cavernous finger gently adoring his flushed countenance, "I will not ever regret bringing you pleasure, and you may take *all* you want, my lovely one."

Greedy hands took and took the warmth that spilled from his admission, satisfied utterly with the abashed lashes and lovely vision. As satisfied at the acceptance. There was not even a quirked brow to be had when Hadrian had read the Malfoys' request for the homage to their Liege. Not Lord Slytherin, *Lord Voldemort*.

The wizard had accepted the seemingly grandiose gesture as if it was commonplace.

It was not.

The blessing of Mabon was private, closely guarded for the family only. There might be celebrations with much gaiety, but the true sacrifice to the Gods would always occur in the secured privacy when the Lord of the house would pour Mabon wine on their land and leave an overflowing cornucopia generously filled with apples, nuts, and grapes. The heir would serve a bowl of milk under an oak for the Mabon Faeries asking for their goodwill till next Mabon.

An affair ever so jealously guarded lest the Mabon bliss would be taken from the wrong person, so private that even the Lady of the house was not present. Blood superseded all rights, including marriage.

Once upon a time, it had been so that the vassal Lords humbly and reverently left a piece of their bounties on the porch of their accepted Lieges, grateful for their protection. But here was a step taken further than tradition dictated; an unexpected request that could not be denied.

The unexpected jewel upon the crown of the Dark Lord. Even including the fact that the Death Eater desperately wished to appease a vexed Dark Lord.

Hadrian had undoubtedly inferred everything, and Marvolo addressed the tiny furrow surprisingly forward, "I admit it was unexpected, not the least because the Malfoys were not one I cared for until now."

Ah, there was the widening of the inquisitive green and didn't he feel ever so content for no matter how much Hadrian seemed to be *knowing* there was always a piece of puzzle left to the whim of Marvolo, "What, really?"

Utterly infatuated, the dark wizard drew the other close and spoke of his school days to the glee of his companion, he who glowed so lovely in the scant light of the night and Marvolo could not help betraying the spirit of this magical day when he rather worshipped the mortal beside him.

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Marvolo had already left for the fealty ceremony (or was it a commendation only?), reluctant to leave him alone before Harry had to physically insist anyway.

The wizard had been amused, Harry not very much. His smile had been treacherous every time Marvolo put off leaving for just a moment longer, the avarice of power that had driven the Dark Lord he had known was no longer that Siren's call. The wizard hardly hastened to leave for where the Lord Malfoy must await to swear fealty to his accepted Lord and be bound to his oaths by the Magic of this night, an oath that would leave a pureblood family subservient to the wizard for however long he wished. He didn't *understand* and a strange ache throbbed in his core but in the end Marvolo left after much insistence, and with a request for Harry to stay far from the chattering crowd.

The man had not lasted in the lonely company of moon faeries and the white peacocks on the lawn below for long, the memories just moments past and phantom touches urging him to seek distraction and he had wandered into the large ball room.

The dining table was oblong and large, filled with dishes courtesy of the elves. There was no formal sitting that had to be enforced and the hostess urged everyone to be comfortable on the various divans and chairs however they pleased. The dishes had to be made from the baskets the guests had brought, as the Malfoy farms could not be enjoyed just yet, certainly not before the Gods were themselves appeased. Harry noted the absence of Lord Malfoy, watched the witches and wizards mingling among themselves a plate or a glass in their hands and listened absently to the abstract conversations and peals of laughter; magic alone saved the masks from committing numerous accidents.

Harry fingered the seed of the pomegranate, uncaring to break his fast and was uncomfortably reminded of the legends of Kore, particularly when compared to his situation.

"Perhaps mulled pear would do better as a first taste?"

Even before turning to see the person who had spoken to him, Harry knew already, the identity of the speaker very much dear to him. Memories coiled to the fore of his mind, and with cruel strength did he manage to stop them from being reflected in dark irises.

Marvolo cared not for his advantage to be ill-begotten from thoughts trespassed, but Albus Dumbledore had no such reservations.

"Thank you, Professor. But I am comfortable for now." Caution had long since abandoned him without his conscious acknowledgment, wrapped in the dubious security of a Dark Lord that he had long resigned himself to. The sudden need of it startled him now.

Albus smiled at him, remarkably younger than in his memories and Harry just suppressed a nostalgic gasp. And of course, the man was predictably without a mask in deference to the hosts. "I am afraid I don't have the honour of knowing you."

Harry shied away in faux embarrassment, "The joy of Masquerade, that one can choose to reveal himself or *not*. Besides," He waved his hand away casually, "I am just passing by."

His heart stuttered wildly in direct contrast to his controlled tone. And sub-consciously his eyes scanned the room for the tall, dark wizard, the only person who would not be a stranger to him, even knowing that hardly much time had gone by and surely the ceremony could not have been completed as of yet.

The Dark Wizard had stripped his defence with careful precision and cruel honesty in equal measures, and was it not the height of paradox that Harry turned away from the person he had once admired most, however metaphorically, to the one he had helped destroy so absolutely? Was it not the cruellest quirks of fate that his ability trust had fled the vicinity along with Marvolo?

That Harry must look at this person with the silver veils of suspicion he had once warranted deadly enemies only. (And the temperamental State Heads he had had to entertain in his time)

"Hmm. "The man contemplated him with a sincerity Harry didn't wish to be afforded, "For a passerby, you have remarkable acquaintances."

Was it such a surprise that Harry felt even more cornered than when he had first seen the Dark Lord?

"Is that so?" Harry despised the simpering tone he talked with, " Then I must be more fortunate than I had assumed.

"Well, fortune does favour the bold." And Harry cursed his expressive face that belied the ignorance that his words carried when blue dug deeper into the secrets. " After all, bold you must be to stand with the people you have chosen."

The words were grave and spoken with such quiet insinuation that had Harry forcefully shrug off the flinch, no matter that he was more informed than Dumbledore could ever know. The words would have struck true were it taken by one truly complicit of the crime the professor implicated and they would have invoked the expected rebuttal.

It was startling and a bit upsetting for the young man who had once been the most favoured of the old headmaster, notwithstanding the mistakes and the selective ignorance in some matters that Albus Dumbledore had committed.

And now here the blue eyes were cold behind their genial facade as Harry had never seen directed towards him, the words blatant in their threat and intention as they had never been. He felt the revulsion and the urge to deny, deny, deny. But any confirmation or denial would only confirm the association and to acknowledge his true knowledge, a condemnation.

Harry was perhaps more than a bit upset, the close emotional connection he had once shared with the powerful wizard did not give him leave to stay detached. This very night twice as many times people made assumptions of the same kind and while one had invoked his righteous fury, the other brought about shocked dejection.

Here now though, Harry curbed the impulsive reaction and let his caution sooth the emotional barbs in his tone.

So he consciously relaxed his gestures, let frown lines colour his disapproval, "I care not to be embroiled in your state politics, Professor Dumbledore. I only speak based on the experience I have had thus far."

Perhaps the young Wizard might have fared better against this master of Sorcery and Wizardry, might have thought better defence but predominantly did his emotions delay his rationality. And his words came out rushed, a desperate grasp to stay detached from this apparition from the past.

But no, the twinkling blue eyes spoke very much of a present, something that coaxed tenterhooks with every syllable uttered by his mouth. And despite all of his caution, Harry could hardly be expected to remember each nuance that must belong in the time that had yet to be.

Silence was the weapon best wielded when ignorance was your arsenal. Hadrian Peverell after all knew nothing bar the bare basics of Wizarding Britain.

And confronted with the false accusation, Professor Dumbledore was taken aback for a while, "Forgive me if I have offended you. Perhaps I knew your friends a bit differently. "Keen eyes sparkled with interest, "Or perhaps your fresh perspective will give a view that biased familiarity won't."

Harry once had met the head of State of Norway, a wizard very proud of his province and one who refused to speak in any language other than Norwegian. He had option between delegating his responsibility and thus forsaking the chance to help Norbert (the Norwegian Ridgeback the golden trio had rescued in their first year of Hogwarts) or find a tutor to teach him the language.

Harry let the foreign tint catch his words just the slightest and with a mind that twisted and twirled chaotically, he smiled charmingly, "I suppose they were not your favourite students then."

Albus laughed. Not the amused chuckle, but one that ringed sincerely. One that brought the breathlessness of nostalgia and battered love. Harry didn't think of the resentment that had darkened their relationship, didn't think of the mistakes and manipulations.

For just this moment he let himself be soaked in the warmth that had been one of the persons he had treasured and respected for so long.

Albus chuckled again and Harry smiled back unguardedly.

"It does seem so, doesn't it?" The elder wizard tapped his fork and the plate filled with sweet sour desserts, "What brought you to the isles? Or was it your travelling companion who persuaded you?"

Harry hummed, "I don't think anyone would need to be particularly persuaded to come to a land as beautiful as this."

Albus examined the defence thoughtfully, "Indeed it is. You are fortunate to come at a time of peace. But of course, the future cannot be guaranteed."

*Was it a threat?* The young and relatively inexperienced wondered, "Maybe not. But surely England will be safe from the uncertainly considering *you* are here, the Grand sorcerer, defeater of Dark Lord Grindelwald."

The professor shied away from the remainder of his fame, not very much comfortable, "But it is the children that become the man of any revolution. I am but one old man. The youth shall carry the legacy, you and your peers." Dumbledore nodded at his general direction, "Speaking of, have you been left alone? Rather insensitive of your friends, isn't it?"

The man was *tenacious*!

Harry gritted his teeth at being accused again and again of being one of *them*, but despite the clammy distaste in his throat the man stuck to misdirection.

He stuck to foolishness, careful at not being seen as an intelligent anomaly, "Maybe they scattered when they saw the white beard and detentions was all they could think of."

The man didn't return the flimsy cheer, and Harry sub-consciously straightened when the viciousness of the assault became evident in the flinty blue, "Hm, no. Nothing quite so benign when it came to them. It wasn't then, it is not now. I am rather curious, my boy, do indulge an old man. Where is your friend now, when the Host is performing the Mabon rituals? Aren't you curious?"

Beguiled green stayed wide behind the Masquerade, stayed righteously indignant and refused to play into predicted defence, "I am sure they were absolute brats to you, professor. It doesn't mean they have to be doing something nefarious every single time, professor. It doesn't mean each and every action of theirs is answerable to you. They have grown up now."

Dumbledore didn't deny the accusation, didn't parry the blow but instead used it to reel him further in, "Have they? Has *he*? For years I have watched him, and every time he became only *less*." Harry bristled, and the professor eagerly did examine the exposed crack in the armour, "But you see something different, don't you? Tell me. Help me *see* what you see."

Help him see? The wizard of nightmares was no less than in its monstrous nature and Harry Potter accepted no other than the truth and it would be even more terrible than what the old man knew so far. But the truth has but a relative place in heart.

Truth had not clogged his compassion for the miserable piece of Horcrux Harry had seen in a dream. It didn't end his emotions for the man who was perhaps less than human, but no less compelling.

No one would see the Dark Wizard as something to be feared, something to be destroyed, something to be admired, something to be followed. Something. An abstract and distant design. But not human. And he would not be seen as anything more, least of all by the person who had decided upon the Marvolo's destiny in the sad crumbles of an orphanage with the words '*I can hurt others*'.

But the youthful wizard that Dumbledore scrutinized now wouldn't be quiet so knowing, sceptic yes, hopeful all the same. So Harry drew back a bit, and answered with the same intonation, "Can I win against the years of bias?"

The older wizard coaxed with a slight tease, "Are you giving up so soon, young champion of the ill-treated?" Before the tease turned to a taunt, "Or are you afraid of speaking without permission."

Harry blushed first from the title, then with annoyance just as the professor had intended. "I am *not* afraid of him!" *Caution was not the same thing as fear.* "He is a bit..intense and really hard-headed about some things." *Annoyingly hard-headed*, Harry thought back to the short hiatus when Marvolo was still reeling from his non-wizarding ancestry. "He is as sly

as...well.. no one I have ever known, but he doesn't *lie*." Harry spoke with absolute incredulity, his hands fluttering in remembered exasperation.

"He is..."

A stickler about promises.

Vain like a peacock, and equally beautiful.

So powerful and sometimes so vulnerable.

Blood-thirsty and caring.

Incomplete and *perfect*.

At the last thought, Harry turned away from the *want* that burned in his core, at the *longing* that returned multi-fold and tore apart the semblance of dignity.

But Albus Dumbledore was watching. Turned away to find the pale orchids dripping down to pillars, Harry continued in a measured way, desperate now to leave and find his sanctuary.

"He is... as human as everyone else. Flawed and imperfect. So, he deserves no less thought, no less consideration. He is as much worthy, he deserves just as much apology for being condemned. He is..

"Here." The cold voice came from his left, and Harry didn't think of the audience, didn't think of the blue eyes losing any care for warmth. He turned, vulnerable in his freshly shattered decorum and tired already of this *ache*.

"*Mar..*" Marvolo hushed him with a touch to his trembling palm, with a magic that settled comfortably with his own and the shelter of crimson warmth that remained bare for him alone.

And he turned to the wizard that watched them still with nary a scruple and nodded shallowly, "Blessed Mabon." Marvolo gave no acknowledgement to the much loathed person, to the man who openly mocked the hosts with his muggle mask that did nothing to honour the Masquerade.

His only concern remained the precious one whose lustre was slowly being dimmed at the very proximity to the cunning professor, the lovely one who had for so long chosen the isolation over society and yet was now in the curious claws of this person.

None shall draw a blood from Hadrian when he had denied even himself.

So, possessively did he hand drop open the waist of his companion, drawing him away and away. Furious thoughts became a distant cousin to his enamoured present with every step, because his precious one looked up at him with eyes that mirrored an ache of his own.

Utterly uncaring of the sharp blue eyes riveted upon their abrupt departure, Hadrian drifted away from them all.



Uncaring because cold hands brushed his wrist so, the lovely stranger unmasked absolutely for his dark wizard alone, and Marvolo murmured bringing forth the incense of sage and myrrh with him, "I don't know about you, but I am absolutely starving."

Harry laughed breathlessly.

Evernevernever----evernevernever---

Albus Dumbledore twirled his spoon thoughtfully into his chocolate, sweeter than he normally indulged but the fudge fountain looked absolutely irresistible! Abraxas spared nothing in the celebration, a perfect host despite the fact that the man must despise his sudden presence.

Indeed, he had not even sent an acceptance of the invitation until much later.

He still didn't know why he had not flatly refused the barely polite formality, well aware of the sneering students of his and the sycophants that must simply meet the defeater of the Dark Lord. Hogwarts was an haven in that respect.

He had mulled upon it, but the fact that it was a masquerade had swayed his opinion. He had seen an absolutely lovely thing in his excursion to the Muggle London once and it was a perfect chance to actually use it.

Now he was glad he did accept, what a delightful mystery had fallen into his lap!

He had never met the wizard before. Young, painfully young, and painfully naive. It was rather refreshing to see such wide-eyed innocence that didn't care for deception and lies. Ordinarily, he would have been quite pleased to meet such a personality.

He had been disappointed, admittedly a bit suspicious. After all the boy had accompanied by Tom himself. Yet, with each words and each gesture that was as unpretentious, he had only been curious. This was not a typical pureblood smirking about blood supremacy, this was not a wizard who had been swayed by Tom already and was immediately wary of Albus Dumbledore.

No, the young wizard had been happy with his company, if occasionally temperamental.

A lovely person indeed, so the professor had thought. Definitely not the representative demeanour of one of Tom's *friends*.

Yet the boy had so adamantly, so infatuatedly proclaimed his loyalty to Tom, and Albus Dumbledore felt the first stirring of unease.

The intention of Tom was easily deduced. The boy was gifted, very gifted indeed when his untainted magic shone despite the attempt of the Mabon magic. How much did it dull his true worth? So unfortunate this boy was, pliant and the perfect prey that had fallen onto the machinations of Tom and yet his magic was so pure, docile just as the boy was. He was a potential for now, but might be a powerful player very soon.

So Albus Dumbledore had wondered.

He wondered when Tom fawned over the boy with contrived devotion he had seen countless times and his uneasiness grew at the careful distance Tom maintained from his death eaters, at the forced intimacy the dark wizard carefully concealed.

He wondered if it was a coincidence that Tom brought this mysterious wizard to a *masquerade* ball and nodded decisively.

After all, it was rude of Tom to interrupt a conversation in this manner. Indeed, they had not even said their *farewells*.

The fresh scent of burnt myrrh was still present, if lost under the overwhelming spread on the table and unsullied marigolds in between.

Evernevernever----evernevernever---

"Ah. Just the young man I wanted you to meet!"

Harry jolted back from his quiet conversation with Marvolo to find the twinkling blue eyes of his old mentor. Albus Dumbledore was accompanied by another wizard, a man of utterly unremarkable features. Harry looked interestedly down at the man who looked mildly ill at ease in their presence, at the face that stirred nothing worthy in his memories. Not even as a legacy.

When no other words seemed to fill the increasingly awkward atmosphere, Harry gave a small smile, "Blessed Evening."

The man seemed even more discomfited, and gave Dumbledore a side glance. Perhaps it was mite unkind of him, knowing and yet giving nary a help to the poor man.

Harry was admittedly cross at being interrupted when he had been for the past hour relaxed at the company of the only person he cared to be with. Hence, the cold masks turned eerily towards the unwanted intruders, his spine rigid while his tone remained force-fully pleasant.

, informal even with the suspicious twinkles in the blue eyes.

And his ire didn't care for the poor man who must be the unintended target, remained derisive of the scheming twinkle in blue eyes. Harry felt the utter stillness in the line of his companion and a thoughtless touch to the arms brought Marvolo's trembling magic into attention.

It was an encounter fated for disaster, Harry thought as he ran a speculative glance over the man in his Wizarding robes that didn't take away the discomfort of the physique, and the overall stance of an outsider.

Harry realized from that particular attitude of not belonging, the reason of Marvolo's immediate disquiet, not that he would have been welcoming to anyone else.

But a *faithless*, a Muggle-born, in the gathering of Mabon celebration. What had Abraxas been thinking?

*What was Dumbledore thinking?*

"Blessed evening, yes." The man was pleasant enough even as he stumbled over the greeting out, and swiftly his words came to override the discomfort, "Albus told me that we have a visitor from Europe. I, of course, wanted to welcome you personally. There have been no problems at all, I hope?"

Have you been enjoying your stay?"

Dark brows rose a bit in at the confidence of the man; he had been quite sure that Albus would be the ventriloquist to this puppet.

"I was told my accent was fine. However did you guess, professor?" The perplexed tone guised his true confusion for the enthusiasm of this man; being a foreigner on another land, was it so fascinating to invite this kind of intrusive behaviour?

Green eyes flitted to the side as a hand rested upon his lower back. Marvolo was still, far too still, even taking into consideration that he was standing in the company of a muggle-born.

The professor smiled agreeably, "I was close friends with a man who hailed from the Nordic Europe. I am not likely to forget the tendency to shorten the syllables, no matter how much one tries to resist it."

The other man laughed, Harry hummed with sympathy and Albus noted the recognition with confusion and denial.

*(It was impossible for this boy to know who he truly spoke of.)*

"Don't worry, I would rate it outstanding!" The intruding wizard added his thoughts and turned to Albus, Harry continued to watch with mounting frustration at being denied to know who he was conversing with, "Speaking of, you must not have seen Hogwarts? Surely Albus wouldn't mind giving you bit of a tour?"

Now the man thought he was the Minister of Magic.

Something of his frustration must have been shown in his posture for Albus exclaimed suddenly, "Ah, how rude of me. I didn't tell you, did I? This is the Minister of Magic."

The fingers on his back dug in slightly and Harry accepted at the anchoring touch, "No, I didn't know Professor." He sighed when a hand was extended, "Pleased to meet you, Minister." Leach shook his hand solemnly and a bit of assurance crept in the contour.

And the Minister buoyed by the false confidence said, "Nobby Leach, yes. Very nice to meet you, indeed!"

*Fool of a man. Wretched, wretched man.*

Harry should have realized the soft trap before.

Each breath a magical must exhale carries away a bit of Power. So the words that define a Wizard to the entire world? It is saturated with binding magic. Simple words that a child carried, as they grew up became equally synonymous with the love of ssssqtheir family, with

the respect of their peers and the weight would grow as the Magical being did. A tiny sliver of magic forever embedded in those letters. The unworthy mustn't utter it and it must not be taken in vain. Such was the power of a wizard's name.

It was true for everyone, but not all cared to give the respect one's name deserved. Harry looked at the Headmaster who was looking back serenely: *some* would exploit it, barely skirting the rifts of courtesy.

The minister looked at him expectantly; *some* would rather reject all and one for the superiority of their own beliefs.

*His name.*

Harry dared not turn towards his companion. How long had it taken for Marvolo to learn of it? How long had the man coaxed and persuaded until Harry had surrendered? Now each time the pale lips uttered Hadrian with intimacy of a secret shared, the attached bond trembled along with it.

Now, he could not afford *not* to give his name. The one he identified himself with *here*, but no less powerful. For no matter he was Merlin or No Name, he was who he was.

Hadrian Peverell had already become a steady weight.

He had *known*, had he not, that two persons would happily devastate his life? He could not deny his right. He could not deny himself. Each declaration that was as entwined with the person itself as the intention, and now forsaking was *impossible*.

*Forgive me, Marvolo.*

"Hadrian Peverell. It was a pleasure meeting you." The blue eyes of Albus lost the spark of knowing under the guise of a smile, Minister Leach didn't react.

But then a faithless didn't care enough for the history of Wizards.

*If only it had ended there.*

But Minister Leach's attention turned interestedly to his mute companion.

Marvolo wouldn't deny his magic under Mabon evening, wouldn't deny his right under the house of one who submitted their family fealty to him. He would stand steadfast to the tradition, wouldn't dare condemn magic for the sake of anonymity.

No matter that it would be the end of everything.

The attendee of the ball might not be as sensitive to the magic as the naturally powerful are, excepting the knights who had already pledged under Lord Voldemort (there would be no respite for them), but their magic would be smothered when the most powerful wizards chose to mingle among the rest absolutely benign.

In the end, the result had been such that no one of their own foolish volition had wandered into the bauble Hadrian and Marvolo had wrapped themselves in. (Dumbledore didn't care for the trivialities and chose to be instead the invader to everyone's privacy). The self-preservation of their magic sub-consciously guarded them.

Thus no one really knew the identity of the two strange wizards, didn't know despite instinctively feeling the powerful magic. Didn't know to associate power, even if Masked, with Marvolo Slytherin (Gaunt?). Hadrian Peverell was an unknown perhaps washed ashore from beyond the lands, but Slytherin remained the name associated with Dark Lords.

Even the most deluded would wonder at the persona *Marvolo Slytherin* when Lord Voldemort inevitably would alight upon the Wizarding Britain with devastating intention.

Perhaps in another time, Lord Voldemort would not have been in attendance of such public speculation, perhaps Dumbledore himself had not cared for the traditional ball of masquerade. Definitely, Hadrian had not been in any of the scenarios, where Lord Voldemort might be cornered in such a manner, might care to be vulnerable in such a manner.

*And vulnerable he was.*

A choice perhaps remained, where Harry might not choose to intervene and let the secrets unravel with the manipulation of an old professor.

A breath of two instants and an exhale. Minister Lynch spoke curiously, "I suppose both of you came together? A friend of Mr. Malfoy then?"

The unruffled ambassador, once the saviour of Wizarding World smiled courteously from beneath the cold mask, "Perhaps, perhaps not. This is an unfortunate time to satisfy one's curiosity, one would rather think a wizard as Professor Dumbledore might already know, but you are a bit of rebel. Aren't you, sir?" Harry spoke playfully and the minister chuckled abashedly.

But already the man's attention had wilted, as Harry knew it would. Minister Leach did not know why Dumbledore had dragged him off to see two snobbish purebloods, and the formal words chaffed at the jovial man.

Albus Dumbledore smiled, coolly observant, knowing the barbed nuances meant for him. "Unfortunate indeed."

Harry didn't show any reaction, all the pretence of a charming youth must have long since fled and he could do nothing to support the tilting design.

His tone rose and fell with the syllables, attempting to amend the callous disregard "I am sure there would be plenty other times for us to better acquaint, Minister. I know I would be looking forward to them."

The minister left with the comfort of the charming words when the unyielding masks gave no emotion from beyond them. Albus Dumbledore left with a disbelief that had yet to leave him.

Poor man, dancing on the wind as the powerful left their exhales.

His companion was still quiet beside him and Harry turned to the Dark Wizard whose magic still furled unnervingly.

“First time being the damsel in distress?”

The man froze but for a moment before crimson gaze narrowed in offense, “I was perfectly in control!”

Harry turned to face him completely, arms crossed and absolutely sceptic, “Oh really, were you now? What exactly would you have done? Obliviate the Minister on his way back home, and maybe sneak a peek into everyone he might have talked to?” Marvolo watched on with his mouth parted and Harry barely resisted his descent into undignified cackling, “If nothing else, I saved you a night of stalking.”

“No hardship on my part. *If nothing else*, I would have delegated.” Marvolo recovered fast from the mischief the green eyes foretold, “But yes, they might owe you a hypothetical life Debt.”

The hypothetical scenario was grim indeed, but Harry couldn’t control his laughter anymore.

They were underneath fairy lights, past the threshold into the garden and the curtain of pearls, not quite hidden from prying eyes. But Marvolo cared not when with a tender smile, the man caressed the flushed cheek of his companion, “And I *am* thankful to you for defending me, twice over.”

The wizard had hardly done it for the generous gratitude, as were both aware. The Dark wizard also had the wherewithal of eradicating even a prediction of a muddle, as were both aware.

The Dark Lord didn’t show appreciation either for the reasons spoken, but rather the *stand taken*. Of choices and his own acceptance. After all, Lord Voldemort was supposed to stand *alone*.

Evernevernever----evernevernever---

Darkness was fading reluctantly when two wizards returned from the festivities to the Rowena's Ridge. They had apparated not to the Peverell's cottage, but a walking distance far. Despite the exhaustion that fogged the green eyes of the resident, he had not objected to the silent request for more time of his companion.

Harry was not quite ready to say farewell either. Whereas the loathing with which Marvolo treated the ending to their every meeting had become commonplace, it was more uncharacteristic of the younger wizard.

Because Marvolo did not *know*, not as the quiet companion of his walk, that this farewell would be *final*.

No, the dark wizard remained unaware even as he marvelled that Hadrian did not protest the possessive way Marvolo kept their hands locked, let the gesture pull his lovely one closer to his warmth. And he marvelled even more so when the exhausted wizard timidly let his head lie upon a shoulder.

He didn't know and Hadrian did not let his grief overwhelm the night. Quietly did he take all that was offered, closed his eyes against occasional soft pressure on his hair, on his temples.

By Morrigan's blessing, may this journey never end.

When the silence broke it was accompanied with a regretful sigh of Marvolo, "I was not able to keep my promise to you. Frankly, I am surprised I am not being flayed already."

Hadrian chuckled into the dark robes, "I had not expected you to be apologizing for others' mistakes."

The wizard yelped at the punishing pinch that went past his clothes, "I am not."

With a barely smothered giggle, the other turned to face his Marvolo, a hand stopping their advance. The quiet annoyance clenching the mien tight calmed his amusement though and Hadrian murmured his consolation, "You couldn't expect everything to go your way now, did you, Marvolo? It was unfortunate perhaps but.. or are you upset the honour of *knowing* my name went to someone else other than you?"

The quiet of the night broke with silvery delight and surrounded by such loveliness Marvolo couldn't remain rigid. Adoringly did he melt into the others' emotion even as he persisted with a soft question, "Why are you not more upset, Hadrian? I know how much your identity was important to you. How much I had to bear the grief of your fury, and yet you seem calm in this situation."

For a minute instant, Harry turned away lest the truth reflect honestly in his stance. For a swallow of breath did he have to gather his scrambled thoughts and return to the embrace of his Dark Lord, "You did neither facilitate nor commit the actual offense. Let my fury go with the people who deserve it. The missteps of the world are not your responsibility and to think otherwise is rather arrogant, no?"

A tiny frown still twisted the Dark Wizard, "But.."

Red blossomed violently under the pale moon, of absolute mortification but Hadrian did not remove his palm from the others' mouth, not even when the scorching imprints of his lips seemed to overlap his fate lines.

"I do not wish to end the night on bygones, Marvolo."

The crimson blaze threatened to burn him, devour him from inside out, but Hadrian did not look away. The tender hold on his back pressed harder, a heat that sheared through his dress robes but Hadrian did not squirm.

They continued their quiet journey into the cold. Hadrian elated in the final embrace, in the desperate grasp of his beloved and Marvolo never let go.

## Chapter End Notes

A/N- Please read the note.

Hey, it took them some time but now its two equals standing together! I am so proud of Harry. It's getting to the end now, this story. Literally. So hey, I have a question. Anyone cares about a sequel? I laid down some groundwork for it already. Maybe it won't happen instantly because I have several other fics that I am just dying to work on. But.. raise your hands who say aye!

Now time for trivia check! So Kore is another name for Persephone and I needn't tell you the relationship between pomegranate seeds and her. Minister Nobby Leach is taken from Harry Potter facts. I have mostly dabbled with celtic and Greek mythology.

And ooh.. also I took the harvest king idea from the ballad of John Barleycorn., the Corn King was selected from the men of the tribe, treated as a king for a year, then at a pre-set time, danced the corn maze and was killed. His body was then dragged through the fields so the blood would run in the furrows and make the barley grow. Afterward, he himself may have been eaten. The barley was made into cakes and stored for the winter. Around the solstice, when it was evident the sun would come back for another year, the cakes were given to children to imbue them with the spirit of the corn king. They were called 'soal cakes' (soul cakes).

The thing with Malfoy I will explore later. Basically he swore fealty to Lord Voldemort; not only him, but he swore it as the Head of Malfoy on the day of Mabon when he wasn't supposed to bow before anyone else. It was a big deal.

Any other questions, do ask.

Hope you liked it and please please please gimme your lovely reviews!! Thanks to everyone who stuck to this story. Hugs to everyone who gave kudos and comments. You are all awesome!!



# Till The End

## Chapter Summary

Surely the Dark Lord wouldn't be the one to kneel Certainly He didn't think so.  
The night of ritual is here and never did it ask for the blood that would be shed anyway.

## Chapter Notes

The usual disclaimers, because if only (\*sigh\*).

This is unbetaed everyone. Enjoy and don't forget to comment.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The placid lake broke now and then into soft turmoil under an indecisive Scottish weather; thus harassing the dazed recollection of dreams that glistened on the translucent surface, reflected off of the troubled eyes of a lonesome wizard. The sky remained veiled to the man seeking for a distraction, as was expected of the gloomy isles. But it was not even dusk yet; there was nothing to be done except stagger through the wait.

He had fled from the place he had once thought of as a sanctuary. The Peverell Cottage had lost the said claim; haunted as it had now become with soft voices accompanied by a past longing, tainted as it was now with the shared claim of another and saturated with memories that bled his sanity. For, cruel that they were and callous towards a shattered wizard, the memories took to gleefully teasing a despairing heart with one sweetly scorching temptation after another.

So the wizard had fled to the centaurs, much earlier than needed, prepared with the manuscripts of the rituals and all the ingredients that he needed to acquire. The centaurs had neither been amused by his sincerity, nor gracious enough to host.

He had been brusquely asked to wait and his guide had very considerably placed him right in the heart of a place that featured extensively in the dreams that he most assuredly did not care for.

If it had not been for the fact that he needed the centaurs to guide him along the exact alignment of the stars for him to anchor the *time*...

For the ritual itself was not much difficult for the once Saviour, in terms of power or preciseness needed. (Thankfully there was no potion to be brewed otherwise it might have proved to be a greater challenge, however Harry might protest). The stars were going to guide

him across the time, keeping him anchored and not letting him drift away across any other distractions. The earth and its magic were going to keep his soul from being lost in the vast creation. For a true direction, Harry was going to use his own magic and its imprint that would have stayed strong as the Master of the Grimmauld Place.

Even if he could have unwillingly and unknowingly relinquished his claim (because he would have been deceased in that time) it would not be absolute, or so he hoped. Because Harry was leaving a great many things to hopes and magic. The centaurs had not assured him, nor had he asked beyond the knowledge of the ritual the centaurs had very reluctantly shared. But he had been desperate.

No matter how powerful he was, it was still a mite to the truth of the universe. Unaided, it would fail before it might begin. Overconfident, he might lose himself to the whims of greater entities.

If it were not for the fact that they wanted the blemish that he was from their perfectly predictable sky they would have torn out their throats themselves before reaching out to him that night.

The wizard again went over the painstaking details he had already gone over.

*Nothing kept him distracted for long.*

Harry Potter sighed against the ache that kept flaring anew every time he looked over at the water body, pieces of a vibrant memory dragging down an utterly exhausted mind.

The rain fell a bit harder and he let it wash away the evidence of a tortured soul.

“The stars have not agreed yet.”

Harry turned, startled at the distinctly feminine voice. And promptly sucked in a startled breath.

She was beautiful, if past her prime. Dark hair with silver strain fell untamed past her knees and her upper body bare and unashamed as male centaurs were. Sympathetic mortification had the young wizard blushing bright, trying to be respectful at the same time. She seemed to care naught for the delicate sensibilities of the young wizard.

*A centuride!* Never had the Saviour been allowed past mere tolerance, least of all a trust to garner an audience with the most treasured of the herd, namely the centuride and the children.

The man who had saved the Wizarding world had not been enough. The Ambassador sympathetic to the rights of magical creatures was not either.

Yet, in this land when he was nothing but a stranger, the centaurs did not care for caution. Perhaps in the advent of his near departure they felt secure in their protection and the honour had been carelessly bestowed upon a wizard who cared for it no more.

“My Lady, it is an honour.” Harry bowed shallowly, uncertain but polite nonetheless.

The centuride was graceful as she nodded back and pitiless in her reply, “Yes, the man stranded in time.” She started walking away, before continuing, “There is time before the preparation will be completed. Walk with me.”

Harry happily turned away from the excruciating sight of a place where once a dark wizard had once gifted him something beautiful (*of memories the vulnerability of a self-proclaimed dark Lord and his pulse even now resonating from the dark touches*), the place whence he had once fled to in the face of crushing realization of his own feelings.

He turned away desperate for any and all distraction.

Never did the wizard once wonder why the centaurs would let him be with one of the most treasured member of their herd, when they couldn't even abide his presence near their home.

**Tomarryyy---tomaarrry—tomaarrrryyy-----**

“You are leaving.”

The startled wizard looked up from his bended position over the scattered parchments, terror not quite taking hold just yet. He shook his head once, as if to rid of this illusion standing in front of his doorway; his done up hair chiming back softly. It didn't leave though. No, the apparation didn't fade away but entered with measured steps; soft pats on wooden floor.

“Here I had thought I was worthy of a more polite farewell.” It stayed real, dispassionately staring down his stilled visage.

Harry didn't understand. He had convinced himself that never would they meet again, that the night of the Mabon was to be their last. He had kept the memory under vicious hold, never letting it take hold of his actions anymore. He had kept *himself* under vicious hold, never letting his emotions sway him.

But this wizard was here, regardless of his efforts. How...

The one of his thoughts stepped closer, “Were you even planning to tell me?”

The hissing voice broke through his stupor and Harry tightened his control over an eager heart. *He couldn't... couldn't let it be...*

So, through narrowed gaze he brushed aside the questions, *derisive*, “Are you planning to stop me?”

Marvolo remained unmoved through his hostility; instead hummed in a distracted manner and moved around the small study contemplatively, pausing only beside the Beltane Wreath perched carefully on his dresser. The flowers had still not wilted, unnaturally long hands noted.

The aching core of Harry Potter clenched at the memory and his heart stuttered as if caressed by phantom of that dewy morning as well. The wizard, increasingly uncomfortable of the serpent gliding through his haven, all but bared his own teeth.

Harry spread his hands in a mockery of invitation, “You can’t actually think I would care. After all, *I* was never the one chasing anybody.” Even as the cruel words left his mouth, leaving charred imprints behind, the wizard didn’t shy away.

Let the other despise him all he might, let hatred burn away the familiarity such that shreds of soft affection be forever misplaced.

The tall figure stilled and answered with incredible gentleness, “Come now, you are being transparent in your intention.” Marvolo turned around, “Trying to drive me away with cruel words?”

Harry snorted in contempt. Blackheart, are you speaking of emotions?

“Drive you away with cruel words? As if I am capable of hurting you? Do you really believe that the pitiful remain of soul that you have left, actually allows you emotions? You have forsaken your humanity and I am not even exaggerating here. You *know* what you chose to sacrifice.”

Marvolo remained unshaken as he calmly gazed back at the storm clouds in the verdant sea and Harry tightened his jaw in frustration, “This is not an epiphany that you had last night or even the day before. You knew the truth the moment you laid your eyes upon me. Yet you allowed my... persistence. I wonder why.”

“I was bored.” The young wizard gave a negligent toss of head, turning away from the screeching threat nonchalantly and infuriatingly, “When the entertainment must come my way freely, why wouldn’t I indulge?”

“Your words, my dove, are far more lethal than any spell could conjure.” Marvolo murmured, the stuttered exhale only indication to his upset composure. “But then no one has known me as extensively and inexplicably as you do. No one is capable of *hurting* me as you do.”

Harry stiffened and tilted his head unkindly, “Ah, so is this your mercy before you eliminate the threat to your life?”

Marvolo looked at him with an inexplicable look on the frozen features, “Yet you still do not lunge for your wand.”

Harry stilled for a moment before frantically rushing for the wand. But a harsh grasp caught his forearm through the robes, unyielding in its intent. And the Dark Wizard dragged him away from the desk, closer to him and forced him to breathe through his realization.

*Foolishness...utter foolishness...*

Of course Marvolo was unmoved through his mad chatter. Why would the wizard care for the provocative words when his actions spoke another language? Harry kept his face turned away

stubbornly, unwilling to face the betrayal of his own mind.

*Because there was nothing that either of them valued more than trust. And Harry had given his unasked answer; that he trusted the dark wizard enough to waylay his wand in such a manner.*

Marvolo held him fast and Harry gritted his teeth through futile struggles.

“I have come to realize I have not been obvious enough in my intentions. My actions have been, yes, but not my words. And you, knowingly or not, ignored them anyway.”

Brilliant green eyes widened, and his struggled became far more desperate. He pushed against the firm body, shaking his head against the words that kept coming.

For, this soft voice heralded a calamity that would tear apart all that which he held dear and his instinct whispered frantically of the end that would not come by curses, but in the curl of sibilant words.

*He must not speak, must not...*

“How can you not see, how beautiful you are to me?”

“You are *insane*.” Harry hissed at the Dark Wizard. He could understand the ones who had not cared for his scars, mostly because *one* of the unseemly sights *had* been the reason he had been wanted at all, “I can’t do anything about someone who will willingly remain blind to reality.”

Marvolo let his grip fall to the elbow, before dragging the sleeves away for a better display. He pressed a cold knuckle reverentially along the ‘*I must not tell lies*’. The wizard let it go and Harry exhaled in quiet relief only for the cold hand to push away the trailing fringes to bare his forehead and give the faded scar equal adoration. Panic had stewed for no longer than a moment before he was being turned around and the sleeves were pushed even higher.

Harry deterred the insistent limbs with a sharp elbow to the body behind him; a mortified wizard having resorted to pathetic means to keep his dignity.

Marvolo ceased his demonstration but put his grip back on his arm, precisely on the place where a basilisk had burned him. Pale cheeks burned equally horrified at the subtle acknowledgement.

*(That the wizard had noted each and every one of his disfigurement and gave none any thought more than others. That the wizard had scrutinized each and every part of him in such a manner.)*

In contrast to his companion, Marvolo remained entirely composed as he bent down to whisper, “Blind to which speaks of your strength? Not at all. I can never condone your pain, my dear one, and I would destroy the ones who dared give you this. I won’t deny that they display how beautifully you have survived, how stubbornly you have endured.”

Heart shuddering and palm sweating, Harry broke away, tremors wrecking him but stubbornly did the Gryffindor gather the fleeing courage; cruelly did he speak, stalking close, “What exactly have you imagined, Dark Lord, *hm*? How goes this...this future dream in your mind? I know you mean to persuade me to stay. Besides the fact that you are being so presumptuous...”

Harry huffed out a frustrated breath, before focusing with eyes as fatal as the embrace of a basilisk, “Let me predict the future as *you* see. I will be the demure companion compliant in pureblood behaviour and never deigning to speak out against his Lord in public. A probable threat that needs to be watched, but, oh, so perfect because who would willingly stay beside one as dark as you are? The pliable fool who should have heeded what natural revulsion but didn’t run *far, far away*. The pretty entertainment who would make enough noise but quiet down where he was not needed!”

Genuine fury had lent momentum to his words, tone rising higher as did the wizard’s ire, “Now let me spell the future that you *will have*. Absolute ruin. Do you think I will ever go along this idyllic fantasy of yours? That I wouldn’t threaten your kingdom you have so painstakingly built? That I won’t rip your mask away to reveal to everyone, the monster behind the wizard? Have you forgotten so easily how much I *care* for your beliefs?” The sarcasm elongated the vowels, “How I react to your assertion or *attempt* of such, I should say.”

Expressive hands spread wide as if already presenting the vicious future to the Dark Lord.

Marvolo did not reply immediately and the wizard so very brave but entirely uncaring to the rising threat stood his ground even as caution prompted the rhythm of his pulse.

The weariness came not from a possible threat to his life, not from the glowing tip of a yew wand either. Such perils were ones that Harry Potter could handle happily.

It came from the complete shattering of a mask; rupturing in silence and the ignorant world didn’t stutter in its axis. Fools, Harry thought almost hysterically.

The Dark Wizard who had remained for so long enigmatic and calm beneath his facade; frozen features reflecting none of the rage in scarlet shades, none of the storm broiling in his magic. Harry had long become accustomed with the volatile dark magic saturated in cold insanity, whose shadow only would caress the icy features.

There was no calm now, no. There was no reservation now. Marvolo, Dark Lord Voldemort, Tom Riddle. They stood before him, maws wide open. Harry’s breath hitched.

He put a desk between them discreetly, not taking his eyes away from the predator that had shed its skin. Marvolo spoke softly and Harry should *run right now*. Neither of them however could break away from their enthrallment.

“You think I see you as my demure companion, one never to speak out against me? You, the one who never heeded what I said, but stood against me, my claims, my beliefs in every instance. You didn’t care to just oppose me. Nay, you would take glee in decimating the fundamentals of world as I had known, stampeding across my wishes and desires. Who are

you mocking here, tell me, by calling the person demure who raged against me, cursed me and stopped shy of shedding blood?"

Far better it would be if Marvolo were to seethe against his impudence, but his voice remained worshipping and the young wizard could only stay mute as each of his arguments were deftly torn apart.

"You say I am blind, to what exactly was I blind, my lovely? I know you hardly think me so shallow that I would be swayed by empty shells of elegance. But if I must reassure you, it will be no hardship for me to speak of your strength, your intelligence, your kindness (one virtue I never thought I would extol). You claim yourself to be a pliable fool and a fool you must be to be blind to your own worth. But never pliant, never to me. You would defend the dead, the elderly, the weak and for Merlin's sake, even random animals before you would care to take my side!"

Marvolo sounded tad baffled for a second and despite everything, Harry felt his mouth unconsciously turn up in the corners.

The next words did well to carve way any levity in situation, "Probable threat? Yes, you are. My equal in everything and anything. I can hardly call you such if you didn't affect me just as I swayed you."

Harry stepped a small step away, the present and past colliding in a tar of cold arrogance and sweet entreaties. He was shaking his head already, his small whisper a poor defence against Marvolo's beseeching voice, "Stop it."

Marvolo didn't relent, didn't respect the distance Harry begged for. He stepped around the desk, insistent compensation for every escape Harry sought.

"Do not deny this." He was so very close now, his voice a sweet croon to the younger wizard, "Precious as you are, leave the subtlety of manipulation to me, sweet one. I am not blind. Not to the fire in your eyes, the knowledge in your palms."

"I am not blind to the naked *want* in your eyes, the way you keep pleading for my touch." Harry's breath stuttered as the voice dipped low and sultry, "The way you care for me enough to defend, to persist. I am not blind to the way you never turn your eyes away, despite the so called revulsion."

After all this times, I won't let you hide in your denial, won't let you deny how much you *care* about me."

Harry finally shrieked in agony, "Stop it!"

The quiet steps didn't pause, the soft voice didn't care to heed his pleas.

"Vexing. Charming. Absolutely beautiful. The only one capable of not only withstanding my rage but respond just as viciously. The only one who knows all of me and still looks at me with a heart so kind. How can I ask for anything different?"

*Because you never had before!*

Isn't that how the history was known? The Dark Wizard incapable of nurturing true emotions...because the Gryffindor had not wanted to lose himself in a reality whose truth would be charmed indeed by the sly whim of this person. And all this time, Harry Potter had felt certain of the truth as he had known. After all this time fiercely had he not believed that it could not have been anything more than an amusement and distraction for the powerful Wizard?

Wished Harry did, that he remained unmoved and indifferent to the coaxing voice; that the absolute adulation in that face did not raise him to lofty heights, did not splinter him apart into the deepest of abyss. That he could callously throw away this naked regard without destroying himself first.

Marvolo murmured lowly, and Harry fought off the tremor tracing along his spine, "Stunning in your magic and defiance, yet you still submit to me. Again and again. Not because you had to, but because you wanted to. Do not say I forced you to submit, you would never do something unless you willingly let yourself. My proud Hadrian, forgive me that your words do none of the trick you were expecting them to."

Sometime in between Harry had turned his back to the dark Lord, eyes shut against the trembling despondency that Marvolo hadn't cared to hide, even with the assuredly arrogant words. His face turned upward towards the ceiling, biting back the grief that threatened to flow anyway. Because...

"I can't... it doesn't change anything." He whispered in misery.

It made the Dark wizard startle and pause where the loud entreaties had not managed to.

A softly hitched breath behind him. Rustle of robes. Screeches of Dark Magic and then Marvolo was there, madness throbbing in the sharp gasps and contrasting tender caresses.

"Why not?" Asked the plaintive Dark Lord, "I will pour the world at your feet, my beloved. I will burn everything and anything for you. I will adore you; cherish you like the enchanting jewel you are. For your happiness, I will do anything. How can it not change anything? The mere days that I spent with you upended all that I was. *How can it not change anything?!*"

"How could you ask me that?" Harry shrieked back, despair lining his throat and confused anger muddling everything, "How could you ask me to leave behind everything, my family, my friends, and my world just for you? For however long until you are bored with my company, and I am left with nothing?"

Harry pushed against the Dark Wizard, and the other in turn violently clasped the upper arms, politeness a distant meaning. It burned, but Harry could focus on nothing but the dark wizard who was flailing for a lost semblance of reason, on the soft words gritted out through clenched mouth.

"I would *ask*, instead of taking as I want because I care for you." Breath left him, when cold arms dragged him closer and icy breath fluttered against his cheeks, "Because *Hadrian*, I



would always choose you.”

“Why are you doing this?” Harry miserably asked, futilely pushing against the firm body.  
“*Why now?!*”

“I had to tell you, for you to have a choice,” Harry clenched his fist on the robe when the ever assured voice broke before the man contained himself, “I had to ask. You are the only one I want beside me, beautiful and so strong. *How can I not hope?* I have never known one such as you, stubborn and lovely.” Marvolo cupped wet cheek, scarlet eyes tracing the nuances of each feature, “So *lovely*. Now that I know what I can have, how can I not want it forever? How can I let you go?”

It was the last words that faltered his emotions, that worried his rationality and Harry asked, “Even if I *choose* to go?”

Marvolo stilled against him and in this entire time Harry had never despised himself more than when he caused his wizard to crumple in agony.

“I would take you if I could, my beloved one. I am hardly noble enough. I could keep you away from your home, and care less about it. I could, if perhaps I cared for you less. I cannot bear to part from you even for this measly period. If you must, tell me and I will bring all who you wish to meet. I will bring them to your reach and may you never be parted from your family. Even if I trust that you hold me in your heart, that you will return to me, I cannot have you so far. All my resources and my men are at your mercy. You need only *ask*.”

It was the fiery determination in that baritone that finally broke him. Marvolo stopped with a sharp inhale when Harry prompted an embrace this time, saturated with desperate emotions that had been unthinkable months ago, that had become familiar to him. Marvolo wasted nary a second before sheltering him, letting him secrete away in the smothering response. He didn’t protest at the discomfort, didn’t look up to the questioning face.

*How could he look at the trusting scarlet so readily, when he could not even keep to this promise?*

Because Harry had not realized that Marvolo was frantic for a supposed short separation alone; that the Wizard had yet to understand the finality of it all.

Why would he? Why would the Dark Lord fathom that Hadrian could go anywhere unreachable, anywhere beyond this world.

Perhaps the madness of a Dark Lord would be as indomitable as Fiendfyre but Harry couldn’t...wouldn’t torture even the worst enemy in such a manner. Couldn’t keep the lie be the bait for the expectant wizard as he languished for however many years.

So he whispered into the other’s chest, “There will be no return from this kind of journey, Marvolo.”

The grip on him slackened and this time it was Marvolo who held them apart; vacant understanding finally dulling the intense scarlet. As swiftly as he had stepped into his

personal space, the wizard stepped away understanding the implicit rejection.

“But you still won’t choose me. I see.” Marvolo gave a broken laugh. He backed a step away, “Forgive me for distressing you.”

*It was for the best.*

The cold hands cradled him so gently, so reverently, but for a moment. Marvolo leaned down, leaving a burning imprint of a kiss on his forehead, “Blessed be your path, beloved.”

*It was for the best.*

**Tomarryyy---tomaarry---tomaarryyyy-----**

The old and wretched elf flitted about the drawing room, determinedly scrubbing the stain that the filthy doxies had left behind. The infestation had been cleared away years before, but the things had discoloured the woodwork already with their filth and it wouldn’t *come off!*

The loyal creature frowned down at the stubborn mark, not for the first time. Not for the last time either.

But there was precious little indeed that could be done in the empty house. Hogwarts kept the old elf from fretting about tasks to do, but even the yard of chaos could not keep him distracted from the fact that his house remained empty. That the house elf was unable to cater to his master’s wishes. On holidays, many of the elves felt the discomfort that came from not being needed; but for the loyal elf of House Black, it was even more harrowing.

For, he had had to return to an empty house devoid of his kind master. He had had to keep himself obsessively occupied, lest the guilt of his failure suffocate him. Disgusted, Kreacher threw down the rag when soft footsteps sounded behind him. Kreacher didn’t mind the blood traitor or the mudblood *per say*. After all they had helped his Master Harry, they had helped keep Master Regulus keep his promise. And Master Harry would not like it if he spoke aloud anything about his friends.

Kreacher missed the young master.

The ugly being flitted out of the kitchen with a plate of sandwiches, tea and crackers. Mr Wizzy was never so quiet, it must be the Miss.

Kreacher hurried with the plate and dropped it promptly.

The green-eyed wizard smiled at him. His kind, *kind* master.

“Hello, Kreacher.”

And the grumpy elf burst into tears. Somehow later, he came to his senses and was predictably flustered. Here was the young and kind master returned after so long and what did the respectable house of Black do to welcome him?

The bulbous eyes flitted to the fire place, but he had promised his Master, who was still holding his ugly self in his rich and refined robes. Kreacher worked to right himself, not quite aware of the wizard's sorrowful face."M-master Harry, yous back! Kreacher be making *cherry tart and pickled sandwiches and roast lamb with the gravy* Master is so fond of! "

Master Harry however took light grip on his wrist, "Later Kreacher. Come sit by me. Tell me, how have you been?"

Kreacher broke into tears again.

**Tomarryyy---tomaarrry---tomaarrrryyyy-----**

Harry had been feeling much at ease. The centuride had only asked about his true world. Harry had eagerly latched onto the subject, stubbornly dismissing the grief that kept creeping back and carefully not mentioning his encounters with cousins of her kind.

*He was going to see them soon anyway. He had no more reason to be upset.*

The centuride was a polite listener. Harry had not ventured to ask anything about her kind; it would be rude anyway when she seemed to skirt against the subject obviously. She didn't volunteer anything, be it about the stars or the herd or even the forest itself.

After a while she looked up at the sullen sky, "It is time." She remarked in the middle of his tale of Ron and Pig the owl.

Harry swallowed against an asphyxiated heart, "What do I have to do?"

"No." She turned to him calmly, "You must be ready for your time."

His brows furrowed. If there was nothing for him to participate in the preparation, "I am ready. Aren't I supposed to at least..."

She interrupted him again, looking deep into the forest, "You are not. The ritual will not take if you are taking with you any that belongs here. You can not fool a ritual; magic will make sure the punishment is as harsh. Take care that nothing on you that didn't come with you. You have been warned, do not be a fool and lose your own world due to greed."

Harry startled at the offence, "Hey, I am not going to taking away any gold or jewels!" She continued to watch with absolute distrust until Harry fumed through and gave a jerky nod finally.

"I will leave you here now. Prepare yourself."



None of them had accepted it. Hermione couldn't speak for the rest of the world with a certainty, but neither she nor Ron had cared to grieve. They had not mourned. They had not accepted. For months the world had looked for their saviour, eventually settling down to a melancholic acceptance. But friends and family had never given up.

They stumbled sometimes in despair and frustration, but never let themselves get swamped by it.

It had become sort of routine now, because the world must go on no matter what, to walk on the grim road and *live*.

Perhaps Hermione had become more accustomed than she had realized because when she saw Kreacher, the sulky elf of Grimmauld place, trembling in terrible ecstasy with pink and watering eyes, her logical brain had understood before her heart could catch up. As it was, she stayed stupefied for quite a long time.

The proof of her here and living best friend was no fantasy. It survived her spells and shock, irrefutable and real. Ron grasped her elbow in silent understanding and that grounding touch broke through her dizziness.

Harry Potter had welcomed her embrace with equal desperation instead of pleading with Ron to rescue him. He had not welcomed the furious curses quite so well, yelping when one or more landed, using the furniture of the dining room as shield instead of going for his wand.

Ron had blushed at the swearing that spewed from a ranting Hermione.

("Harry James Potter, I do hope you have a bloody good explanation." She had hissed. But they had been all too exhausted for any more conversation and Harry only smiled at her tiredly.

He spread his arms, "Aren't you happy I came back whole?"

She smiled back, "Yes, because now I can cut you up in pieces without any worries.")

Both of them had taken leave from the ministry; it was hardly going to end up in the doom and despair in their absence. Hermione refused to twitch at the thought that her department was essentially in the mercy of her assistant, a wizard she still didn't trust with interdepartmental memos let alone an actual emergency.

And then they simply...talked. Harry would slyly direct their conversation towards the recent events in the Wizarding world or their life, would crave every bit of insignificant information. Hermione narrowed her eyes, not deceived in the least but let the man be for the moment.

Because Harry wasn't being duplicitous, he was genuinely starved to be included in the world that had gone on without him. In the end however...

"Nothing much has changed, has it?" Harry smiled in thanks to Kreacher who kept filling their cups.

Ron barked out a laugh before Hermione could do more than bristle, “Unlike you?” the witch calmed when the dark haired wizard only showed confusion.

“You are thinner and paler.” Hermione started gently,

“Mom wouldn’t like it.” Ron muttered. “Of course could have been worse.”

” At least you took care of yourself.” Harry looked down at his cup. Hermione frowned but continued, “It is the way you hold yourself, though, that seems to be a bit different. There is just something...”

Ron interjected bluntly, “You are behaving proper and gentle, better than Malfoy even. More than when you would come back from one of those uppity diplomatic missions. George would be *delighted*.”

Harry didn’t turn their way, staring down the cooling tea. Boisterous and delighted as Ron had been, even he realized the awkwardness of the scenario. Hermione... for once wasn’t patient or sensitive.

“What really happened? Where have you been, Harry? What took you so long?”

Her best friend looked but a pale shadow of himself. It lent unease to her heart, or perhaps only discomfort because she had truthfully become too accustomed to searching for Harry. It seemed all quite anti-climatic, after all their efforts were in vain.

She shook her head at the irrational thoughts, because it was not her imagination. Harry seemed subdued and wary; ‘twas not reticence borne of a foolish desire to keep protecting them.

He looked far more as if he had *lost* something by coming back, rather than simply returning home. *As if he was...* Ron kicked her feet non-too-subtly under the table. “Let the man be, Hermione.” The witch glared at the red-head, but he shrugged unrepentantly, “Between you and Mom, he is hardly going to breathe the next few months anyway.”

“Try years.” She snapped back, but relaxed. Perhaps there was plenty of time still, for him to explain everything to them, to plead their forgiveness, to let him come to them on their accord.

She exhaled out. Perhaps she was over thinking this in her state of panic.

Harry was not looking at all worried though, at the potential interrogation, instead gazing back at them fondly. Hermione felt the unease recede, let the overwhelming affection drown her. She reached out. Her robes sliding down and playfully tugged at the curl that had escaped Harry’s up-do.

“Take all the time. We’ll be right here.”

They left after a luncheon at which Kreacher had tried his best to serve all of their favourites. They hadn’t really wanted to, but Harry had begged due to exhaustion. The one who wouldn’t speak of his weakness till his consciousness had planted to the floor, admitting such

weakness meant more than a simple excuse. So they had reluctantly drawn away from the truthfully pale friend and showed themselves out.

Kreacher swore to keep an eye out for the errant wizard besides.

Even so, she paused at the top step looking back at the grim knocker. Ron murmured gently, “You promised him time, Hermione.”

All the worries, all the sadness that they had repressed in front of their best friend were bared to each other. Hermione spoke in a strangled whisper, “He just looks so... Something must have happened. Something terrible.”

“But nothing that involves anyone beyond him. Reckon he wants to deal with it himself.” Ron shook his head in exasperation.

“He won’t have to! We will be there for him.”

Because they had promised, hadn’t they, so many years ago? Hermione squeezed Ron’s hand, the returning gesture kept her steady as they walked away. Because he *would* be there when they returned for him.

**Tomarryyy---tomaarry---tomaarrrryyy-----**

This was not supposed to happen.

Basilus, the chieftain of the centaurs of the Misty Forest, looked with disbelief at the completion of their ritual. The glade was absolutely silent and the one to lead them all dared not meet the stricken gazes of rest of the herd. This was not the time to wail along with his People, not the time to panic when the rest were looking to him for guidance.

So he turned his back to the altar, magic burn sunk deep within the soils with the charred evidence of a *complete* ritual. This was not supposed to happen.

“Speak with them. With all of them. I want to know who went against my order.”

To sink down upon the Earth, to beg for the Stars to guide and let him undo it all were what his shaking limbs and a despairing heart pleaded. But Basilus could not fail the rest of his people, he had to...

Horror still had not left the dark eyes of the warrior, but the centaur could not let himself be lost in pre-mature grief. Impatient he waited, for the traitor to be dragged to him.

They were not dragged to him, no. Basilus had gone instead, with his advisor flanking one side and second-in-command guarding another. He went to the placid nook among trees farther into the Forest to speak with the one person whom he had respected and revered.

“Haymone, *what have you done.*”

It was not an interrogation but a request to refute the accusation instead, horror stricken and strangled. The proud Mother of centaurs only shook her mane, utterly unrepentant.

“What had to be done, Basilus.” She spoke through pursed mouth, “What you were too *weak* to do. I would not let the whims of a wizard carve our paths. For *that* to walk on our lands was an offence already too far.” Haymone trotted by, hooves prancing grave and loud through the stunned night. The spear in his hands shook but remained pointed downward. He was still foolishly contemplating.

She sneered, her back to him.

“You interfered where you had no right to. Did you believe in all your righteous belief that you were the only one capable of handling wizards? You have *doomed* us.”

Her rigid control strained at the accusation, at the preposterous conclusion. *How dare he?*

She snarled at him through bared teeth, “The wizards did that, not me. We once vowed, remember? The last of us would fall before bowing to the wizards? And you, “She moved closer to this weak descendant of hers, *her shame*, “You trotted to the wiles of this Wizard, spat away the pride of our herd. What then? Would you have let the wizard ride you as well, *pet?*”

She was grateful that at least her mate hadn’t had to see their clan fall in the hands such deplorable heirs. At the same time she longed for his support and the shrewdness of her advisor.

Now, she had to bear the responsibility of their honour all alone.

Basilus didn’t roar at her, only flinched as Haymone watched with satisfaction. *Weak.*

He kept his gaze on her though, still accusing, “I would break a hundred vows. I would fight a thousand battles and I would bow before all wizards, Haymone, if need be. I will care for my pride the *least* because I swore to protect my people. My responsibility as a chieftain will always come before my clan pride.”

She roared over him, “A *weak* chieftain! A *shameful* one! I pitied us when I saw you for what you are, because you will meekly let us be the slaves of those wizards. You will let us be the entertainment for their pleasure, let us slobber over their feet like the low-bred! Never fight, but bend as if you were well trained for them since birth. Weakling of a boy, you will ruin us because you loathe shedding blood.”

“Even if it is the blood of innocents, Haymone? I did what had to be done, to protect my people without condemning them for any arrogance.” His tone was still quiet, as opposed to her seething hisses. “When I must think of our centuride and babes that are but few decades old? Did it please you, oh Great Mother, when you let them be second thoughts to your pride?”



She looked away then, stubbornly not thinking of the silence of the glade from the lack of playing children, “They would understand. They would understand that to fall as a centaur is better than to live as a domesticated animal.”

“Perhaps so. But you didn’t ask them. You didn’t ask anyone. You paid no price for your hubris, Haymone, the rest of us will. “

Basilus tucked away his spear and walked away. She shook her head, not understanding why she wasn’t dragged away already for the betrayal. But Basilus had always wilted to her words, anyway.

*They would understand.*

## Chapter End Notes

Hiya! Yes I know it had been a loooong time and I am a unreliable author. I just wanted to give you the best

If some things seem redundant, that's intentional. I have had complaints that not everyone has devoured the Hp books. So I tried not to be the all-knowing Odin. Even so,

any confusion- please ask. The scenes are jumbled a bit intentionally, to keep the ending still a bit mystery. Besides, it was no fun otherwise. I have made the lapses clear enough. Again, if confused please ask.

I took the name of Haymone and Basilus from the early centaur and centauride from the Greek mythology.

This was meant to be a single chapter aaaand..then it wasn't. Yay! I had the ending ready from the beginning but the details alluded me like a squirrel.

# of All Eternity

## Chapter Summary

Is it happiness if it asks for with tears of blood? Is it victory if it tastes pungent anyway? Is it defeat if you are the last standing in the battlefield? Is it the end if it hasn't begun yet?

## Chapter Notes

I am curious by the way- can you guess in the chapter summary what line refers to which character? I wanna know who guessed correctly and who didn't. No fibbing!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Teddy had been delighted when gran pulled him out of the lessons; his fingers were starting to ache with having to write for *so long*! He bounded down the stairs broom in hand (just a bit hopeful). Within moments he forgot it all, left it forgotten on the last step and bounded forward with a shriek. Gran rebuked him, but his Godfather took him up in his arms with a laugh.

Harry held him at an arm's length to look at him better and Teddy giggled at the familiar ritual.

"Merlin, is this my Godson?" His godfather gasped, "All tall and grown up? Andy, you sure this is him?"

Teddy nodded violently, "It is! It is!" He pouted, "You say it every time, Harry."

Harry smiled at him, "That's because you will always be my little twerp, Ted bear."

The boy sulked while the adults chuckled. Harry ruffled the pink hair fondly, "Andy says you have been practicing a lot. Do you want to show me what you got so far?"

The boy perked up, and bounded forward with a tight grasp on his godfather and the other on the broom, "There are so many things I have got to show you!"

He had missed his godfather so much.

Teddy might be six, but he was not an idiot. He had seen how gran had been upset, *not mad*, when Harry didn't come around anymore. He had heard how she would talk to Uncle Ron

and Aunt Hermione with a scrunched up face. He didn't know everything that was going on, only that it had something to do with his godfather.

But they would all hush up whenever he showed up. It was so annoying!

Everyone treated him like a child, but not his godfather no matter how much he would tease him. Harry would say he had no idea how to talk to a child, but Teddy liked his way just fine. It was not as i-n-f-u-r-t-i-n-g as everyone else.

So Teddy was very happy Harry was back. But he smelled all wrong. He didn't say anything though, but waited till they were past the pond and on the wide fields. Besides he had other important things to say.

"You missed my birthday." He said quietly.

His godfather startled on his walk and then stopped. "Let's sit down a bit here, yeah?"

Teddy didn't mind.

Harry sat down beside him right on the dirt and grass without bothering with a scourgify, thus delighting his godson. They faced each other but the older one didn't speak immediately. That was alright; Teddy remembered Harry telling him that everyone needed a moment sometimes.

When Harry looked up, his eyes were bright green, "Teddy, you know I missed you a lot, don't you?"

The boy went silent before answering just as quietly, "Yeah?"

And then his godfather had gathered him up in his arms and teddy didn't mind despite the fact that he was all grown up now. This was important. Harry hugged him close and Teddy clutched his robes back. Harry was speaking in whispers, buried in his hair but Teddy could hear him just fine.

"Of course I did Ted bear. Never doubt that. Out of everyone else, you were the one I thought of the most. I couldn't breathe knowing you would be waiting for me, you know."

It was a tad uncomfortable how hard his godfather was squeezing him. But it was warm and his neck was getting wet and he had missed his godfather so he tried to keep from squirming. But...

Harry immediately pulled back.

When Teddy turned around, his godfather was smiling down at him, "I am sorry I missed your birthday, Teddy."

He ducked down, "It is alright."

Harry pinched his cheeks, "What a sweet godson I have."

Teddy giggled, "I am your only godson!"

Harry cuddled him closer and Teddy trustingly went, "And how lucky I am to have you. Never, ever doubt how much I love you, Teddy, no matter what happens."

Teddy frowned and opened his mouth to ask...

"Tell me what you got for your birthday?"

And the child forgot the momentary thought that had whispered doubt in his head a minute ago. He bounced on his Godfather's knees and with a wince Harry cajoled him to shift to the ground instead.

"Oh! I got a wand! It bubbles, hisses and eats up anything you point at and smells a lot of different things. It bubbled all over Uncle Bill's socks and then stunk up the room really fast. Gran told off Uncle Ron for enabling me! What does that mean?" Teddy frowned up at the other.

Harry gave a small snort, "He is making sure you are provided for all sorts of mischief."

Teddy nodded thoughtfully, "That would drive Gran around the bend." Before whispering conspiratorially to his godfather, "It was loads fun though!"

Harry scratched a hand on his scalp and Teddy happily leaned into him, "Your Gran can't be as sprightly at her age, you see? Or I am sure, she would be right there encouraging you as well."

That made sense. Why, Harry and his friends still got up to all sorts of trouble didn't they? He had heard Mrs. Weasley speaking with Gran about it, sounding really exhausted. He will have to really sneaky too, so as not to worry them much.

Harry hummed, "What else?"

Teddy babbled on with a loud, raucous voice about the strutting dragon toy he got from their cousin Draco (Harry had a weird look on his face at that, Teddy ignored it), and the small cauldron and potion kit he got from aunt Hermione and the rant Gran had gone on again. Harry chuckled and murmured something, but let Teddy go on with his birthday celebration and the frozen pygmy puff that Gran had been about to carve into before it had thawed out. It had pretty icings and sparkles on it too, until it started shrieking and running and flinging the cake matter everywhere.

Uncle George had gotten into a lot of trouble for that.

Harry didn't interrupt him at all, kept listening quietly without looking any way bored or annoyed. He carried on until he had talked himself hoarse and simply flopped belly down on the ground.

His birthday had been perfect, and he had had lots of present but still missing his Godfather. Teddy wasn't at all mad about the presents. What he had really wanted was that *person*. Sure he had enjoyed himself and everyone had made it *really* fun, and Teddy hadn't felt *at all* like

the only kid when his other cousins had been by as well. He was older than them all and Teddy had puffed out with how *grown up* he was even while playing with them.

But he had *missed* his Godfather, the only person who didn't always treat him like a child. Whenever Harry looked at him, Teddy felt as if he was the only important thing in the entire room, even when all his uncles. Cousins and their families were over! It made him really happy.

Teddy wanted to blurt it all out, wanted to hug and cling to him and never let him go. But Gran had once sat him down and talked to him about why Harry stayed away all the time, why he would come around only so few times. She had talked to him as if she didn't expect him to understand.

But Teddy wasn't five anymore. He could wait for him he must.

"Sounds like you were well taken care of." Harry murmured so faintly Teddy was sure he was talking to himself.

Teddy frowned, with a mind to say how *much* he had missed him. He kept quiet and let his Godfather snuggle him to his side.

*His Godfather still smelled wrong.*

**Tomarryyy---tomaarrry---tomaarrrryyyy-----**

The centaurs didn't at all care about the wizards trespassing in their lands. Harry cringed slightly at the baleful stare of yet another one that trotted past him for no reason but to draw his attention towards how the sharp end of his spear glinted even in the sparse light.

The night had been dark, but will o' the wisps illuminated the glade instead with their starlight. They darted here and there, curious about the cluster of centaurs engaged in various tasks or perhaps to mimic the flashes of a falling star. Globes of white light floated around their heads of their own volitions (some would float into the forest and never come back); Harry was really curious about the kind of magic associated.

He refrained from drawing undue attention to himself; any more than already present that is.

The horde was very different from the ones he had known from his Hogwarts. They were even less friendly than Bane; Harry had truly thought that no centaur could loathe wizards as much as that one had. He stood corrected. Their weapons seemed different; for, they preferred the close melee that spears and swords would draw rather than the long range weapons like bows and arrows that their distant cousins carried. They were noticeably a very different species; while the brave Firenze had been exiled with a hoof imprint on his chest for his sympathy towards the wizards, such *foolishness* in this flock would invite a stab to the traitor most likely.

Not to speak of their *horns*! The centaurs carried them with all the pride of an arrogant bull (Harry was very careful not to gape openly not unlike his one best friend). Unbidden in his thoughts, he imagined a dominance fight between two centaurs with their horns locked in.

He huffed out a snicker and eyes narrowed in his direction.

*Well then.* Harry strode confidently towards the closest cluster that was not occupied with preparing the glade with oddest things, utterly disregarding when the air around him thickened with deadly hostility.

He might as well get some information, because apparently even becoming bowtruckle larvae was not going to have any effect on the hostility directed towards them.

He didn't cross his arms, didn't draw his wand. With a posture open but not challenging he looked up at them with a nonchalance that made their tails bristle. "What would happen if the ritual somehow goes wrong?"

A dark centaur with horns reminiscent of the minotaur painting in the Hogwarts hissed out, "Do you challenge our capability, wizard?" The last word was made up of less syllables and more venom.

Harry met the spiteful stare evenly, "I do not doubt your capability, not at all. I don't trust you to keep my wellbeing a high priority either." He waved away the hissed advances of the offended and continued, "Again, this is not about whether you can but whether you want to. Don't tell me your motive is altruistic, out of a true desire to help a wizard?"

Not all of them relaxed, but a chortle floated out nevertheless. Harry focused on the amused centaur, sensing mild tolerance at best. He was of stocky build and had a pleasant enough face, but what would draw and keep one's attention was the volume of wild hair and beard on that man.

The scraggly man comported himself and restricted to a smirk, "Very astute. A slight alteration in the alignment in the stars and you will be torn to pieces between the two worlds. A hitch in breath in the air and you will be left with your soul in one stream while your body drools vacantly." Harry shivered unconsciously at the fate not unlike that of a Dementor's Kiss victim.

The centaurs relaxed at his reaction, even the ones that had been almost hostile with the centaur that had seemingly agreed with Harry. The former tapped his front leg smugly, "The possibilities are endless and yes, so is the temptation."

"Well then, I suppose I would better get to know of all the important temptations you might face and what they might mean for me."

Sneering, they turned away.

In the end however Harry had persuaded them to unveil some of the secrets (bothered them until they gave in), had learnt about the hundred of ways the ritual could go wrong. Were it

for any other purpose or of less dire an ache in the heart, Harry might have cared more, but the self-preservation instinct was never the one he had cared to cultivate.

**Tomarryyy---tomaarrry---tomaarrrryyyy-----**

Many a times Harry opened his mouth to say something but the words remained stuck behind a block of mortified uncertainty. His friends had stayed with him despite everything and ever since he had entered the Wizarding world, there was nothing of import he had truly cared to hide away. If he must, he would only hide the shame of the trolls that dotted his potions essays.

Everything else... had been circumstances beyond his control and apprising his friends of the situation had not taken courage so much as a simple desire to lessen the burden on self.

This though...

This was not merely a circumstance beyond his control, more than a stumble. Back to the war-torn world of his, steadily healing but still hurting; he felt the shame of his actions return multitude. He felt the disappointment of the dead in his awakening nightmares the dark of his nightmares. He felt the loss of the innocence in the weary orphan child as a gritting attack on his heart.

He could see Hermione was curious, could see the countless theories their imagination must have taken them. They had no idea he had been gallivanting in a time far away, let alone precisely half a century.

He didn't even know how to start, without coming off as having indulged in a quite lot of questionable substances in his time away.

So he stayed quiet, stepping casually through Hermione's probing queries and squirming uncomfortably against Mrs. Weasley's woeful face.

While Hermione's understanding was something he wanted, there was no way he could stampede past the sceptical blockade the witch always maintained against the impossible.

It had been Ron, whose behaviour proved to be the most perplexing however. Considering his own reticence, he couldn't confront the man candidly. Even after all these years, the two wizards were no less awkward when it came to naked emotions.

So he ignored the sometimes thoughtful stare and heavy weight upon his heart when the other would clasp his shoulder wordlessly.

Regardless, Harry was joyous, in the company of his friends, his family and back to the warmth of his home.

There was nothing else he cared for.

**Tomarryyy---tomaarrry---tomaarrrryyyy-----**

In another time and another place, nightmare stalked through undergrowths and towering trees. The forest was silent, all living being holding their breath, fearful of the catastrophe that loomed closer and closer.

Their hearts didn't soothe even after its malice had walked past them. The earth itself seemed to have been steeped in the coagulating spite. They dared not even wonder of whoever was the nightmare was seeking. The colony of the centaurs heard the call of the harbinger too late. The warriors stiffened, letting the infirm lag behind, unsurprised as they were. Mars had been bright for a fortnight by then; it had been only a matter of time.

Nothing breathed out loud.

The twisted caricature of a monster in a shell of wizard arrived and with it, their compliance was forced through screaming mouths and crushed knees.

"Come now, surely you have been expecting this? Why didn't you flee already if not you are not accepting your...hm...due punishment."

Many bared their teeth in defiance and the Dark Lord shattered the strong jaws. The wise and the venerable watched the carelessly restrained violence in the carefree posture and prayed, prayed to the stars and the moon, prayed to the earth and their ancestors.

He stopped before the chieftain of the herd. Basilus tried to keep his nerves placid even as his palms sweated, the magical ropes sliding through the slippery fear.

He will bare his throat first before letting any of his own fall.

The night terror in front of him scoffed, "Very gallant of you. But that wouldn't let the lesson latch onto your soul, would it?" The handsome face turned monstrous in the gloomy light of scattered stars and Basilus flinched away.

He didn't look at anyone else, refused to draw the attention away from him to the herd, refused to see the condemnation in the faces of all who he was supposed to protect. He would gladly bear the burden of it all.

So he opened his mouth only to yell when the scorching end of a wand pierced though his bearded jaw.

"I would rather have the truth, if you would be so polite." Spoke the soft, slimy voice.

He had scarcely drawn a breath before there was only excruciating pain. Raging ambers slid through his eyes, and went deeper still towards the back of his skull; never reaching the end however and simply meandering around the fertile place it had deemed its playground. It



didn't end, even as Basilus babbled through pleas and shrieks of mercy. The agony dove another inch into his brain.

He could feel the rest of his body protesting at the violation, could feel his stomach rolling and his heart bolting up, threatening to slide past the throat as well.

Nothing so happened. Only the pain remained loyal to him.

As unexpectedly it had started, so it did end. The chieftain of the centaurs of the Misty Forest fell to the ground, eyes staring mindlessly to the heavens and tremors of the horror imprinted in his body and soul after the wretched violation of a callous Legilimency.

He didn't register the soft footfalls as the nightmare walked away from him, didn't hear the screeches of a very familiar voice.

**Tomarryyy---tomaarry---tomaarrrryyy-----**

It had been seven decenniums. Harry would have been amused at the repetition of the number seven, but the he was far too emotionally exhausted.

Hermione and Ron knew the truth of it, in its entirety. He couldn't not confide in them, his confidants for life. Neither did they understand (or even cared to) his quiet but stubborn defence of the wizard who was portrayed as the dreadful nightmare of the century, one that had for once united all magical creatures and species in their seditious resistance, nor had they been amused at their bizarre relationship.

If it could be called that.

But they had not left him to contemptuous dismissals. They stayed, with pursed lips and averted eyes, but never left him behind. Ron preferred to remain deaf and blind. Harry didn't argue, for he would be disgusted as well with the person who cared for the monster. Hermione appealed to his logic, and intelligence, to show the emptiness in the soul of a Dark Lord.

*(The magic had not wilted from the flower torn from the May wreath. Hermione was blind to the meaning but Harry couldn't)*

Mrs. Weasley relented after a healthy flush had returned to his cheeks and appetite to a spoiled body. Kreacher had only gleefully assisted in that endeavour, ignoring the bemoaning wizard at this siege.

Harry had thought, well he hadn't known what he had expected, maybe to return to a world that had changed so drastically that he would take some time to regain his lost footing? But it had all remained in the standstill that Harry had known whole his life. Change was slow in the Wizarding world and it won't be completed in one lifetime only. Considering the

significant lives of witches and wizards sans unfortunate accidents, their earth continued in its lethargic pace.

It was comfortable to him, to find his home unchanged in his absence. Tidy and familiar despite his long absence. In his memories it had all been a halcyon time lost forever to time. Reality was not idyllic, of course not, but perfect with its dashes of absurdity.

He didn't care for the entourage that tended to follow him in public as if only the day before he had vanquished a Dark Lord though.

Often he wandered alone, disappearing from time to time wanting to breathe in solitude awhile. Ron and Hermione were not very fond of it, but holding Ministry high posts as they were they didn't realize the true extent.

*(He had lasted a matter of mere couple months before he had surrendered to pilfering through memories that wouldn't leave him be and torturing himself with visiting the barren places that seemed so vibrant in another time.)*

His godson still adored him with all his innocent heart, didn't replace the void of his Godfather with any other. He was tad bewildered that Harry insisted on seeing him every week when the lad had gotten used to his months of absence due to his responsibility as the ambassador. Teddy had taken to it enthusiastically; his Godfather's spontaneous adventures to strange places and his entirely undisguised displays of affection.

And the sweet boy totally ignored Fred's taunts that he was still such a *baby*. Fred was of course mad that Harry didn't hug him just that often.

Harry would make sure the boy would be taken care of no matter what.

Mrs. Weasley kept saying he had his father's mouth. Andy said Teddy had his mother's colour. Harry saw only his adorable, babbling and occasionally not-a-baby-anymore Godson alone.

*(Nestled in his godson's ever changing curls as he listened to the faithful narration of every moment spent from when Teddy roused from his bed. And often when caring past the relief, he was seized with painful guilt for **using** Teddy this way.)*

Harry had gone to the forbidden forest, to speak to the centaurs; to very carefully probe their memories fifty years earlier. They were marginally welcoming to him than any other witch or wizard, but no more than a step below cordial. He had wondered as well if in their knowledge they had an incident as rare as his had been, but Firenze the disgraced centaur who had not carried as much of a species bias cared to talk to him frankly.

Grimmauld place had welcomed him gleefully back; Harry had done the absolutely correct thing in not letting himself be swayed by the poisonous words of the Dark Lord.

He had been home. Hadn't he?

What was he doing then on this night that 7 decenniums would flit by, coercing a reluctant favour from Firenze?

What was he doing swaying in the dark of this night, as dark as it had been the night of his departure, his steps carrying him away dispassionately; his numb heart leaving everything behind with each stumble.

*(Numb had been how he had wanted the last few days, lest even the slight whisper of emotion leave him crumbled on the floor.)*

He disappeared away from the quiet forest and the ritual ground faded from glow of completion. The crack on the ground marking a fissure in his heart as well as his life.

With each step, Harry felt a shard of the apathy fall away, flooding him with copious self-loathing and hopelessness. He followed blindly to whence his heart led, not giving it any rational attention.

The veils from his eyes didn't fall; they were ripped away instead when he finally stopped in front of the inconspicuous looking manor. And then it wasn't numbness holding his emotions prisoner and they let themselves flare with the wounded shriek of a tortured heart.

By the time Harry had reached the abandoned hallways of the manor, he had fairly worked himself to blind hysterical rage. When the sole inhabitant of the manor appeared, the reason for all his vexation and despair, Harry responded with nary a syllable, but the violet twisting magic carrying the charm to blast back the offending person.

Something exploded, but it was not the infuriating wizard he had been aiming at. So Harry took aim again and brilliant lights played with his emotion as they were thrown ceaselessly. He vented his fury again and again, nonverbally for his lips trembled with hopelessness. His eyes had blurred to deceive him of the other wizard's position and his hands were hardly steady, but the curses flew precise and powerful and the need to unleash all which had been shielded in a polite cage bled through his wand, his magic swirling about with equal fervour.

He never noticed that the dark wizard didn't ever answer with offense, but casual discard. Each spells were averted relatively harmlessly to elsewhere, the configuration of the magical house altered as his fury rendered its ruin.

He never noticed that the other wizard approached him steadily, the increasing intensity of the attacks ignored and each step brought him all that closer.

So, his wand was still lit a poisonous yellow when he was pulled to an unyielding embrace and in astonishment he could only respond with a sharp exhale. Surprise wouldn't hold him for long however, because caged as he was only heightened his distress.

This cage was what felt overwhelmingly tight around his heart; for the sake of his golden cage he had forsaken his world. His family, his life: this cage in the arms of the most terrible Dark Lord to ever write the history.

*How selfish had he been?*

He struggled in his confinement, with hardly any finesse, fight to keep a shard of sanity at least buoyed. The final desolation of before the willing sacrifice walks away to its end.

But the bars around him hardly yielded and Harry didn't know when he transitioned to physically venting his emotions, in forms of closed fists and shaking hands, in hitting that body that wouldn't budge, wouldn't yield under his unrelenting hits.

He didn't know either when he had started screaming  
I hate you hate you hate you you despiseable despise you

Harry did feel however when the arms cradled him gently despite the harsh reception, restrained as he might be, desperate he might be to envision these hands as a physical form of the cage he had chosen after all.

His sobs lessened, the choking lungs felt less threatened and Harry clutched at the expensive robes in his unsteady hands before pulling slightly back. Marvolo was utterly dispassionate, unaffected by the storm of spell fire he had been attacked with or the hail of devolved emotions he had been wretched with.

The detached expression only violated the sanctity of his sanity even further. A closed fist hit the firm body again, harsh in its intention, timid in realization.

"I hate you. Do you think your words have no consequence? You have no consequence? You are chaos; your hands can bring nothing but destruction of dreams. I didn't ask for you. I never asked for you. Not now, not then. Why do you keep taking over my life, making it all about you? What right do you have to invade my mind, my soul? I thought I had rid of you, but you weren't satisfied by ruining my life once, were you? I had a life, I had a dream. I had my own world, responsibilities. Now I left them all *alone!* And now..." Harry continued with horrified realization, "It's all gone! Oh, I am such a self-centred..."

Marvolo was holding on to the distraught wizard with eyes alight with an unknown emotion, "Were you happy?"

"That is none of your business." Harry shrieked at the presumptuous man, "You have no say in whether I am happy or miserable. It is my life, my choice. You don't get to... you can't take away that..."

"It is your choice. Besides, you can always visit there, can't you?"

Harry punched him in the jaw.

"No." Harry breathed, "It wouldn't have been a choice at all then." Because he knew, even as he had subconsciously discarded the centuride's suggestions and taken Marvolo's gift with him anyway. His mind had taken some time to catch up when his heart and soul were already decided.

He knew precisely how selfish he had been. It hadn't been a matter of mere enjoyment, being happy.. No. He could have let himself be without the thunderous passion the Dark Lord woke in his veins, if that was all it had been.

It wasn't. It was a matter of self-preservation, of survival. A matter of breathing life in...

He knew and yet his fingers curled around the vest balefully. "Not when it is *you* involved, I can't think rationally when you are concerned. I *can't* see anyone. I can't, not anymore. Nothing was enough. How *dare* you relegate my family to..." Harry couldn't acknowledge that horrifying thought, "Are you happy now that you have ruined my life? I hate you, obnoxious *bastard*. I hate you..."

Marvolo curled a reverent hold on his nape, all his unruly hair having been crudely fastened with kanzashi that the Dark Wizard had given him last Mabon.

The Dark Wizard saw the surrender in every trembling vein of his prey, even as the mouth continued to move in denial. He didn't care to hurry along the realization. Didn't coax the struggling wizard to soft acceptance.

He waited instead, for the man to come to him by his own pace.

"Do you really?"

With tears brimming over, the Gryffindor felt his feet poise over the abyss. But it was a delusion indeed to think that he could ever deny the truth, when he had already fallen.

No, he had willingly stepped into the cavern, drawn by that darkness. It was time Harry accepted the truth that he had always known. Marvolo had been the catalyst to draw him, yes. But it was his heart that followed the lure.

It was time to accept the responsibility of his choice, to stop assigning blame for his actions upon the Dark Wizard.

(Acceptance was the last step to grief and loss, was it not?)

"No." He whispered.

It wasn't the Gryffindor courage that aided him, but simply the irrepressible wish to show this person the truth of his intention.

Harry tilted his face upward, raising to his toes a little. One of his hands moved to support his unsteady position, curling around a strong shoulder and thus his lips met the frozen ones of the Dark Wizard with a gentleness that spoke of timidity and of adoration.

It was not perfect. It was the barest touch of lips, chaste and sweet. It was wet, glistening with tears whose salt he could still taste. It was the slightest whisper of intentions.

Then Marvolo moved. A greedy hand supported his waist, crushing him so, raising him so, and denying him the need to totter upon startled limbs.

An unforgiving grip cradled the quivering jaws and pressed down upon the gentle offering.

Harry inhaled sharply or perhaps gasped. But his bottom lip was nevertheless taken prisoner and worshipped so ardently. He was catapulted into chaotic dreams, the miasma of sensations

wrecking brutal assault upon him. It never went deeper and was all the more unbelievable.

It was perfect.

Marvolo cradled him to the firm body and Harry felt himself lighter off the weight he never had known to have carried even.

**Tomarryyy---tomaarry---tomaarrrryyyy-----**

Marvolo smiled at the beautiful Hadrian Peverell strolling about his private garden, exclaiming still at its beauty.

In the warded locker of his desk, there was a very unremarkable galleon, inscribed not with the Goblin approved authenticity. At first glance it would seem to be an indulgence to sate the greed of a pureblood child; this frivolous coin that had nothing but a field of trotting ponies, crafted inside a delicately drawn circle.

At a closer look one might be startled by the humanoid faces on the ‘ponies’.

A closer scrutiny still might confide in one the terror in the young faces.

The figures had shrunk in numbers since the Dark Lord had re-visited their elders. It was fortunate indeed, he mused thinking of the ones that scrambled away from his touch; that Hadrian had come to of him of his own volition. The herd might have had to sacrifice a life for every month they cost him, but they hadn’t lost all of their progeny.

Their hatred had long since turned to abject terror and hopelessness. But then, to have the massacred flesh of their heirs on their hands, committed by their own hands... such agony had been more satisfying if he had cared to use the Cruciatus instead of the Imperius.

It was very fortunate... Because he would have traced the path of his beloved no matter, would have left ashes around to purge his own agony.

But Hadrian had returned to him.

Yes.

Not caring anymore of the future that didn’t come to be, he walked away to join Hadrian, content that his possession, his lovely creature had come to claim the position he belonged in.

A/N- Ta da! It has been awesome so far. And fun to be with you guys. Thanks for your support everyone and I am truly grateful for all the kind kind kudos and comments. I have the idea of a sequel but before that I am itching for the plot that I have had in mind my months and I just gotta write it! So its ciao for now. ^.^\*  
But not forever  
Don't forget to leave what you thought of the story.  
And a shout out to all my loyal readers who have been so patient, so incredible and so amazing. Thank you all!! :\*

# sequel

## Chapter Summary

To the ones who waited for me

I will take it down later-

I know it has been centuries, but I hope some do get their new year gift. ^.^

[sequel](#)



## End Notes

Hello! This will be a longer story than my previous ones. i am trying to keep them in character as much as i can with some concessions. First, Harry is no longer a teenager, so there will be not much emotional outbursts or cases of complete immaturity. Voldemort has created a couple horcruxes, but no more. So, he is sane, but still evil. He was a evil little kid, so that can't be helped. He has a bit less control over his emotions however. Harry is a more experienced, so his morality and ideas are a little more different, but that is to be read in the later part of story. There is no complete good or evil here. All are human, with all their faults and mistakes. But not all are mortal. Case in point: Voldemort.

That is all, I think. Enjoy, folks!

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