

Full circle

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Full circle

by [tetsurashian](#)

Summary

(aka 'how to survive endless rebirth with your so-called soulmate')

Harry and Tom's souls are tied together. Which is why they're in this endless loop of rebirth.

At some point, they stopped caring and just started fucking with people.

(cracky humor with a hint of seriousness and plot, my specialty)

Notes

Beta'd by the lovely [Piff](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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

On their eighty-ninth lifetime, they're finally Harry Potter and Tom Riddle-slash-Lord Voldemort again.

"Ah, bugger," Tom hissed after killing Lily Potter and then laying his eyes on Harry Potter. The memories flowed in without so much a *hello, how do you do* and all he could do was lower his wand and pinch the bridge of his nose. He's experienced it so many times it barely bothered him anymore. "Sorry about that." He grimaced at the infant in the crib.

Harry Potter gave him as much of a deadpan stare as a baby could give.

"It's not like I remembered! She was blocking my view of you." The Dark Lord said almost defensively and Harry rolled his eyes. Harry rose his arms up in the universal baby gesture of ' *pick me the fuck up* ' and now it's Tom rolling his eyes as he does just that.

"I swear to god, Potter, if you vomit or urinate on me I will-"

"James!" A despaired cry comes from downstairs and they both turned their heads to the general direction it came from. Then they looked back at each other and nodded decisively.

"Right, time to go." And not a second after Tom apparated them away does Sirius Black burst into Harry's nursery to see Lily's cooling corpse.

Here's how it started:

Harry Potter, the first time, lived a very fulfilling and mostly peaceful life. He was an Auror for quite a bit of time, which was alright, but once his precious Lily Luna started Hogwarts he quietly retired that job and flourished as Hogwarts's DADA professor. He'd taught for a good two decades before he and Ginny decided to do a bit of a world tour, coming back for good after their third grandchild was born. He then quietly died surrounded by friends and family, proving that yes, dragonpox can kill even an old Harry Potter.

In retrospect, his entire life post-Voldemort was rather... bland.

But when he found himself in the Afterlife King's Cross after taking his last breath, he was rather... confuddled. Then he saw Tom Riddle - looking perfectly human and whole - irritatingly sitting on the only bench and said the first thing that came to mind.

"What the fuc-"

"About time you got here-" Tom had started angrily before everything went white.

The next thing Harry knew, he was twenty two year old Alexander Baker who, having just made eye contact with nineteen year old William Terrance, was flooded with the memories of being Harry Potter. William was also less than pleased.

“Potter,” William-- or no, Tom, hissed. “What did you do?”

“What makes you think it was my fault?!” Alexander/Harry sputtered indignantly.

“It’s always your fault!”

They staunchly refused to do anything with each other for about four lifetimes after that and honestly could’ve gone longer if it weren’t for a certain intervention.

“Look,” a hooded figure in a dark cloak sounded almost exasperated, “both of your souls are tied together, okay? So you’re both going to be waiting for each other each time one of you dies, then you both get reincarnated in god-knows when and where, and inevitably you’ll both meet again and regain your memories of your past life.”

“But *why*?” and Harry didn’t whine, *really* .

It shrugged at him. “Like I said, you’re *soulmates* .”

“That’s disgusting,” Tom flatly decided , and Harry was both offended and in agreement.

“Blame it on the Hallows, or Death! But really, you,” it pointed at Tom, “are the one that made him your horcrux for more than a decade, and you,” it then pointed at Harry, “are the one that became the Master of Death. So technically you both did this to yourselves.”

“Bullshi-”

“Oh would you look at the time, bye!”

And it was that damning white light again.

On their eleventh life, they finally decide to be adults about the whole thing and talk. The fact that life number ten had Harry and Tom as father and son, respectively - and wasn’t that a bit of a traumatizing experience for both of them - was only one of the breaking points.

By number eighteen they were almost friends (they’d been both girls in an all girls’ boarding school, and they ruled that place with an iron fist).

On number twenty-five they started sleeping with each other during the times the age gap wasn’t big enough to make either of them uncomfortable or sent to jail (on number twenty-nine, Harry had let Tom’s thirty-three year old incarnation take his sixteen year old self’s virginity, which got Tom almost shot by his very enraged father).

On number twenty, thirty-seven, and fifty they were blood siblings (once as orphans, once raised by a single mother working three jobs, and once as part of a big loving family much

like the Weasley's).

On thirty-four, thirty-nine, forty-two, forty-six, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty-three, sixty-five, sixty-six, seventy-one, seventy-three, eighty, and eighty-four, they were even married. Sometimes out of convenience, sometimes out of necessity, but even more times out of, strangely enough, actual affection - because god knows there's more than a dozen lifetimes when they couldn't even stand the sight of each other, but....

This seemingly endless loop of rebirth was their new normal. Jumping at different points of time as different people each rebirth, but always, never failing, destined to meet. It was--

Well, it changed people. And quite possibly gave them a perverse sense of humor, because lately they've really enjoyed just fucking with people. Just for the principle of it. (Just living their lives all the time tended to get dull quickly.)

And life eighty-nine? As their originals, Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort? Oh, they were going to milk this for all it's worth.

The Daily Prophet headline on November 1st, 1981 was as follows:

The Dark Lord Dead?

The Potters' Last Act of Courage

And on November 2nd, it was this:

Harry Potter: The Boy Who Lived!

From a private cottage in France, Tom snorted into his tea. Whatever Dumbledore thinks he's trying to pull, it was bound to be interesting. Harry at least was going to get a kick out of it.

Now, regarding his horcruxes...

Chapter End Notes

guess what i've been reading lately *jazz hands*

my own personal homage to the trope. the bugger wouldn't leave me alone until i wrote it.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

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

“My question is,” Harry said, high pitched and lisping as a toddler’s voice tended to do, “why is Dumbledore so sure I have a lightning bolt scar? He’s never even seen me after that night.”

“A distinctive mark of a hero is proof of triumph over the villain and destiny as the Chosen One. X marks the hero, and all that. There is also that line the prophecy, remember? ‘And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal,’ utter rubbish.” Tom rolled his eyes behind his copy of the local newspaper. “The lightning bolt can also be interpreted as the rune sowilo, which you know very well means.”

“Ugh, that light thing again.” Harry sulked as he cradled his milk carton. “I don’t even have the scar, this time around.”

“Do you want it?” Tom dryly asked, turning a page. “I’m sure I can muster up a Killing Curse for you, if I must. Reading about the prices for dragon liver in France is making me itch.”

Harry sniffed. “Don’t be stupid. A knife would do.”

(A year later, Tom laughed himself sick when Harry trips and he gets a lightning bolt scar out of it. Harry, having stolen one of Tom’s spare wands ages ago, sent a *levicorpus* in retaliation.)

Hermione, back in the first lifetime, told Harry and Ron about how to put one’s soul back together after splitting it into horcruxes. “Remorse,” she had said, “You’ve got to really feel what you’ve done. Apparently the pain of it can destroy you.” Harry could see why Tom was relieved to find his horcruxes were really just soulless trinkets this time around.

“I do remember making them this lifetime, but I suppose the rebirth thing brought them back together as soon as we regained our memories,” Tom murmured, flipping his diary curiously. He’d stolen it back from Malfoy Manor as soon as he could.

“Convenient.” Harry commented while he viciously picked apart a potions textbook with red ink. He was that bored. Being in hiding with the Dark Lord - there really wasn’t much to do, honestly.

(They did make quite a sight though - handsome Tom Riddle, rid of his half-serpentine Lord Voldemort form and not looking a day over twenty-five, with little baby Harry Potter, almost two years old and furiously scribbling corrections on a book as big as his body.)

“Doesn’t mean I don’t want to strangle Death after all of this is finally all over,” Tom grumbled and Harry nodded in agreement.

They sat quietly for a few minutes before Harry sighed. Nine years to go until the real excitement starts. *Merlin* .

Two weeks before Harry’s Hogwarts letter was due to arrive, Tom dropped Harry off at the shadiest looking London orphanage Harry’s ever seen. The two eyed it with a mix of disdain and dubiousness.

“This place looks worse than St. John’s,” Harry said, referring to the boys’ home they had unfortunately stayed at lifetimes ago. “Are you sure this place even has plumbing?”

“Get inside,” Tom sighed.

Twenty minutes and a *very* generous amount of mind charms later, Harry settled in an almost exact replica of Tom Riddle’s childhood room.

“You remember your lines? How to act like a properly frightening orphan? Your toothbrush?”

Harry rolled his eyes, “Yes, daddy.”

They both paused for a second at that, and grimaced.

“I’m just-”

“ *Go* .”

Everyone in the orphanage was completely terrified of him of course, even if they couldn’t exactly pinpoint the exact reason why. Only that if they even so much touched him with a finger Very Bad Things would happen to their person.

So Harry was pretty much left alone for the whole two weeks, until Dumbledore personally came knocking at their doorstep. With Snape.

Oh, this was too easy.

The matron, Miss Mary, was quick to leave him alone with the two men, looking parts guilty and afraid. No doubt she’d given them the eerily similar warning Mrs. Cole had given Dumbledore when he’d visited Tom. In fact, Dumbledore was starting to look a little unsure.

“My boy,” the Headmaster nevertheless beamed, “it’s good to see you well.”

“Are you the doctors?” Harry asked quietly. “Miss Mary always said she wanted me looked at.”

Dumbledore swallowed and Snape, behind him, frowned. “No. We’re professors.”

“I don’t believe you,” he scoffed at them. “They think I’m different. They think I’m mad.”

“Hogwarts isn’t for mad people,” Snape slowly said, glancing at Dumbledore, who was looking rather unsettled. His frown was becoming more pronounced.

“It’s a school, Harry.” The old man’s voice was gentle. “A school for magic. That is why you’re different. But we promise you, it is in a good way. After all, you can do things, can’t you, Harry?”

“Things other children can’t.” Harry said at the exact same time as Dumbledore. He stared at the increasingly worried professors with a blank face. Oh, he deserves an Oscar for this.

“I can move things without touching them. I can make animals do what I want without training them,” he continued, eyes widening at each fact he reveals to them, “I can make bad things happen to people who are mean to me. I can make them *hurt* .”

Aware that his employer was a word away from a mini-heart attack, Snape sharply asked, “Who left you here?”

Harry dismissively shrugged. “I don’t know. I don’t particularly care. I’ve been here for as long as I can remember.”

“Harry,” Dumbledore said after a moment, “We’ve been looking for you for quite some time now. *Our* world has been looking for you.”

“You’re different too, then? Prove it.” Harry demanded.

Ignoring Snape’s grumble of ‘ *just like his father* ,’ Dumbledore set fire to his wardrobe while keeping his eyes on the child. The child whose eyes lit up at a burning flames.

“At Hogwarts, you’ll not only be taught how to use magic, but to control it as well,” he told the young Potter. He stood up, suddenly feeling heavy and suffocated and ill at the sight of the boy in front of him, and made to leave. “We will send a representative to help you with your school shopping on Friday. Have a good day, Mr. Potter.”

The two wizards were barely a foot out of the room when Harry hit the final nail to the coffin. “I can speak to snakes, too.” His gaze burned their backs. “They find me. Whisper things. Is that... normal for someone like me?”

“No.” Dumbledore rasped out, and fled with Snape not far behind.

Tom was going to be so proud, Harry thought, as he cackled in his room the moment the two apparated away.

Tom hadn’t been idle himself, especially the past few years. Creating a new identity with painstakingly detailed care would take anyone a while, even for him (maybe even especially

for him, considering who he was). Not to mention brewing the de-aging potion Hannes Braus created - or *will* create that is, since that was Tom's twenty-third life, in the year 2021 It was all about patience, having to stew for three months for each year he wanted to shave of.

So it was only recently that *Marvolo Thomas Gaunt* decided to finally show his face in public, way after his father's dark reign was finally over.

(Playing his own "secret" thirteen year old "son" - now *that* was something Tom had never done before.)

"Karkaroff," he smiled coldly at the frozen Durmstrang headmaster in front of him, "it's been a while."

Because while enrolling at Hogwarts was a tempting, *tempting* thing, instant gratification wasn't satisfying for long. If there's one thing he and Harry had learned from this cycle they were trapped in, it was *patience*. So he'll let Harry run his own show in Britain while he planted some of his roots in the one place he wasn't able to the first time - mainland Europe. And eventually, the *real* show will start.

Tom and Harry were running the long con, after all.

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Interlude: Dumbledore

When it was revealed that Harry Potter was indeed alive and getting a Hogwart's letter, Albus had been so very relieved. He knew he took a gamble that day nine years ago, when he fabricated the story of the Boy Who Lived. But the people needed a beacon - a hero figure - to assure them the threat of Voldemort had passed. (Even if Albus had his doubts.) And if Harry Potter had proven to be dead?

Well, there was more than one possible prophecy child.

Young Harry's disappearance had deeply concerned him for years and years - after all, only one other man could have possibly escaped Godric's Hollow alive that night - and not even Sirius Black knew a word about it, or so he claimed. The address that wrote itself on Harry's letter was one of an orphanage, and perhaps Albus should have taken it as the first warning sign.

The presence, the words, the gestures - everything about it screamed Tom Riddle. Yet it was young Harry he was facing, not the childhood Dark Lord. Even Snape was unsettled by the child before them. Later, when they were back in his office, Snape asked.

"Albus, what was that?"

The Headmaster was quiet for a while. "I do not know."

For the first time in a while, Albus was afraid.

Chapter End Notes

(side eyes the number of kudos, hits, and bookmarks)

i should probably mention im being spontaneous about this entire thing

10 points to whoever could guess the very obvious reason why tom's going to durmstrang bc im not even being subtle at all

next time: Harry goes to Hogwarts and What Happens Next Might Surprise You
will happen eventually: more stuff on their reincarnations, Snape interlude, Tom becoming the continent's problem now

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

“*Thomas*, though?” Harry raised an eyebrow at the now-teenaged Tom through the enchanted mirror they were talking to each other with. “Marvolo Gaunt, yeah I get it, but I really doubt Lord Voldemort would give his son the name *Thomas*, even if it was just the middle name.”

“Since when did you become an expert on Lord Voldemort more so than *I*?” Tom dryly asked “You know, the person who actually *was* Lord Voldemort? And I told you, it’s symbolic.”

“Lord Voldemort hated his name with a passion,” Harry scoffed at the older wizard. “The only symbol he associated it with was his muggle blood and dick of a father.”

“It’s symbolic to *me*. The story is that I, as Marvolo, took the name Thomas for myself to own up to my lineage while at the same time giving a nice old *fuck you* to my ‘father.’ Dumbledore needs false hope when he finds out my existence, remember?”

“So you’re technically telling yourself to fuck off? Are you sure you’re not just finally acknowledging the fact that your moniker was stupid and stemmed from daddy issues a mile long?”

“Oh for Merlin’s sake, Harry-” Tom gritted, neither agreeing nor denying his words. “No one’s going to question my damn middle name.”

“Ah,” Harry turned smug, “so you did learn some things from life number seventy-seve--”

“We don’t. Talk about. Seventy. Seven.”

(Seventy-seven was the lifetime when Tom had been, essentially, the era’s equivalent of Harry Potter. There was literally a Dark Lord and everything, complete with the hyphenated names and anagrams and *utter bullshit*. Harry had taken great pleasure playing as his “Malfoy,” watching from a distance while Tom dealt with the nosy public, manipulative headmasters, grudge-bearing professors, and the chaos brought upon every storybook protagonist. It had been a disaster and Tom had hated every second of it.)

“Sorry, *darling*, we’ve lived so many lives some things slip my mind sometimes,” which was a bold faced lie and Harry was completely unapologetic.

“You’re a piece of shit, *sweetie*.”

“Love you, too.”

They made a bet on who Dumbledore was going to send to take him to Diagon Alley. Tom said Snape, Harry said it would still be Hagrid. Looking at the half-giant before him, Harry smugly noted that Tom now owed him a book from Durmstrang's library.

He could've done without the crying, though.

"S'rry," Hagrid sniffed and blew his nose on a rag from his coat pocket. "Just, yer parents were such good people, t'was terrible wha' happened to 'em, and then ya disappeared on us. I'm just glad yer alright, Harry."

"Er, thank you."

They went to Diagon Alley using the Knight Bus, which was never Harry's first choice of transportation but it wasn't like he could do anything about it. They shuffled into the Leaky Cauldron, was greeted by Tom the owner, and proceeded to be mobbed by the entire establishment at his utterance of "Bless my soul, it can't be Harry Potter?"

Harry, back in the first life, had fumbled and bumbled through the attention like the terrified little thing he'd been. This time though he gave everyone a shy, sweet smile and handled it with a kind of grace that would make Fleur Delacour seethe with envy.

Also this time, there was no Professor Quirrell in sight. Not surprising in hindsight, but it made him quite curious nevertheless. (Was he even going to be his Defense Against the Dark Arts professor?)

The trip to Gringotts was more pleasant than he ever remembered until he realized that was because he hadn't antagonized the entire nation by breaking in and out of their bank.. Yet. Or, well, perhaps never, because it was rather nice not to be threatened with beheadings every time he so much glanced at them. Goblins, unsurprisingly, carried very large grudges.

He side eyed Hagrid being very unsubtle about the Philosopher's Stone in his pocket, but it was none of his business until it arrived at Hogwarts. No need to get the poor man in hot water just because Harry was impatient about stealing it, after all.

Then there was Draco Malfoy.

"-And I asked him, 'Why? Hufflepuffs are all about loyalty and hardworking, aren't they? Aren't those qualities people should admire?' And then listed all the Hufflepuffs that made history - which is a shit ton you know, I think I probably missed a dozen of them at least." Harry chattered to Tom through the mirror as the latter read through his Durmstrang Offensive Magic book, later that night. "Then I said, 'Anyway, if there was a Hufflepuff with any bit of Slytherin tendencies, they could rule the world, get away with it, and have an army ready without so much fuss and megalomaniac speeches.' Which I managed that ages ago, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did." Tom dryly replied. "It was, frankly, a rather terrifying sight."

Harry beamed. "I think I scared Madam Malkins a bit, though. And Malfoy did look a bit wide-eyed too."

"That's because eternal rebirth has made you a menace to society and some days I'm not even sure why I let you go outside."

"Because most days you join me in the chaos."

Hagrid, bless his sweet dumb heart, had forgotten to tell him about Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. (Again.)

Luckily, Harry wasn't that confused little orphan boy from the first life and thus was able to find the Express without much fuss. (Though it did make him wonder about Molly practically yelling about it in the middle of the muggle side of King's Cross, before.)

Then a toad jumped right. At. His. Face.

Harry Did Not Shriek.

"I'm sorry!" A flustered, chubby faced Neville Longbottom flailed at him. "Trevor didn't mean it!"

"It's fine. Really." Harry blushed at his reaction and hoped Tom never heard about this. He was (mentally) a couple of hundred years old, he didn't shriek at toads sticking their slimy bodies on his face. Suddenly remembering who it was in front of him, he gave the boy a smile. "Actually, I think that's a basis of friendship, don't you agree?"

Neville blinks. "What-"

"Come on, let's find a compartment together."

Harry wondered if this marked Neville as his 'first official friend'. Maybe even his 'best friend'? Well...Chosen Bros before Jealous Hoes. No offense to Ron who joined them ten minutes into the train ride.

"My brothers had their friend bring out his tarantula," Ron shuddered. "I hate spiders." Neville, sympathetic to fear of almost everything after being pushed off the balcony by his own uncle, patted the seat beside him in welcome.

After the hubbub about him being Harry "The Boy-Who-Lived" Potter, and a thorough reprimand from Neville about tact (Harry didn't even know Neville was capable of that at this age) their conversation turned to their pets. And know that feeling of suddenly remembering the stove was on while miles away from home? That's how Harry felt when Ron took out Scabbers from his coat pocket.

'Oh, *shit* ,' Harry inwardly screamed while he kept a smile on his face, 'Oh buggering *fuck* .'

He'd forgotten about Sirius.

Worst. Godson. *Ever* .

Even after his internal crisis, Hermione didn't stop by.

Draco, however, did.

"I heard Harry Potter was on the train," he burst in their compartment, Crabbe and Goyle missing from his sides.

"Hi, Draco," Harry beamed, because he definitely and conveniently had neglected to tell Draco his name at Madam Malkins. Draco, seeing him and his visible scar and connecting the dots, faltered.

"The Hufflepuff..." he murmured faintly, and was amusingly torn between backing out or sinking his fangs in him. Neville looked confused and Ron just sputtered.

"Hufflepuff? Everyone knows Harry Potter is going to Gryffindor!"

Draco took one look at Ron and the insults went flying out.

"Why can't we just get along," Harry mourned, which made Draco and Ron stop on their tracks. Emotionally manipulating kids was too easy, no wonder Dumbledore did it so much. "I just want us to all be friends. No one ever wanted to be friends with me back in the orphanage."

"I'm your friend, Harry," Neville shyly patted him on the shoulder. This was why he was fast becoming his new favorite. "I didn't have many either, growing up."

"I'll be your friend, too," Draco cut in almost desperately. "I, er, don't mind Longbottom, either."

"Me, too," Ron said, not about to be outdone.

Harry beamed at them. "Group hug?"

Draco and Ron, for the first and not about to be the last time, shared a look and thought, 'Oh, *Merlin* .'

When Harry sat down on the stool and the Sorting Hat proclaimed, "Hufflepuff!" only three other people in the Great Hall weren't surprised. Of the three, only Neville clapped.

Meanwhile, in Durmstrang...

“My name is Marvolo Gaunt,” Tom smiled sharply at his new classmates. At least five of them shuddered. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Chapter End Notes

i know i know many of you wanted slytherin!harry but just because he's in hufflepuff doesn't mean the fun gets any less. besides, do you really think his house sorting is going to stop him from being a little shit to everyone?

also i had to start making a side list of all the lives they've lived and what i've said about them. i rly didn't think that through.

next time, eventually: handling a Sirius problem, there's two kinds of dark wizards in durmstrang: dark wizards and Tom, Harry continues to befuddle everyone in hogwarts, and there's still a troll in the dungeons

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

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

Snape and Dumbledore were, of course, discretely wary. They probably thought he was either bipolar, had somehow managed to trick the Sorting Hat, or had some grand ill plot against his housemates. Harry took offense to the third one the most, because the Puffs were a funny bunch and he liked them, never mind the whole hullabaloo about the Heir of Slytherin thing and the TriWizard thing.

He did, however, make sure he slipped into his Tom Riddle persona whenever the headmaster and or potions professor was conveniently within sight. Only two other people seem to have noticed the slight shifts, but neither Draco nor Neville ever mention anything, even if both of them looked extremely curious.

Harry was an absolute delight to the other professors of course. Two days in and he had Professor McGonagall treating him like one of her own lions, Professor Flitwick practically singing his praises, and Professor Sprout beaming at him with pride. As far as the rest of the school was concerned Harry Potter was the next budding magical prodigy and pride of Hogwarts, eccentricity and all. Most of them couldn't even get mad about it, Harry was *that* good.

Then a week into Hogwarts, Harry showed up to dinner wearing a new accessory.

"Harry," Susan said slowly, "Is that a tiara on your head?"

"Oh, yeah!" Harry beamed. "I got lost earlier and found it in the Lost and Found room. Isn't it pretty?"

"Pretty *real* ." Hannah whispered with wide eyes. "That sapphire doesn't look fake at all."

"Of course it's not fake, it was my mother's." Half the Hufflepuff table jumped at the appearance of the Grey Lady behind Harry, and now most of the entire school was staring at the spectacle they made. She eyed the tiara curiously, but didn't make a move to touch it. "I thought it lost forever."

"Your mother?" Hannah asked the ghost, and squeaked when a glance was sent her way.

"Rowena Ravenclaw."

"Wait a minute," Ernie exclaimed, grabbing even more attention to their table. "Harry, are you wearing *Ravenclaw's Diadem* ?"

Someone behind Harry started choking on his drink, and heedless of all the eyes on him, Harry shrugged. "I guess so. Is it important?"

About three Ravenclaws let out a strangled gurgle.

“Just what,” Tom dryly commented two days later during their nightly conversation, “are you planning?” He held up that morning’s Daily Prophet, the headline ‘ *Potter Finds Lost Founder’s Artifact!* ’ written out in bold letters.

“What *you* apparently were too crazy to do on your first life.” Harry replied lightly, flipping through his Charms homework. “You know, grabbing fame and fortune by being the one to find the lost three Founders’ artifacts and *not* putting my soul bits in them to hide.”

Tom rolled his eyes at that.

“How’s it over there in dark arts wonderland?” He asked the older ‘teen.’

“Less dark arts wonderland, more Lady Claire’s Academy on testosterone.” Tom said. Lady Claire’s Academy, of course, being the all girls boarding school they met in at life eighteen. “Someone actually tried to haze me. Karkaroff looked like he was about to prepare the boy’s coffin when he found out.”

“Did he need it?”

“The hospital wing’s bed is enough for the next week.” Tom paused thoughtfully. “Or two.”

It took all of three days for Tom to establish himself as the alpha male of the younger half of the school. He even worked at a disadvantage, having no one but Karkaroff knowing his true origins. As much as the Gaunts were part of Britain’s Sacred Twenty-Eight, the name held little weight nowadays with its last disgraced and pathetic members’ tarnish all over it, and very, very select people had known the connection Lord Voldemort had to the family.

“You are rather terrifying,” Viktor Krum, who was a year older, told him after he sent the last of the dissenters crawling away. “That was a seventh year spell, was it not?”

Tom gave Krum a bland smile. “I read ahead.”

By the end of the first week, the entire school knew that Marvolo Gaunt was not only extremely intelligent, but also extremely dangerous. Messing with him was not an option if one wanted to live long enough to see graduation. (Only one person had the balls to test that theory, later on, and his classmates haven’t seen him since.)

And by the end of the first month, *well* .

“You know I used to wonder how you got the Death Eaters started,” Harry had told him a few lifetimes ago, number forty six, when Tom was a Ravenclaw and Harry a Gryffindor (again). “Then I watch you and go, oh, that’s how. You’re too fucking charming. And smart. And perfect. It makes me want to punch you in the teeth.”

“Careful,” Tom had fakingly smiled back. “I’m going to start thinking you don’t love me anymore.”

“Oh, don’t be like that, darling. I love you so much I’m going to propose to you publicly. At graduation.” Harry had said with a shark grin, just as one of their Hufflepuff yearmates passed by and almost broke her neck with a violent double take. And that’s how Gryffindor’s Star Seeker and Ravenclaw’s Perfect Prefect ‘came out’ to the school.

And for the record, yes, Harry did propose to Tom at graduation.

“Are you... recruiting?” Karkaroff had the gall to ask Tom, actually looking worried for his students.

Tom asked rhetorically, “What do you think?” And watched in amusement as the headmaster paled at the answer he thought of. “I’ve quite a few years to decide, don’t you think? I am here until I graduate, after all.”

At that, Karkaroff turned an alarming shade of white.

Perhaps the strangest thing Harry had seen so far in this lifetime was Professor Quirrell being normal and.. Competent.

“Five points to Hufflepuff,” Professor Quirrell gave Harry a small smile, and Harry stared at the strange expression on the professor’s face, mystified. “A perfect *Lumos* on the first try. You never cease to amaze, do you, Mr. Potter?”

“I do my best, Professor.” Harry shrugged, acting sheepish.

“I think you’re the single most point-earning student in our year,” Hannah murmured to him. “Thank god you’re with us and not the Gryffindors. Merlin knows all of us wouldn’t stand a chance if you and Granger were in the same house.”

“I don’t know about that,” Susan giggled from Hannah’s other side. “Haven’t you seen the looks she’s been giving Harry? Half the time she looks ready to murder him for knowing more than she does.”

Justin snorted. “I know her type. Doesn’t know how to deal with the fact that she’s not the smartest kid around, for all that she reads books twice her weight.”

It was unfortunate, Harry thought, that child-Hermione was so led on by books rather than rationale. And so prideful and stubborn. He tried reaching out to her during the earlier weeks, but once it became clear that Harry excelled at the school work far beyond than she did, her attitude towards him soured. Ron didn’t get why he even tried, Draco was derisive about it, and Neville just looked at Hermione sometimes with a heavy disappointed look.

Speaking of which, even with the House differences, it seemed evident to the entire school who Harry Potter’s best friends were. People of course side-eyed Draco, and the Slytherins weren’t very approving of it, but the latter eventually realized that being one of the Boy-

Who-Lived's closest friends had it perks, even if it meant occasionally fraternizing with a blood-traitor and a Light wizard. And of course, Harry himself had been warned about the Malfoy family's allegiance in the last war, but all he really had to do was turn on his puppy eyes and insist how 'Draco isn't like that!' despite the contrary, and they backed off.

Funnily enough, Snape had warned Draco of him.

"He was rather strange about it too," Draco told him while the two of them chilled by the Black Lake one afternoon. "Cryptic. Saying you're not like what you appeared to be, and things like that." Then he gave Harry a shrewd look, and Harry inwardly smiled. He'd almost forgotten Draco, for all the pomp and bragging, was actually one of the smartest of their year.

"And what do you think of that?"

"I think he's right," Draco said firmly. "But I insist having you as a friend anyways."

That was, actually, quite heartwarming to hear.

Then the week before Halloween, Harry stole Scabbers from the Gryffindor dormitory.

The shitstorm that followed was beautiful, and the political fallout from falsely imprisoning an Heir of a prestigious family like the Black's even better. It would fuel many of Harry's Patronuses in the years to come.

"Britain is doomed," Tom mourned while he read the Daily Prophet's 'Reveal-All.' "I should just stay here."

"But Tom, darling, don't you miss me?" Harry pouted.

"Fuck no."

Chapter End Notes

are you all still with me
i swear i know what i'm doing
there is a plot

sorta

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

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

“Uhm,” Harry stared at the large creature before him.

The troll stared back. And when its lips pulled back into a snarl, Harry turned around and ran for his life.

(Magical ‘prodigy’ or not, his body was eleven for Merlin’s sake. Last time they made it out of that bathroom alive by sheer dumb luck and he wasn’t about to test it a second time, alone.)

When he burst into the Great Hall where the Halloween feast was well underway, a few of the students turned his way and a few professors noted his late arrival with various expressions of disapproval or exasperation. So Harry said the only thing he could have, in this situation.

“Why is there a troll in the dungeons?”

Snape stood up, expression stormy, “Mr. Potter, that is not something to-”

Then Professor Quirrell ran in the Great Hall, and oblivious to the atmosphere, exclaimed, “Troll in the dungeons!”

Clearly, the Professor’s word heavily outweighed Harry’s, because that’s when people started panicking.

During the chaos of trying to get students back into their dorms, Neville found his way towards Harry, dragging Ron with him. “Hermione’s in the girl’s bathroom and she doesn’t know!”

Harry immediately gave Ron a look that was mix of ‘I’m disappointed in you’ and ‘Are you fucking pulling my leg?’ Ron reddened.

“What?” Ron whined. “Why do you immediately assume it’s my fault?”

“Because it is.” Three voices chorused together, Draco having arrived at their side just in time to hear the tail end of Ron’s question.

“No one seems to realize that the Slytherin common room is in the dungeons. Where the troll is supposed to be.” Draco deadpanned when they gave him questioning looks at his presence, but the panic in his eyes and the way he clung to Harry’s arm said enough.

So that’s how the number of the ‘Save Hermione from the Troll Squad’ doubled in number compared to the first time.

Wingardium Leviosa on the troll's club to knock it out though? Classic.

When they inevitably got caught by the Professors in a decimated bathroom with the unconscious troll in front of them, Hermione burst into tears (actually real, faced with the knowledge that she could have died) and weaved a story that was part truth and part bullshit while the rest of them boys shuffled awkwardly and avoided eye contact with their respective heads of houses.

This. *This* was more like the Golden Trio Harry remembered. Even if now it was plus two.

"People are starting to *talk*," Draco hissed not long after Hermione joined their ragtag group of friends.

"People are always talking, that's what people do." Harry lightly said before turning to the Slytherin. "About *what* is where it sometimes differs. What's up, Draco?"

Draco gave Harry a look. "You have got to stop collecting Gryffindors. Weasley is bad enough, but Granger too? Are you trying to get me killed in my own dormitory?"

"You know you don't have to keep being publically friends with me," Harry said after a moment, unusually solemn and sympathetic. "I know your housemates have been giving you a hard time about it."

Draco, surprised, turned flustered. "It's nothing I can't handle," He scoffed lightly. Then quietly added. "Besides, our friendship is the first I've made myself without father's interference."

The long buried father/mother instinct that Harry had had in numerous lifetimes surged within him and he bit his lip to stop himself from (Merlin forbid) cooing at Malfoy. Instead, "Well, if you ever need my assistance on reinforcing your place in the house hierarchy, I'm here to help."

Strangely enough, Draco looked worried. For his housemates.

"Has it ever occurred to you," Tom said slowly through the enchanted mirror, "That Quirrell would want the Stone for himself?"

Harry blinked and felt incredibly stupid.

"Harry," Tom intoned as if talking to a child, "you do remember that the Philosopher's Stone wasn't just some trinket I wanted because it was pretty, right? It's *only* one of the most important magical artifacts in the world."

“You did enough crazy shit all the time that eventually I gave up trying to make out your reasons,” Harry pouted defensively and Tom sighed loudly at the excuse. Then Harry beamed. “So then, I’m *still* going to steal the Philosopher’s Stone.”

Tom sighed even louder.

(Then during Christmas morning breakfast at Durmstrang, many eyes watched as Gaunt received a package from a snowy white owl and actually let out a strangled noise when it revealed to be a simple ring embedded with a peculiar red stone.

Harry, in turn, received an aged tome, de-jinxed after it was removed from Durmstrang’s own Restricted Section. ‘Secrets of the Ten Darkest Arts by Alexei Kuznetsov’ was written in Russian on the cover, and Harry couldn’t help but laugh.

Alexei Kuznetsov had been Harry, after all.)

Then on the fourth of June, Neville, Ron, and Hermione cornered Harry and Draco on their way to the library after dinner.

“We think Snape’s going to steal the Philosopher’s Stone from the third corridor tonight,” Ron blurted out and the non-Gryffindors shared a look.

Draco scoffed at them immediately. “Professor Snape wouldn’t do that,” he firmly said and Harry knew better than anyone the truth of the statement, “and why would it be tonight?”

“Dumbledore’s not in the school,” Harry casually answered and Hermione’s eyes lit up at whatever she saw in Harry’s carefully crafted smile. Clever girl.

“You knew!” She gasped, “Harry! Why didn’t you tell anyone?!”

Everyone’s gaze quickly snapped to an amused Harry, and it might be the first time Harry openly showed a non-Hufflepuff side of him. “Because three things: one, who would believe me or even us, since we’re not even supposed to know anything about the true purpose of the corridor anyways; and two, it’s not Snape we have to worry about, it’s Quirrell.”

“And the third?” Neville, who had grown more into his skin the past few months, asked him shrewdly.

Harry gave a wicked smile. “Three,” He purred, “Is that the Stone hasn’t been in the castle for *months* .”

Harry dissuaded the Gryffindor trio from pursuing the matter and they reluctantly backed off. It wouldn’t matter if they did end up trying to get to the corridor anyways, because without Harry’s own advantage of an invisibility cloak (which Dumbledore realized had no right to

keep from him and thus anonymously gifted it to him on Christmas), sneaking out and around will be very very difficult for them.

Which brings Harry to the last room of the third floor of the corridor, alone with Professor Quirrell and the Mirror of Erised.

“Why?” Harry asked, not so much accusingly as curious. “Why are you going for the Stone? Immortality?”

Quirrell actually smiled. “Perhaps, yes. But not for me.” He stroked the mirror thoughtfully. “Strange though, how this mirror works. I thought if I made it so that my desire was not to use it for myself, that it would appear... Perhaps I was wrong.”

“If not for you, then for who?” Harry pressed, because he was a nosy little bugger. “A relative? A lover?” Then Harry’s eyes lit up at an answer. “Lord Voldemort?”

And Quirrell laughed, and laughed. “You hide more of yourself than most realize, do you not, Mr. Potter? No wonder the Headmaster and Severus have been so wary of you.”

Harry grinned sharply. “You don’t even know half of it.”

By dinner the next day, the entire school knew that Professor Quirrell had tried to steal from Hogwarts and had disappeared to nowhere in the middle of the night. Headmaster Dumbledore wore a grave face amidst the other professors’ concealed and unconcealed worried ones, and Harry hid a smile. And when he received a note calling him to the headmaster’s office, Harry had to suppress a full toothed grin.

“Come in, Mister Potter,” Dumbledore greeted him from his place behind his desk. “Please take a seat.”

“Is there something wrong, Headmaster?” Harry asked straight away, voice sharp enough to toe the line of disrespect but polite enough for it to be ignored. He tilted his words the way Tom Riddle did, carefully constructed his face to be guarded.

“Nothing, my boy,” Dumbledore smiled at him, but the wrinkles by his eyes were tense. “I’ve heard from a little bird that it was quite possible that you encountered Professor Quirrell before his disappearance.” Hermione, no doubt, who still carried an unhealthy amount of trust in authority figures and a stubborn righteousness.

“Unfortunately, I didn’t.” And in a bold move, Harry met Dumbledore’s eyes straight on. The telltale prick of legilimency tickled his mind and Harry conjured an image of viciously hissing cobra to serve as his ‘guard.’ Pretending to be oblivious to the intrusion and Dumbledore’s twitch of surprise, Harry smiled blandly. “Was that all, headmaster?”

Dumbledore paused and gently pressed. “You know you can tell me anything, my boy.”

A flash of vulnerability crossed Harry's face. "The orphanage," Harry said quietly. "No one wants me there. Is there anyway for me to stay in Hogwarts for the summer instead?"

Dumbledore inhales sharply, and falters for too long. Harry snaps back a neutral mask at the non-answer and makes his way out. "Then, Headmaster, there's nothing for me to say."

"Harry, wait--"

The door slams shut, and Dumbledore's face falls. After a moment, Snape cancels his disillusionment charm and frowns. "Albus?"

"I'm afraid I've made a terrible mistake, Severus." Dumbledore grimly replied after a moment. "I believe the Dark Lord has been reborn in Harry Potter."

"Write to me, alright?" Draco practically demanded near the end of their train ride home. "We can go to Diagon Alley for school shopping together, or even just to hang out."

"Sure," Harry agreed in amusement. It's not like he had much plans other than bothering his partner-in-crime. "What about you three? Joining us?"

Neville shrugged, "If Gram's okay with it." Ron gave a noncommittal grunt, which Draco pointedly ignored, and Hermione beamed. (She was relieved that Harry didn't take it against her for being honest with the headmaster.)

"Oh, I know we just left but I'm already very excited about next year! I wonder when we'll get our grades? It must be before the school supply list comes out, right? I hope I did well, I know I messed up a little bit on Defense--"

Ah, such simple children.

They wouldn't know what'll hit them next year.

Chapter End Notes

and that concludes year one. i'll prob fast track year two and three in the next two chapters bc i know you guys are excited for the real fun. (i am too.)

thank you for your continued support guys /o/ i appreciate all of you!

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

Harry side-eyed the Ministry worker beside him. Sirius, on the other hand, pretended that she didn't exist.

"Have some more cake, Harry," Sirius cajoled as he slid another cake slice towards him. His godfather, finally out of St. Mungo's a week ago, looked better than Harry had ever seen him. A year less in Azkaban and proper physical and mental treatment (paid in full by the Ministry, in an attempt to make amends) did wonders on the ex-not-really-a-convict, who knew.

"Does she really have to be here?" Harry asked his godfather. Sirius shrugged. The Ministry worker sniffed and huffed.

"I'm here to make sure Mister Black--"

"*Lord* Black," Sirius cheerfully cut in. She reddened.

"I mean, Lord Black, does not act untowards you, Mister Potter."

"Ex-Azkaban resident, and all that, you see." Sirius nodded, face serious in agreement, which is basically Sirius-speak for calling out bullshit. "And they want to see firsthand if you go running for the hills at the thought of me taking you in."

"Oh, cool," Harry nodded as he took another bite of cake. "When do I move in?"

The Ministry worker coughed uneasily, "Actually..."

"Black, Weasley, Malfoy," was the first thing Harry said when Tom picked up his enchanted mirror. "Kill, Enslave, Save?"

"Kill Weasley, Enslave Black, Save Malfoy, which I hate to admit," Tom replied. "Why are you asking? Did you even have to ask?"

"There's a custody battle," Harry sounded disbelieving, which Tom couldn't blame him for because his own eyebrows rose at the news as well. "Between the Weasleys, the Malfoys, and Sirius. I never even met Ron and Draco's parents yet this time around."

"Congratulations," Tom deadpanned, "you're a wanted asset. Do you want a gold star?"

"I'll take ten, please."

Naturally, like all things that pertain to Harry Potter, the custody battle made the front page news of the Daily Prophet a day later.

“Gram voted Black, surprisingly,” Neville wrote to him the day after the issue was published, because now there was a poll, of all things. “Said the Weasleys couldn’t even afford to feed the mouths they have as it is and they shouldn’t expect to touch the Potter fortune for your own welfare. Then said that while she’ll reserve judgement on Draco, Lucius and Narcissa are more likely to parade you around like a trophy to boost their own social status for the next five years than form any emotional attachment. Black at least is your godfather and in the Potters’ Will as a preferred guardian. Likely to have some measure of insanity that will never leave him, but at least he’s a semi-functional member of society.”

“Your grandmother is *savage* .” Harry wrote back.

“Mum’s gone crazy,” Ron wrote, while Fred and George tastefully sent him a fake bloodied note that said, “Run away while you can.”

Draco, bless him, properly invited him to lunch with him and his parents in Horizon Alley, which was the more posh attachment to Diagon Alley.

“Do you actually want to be my ‘brother’?” Harry asked Draco in a whisper the moment they were not within earshot of the elder Malfoys.

“Merlin, no.” Draco hissed. “Harry, you may be my best friend, but you are not good for my blood pressure as it is. I might die before graduation if I was to be responsible of you until you become of age. Now just be yourself and hopefully my father realizes what a bad idea this would be. Team Black all the way.”

(Harry wasn’t sure if they were successful in convincing Lucius and Narcissa against the adoption, but Lucius stared at him like a fascinating insect the entire dinner and Narcissa, surprisingly, fussed over Draco and him and did most of the talking.)

Sirius somehow managed to claim the Lestrage vaults by pointing out some obscure loophole, which boiled down to all owners being in prison and him the Head of House Black and Bellatrix a part of his family. He promptly used said fortune (and the compensation money from the Ministry) to bribe more than enough of the body overseeing the matter to simply hand full custody of Harry to Sirius.

Once that was all taken care of, Sirius gleefully disowned Bellatrix from the Black Family and reinstated the Tonks. It was all very neat and tidy.

Harry was very much quite impressed. Tom didn’t think Black had had it in him.

“How did you get that much taller in just a year?” Harry scowled at Tom, who was five inches taller than he had been last August. Harry grew one inch. “I don’t think that’s even

fair.”

“I’m a growing boy,” Tom blandly replied. “Now sit down and drink your tea.”

“Your voice didn’t even crack, did it?” Harry sulked, “I bet you woke up and your voice was already perfectly silky deep.”

Tom hummed, amused, as he delicately stirred his tea. They were currently at a muggle cafe, not far from the refurbished Black family home Sirius and Harry now lived in. (Not Grimmaud Place, thank god.) Sirius was just as Harry expected, smothering but also way too lax about Harry’s freedom. Currently the new Lord Black was purging the family library which, while not as riddled with dark tomes as Grimmaud had been, still had a sizeable dark arts section. It was still a Black home, after all. (Sirius doesn’t need to know about the books Harry had snuck into one of his locked trunks.)

“You know what I forgot,” Harry started conversationally.

“A lot of things, I believe,” Tom replied without missing a beat.

“I got my Hogwarts letter,” Harry pressed on, ignoring the former Dark Lord, “And my booklist. Gilderoy Lockhart. Defense Against the Dark Arts.”

“Don’t remember him.”

“Good for you.” Harry rolled his eyes. “So like, can I borrow your basilisk?”

“Don’t give her indigestion.”

“Does she like her people roasted or broiled?”

“Alive.”

Of course, Harry just so happened to get dragged to Diagon Alley the same day Lockhart had his book signing. Of course.

“What is with this madhouse?” Draco scowled as they tried to shove their way around Flourish and Blotts for their yearly textbooks.

“Gilderoy Lockhart is giving autographs,” Neville said, pointing to where the crowd was the thickest and loudest. “My Aunt and her daughter have been crazy about him all summer.”

“His books are rather fascinating.” Hermione gushed, looking torn between facing the crowd for an autograph or scouring the rest of the bookstore for more side reading. The three boys all gave Hermione slightly betrayed looks, and she flushed. “Hey, look, it’s Ron!” She pointed a little too cheerily at the aforementioned redhead just entering the store with his family.

Ron, hearing his name, perked up and loudly shouted, “Harry!” just as there was a slight lull in volume in the store.

As Lockhart practically teleported to his side, beaming with a “Well, isn’t this wonderful! Harry Potter, the boy almost as famous as myself!” to the flashing cameras, Harry lowly moaned a very extended “noooooooooooooooooo....”

At least Ron looked faintly apologetic, though slightly jealous that Harry was getting signed textbooks from the celebrity for free. Hermione looked the same, for that matter. Neville was slightly pitying, but Draco was laughing at him, the berk. Harry wanted to throw the hardcover books at all of them. But foremost at Lockhart’s shiny teeth.

Before Lockhart could get any more dangerously handsy, Sirius finally emerged from whatever corner he’d been lurking before with a smile Harry thought was borderline mass murderer-esque.

Which, considering what he was convicted for the past decade... Well.

“The crowd parted for you like the sea did for Moses,” Hermione gazed at Sirius as they all exited the store, mystified at the power of a Black.

“Cool, huh?” Harry grinned while Sirius absentmindedly went “Moses who?”

Mrs. Weasley, however, was not impressed. “Really,” She sniffed, “Lockhart meant no harm, and you should have been keeping an eye on Harry regardless.”

“Hey, Harry, let’s get you new robes,” Sirius cheerfully said, completely ignoring Mrs. Weasley. Sometimes Harry thought Sirius himself was reborn and this is him basically giving no more fucks to anyone after they all imprisoned him in his own home.

“You would look very flattering in green,” Draco nodded, as he and Sirius resolutely looked the other way from Mrs. Weasley’s indignant sputtering. Ah, Black blood sticking together, at its finest.

“Then why,” Tom flatly asked, after Harry recounted the shopping trip to him later that night, “did you end up with orange robes?”

“Because everyone’s faces when I got it was fucking funny,” Harry grinned.

“Oh for fuck’s sake, Harry.”

So far, Harry’s second year at Hogwarts arrived peacefully. Media and Lockhart aside, at least he didn’t have a house-elf hell bent on helping him through grievous harm. (Harry will always love Dobby, but let’s face it, the elf hasn’t been completely there since even before they met.)

Really, the only weird part so far was Ginny. Because well, *Ginny* . (He'd forgotten little Ginny had been a starstruck fangirl who couldn't even say a word to him without turning red. Because she was *Ginny* .) Harry couldn't forget how devastated she was when, after getting sorted into Gryffindor, she saw that Harry was a Hufflepuff. He suspected her brothers conveniently forgot to relay to her *that* piece of information.

So, other than that, and Colin Creevey's habit of snapping pictures of him (which Harry immediately monopolized for his own benefit), there were few hiccups during the first month or so of Harry's second year. Sure, Snape continued to be torn between being afraid of him and despising his very existence, and Lockhart continued to force him to reenact scenes from his so-and-so book, and Dumbledore continued to observe him with laser-eye focus, but they were no bother in the long run.

Then on Halloween, Katie Bell and Angelina Johnson screamed on their way back to the dorms after the feast.

"Ah, bugger," Harry said to himself as he, along with the rest of the school, gathered at the hallway to gape at the spectacle Katie and Angelina had run into. "Seriously?"

The chamber of secrets has been opened

Enemies of the heir... Beware

-

Life #77 - Where Tom is the 'Chosen One' and Harry is his 'Malfoy':

Part 1:

Harry, as Altair Burke, laughed himself sick for a straight two minutes once he laid eyes on Tom, who was David Steel.

Tom blankly stared at the train compartment wall blankly, mind processing what he just realized. "Oh, god," He moaned in despair, "Oh, Merlin, no."

"Oh, Merlin, *yes* ." Harry gleefully grinned and locked them both in the compartment. "David Steel, the Boy-Marked-With-Victory, vanquisher of the Dark Lord Thanatos. It's truly an honor." Harry bowed mockingly.

Tom hissed in anger. "Oh *shut up* . Who are *you* supposed to be?"

Harry sniffed pompously, more naturally than ever, "I am Altair Burke, pureblood heir to the Burke family. Show some respect." Harry paused for a second then smiled wickedly, "Can I see your scar?"

Tom glared and turned Harry's hair neon green.

After five minutes sitting in front of a wide-eyed audience, Tom was sent to Gryffindor, the Sorting Hat's loud mental cackling still echoing in his head.

"Blimey," one of his new housemates (oh god) gaped at him from across the table, "David Steel is in my house!"

"As if he'd be anywhere else!" An older Gryffindor crowed and the others cheered in agreement. Tom strongly resisted the urge to scream.

Which was hard, because Harry - or 'Altair' - sent him a smug look down his way and Tom was going to *murder* the little punk. The Gryffindor beside him noticed, and seeing who it was Tom was trying to kill with his gaze, also scowled at the Slytherin.

"Met Burke, huh? Bad news, that family. They own a shop down at Knockturn Alley that shouldn't even be allowed even by Knockturn standards." The kid told him, "Heard they helped 'The Lord-of-Death' before and during his rise to power. They're as dark as they come, and wouldn't be surprised that the heir is no different."

Merlin, what Tom wouldn't do to switch places with Harry this life. Just this once. *Please* .

Chapter End Notes

the extra was more or less a teaser of a bigger side-fic/interlude chapter for life #77 bc so far that's the one everyone's most interested in.

had a little trouble with this chapter and it ended up as a filler im so sorry lol

BUT IF DIARY TOM DIDNT OPEN THE CHAMBER THEN WHO DID
FIND OUT NEXT TIME

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

shit gets serious

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

“That can’t be possible,” Tom insisted after Harry told him what happened. “I’ve reunited with all my horcruxes. You know I got back my diary. You were *there* .”

“I’m not saying you or one of your souls did it,” Harry said gently, their roles for once reversed as Tom got increasingly agitated. “I’m just saying someone opened the chamber and only two people know where it is, and they’re both taking part in this conversation.”

“Unless there’s a stray soul bit sticking to someone again, or another legitimate Parselmouth in the school, then there’s no other way they could have found and opened the chamber, and gave the exact same warning as the first time, right?” Harry frowned then his eyes squinted at Tom on the mirror, “Voldemort didn’t *actually* knock anyone up this time around, did he? *Marvolo Thomas* doesn’t have a sibling, does he?”

“Voldemort couldn’t even get an erection,” Tom dryly said. “The rituals did a number on my old body, physically and chemically. In fact, my second body during Life 1, the genitals were-”

“Stop. I regret bringing up Voldemort’s sex life already,” Harry blankly interrupts. Tom rolled his eyes. “Okay, so if it’s not you, your soul fragment, or - oh Merlin - an illegitimate demon spawn, who opened the Chamber?”

The former Dark Lord very seriously ordered, “That’s what you have to find out.”

“Oh, fuck you.”

“Now, don’t panic,” Harry immediately said as the sink in front of them shifted and opened to reveal a hole. “This is completely natural.”

Neville, his chosen companion for this particular task, stared at him. “You’re a Parselmouth,” He faintly squeaked. “And you just opened the Chamber of Secrets, I think?”

Harry beamed at his friend, “Yes! Well, I didn’t open it *last time* , that’s what we want to find out, but yeah!” He patted the Gryffindor’s shoulder. “I knew you’d keep a level head. This is why I picked you.”

“I’m starting to feel the regret that Ron and Malfoy always feel when you do something... Harry-like,” Neville sadly murmured before taking a leap of faith and jumping down the slide towards only one of the most legendary places in magical Britain.

The Chamber was as wet and filthy as Harry remembered it to be. There were miscellaneous bones scattered here and there, as was gross muck and slimy green stuff.

“If I die I’m going to haunt you for the rest of your life,” Neville said, side-eyeing the enormous shed snake skin as they continued on deeper into the chamber.

“We’ll be fiiiine,” Harry cheerfully assured, but paused. “I think.”

“I swear to Lady Hecate, Harry-”

“Did I mention we’re meeting a basilisk?”

“The rest of your life *and beyond*,”

“Are you okay, Neville?” Hermione asked the next morning during breakfast. “You look a little pale.”

“Harry,” Neville, slowly turning to his housemate with a dull look in his bagged eyes, and it was all Hermione and Ron needed to hear.

“Have some eggs, mate,” Ron sympathetically said, trying to be comforting in the one of few ways he knew how.

“Oh, come on,” Harry suddenly appeared, making half the Gryffindor table jump in surprise. “It wasn’t that bad, was it, Nev?”

Neville mustered a rather vicious glare that made Harry croon in pride. The cub was turning into a lion so fast. “Never again,” he hissed.

Harry pouted. “But we haven’t solved the mystery yet!” And just as predicted, Hermione and Ron’s ears perked up. Neville, seeing the same, twitched.

“Mystery?” Hermione’s eyes practically sparkled.

“Mystery?” Draco says almost excitedly, when Harry snuck into the Slytherin dorm to pick Draco up that night. “Wait a minute, how did you even-”

“Shh, don’t worry about it,” Harry smiled. “Now are you in or not?”

“I will murder you if you leave me behind this time,”

Honestly, having Draco as a friend was a wonderful change. He always knew the pureblood had some Gryffindor in him.

“This,” Harry swept his arms around the bathroom grandly, “is where it all began.” Ron, Hermione, and Draco looked around dubiously while Neville sighed in regret of his life choices.

“You’re back!” Moaning Myrtle squealed in delight while Harry’s friends startled. “And you brought friends over! Oh, there’s always enough toilets for you all when you die down there.”

“If, darling Myrtle,” Harry cheerfully rebutted. “*If* we die. Come now, be a little positive.”

Moaning Myrtle playfully pouted, “But I am!”

Ron and Draco looked properly horrified at Harry’s flirting with a ghost, but bless Hermione to look for more important things. “Is this where the Chamber is?”

“Five points to Granger!” Harry approached one of the sinks and tapped it firmly. “You’re all bearing witness to a piece of Hogwarts’ history.” And then proceeded to give his three friends a heart attack by speaking Parseltongue to the sink, revealing the Chamber entrance. Neville sighed deeply for the tenth time that night.

“You’re going to drive your friends to an early grave,” Tom scolded the following evening after Harry reported to finding nothing but a very lonely basilisk down at the Chamber.

“Oh come on, I was careful and all,” Harry protested. “I may be slightly unhinged and questionably sadistic, but I wouldn’t deliberately lead my friends to danger without taking precautions first. They’re just kids.”

Tom rolled his eyes. It wasn’t like Tom could say anything else without being hypocritical himself. After all, he’s been subtly tormenting his entire school since he stepped foot into it. Only a handful of students seemed to be taking everything in stride, among them most notably Krum.

“Anyway, Sasha says no one’s come visit her since you.” Harry continued, ignoring Tom questionably mouthing ‘Sasha?’, “So either there’s a way to mind-voodoo a basilisk or someone’s deliberately fucking with us.”

“I might just murder the person if it was the latter,” Tom said after a moment.

“Me too, actually.”

“Now, Harry,” Lockhart beamed, “Remember your lines?”

“Oh, I feel so much agony,” Harry deadpans, “Please save me from this misery.” From behind him, he could hear Terry and Justin not even bothering to smother their snickers anymore.

“Hm, a little more enthusiasm please, as always,” Lockhart patted Harry’s head and Harry refused to feel murderous, but it was so *hard*, “You have to work on that! Take it from me, I’m well accustomed to what the fans like, and really, you’re very lucky to have me as a mentor, Harry-”

“Please curse me,” Harry mouthed to his all too amused Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff classmates as Lockhart continued running his mouth.

Then everything seemed to quiet down and all Harry could hear was the faint hissing of the basilisk through the walls, in the pipes, “*Ssssoo hungry Masssster... Tell me where to go...*”

Suddenly things got more serious.

“I heard the basilisk through the walls in Defense,” Harry told his friends in a private warded corner of the library, serious for the first time since the year started. “Someone is definitely controlling it.”

Ron paled. “But you said she didn’t know anything.”

“It’s always possible to be controlled against your will, and even without any memory of,” Draco said darkly. “People can do it to other people, who’s to say it’s any different against magical creatures?”

“You would know, wouldn’t you?” Ron snidely muttered, and Hermione hissed a reprimand before an argument could break out.

“Now is not the time,” Hermione scolded, eyeing Harry’s unusually grave expression, “This is serious, and we don’t need a lecture about light versus dark magic to top it off.”

“You introduced us to Sasha though. She scented us, so she should be able to recognize us as allies, right?” Neville asked thoughtfully.

“Having her in someone’s control changes things though,” Harry said. “It makes her unpredictable. I don’t want to hurt her, but I don’t want a Myrtle to happen again. I’d rather be safe than sorry.”

“Myrtle was killed by the basilisk, wasn’t she?” Hermione quietly asked and Harry’s somber nod was all she needed as an answer. “Right,” Hermione straightened. “You’re all getting pocket mirrors. None of you are allowed to complain how girly they look, either.”

“Check corners, especially at night, but considering I heard her going around in the afternoon, be cautious always anyway.” Harry said, “Never travel alone. If you see a hallway that’s wet, turn back. Spiders are also afraid of it, so if you see them going a particular way, follow the spiders.”

“Follow the spiders?” Ron faintly looked sick at the information being recited, but seemed to be paying attention to all of it and taking it to heart. “Why does it have to be spiders. Why can’t it be follow the butterflies?”

“Because we can’t have nice things,” Draco joked, and Ron actually laughed, albeit a little hysterically.

After double checking that it wasn’t Ginny being possessed by some malevolent magical artifact again, nor was it some other first year otherwise, Harry found himself in a conundrum. Any way you looked at it- only Harry and Tom (and his soul fragments) could have possibly opened the Chamber. But all the soul fragments had been reunited with Tom for years, and the only reason why Harry could even still speak Parseltongue was because it was a quirk stuck to Harry’s own soul as much it was to Tom’s, so it always appeared when they were even remotely magical.

The Duelling Club debacle hadn’t happened this time around, so he wasn’t met with accusations of being the Heir of Slytherin every step he took. Yet. Unfortunately, there were two other people other than his friends that knew about his little trick, and they watched him more like a hawk than ever.

Then one night, Justin Finch-Fletchey and Nearly-Headless Nick were both petrified, and the next morning, Harry wasn’t welcome at any of the House tables anymore.

“I swear none of us said a word,” said a distraught Hermione, all of them having retreated to the kitchens to eat their lunch after Harry’s sudden exile from the student body. Harry thought their loyalty was really admirable.

Ron took a bite of a rather large serving of pudding that a house elf had happily gave him. (And wasn’t their existence a shock to Hermione, who if it weren’t for the fact that Harry’s situation warranted more attention, would’ve probably given birth to SPEW then and there.) “I’m surprised the snakes didn’t snatch you up immediately,” he said with his mouth still full.

“Slytherin isn’t allowing you mostly due to politics,” Draco explained apologetically after giving Ron a look of disgust. “There was a lot of debate of whether or not you would be welcomed but at the moment, the cons outweigh the pros.”

“Who leaked the rumor, though?” Neville asked, because it was clear that it wasn’t either the four of them.

“Snape,” Harry and Draco both said, the Slytherin scowling slightly. “I mentioned it when he and the headmaster dropped my letter off, because I wasn’t sure if it was a common thing.”

“Well he ‘somehow let it slip’ to one of the older students,” Draco added. “And it spread from there.”

“Slytherins are a gossipy bunch,” Harry grinned teasingly and Draco rolled his eyes, not disagreeing because he was raised around Slytherins, he knew how they got.

“That’s completely unfair and unprofessional!” Hermione was scandalized. “That breaches student privacy and spreads unfounded rumors-”

“Oh Hermione,” Harry patted her hand, “Didn’t you get the memo? Snape hated my father, ergo, he hates me.”

“ *Completely unfair* ,” She insisted, and Harry was touched, really. “You could sue for libel if it weren’t-”

“True?” Harry’s grin never wavered. In fact, it turned slightly sinister. “Don’t worry, I got it covered.”

His friends all exchanged alarmed looks. ‘ *Oh, Merlin .* ’ They simultaneously thought.

Then Hermione got petrified.

Now Harry went from slightly annoyed and worried to downright *pissed* .

Chapter End Notes

sorry sorry for the long wait! i promise the next chapter won't take this long to write lol. i also promise next chapter is the last of year 2, because this fic is growing bigger than i expected oops.

thanks so much for 1k+ kudos so far! i'm glad you all like this little plot baby of mine, no matter how silly it gets.

I've been lagging with answering questions in comments (and if I've ignored it, I'm sorry!), so if you would like, **please feel free to ask anything in the comments section in this chapter! Treat it as a Q&A lol.** I'll answer everything as best as I can and I promise not to be as trolly as Harry is. And since this is up in ff.net too, I'll be compiling the questions and answers in a readable doc to be linked next chapter.

Thanks to everyone \o/

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

you're not hallucinating it's a second update in a week
surprise its christmas

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

Harry didn't like to show anger. His first life as Harry Potter had him going through extreme emotions as a teenager, and after getting married he had sworn to reign in his rather volatile temper, especially around the children. More than once people had commented how he inherited Lily's temper, and only as an adult did he really find out how bad her temper had been. (It surprised him that Snape didn't end up getting eviscerated after calling her a Mudblood, but he puts it down to shock.) And he carried that control well enough throughout all his lifetimes, really.

Until now.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me," Harry hissed loudly. His vision flashed red when Lockhart turned in surprise, only to give him a smug look that looked different from the usual sparkly one. It looked wrong, warped.

It had only been a week since Harry's last visit to the Chamber, which had been right after hearing about Hermione's attack. The school had done a complete 180 towards him because even if he was a Parselmouth and quite possibly *an* Heir of Slytherin, one thing everyone knew for a fact that Harry Potter valued his friends more than anything. And the thought of him attacking Hermione contradicted everything they knew about him.

But he visited the Chamber again tonight with the intention of asking Sasha more questions, only to be confronted by *this*. Lockhart had no reason to even know where the Chamber was, much less have the ability to open and enter it and control the basilisk, but there he was in front of him, stroking a dazed looking Sasha and speaking whispered Parseltongue.

"Harry, my, my, what a surprise," Lockhart smiled, but it looked stiff and unusual. "So the rumors weren't unfounded, after all."

"Just some," Harry scowled darkly as Lockhart chuckled. "But fancy meeting you here, *professor*."

"I'm only doing a dear friend a favor," the older man replied. "He's helped me with my successes so far, it was only fair I repaid him somehow." In an almost absent minded gesture, Lockhart grasped something hanging from his chest.

Harry froze as he recognized the distinct design of Slytherin's Locket.

“You *really* have got to be fucking kidding me,” He breathed in disbelief. “That’s impossible.”

Because Kreacher guarded the one that hosted Voldemort’s soul with insane fanaticism and the fake Regulus Black had made hung by the fireplace at his and Tom’s cottage in France. This one though, this one looked exactly the same as the other two and had dark magic oozing out of it, different from the horcruxes’ unique aura but similar.

“I do apologize, however,” Lockhart’s voice cut into Harry’s running thoughts. The professor frowned, and the fact that there was something completely off about him was as blatant as the sun. “But as much I personally like you, Harry, I can’t let you leave this place alive.”

“Is that you or your master talking?” Harry wryly asked, fingering his wand idly. His fingers itched in anticipation.

“Your body would make a wonderful vessel, boy,” An otherworldly voice echoed in unison to Lockhart’s, and there was no doubt that there was a soul parasite akin to a horcrux in that locket.

“That’s too bad,” Harry grinned sharply, “You hurt my friend. Therefore, *I* can’t let *you* leave this place alive.”

Tom didn’t shoot up awake, but it was a near thing. He didn’t even bother being quiet as he made his way out his dorm room, ignoring a roommate’s half-awake grumble of “Gaunt?” when Tom passed by him.

Karkaroff was thankfully too stunned to question why Tom needed to use his Floo at this hour, not that he would’ve given him a straight answer either way. His rush to his cottage proved to be warranted, after all, being greeted by a blood splattered Harry clutching *something* that was dark enough to make even *him* falter.

“Merlin, Harry,” Tom hissed in concern, “Please tell me the other guy ended up worse.”

“Way worse,” Harry grimaced. His body felt heavy and it was only his extensive knowledge of healing spells that prevented him from needing an urgent visit to St. Mungo’s. His magic may be more significant than normal, but this body was still growing and his core hasn’t matured yet thus there was only so much he could do. The battle with that... *thing* possessing Lockhart took a lot out of him as a twelve year old even if he would’ve wiped the floor with it if he were seventeen.

Tom tsk’ed, and led Harry to the living room couch to be tended to. But he had to ask, “What is that thing? It reeks.”

Harry sighed, opening the magical pouch he had in his hand and tipping it over the coffee table to reveal Slytherin’s Locket, generously scorched in places. Tom stared at it with a stumped expression.

“Lockhart had it,” he explained, “From what I could glean, it’s the reason why he’s been able to get away with his ‘fantastical feats.’ He was in some sort of give-and-take relationship with the soul parasite that inhabited the locket. Instead of spreading memory charms like candy, he had the soul feed on the others’ souls for strength and tried to find a suitable host body for it, but they all deteriorated too fast. The Chamber of Secrets was just going to be another dot on his resume, in exchange for a few muggleborn students’ lives and my body.”

Harry felt Tom’s hand around his wrist squeeze tighter at the last two words, and he couldn’t help the surge of fondness he felt towards the other man. It was always nice to see moments wherein Tom showed he cared.

“Fiendfyre on the soul, then?” Tom asked, peering at the locket but making no move to touch it. “What of Lockhart?”

“In pieces. And in Sasha’s stomach,” Harry quirked a smile. “Once I managed to snap her out of it, she was rather upset at being forced against me and the students she was supposed to protect according to Salazar Slytherin’s original wishes.”

Tom hummed. “A descendant, then?” He asked, referring to the soul parasite.

“Great grandson,” Harry yawned, feeling more tired than he had in a long time. “Still, I’m more concerned about the fact that this even happened. There was never a third locket in the original world. Yours was The Locket, no question about it.”

“We’ll figure it out in the morning,” Tom firmly said as he supported Harry up and towards one of the bedrooms, vanishing the locket into a securely warded box before leaving the room. Just in case. “You, *sweetie* , need to rest.”

“Only if you cuddle with me, *darling* .”

“I have to head back to Hogwarts,” Harry grumbled into Tom’s chest. It was just a little bit past four thirty in the morning and neither were inclined to move out of bed just yet.

“You really should try blackmailing your headmaster, it works wonders for no one questioning abrupt disappearances,” Tom dryly replied, not even opening his eyes.

Harry snorted, “One of us has Dumbledore as their headmaster, and it isn’t you.”

“Thank fucking god.” Tom then harshly pulled their blanket towards him and gritted, “And you have got to stop hogging-”

Harry squinted up at him, “If you didn’t have damn cold feet-”

“They’re only cold because they’ve been exposed the entire night *because of the damn blanket* -”

“I’m going to fart on your face and trap it with a bubblehead charm-”

“Oh, *real* mature, Potter-”

Funny how they missed this.

Harry was back at Hogwarts just before breakfast, so no one was any wiser that he had been out of campus for hours or that he had essentially murdered Lockhart for the good of all humanity. And revenge.

“What did you do?” Neville quietly asked him that night while he, Neville, and Draco were at the library revising a Herbology essay. Ron was back in the Gryffindor dorm room with Seamus and Dean, and Hermione was, well.

“What makes you think I did anything?” Harry idly flipped a page of their book.

Draco and Neville shared a look, and Harry was both surprised and unsurprised that the two of them got along with each other the best among Harry’s group of friends.

Harry’s lips twitched to suppress a smile when Draco said, “Lockhart’s disappeared. And you don’t seem angry or worried about the Chamber problem anymore.”

“Plausible deniability,” was all he said.

And when Aurors found evidence of Lockhart being the cause of the petrifications somehow (no need for them to know about the basilisk under the school, after all), Draco and Neville simply told him that one day, he could tell them and it won’t change anything.

“Ah, Harry, come in,” Dumbledore gestured, giving Harry a tentative and careful smile. “Please sit. Lemon drop?”

“No, thank you,” Harry said disinterestedly and took note of how Dumbledore faltered and slumped a little. Whatever the headmaster believed about him, it was effective in making Dumbledore keep his distance with a surprising amount of wariness.

“Are you here to apologize about Snape?” He asked bluntly, face as hard stone.

“Now you must forgive about *Professor* Snape’s slip,” Dumbledore lightly scolded, “He meant no harm. And it was true, wasn’t it?”

‘For all we know, you opened the chamber and framed Lockhart for it, after all,’ were the unspoken words.

“I’m not mad about it,” Harry blandly smiled. “Is that all, then?”

“*Harry-*”

“*“ And it was true, wasn't it? ”*” Harry scoffed lightly, “Do you even listen to yourself? Have a good evening, headmaster.”

After the young Potter left, Dumbledore let out a large sigh. “I feel like I can’t talk properly to him,” Dumbledore pinched the bridge of his nose, “No matter what I plan to say, nothing comes out right.”

“You still don’t seriously think he’s the Dark Lord, do you?” Snape frowned as he stepped out of his usual spot in the shadows. “Nothing about the brat makes sense, but that doesn’t mean he horcrux inside of him influenced him that much.”

“I don’t know what to think anymore, Severus. I would like to say the real Harry is in there as much as Tom is, but you don’t see what I see.”

“And that is? Albus?”

Dumbledore stayed quiet.

“We are friends,” Krum announced, weeks after Tom had disappeared in the middle of the night.

Tom quirked an eyebrow at the older student, “Are we?” He asked amusedly.

“We are,” Krum firmly said. Then his eyes gained a serious glint that had Tom paying more attention and setting up a privacy ward around them. “People think of me as nothing more than a Quidditch airhead,”

“People forget you’re one of the top students of your year,” Tom agreed. “But I am not one of those people.”

“You are not,” Krum nodded, “You are also a man of secrets. Understandable, given your origins, but I will say it again. We are friends. If you ever need someone to help keep your secrets, or just to talk to, remember that I’m here. I will not judge.”

Tom was quiet for a moment, before asking, “My origins?”

Krum - Viktor - then surprised Tom by as a matter of a factly stating, “You are the son of Tom Marvolo Riddle, Jr., also known as the Dark Lord Voldemort.” His lips twitched into a small smirk, “Are you not?”

-

Life #10 - Father and Son:

Yamato Shinji approached incoming fatherhood like he did with everything else: with lots of swearing and borderline manic enthusiasm. His wife was undoubtedly tired of it after nine

months of carrying their first child and was ready to get it over with so that they could welcome little Yamato Shinichiro to their small family.

Then when Shinji first held Shinichiro in his arms and stared into his baby's squinting eyes, he cursed rather loudly.

"Shinji!" His wife, Natsuki, scolded as Shinichiro let out a rather impressive wail. "Watch your language!"

Shinji - Harry - hurriedly returned his son to Natsuki but was unable to keep the disbelief and panic in his face.

Shit , he thought. *Oh fucking shit* .

His kid was goddamned Tom Riddle.

Oh Merlin, no. This was going to be a disaster.

Chapter End Notes

this chapter was already half done when i posted the last one, so i went why not and finished it today *ta-dah*

ten points to everyone who hoped and guessed it was lockhart
im either really predictable or something

i welcome more questions, and i'll actually give answers next time lolol

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

crawls out of my cave and nervously pushes this to the outside world;;;;;
it's been a while i know
im alive its ok i can work on this again sorta ;-;
pls no bully

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

“You’ve made a friend!” Harry beamed when Tom tells him over the mirror. “Tommy boy is growing up so fast~!”

“Tommy boy also has an untraceable wand that knows a few little hexes.” Tom rolled his eyes, then looked contemplative. “I didn’t really expect that out of Krum, to be quite honest. He’s different than I thought.”

Harry nodded empathetically, “I wasn’t close to him the first time around, so I’m a little surprised, but at the same time it does seem to be in his character to do such a thing.”

“Could be worse, I suppose,” Tom grumbled. “He’s already invited me to the Quidditch World Cup Final next summer, regardless if Bulgaria makes it there.”

“I think Draco and Ron are going to fight over who gets to take me,” Harry says brightly, “I *hope* they do.”

Tom snorts. “Your mutt of a godfather is likely to take you either way.” Which was very true. The Ministry was going to be bending backwards for him for quite a long time.

“Speaking of Sirius, he’s been a little tight lipped in his last few letters. Like he has a secret that he’s trying *really* hard not to slip.”

“Maybe he got you a puppy. Well, an actual puppy, not one disguised as himself.”

Sirius did not get him a puppy. But close.

Harry peered up at Remus Lupin, who had greeted them at the door, Sirius and Harry having just come back from King’s Cross. The scarred man smiled unsurely at Harry and sent a worried glance at Sirius as he wrung his hands on the apron he was wearing. He looked like a step-mother worried about interloping a two-person family.

Holy shit , Sirius.

Sirius grinned, though a hint of concern showed on his face. “Harry, this is Remus.” He paused , then sheepishly said, “I don’t know if you remember, but he was one of the Marauders, too. Lily’s favorite, actually, well, other than your father, but it’s hard to tell sometimes because James and I did a lot of shit and so Remus and Lily were like two exasperated wives and uh. So. I hope you don’t mind. He’s going to be staying with us?”

When Harry just blinked at the two of them, he could see the anxiety bubble up in Remus, and *aw* . He missed this man.

“With the way you were trying to clearly hide something in your letters, I thought you, I dunno, got an illegal pet or something.” Harry hummed as he looked Remus up and down for show. “Not a werewolf house-husband. S’cool though. I hear they’re wild in bed.”

Remus turned red and choked while Sirius went from relieved to wailing “You’re *twelve* !” in point two seconds flat.

“Welcome to the family, Remus!” Harry grinned like the wicked child he was. “I hope you two soundproofed your room!”

“Aw, come on!” Harry groaned at the Daily Prophet’s headline. ‘*Convicted Death Eater Bellatrix Lestrangle Escapes Azkaban!*’ it proclaims in big bold letters, a picture of a madly cackling Bellatrix under it. “How the hell did she even manage that?!”

“How did who manage what?” Sirius yawned, shuffling blearily into the dining room.

“Your crazy cousin got out of Azkaban.”

“Which one?”

“Well, the ex-cousin, I suppose, considering you burned her out of the family tree.” Harry amended, remembering that fact. “She’s not gonna come and kill us, right?”

“She can try,” Sirius cheerily said, “Then I can say it was in self-defense when I rip her throat out.”

Remus sighed into his coffee.

“I think that’s supposed to be Remus’ job,” Harry said, and Remus promptly choked.

Sirius, immediately reaching to rub and pat the werewolf’s back, sighed, “He has a no mauling policy.”

“That didn’t sound like it last night.”

“*You’re twelve!*”

Remus inhaled deeply. "Next time," He calmly said, setting down his mug before he did something regrettable with it - like throw it at Sirius' head, "*I'll do the silencing charms.*"

He was starting to regret moving in. Just a little. (Not really.)

"*It worries me*," Harry read in Neville's latest letter, "*that my first two thoughts in reading the news about Lestrage are 'How likely is Harry going to be caught up in this' and 'Do I want to encourage him.'*"

"Your faith in me is very flattering," Harry replied, to which Neville sent back, "*You are, after all, the most terrifying person I have ever met.*"

Should Harry be offended? Probably. But he took it as a compliment anyway.

Draco, on the other hand, wrote, "*If I tell you that my Aunt Bellatrix is trying to seek sanctuary at my family manor, can you promise to give her the Lockhart treatment?*"

"What makes you think I know what the Lockhart treatment is?" Harry countered.

"*I don't care what you do, I'd rather not have to deal with an insane Black.*" Draco furiously replied. "*You're lucky your dogfather is fine and that he doesn't fantasize about bearing the Dark Lord's offspring and the motions on how that'll be possible, and I swear to Merlin, I know you're laughing, but it's disgusting and more than my young ears can take--*"

Harry sent him a charmed letter that echoed his cackling.

"Your number one fan is looking for you," Harry wrote to Tom, gleefully attaching the news article to the letter. "I heard from a reliable source that she's currently looking for love."

"*Harry, soulmate*," Tom replied, "*don't even start.*"

For their birthday, Harry and Neville decided to have one combined celebration rather than two separate ones back to back. Which meant the entirety of their class was invited. Yes, even the Slytherins.

Harry was frankly surprised some of the snakes even came, considering the minimal personal interactions he's had with all of them bar Draco, but well, this was the birthday party of two very well regarded family heirs.

"It would be stupid of anyone to pass this up," Daphne Greengrass sniffed and beside her, Tracey Davis nodded. "Parkinson and Bulstrode are too simple to understand what kind of opportunities and introductions attending this party could bring."

And she wasn't wrong. Sirius and Augusta Longbottom really outdid themselves. Harry and Neville may have been responsible for inviting their peers, but as this was an Heir Longbottom and Heir Potter joint birthday party, Augusta made no room for argument as to which of her acquaintances would be invited. And being a very well respected traditionalist, that meant a good number of the upper-crust. Sirius on the other hand, not to be outdone, invited former classmates and friends he'd reconnected with somehow, most of them well respected professionals in their field. Ron nearly tripped flat on his face when he recognized a first string member of the Chudley Cannons and Puddlemere United's first reserve seeker among them.

"I'm pretty certain your party has more prestigious people than any of mine has ever had." Draco commented, not really too bothered because after a few years such things have gotten a bit stale.

"You've had the Minister attend yours," Harry pointed out.

"Some would say that would be a minus."

"True enough."

Neville, surprisingly, didn't look overwhelmed. Just exasperated.

"She does this for all my birthdays," He mourned. "'Twas too much pressure as a kid, all these adults expecting so much from you when you couldn't even do a lick of accidental magic."

Harry patted his shoulder sympathetically.

Overall, the party was going quite alright. Sure there was a somber moment when someone mentioned Frank and Alice Longbottom, and then another somber moment when another someone mentioned James and Lily Potter, and then another somber moment when some of the adult guests had the uncomfortable realization that the two birthday boys were orphans from a war not their own after being directly targeted by You-Know-Who, and really, Harry thought these people were *hilarious*.

He hasn't gotten this many birthday gifts since the birthday after defeating Tom the first time.

Then just as the party was winding down, one of the high ranking aurors in attendance received a very unsubtle patronus with one message.

"Bellatrix Lestrange has been sighted in Diagon Alley."

Harry doesn't think he's ever seen Narcissa Malfoy look so calmly enraged.

The day after, Harry got two updates: one from the Daily Prophet, who sensationalized the event in true fashion and glossed over the two deaths in Knockturn Alley in favor for the three injured in Diagon, and one from Draco, who relayed to him that Bellatrix hasn't come

home and his mother was completely pissed. Even his father was steering clear from the angry matriarch, never mind his own upset about the matter.

Lestrangle doesn't make any other noteworthy appearances, even after the Hogwarts supplies list have gone out and Diagon was brimming with Hogwarts students and their families for the following week.

Harry was able to meet with Tom only once more, in a McDonald's in London. Tom won't admit it, but he'd developed a taste for the fast food in so many lifetimes that there are days that he actually missed the greasy food.

"Are they not feeding you enough at Durmstrang?" Harry squinted at the double amount of food compared to Tom's usual portions. "I don't think I've ever seen you eat two large combo meals in one sitting before."

"I'm a growing boy," Tom deadpanned, unwrapping his first burger. "Also, I'm staying in the Durmstrang summer dorm, remember? We fend for ourselves, food wise. And the part-vampire from two doors down had the gall to leave a bloodpack in the communal chilled pantry, and guess what exploded all over everyone's food last night?"

"Oh, ew. Can't you just buy yourself a mini-fridge?" Harry's nose wrinkled at the thought of unknown blood all over his food. "Or chilled pantry, whatever. God, European wizards need to get on Japan's level and get electronics working with magic. I miss my Nintendo Switch sometimes."

"Those won't even exist for another two decades at the very least, sweetie."

"Bah, humbug. I know you miss your smartphone too, darling." Harry shoved some fries in his mouth. "I wish fourth year would come sooner. It's so *boring* right now."

"Bellatrix wandering out and about not exciting enough for you?" Tom sipped his drink. Pumpkin juice is all nice and well, but there's nothing quite like the muggles' carbonated drinks. "Not to say I don't share the sentiment. There's only so long I can terrorize my school before it gets a little stale."

"Eh, she'll show up at Hogwarts, I reckon. Or get herself captured. She's a capable witch powerwise, but not exactly the brightest tool in the shed after all that quality time with the dementors." Harry shrugged. "Besides, we've been waiting so long! The Tri-Wizard tournament is what we've prepared for all these years!"

"You just can't wait to marry me again, huh?" Tom smirked and Harry maturely stuck a tongue out at him. "And the courtship is the first step to it."

"Please, I know you like that sort of thing," he sniffed. "I remember you during life sixty-three, you were completely mad."

Tom actually laughs, "You didn't like the singing butterflies?"

Harry snorts, and smiles fondly at Tom. "I loved the singing butterflies. The dancing pandas, on the other hand..."

"Singing butterflies? Dancing pandas?"

Harry and Tom jumped and turned at their seats to face a completely baffled Hermione.

"Hermione?" Harry actually squeaked. "What are you doing here?"

"Harry? I was walking to a bookstore and saw you in here from the window and..." Hermione blinked, wide eyed, from him to Tom. "And.. who...?"

Tom recovered his composure quickly, and gave her a smile that was borderline a grimace. "Marvolo Thomas Gaunt, nice to meet you."

"Hermione Granger, nice to meet you, too." Her surprise was slowly fading from her face, increasingly being replaced by a sharp eyed squint. "Harry's never mentioned you before. How old are you? You don't seem to be our age."

Harry, very much acquainted to the nuances of Hermione Granger, sputtered. "Hermione! It's not like that!"

"It's not like what?" Tom asked, a bit amused.

"It's not like what, Harry?" Hermione frowned at her friend, "It definitely did look like *that* just a few minutes before. Honestly, Harry, I don't mind if you're gay, but there's a term called *jailbait*, and-"

Tom coughed to cover up a laugh as Harry started to get mortified. "I assure you, Miss Granger, that despite how I present myself, that I'm only fifteen going on sixteen."

"Oh," Hermione faltered. "You just, you look older. Not in a physical way, but, like, the air around you. No offense."

"None taken," Tom waved a hand. "People have said I act and look more mature than my age dictates."

"He's also one of our kind, Hermione." Harry informed her, and her eyes lit up as he expected. "He goes to another school, though."

"Really? I haven't heard much about the other schools! There's a surprising lack of information about them in the Hogwarts library but there's enough mentions to know they exist. Which one are you from? Ilvermorny? Beauxbatons?"

"Durmstrang, actually."

Hermione let out a delighted gasp. "Durmstrang! Oh, that's wonderful! Is it true the campus is in Siberia?"

They end up spending the day together, all three of them. Tom's the only person Harry knew that could keep up with Hermione's library of knowledge and it showed with how they debated about a variety of subjects without missing a beat. They accompanied her to the muggle bookstore and they all left with at least two or three books a piece, even Harry, who had no intention of even looking at anything.

After they parted ways with Hermione, and just before it was time for Tom to head back, Harry gazed at him thoughtfully and hummed.

"Don't you ever think sometimes about how much we've changed?" Harry asked him. "If in my first life someone told me that Tom Riddle and Hermione Granger would get along, I would've laughed at their face then hexed them to oblivion."

"A continuous cycle of death and reincarnation puts things in perspective," Tom said simply. "I've learned long ago that while there are muggles who are vile and don't deserve to live, the same could be said about the magical kind. They're the exception, not the rule, and realizing that was... well, you know how it is. It helped that I've experienced both good and bad childhoods, but more importantly that I experienced it with someone. Had I not have had you with me, I would've gone mad lifetimes ago, for all my grand delusions of immortality as Lord Voldemort."

"You warm my heart, darling," Harry teased, but they both knew he was touched. "You're right though. It's been an experience. And I sort of wonder if this is the last one, considering we've gone full circle. I won't say that I wouldn't be relieved if it was, but at the same time, a part of me hopes it isn't." Harry sighed wistfully. "It's been nice, you know?"

They walk in silence for a while, before their hands thread together and Tom says, "I know."

Chapter End Notes

BREATHES DEEPLY GUESS WHO'S BACK, BACK AGAIN

Sorry for the sudden hiatus this story took for the past year! After I did my last fic, IRL reared its ugly head and only now do I have the time and energy to continue on with this story. I'll do my best not to make you guys wait another year for the next chapter ;;;; I was fully intending on starting third year this chapter but, well, as you can see I got sidetracked. And Tomarry wanted a moment so I let them have one.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

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

‘Harry,

I received my owl order for the books on magical politics that Marvolo recommended to me and oh, do I have so many questions! Do you think he’ll mind terribly if I write to him to discuss some of these policies with me? I admit, as a Muggleborn, some of these sound either very outdated, or biased, or simply puzzling. I suppose I could ask Neville and Draco instead, but I feel like I would get a better understanding if I talk to Marvolo, you know? Don’t worry! I have no plans on stealing your man (wink).

And don’t deny it, I only caught the last bit of your conversation but the way you look at each other is very telling, you know.

Speaking of which, do you want me to keep your acquaintance a secret? I imagine it would raise a few questions on how you know someone from Durmstrang (and I won’t pry, I promise) so I’d understand if you want to keep it under wraps. I know my tongue has slipped a few times in regards to your personal business, but I’ve learned from my mistakes. No one needs to know about your personal affairs if you don’t want them to, I’ll make sure of it. At the very least, maybe you should introduce him to Neville, Ron, and Draco? A friend of yours is a friend of ours too, you know. (And I won’t say anything about him not being at your birthday party. You probably have reasons, you always do.)

Anyway, I’ll see you at King’s Cross next week!

Love, Hermione’

“You have everything you need? Books, parchment, quills? Enough socks?” Remus fussed, brushing some floo powder off Harry’s shoulders. “If you realize you’ve forgotten something, just send us an owl and we’ll send it to you, okay?”

“Yes, mum,” Harry chirped, more amused than embarrassed at the werewolf’s mother henning, and grinned wider when Remus rolled his eyes. “Though I don’t think anyone could ever have enough socks.”

“He’s fine, Remus,” Sirius snorted as they make their way towards Hogwart’s Express. “He’s a third year now! Next thing we know he’ll be coming home with a girlfriend or a boyfriend or, knowing him, quite possibly both.” Sirius paused for a moment and made a face. “On second thought, never mind that last bit. A betrothal contract for that would be a pain in the arse.”

“Harry!” Draco called from a distance as he approached them swiftly, his parents languidly trailing behind. “There you are. Neville’s found us a compartment already.”

“Cousin Narcissa!” Sirius grinned sharply at seeing his relative. “Pleasure to see you looking still as radiant as before.”

Narcissa, to her credit, didn’t bat an eyelash. “Cousin Sirius. The same could be said to you.”

“No word from our dear Bella yet?” Sirius not-so-innocently asked. “Among us Blacks still kicking, I would’ve thought you’d be the first one she’d go running to.”

In a heartbeat, the air chilled and the rest of them, including Lucius, exchanged uncomfortable looks.

“Fortunately, you are wrong,” Narcissa smiled coldly, “I imagine my dear *former sister* has forsaken our family in favor of the Dark Lord she continues to chase.”

“We have to get going, Narcissa,” Lucius smoothly interrupted before the situation degenerated any further. “And Draco needs to board the train soon, it leaves in a few minutes.”

And with that, she turned back into a fussy mother.

“Your mum is actually terrifying.” Harry told Draco on their way to their compartment. “Like, no offense to your dad, but between the two of them I’d show my back to him, not her. I feel like she’d stab me if I did.”

“Don’t be stupid,” Draco sniffed. “She likes you. Also she’d prefer to use her wand rather than something as plebeian as a *knife* .”

They boarded the train with minutes to spare before the last warning whistle blew and found Neville in no time. Of course, Hermione and Ron were already with him.

“But here’s the thing,” Hermione was saying when they entered the compartment, “in the case of use of underage magic in a magical home versus a muggle one, isn’t it that the child in the muggle one under a severe disadvantage? The Ministry can’t differentiate between the parent or the child’s magic in a magical home, can they?”

“No, they can’t,” Neville was nodding with her, “I can use my wand in any magically concentrated place, whether its my home or Diagon Alley.”

“But I can’t,” Hermione looked frustrated.

“It’s because of the Trace,” Draco rolled his eyes as he took a seat. “We all get it when we turn eleven somehow and only breaks when you turn seventeen. That’s how the Ministry knows when and where magic happens near an underage wizard or witch.”

“The problem is they don’t know who performs it,” Harry continued. “So, let’s say a house elf does a hover charm in the same muggle house as you, you take the blame. But if the same circumstances happen in a magical area, they don’t bother to look into it too much.”

Hermione frowned, “There’s too many holes. What’s the radius of the Trace? If you have both a house elf and an adult wizard beside you, and the house elf performs magic, is it attributed to you or the adult wizard?”

“Ugh, I didn’t even know it was a problem for muggleborns,” Ron wrinkled his nose, “Mom’s a stickler for rules, but Dad let us do a few bit of charms at home and we’ve never gotten any trouble.”

“You live at Ottery St. Catchpole, though. There’s like five families that live there, including yours.” Neville pointed out.

“Have you asked Marvolo?” Harry breezily asked, ignoring the other boys’ ears perked in interest at the unknown name, “You know he has an uncanny knowledge about practically any and all wizarding law.”

“Marvolo?” Neville and Draco echoed curiously.

“Marvolo?” Ah, *there* was the Ron Weasley jealousy.

Hermione beamed at him, probably in pride at Harry taking her advice, as subtle as it was. “Not yet! I’m still waiting for his reply to my last letter. We were in the middle of debating magical creature laws when I started reading *Underage Laws for the Underage Witch and Wizard* .”

“Who’s Marvolo?” Ron scowled, looking quite unhappy at the knowledge that Hermione had been exchanging letters with some unknown wizard.

“He’s Harry’s friend from Durmstrang. He’s quite a nice guy,” Hermione chattered, ignorant of Ron’s souring mood, “I ran across Harry and Marvolo one day in London - the muggle side - by pure coincidence. He really knows his stuff! He gave me all these book recommendations on basically every topic I wanted to get to know better! They were so many that my parents had to give me a talk about a book budget. I haven’t had a book budget since I discovered reading!”

Harry chuckled in amusement and smirked as Draco and Neville had an inward crisis at what it meant for him to have a Durmstrang friend.

“Durmstrang, huh,” Draco slowly started, sharing a look with Neville, who was the one other person bar Harry that knew the school’s reputation was like beyond ‘ *that one Dark Arts school that expelled Grindelwald* .’ “My father considered enrolling me there, but mother insisted on Hogwarts because it was tradition and significantly nearer to home.”

“You didn’t invite a Marvolo to our birthday party,” Neville then added to which Harry shrugged nonchalantly.

“Well, a discovered orphaned Gaunt would put Wizarding Britain in disarray, wouldn’t it?” Harry almost laughed at their raised eyebrows because Harry? Passing up a chance at creating chaos? “He wasn’t ready for the attention just quite yet.” A complete and utter lie.

“Gaunt? That name sounds familiar.” Ron grunted, curiosity overriding jealousy for once.

“You’re right,” Draco frowned. “I’ve heard it before.”

“Me too?” Neville scratched his head. The three of them struggled a little to think of *why*.

Hermione looked confused. Harry reckoned *that* was topic of Wizarding Britain she hasn’t started on yet. Surprising, considering the members of their friend group.

Neville, bless his less prejudiced heart, connected the dots first. “The Longbottom, Malfoy, and Weasley families are all part of the Sacred Twenty-Eight,” he muttered in realization, “Abbot, Avery, Black, Bulstrode, Burke, Carrow, Crouch, Fawley, Flint, *Gaunt*- ”

Draco, whose mind finally caught up, gaped, “There hasn’t been a Gaunt in *decades*! We thought they all died out!”

“I can’t believe I recognized a name from that stupid list,” Ron whispered, horrified, “this is all Percy’s fault!”

“What list?” Hermione, her patience finally out, snapped, “What’s the Sacred Twenty-Eight?”

Harry, the little shit he was, actually cackled.

“The list itself doesn’t really matter,” Draco scoffed, “Most families nowadays regard it as a trophy that’s just there. No substance. It’s an outdated list, too, and I’m pretty sure some of them bribed Cantankerous Nott into it, or at the very least it has a significant amount of bias. I mean, the Potters aren’t in it, and up until Harry’s mother there wasn’t a drop of muggle blood in their family tree.”

“It’s a stupid list,” Ron agreed, and he would know, his family hated being associated with it. All of the people that regarded the Weasleys as ‘blood traitors’ are from the families in that list, after all. “Percy thinks it’s such a big deal though, as if it’ll help him kiss some arses more after he graduates Hogwarts.”

“Ron!”

“What? He’s a pompous prat, Hermione!”

“What does matter though, is that the Gaunts, for all of their infamy of excessive inbreeding, was at one point a *very* prestigious family. They were the direct descendants of Salazar Slytherin. They may have squandered in the end and died destitute and in shame, but an heir to the family is still noteworthy.” Neville explained. “My grandmother has said that the old families were dying out, especially with the bloodshed of the last war. Why do you think our class is significantly smaller than the sixth and seventh years? Most of us are even single heirs, the Weasleys being an exception. So the reintroduction of an old family could be a very good thing for the health of our society, even if it’s just one member at the moment.”

“As long as he’s not a prat,” Ron muttered.

“You mean as long as he doesn’t hit on Hermione?” Draco smirked, making the other boy turn red and sputtering.

“Aw, come on, Ron,” Harry cooed as his friend glared at him, “we’re just teasing.”

Hermione, a little pink herself, huffed, “Please stop. Besides, I’m very certain he is in no way interested in me. He already has *someone* in his mind.” She rose her eyebrows at Harry, who only grinned wider. Fortunately, no one else dug deeper into her words.

Harry clapped his hands together and chirpily started, “Well, anyway, did you hear about the-”

The train’s wheels screeched loudly as it came to a sudden stop and the lights went out. In seconds, the air turned cold and frigid and frost formed on the windows. Their compartment door carefully slid open, a dark bony hand peeking into the room before they were greeted by the terrifying visage of Azkaban’s prison guards.

“-dementors.”

Madame Pomfrey met with everyone unboarding from the train at Hogwarts’ platform, a basketful of chocolate and a little bit of calming draught for the students. She had been furious when she heard what had happened and tutted disapprovingly at the Headmaster for even allowing it at the first place. As if dementors at Hogwarts grounds wasn’t bad enough!

The children looked a little spooked and they all accepted the chocolate gratefully, even if the trolley witch had most likely exhausted her stock to the students during the immediate aftermath. Curiously though, none of them had needed the calming draught.

Cedric Diggory, who had a couple of new first years gripping his robes in comfort, graciously explained. “Potter summoned a Patronus, Professor,” he said a matter of factly, as if that was a common thing for a thirteen year old to do! “It drove away all the dementors and patrolled the train until we got here. Soothed us all, it did.” And Poppy couldn’t argue with that. Patronuses were known to have a calming effect to them to fight the aftermath of a dementor’s presence.

“I read about it in a book,” Potter told her when she asked. His *corporeal* Patronus coiled around his shoulders lazily, peering at her with curious eyes. “I figured, happy memory plus magic equals goodbye darkness my old friend, might as well give it a go.”

The boy was puzzling and with borderline terrifying potential, but well, she’s glad he read about it in a book. He was such a brilliant and kind boy. Who knows what could’ve happened without his Patronus.

But what a curious form, though.

“I kinda miss Prongs sometimes,” Harry told Tom through the mirror after the welcoming feast, during which Dumbledore tried to explain to a very uncertain student body the presence of the dementors in Hogwarts’ grounds. “Not to say the snake isn’t cool, but, ya know.”

Tom shrugged because no, he didn’t really know, “I wasn’t able to produce a corporeal Patronus until after a few lifetimes.”

“And by then both of ours were snakes,” Harry remembered. “Symbol of rebirth, transformation, and immortality, very apt for us.”

Chapter End Notes

Y'ALL MAKE ME EMOTIONAL. I didn't expect so many welcome back comments and stuff ;-; Thanks for not giving up me IT GIVES ME ENERGY TO WRITE MORE HORRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
i love you all

ALSO, I'm currently looking for a beta for this story to help smooth out the grammar a little and ~~tell me if something is stupid~~. Drop me line if interested!

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

short chapter this time but I wanted to get this part out of the way and oh god i forgot about the beta, didnt i

The biggest disappointment of the year came early.

Harry knew Remus wasn't going to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts this year, considering he and Sirius were content playing house and in agreement that Dumbledore could not-so-politely sod off, but it didn't mean he couldn't sigh at the sorry excuse of an auror they had gotten instead. What was even his name? Harry didn't even care to know.

"Well," Draco wrinkled his nose at their new professor, who tripped over nothing as the Hufflepuffs and Slytherins stared mournfully at their textbooks, "Looks like another self-study year. Merlin, no wonder Hogwarts has been underperforming in Defense compared to all the other top schools in the world. We can't even get a decent teacher for a year, and those we do get, never stay until the final exams."

At Draco's words of 'self-study,' a light bulb lit in Harry's mind.

"I have *just* the idea," Harry slowly grinned and Draco felt trepidation crawl up his spine.

"Hey, my wonderful best friends," Harry beamed at the other four when they met up for lunch, "I have a favor."

"Oh no," Neville sighed and Ron helplessly looked at the Great Hall's lunch spread.

"Can I at least fill my stomach first, mate? It'll make me take the news easier."

Hermione lightly smacked the boys' shoulders in reprimand, "He hasn't even said what it is yet! Honestly, boys!"

"I promise I won't be taking you to girls' loos this time," Harry solemnly swore, "It's all legal and proper!" He waved the sheet of parchment Professor Flitwick had cheerfully handed to him fifteen minutes prior.

Hermione's eyes trailed the waving parchment, so terribly curious, and was about to make a grab for it when Draco beat her to the punch.

“I, Professor Filius Flitwick, agree to sponsor and supervise The Duelling and Defense Club, a student club headed by Harry James Potter, so long as they have a minimum of six (6) student members. The purpose of the club is to further the practical study of defensive and offensive duelling spells appropriate for students seventh year and below.” Draco’s eyebrows rose. “A club?”

“That’s brilliant!” Hermione exclaimed brightly, “I knew we had student clubs and we could form them, but I never thought about making one to make up the regrettably poor lessons we’ve been getting for Defense.”

“That’s pretty cool, actually,” Ron added. “Like, I thought it was gonna be worse than joining a club, assuming that’s what the favor is gonna be. We need a sixth though.”

Neville looked wryly at Ron, “With how our Defense professors have been? We could literally ask anyone and they would sign in a heartbeat.”

The moment Neville finished speaking, a small hand delicately took the parchment from Draco’s grip and they all turned to watch a little blonde second-year write her name and signature just under Harry’s on the member list.

Her dazed-looking eyes glanced up at them and Harry could only laugh at his friends’ bewilderment. “It’s a pleasure to have you, Lovegood.”

Luna sparkled with her smile, “The pleasure is all mine.”

“Well, Mr. Potter, it looks like everything is in order. The Headmaster had to be assured that I could handle it, of course, but he forgets what this old man can do!” Professor Flitwick beamed at him. “I must say, I’m very excited for this club of yours! It’s been quite a while since we had a proper duelling club.” He said, completely and unapologetically discarding Lockhart’s effort just the year before.

“Oh, yeah, we’re pretty pumped ourselves.” Harry grinned. “Hermione’s already listing down all the possible spells we could cover and I think Neville and Draco are right behind her on that. Even Ron’s already asking when we’re gonna start ‘cause he’s spread the word to his brothers and roommates, so naturally, everyone in Gryffindor knows.”

“I’ll be letting my students and the other Heads of Houses know later tonight.” Flitwick’s eyes flickered to the cursive name under Harry’s. “I must say, I’m quite glad you’ve taken Ms. Lovegood under your wing.” He smiled gratefully at him, and Harry was actually quite touched.

“It’s no trouble at all. She’s one of mine now, even after knowing her for all of thirty minutes as of the end of lunch time, but I like her. No one can say shi-- anything otherwise to change my mind.” He firmly said, knowing very well the attitude of some of her house and classmates towards her. “Besides, my group’s been missing a Ravenclaw. It was about time we nabbed one.” Harry cheered.

Flitwick studied him intently, before nodding. “I’ll leave it to you then, Mr. Potter.”

“Mr. Potter never ceases to surprise, indeed.” Filius commented idly to Pomona and Poppy later that evening. Every once in a while they convene in one of their offices for a spot of tea and gossip. This time they sat around in Poppy’s office in the hospital wing.

“I’m quite glad he’s one of mine.” Pomona smiled. “The boy is wonderful, first thing, but I do remember Minerva’s assurance that he’ll be in his house. Oh, her face when the Sorting Hat called Hufflepuff!”

“One for a patronus, my dear?” Poppy teased and Filius snorted, knowing that while Pomona didn’t mean ill towards her colleague, it was nice to have a one up Minerva once in a while. Her Gryffindors always caused all sorts of trouble to other houses.

“Still, a practical defense club is quite clever.” Pomona said, “I imagine even he is getting tired of the poor defense staff the past few years.”

“You mean the past few *decades*,” Poppy wryly corrected. “We haven’t been able to keep a Defense professor for more than a year even before *I* was a student here. Albus needs to stop dilly dallying and get that curse looked at properly.”

“Speaking of Albus,” Pomona turned to Filius, who knew what she was going to say next. “What did he think of young Potter’s proposition?” It was no secret among the staff that the Headmaster was *very* interested in the Boy Who Lived, after all.

“I could tell he was apprehensive, but I gave him no reason to refuse the club.” Filius replied thoughtfully. “I believe it was more the fact that Mr. Potter was heading this club that had him concerned, but why, I’m not quite sure.”

“Paranoia, maybe?” Poppy said unconcernedly, “He is getting on his years. Mr. Potter has been squeaky clean since he entered Hogwarts, except for maybe the troll incident.”

“A miracle, considering how his father and his now guardians were when they were students,” Pomona sighed in relief. She remembered quite vividly the trouble Potter and Black got into before Lily Evans got them on her leash.

“Well, you definitely cannot say that Mr. Potter’s entourage isn’t quite an eclectic group,” Poppy said. “They’re young still, but I imagine in a year or two they will truly stir up things around here.”

Surprisingly, or maybe not if Harry thought about it, it was Cedric that approached him first about the club. In the Hufflepuff common room no less, where Harry was playing some gobstones with Justin and Ernie.

“I heard from Professor Sprout that you’ve started a new club, Potter,” Cedric pleasantly started, and Harry blinked up at the prefect. “Think you’ll be giving some tips on the Patronus spell? I’m quite interested in learning it.”

Harry shrugged, and people perked up at interest when he said, “Maybe. I still have to discuss with Professor Flitwick the syllabus.”

Cedric nodded and grinned, “Count me in, then. I’ll attend the ones that don’t interfere with Quidditch practice.”

“What club?” Justin asked, and as Harry explained to him, Ernie, and every other listening housemate, he knew he and Flitwick were going to have their hands full from Hufflepuffs alone.

And truly, there was quite an impressive showing on their first meeting on Saturday. A lot of just curious students, though Harry figured numbers will trickle down over the next few weeks to just those truly interested. But in the meantime...

“Maybe we should’ve gotten some more students to help,” Harry muttered, having counted the number of students in the large classroom they were in while Flitwick said his introductory remarks, and Flitwick laughed in agreement.

“A bit more than expected,” the professor cheerfully proclaimed, “but quite something I’m used to. Don’t worry, Mr. Potter. I’ll handle the older students, you concentrate on your yearmates and underclassmen.”

“Yes, sir!” Harry gleefully took two of the five baskets of small rubber balls as the professor started on showing the *Protego* spell.

“Oh, no.” Draco deadpanned because he may not know what exactly the balls were for, he knew enough to know it was for no good. Hannah Abbott made a curious noise from beside him.

“Oh, yes.” Harry twirled his wand, eyes sparkling. “I hope you guys were listening, because I’m going to make sure I can bounce as many balls as I can on your *corporeal* shield.”

Their club was a hit, of course. It renewed many students’ interest in Defense Against the Dark Arts, and by the time midterms came around, there was a noticeable spike in grades for the subject. Harry, naturally, was still top of his year, but students who used to lag a bit in the practical aspect of DADA like Hannah Abbott and Lisa Turpin had improved exponentially after continuous attendance.

Things have been surprisingly quiet the past few months. Harry was at least fully expecting to hear the Fat Lady’s portrait getting attacked again on Halloween, this time because of an insane Bellatrix Black, but not even the dementor guards were causing trouble. (Much.)

Heck, even the Headmaster and Snape were keeping their distance, however wary it may be. Harry wasn't sure what Dumbledore's theories about him was, and he didn't particularly care at the moment. At least the old man wasn't calling him up to his office anymore.

But.

"I'm so bored, oh my fucking god," Harry whined at Tom through the mirror. He'd come home to spend Yule with Sirius and Remus and as much as he loved the two, dear lord have they grown even more domestic. "So so bored."

"Poor Potter," Tom rolled his eyes, "Not even your little club is exciting enough for you?"

"No," Harry mournfully said, "Maybe I should've waited for Umbridge to come before forming it. The sneaking around added a lot of excitement the first time 'round."

"And get yourself carved up from her nasty blood quill? I don't think so." Harry grinned at Tom's tone, it was cute when he got possessive. "Besides, isn't Bellatrix still running around?"

"Aw, I thought I was the only one for you," Harry cooed teasingly, "But here you are asking about another woman."

"Do I have to spank you again, Harry." Tom blankly said and Harry didn't bother to stifle a laugh. The former Dark Lord cracked a smile.

"You wish!"

They shared a moment of silence, before Harry sighed.

"I miss you," He said, rolling to his stomach on his bed. "It's weird being apart like this."

"It has been a while since we weren't constantly together after unlocking our memories. I thought I would relish the space more, but I suppose I've gotten so accustomed to your presence that it... feels strange to have this physical distance between us." Tom admitted. "I do miss you as well."

Harry smiled. "Come over. Just apparate outside the wards and I can sneak you in without Sirius or Remus knowing. Pretty please?"

Tom rose an eyebrow at him, but relented. "Well, if the princess insists."

"Harry!" Sirius exclaimed, bursting into Harry's bedroom without a warning. He saw a head of dark hair jump up at the rude awakening and grinned when Harry fell over his bed.

"Bellatrix broke into Hogwarts!"

Then Sirius noticed that there was another body in bed.

“Oh my god, Sirius,” Harry whispered in growing horror as Tom stirred and squinted at his godfather.

Sirius stared blankly at the older boy then at his godson, both thankfully clothed properly, and then back to the stranger. “Remus!” He yelled without taking eyes off the teenagers. “Remus! There’s a boy in Harry’s bed!”

The three of them heard a distant clang of a pot dropping. “What?!”

“I thought you said they wouldn’t know,” Tom pointedly said to Harry.

“I thought you set the alarm to wake us up so you could sneak out,” Harry hissed back. A cough prevented the argument from going further and they slowly turned to Harry’s godfather.

“I hope, dear Harry,” Sirius grinned maniacally, “that you have a good explanation for this.”

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

posts a christmas chapter two months late with starbucks
it's still winter so it still counts right

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

“Tea?” Remus very calmly, *too calmly* , offered to Tom. The werewolf smiled. “Do you like sugar or cream with it?”

“Sugar, please. Just two.” Tom stiffly replied and didn’t take his eyes off the cup Lupin was preparing for him. Either they used a different, less sweeter kind of sugar cubes or Lupin purposely put six in instead. “I’m not about to get poisoned, am I?” He muttered to Harry, who sat beside him around the kitchen table. Remus and Sirius sat across them, unabashedly staring at the two.

(So maybe Tom was a little wary. But he very distinctly remembered the last time Harry’s parent-figure caught the two of them in bed, and it ended with him being chased out of the house. Half-naked. In January. With a very angry father with a shotgun on his tail.)

“Don’t be stupid, they haven’t had time to brew one.” Harry whispered back and snorted when Tom grimaced at the too sweet tea.

“So,” Sirius cheerfully started, “Harry. Now, I know you’re a teenager now and Merlin knows the kind of company I kept during my younger years,” at this Remus coughed, “but wouldn’t it have been more polite if you told us you had a *friend* over?”

“You snuck around with girls and boys all the time when you were a teenager,” Harry rebutted, “you bragged to me about it. Hypocrite.”

“Which is why I’m the best person to tell you off about having strange boys in your bed,” Sirius easily said. Remus rolled his eyes.

“It wasn’t like that!” Harry insisted. “It was just *cuddling* . We had clothes on.” Tom, wisely, didn’t add anything and just braved through his cup of tea. Because that’s what you do when you have the werewolf who prepared it staring you down.

“I believe we haven’t caught your name,” Remus pleasantly said to Tom, who carefully met his eyes. “And how you know Harry. I had thought we’d met all his friends.”

“My name is Marvolo Gaunt,” Tom stiffly replied. “I attend Durmstrang, and Harry and I have known each other since before he started Hogwarts.”

“*Gaunt*,” Sirius grinned toothily. “That old family? I thought they inbred themselves into extinction decades ago. Which wasn’t the biggest loss in the world.”

Harry choked but Tom wasn’t one to cower or be offended. Even if he was getting a little ticked off. “No one knew my father was of their family. He himself didn’t know until before he died, just long enough to reinstate himself and name me heir. That was the story according to my late mother at least.”

“Durmstrang, you say? Interesting. Why not Hogwarts, considering you sound like a native Brit.” Sirius peered thoughtfully at him. “And it would’ve allowed you to be closer to Harry, and wouldn’t that have been nice, since you two are *friends*.”

“My mother thought it would be better for me to go to Durmstrang,” Tom’s smile was strained, “I wasn’t about to go against her wishes. I was a bit of a mother’s boy, you see.”

‘*Mother’s boy*,’ Harry mouthed disbelievingly at Tom. Harry knew very well Tom’s feelings towards Merope, and even lifetimes still haven’t eased the bitterness or contempt towards some of her life decisions.

“You’re a pureblood then, I presume?” Sirius casually asked as he started twirling his wand with his fingers. Harry twitched.

“Not quite. My father was a halfblood. He had a muggle father.”

“Oh?” Sirius hummed. “What was your father’s name? Perhaps he attended Hogwarts the same time as we did, we might know him.”

Harry tried to remember if Voldemort’s real name was common knowledge between the Order of the Phoenix or if it was one of those things Dumbledore kept close to his chest. He didn’t think Sirius and Remus were familiar with the name Tom Riddle, but considering how things have changed in this lifetime, Harry couldn’t be too certain.

“I highly doubt it, unless you’re actually over sixty years old.” Tom dryly replied, and god, that tone was bordering on disrespect if Sirius actually cared about pureblood niceties. “He had me rather late in his life.”

“Fair enough,” Sirius shrugged. “I don’t really care that much, anyways, since I know very well from experience lineages sometimes mean jack shit. I mean, my mother had always been a downright bit-”

“What we’re more concerned about,” Remus firmly interrupted, “is the nature of your’s and Harry’s relationship. You’re what? Fifteen or sixteen? Harry is thirteen and while the age gap is only three years, we cannot in good conscience allow a too intimate of a relationship before he’s fourteen at the least.”

“Remus, it’s too soon to have this- this courting talk!” Sirius whined. “Harry’s not allowed to get married until he’s thirty!”

“Oh my god,” Harry groaned into his hands.

“Harry and I are very much in love,” Tom, the absolute asshole, said very seriously. “But I can assure you that his purity is very much safe until we entangle ourselves in the bonds of holy matrimony.”

There was an incredulous pause.

“You goddamn troll!” Harry screeched as something in Sirius snapped and the ex-convict leapt across the table and lunged for Tom’s neck. Remus, with his very impressive reflexes, managed to get the teapot and cups out of harm’s way, only reprimanding Sirius to “ *Watch the fine china! That was my mother’s!* ”

How in Merlin’s name did *Harry* end up the straight man in this situation?

“I still think you were an idiot,” Harry pointedly told Tom the moment he opened the door. He squinted at the older teenager’s presents. “Are those flowers for me?”

Tom sniffed imperiously, holding the bouquet closer to his chest. “Not anymore.” He stepped through the threshold of the house warily, and only when he wasn’t hexed within the next minute did he finally give Harry the bouquet of flowers. “But I guess I can’t keep them myself.”

“How sweet,” Harry rolled his eyes, “and knowing you, the flowers mean something. What is it this time?”

“Shouldn’t you know?” Tom smirked, “Didn’t you date a florist once?”

“Yeah, *you* .”

“It means love, purity, and innocence,” the teenage Dark Lord said with a straight face. “A very appropriate bouquet for my *darling* .”

“Sirius is going to kill you in your sleep.” Harry unsympathetically declared. Tom bared a vicious smile.

“He can try.” Tom then turned to Hermione, who was watching the exchange with wide eyes and raised eyebrows. “Merry Yule, Hermione.”

“You two are the most bewildering couple I have ever met,” Hermione said. “Merry, er, Yule, Marvolo. You were a florist?”

“A summer job,” Tom easily lied. “I got everyone presents. I promise none of them are particularly harmful. Except maybe your Longbottom friend’s.”

Harry squinted at Tom as he took some of the bagged presents from his hands. “Have you been cursed? Poisoned? Taken any questionable edibles? You’re being strangely nice and a decent human being.”

“I am of sound body and mind,” Tom said as they walk towards the sitting room where the rest of the party was gathered. “I wouldn’t drug myself to make this gathering easier on me, Harry dear.”

“Ah, Marvolo!” Sirius, coming out of nowhere and wearing an obnoxiously red santa hat, cheerfully greeted. “Nice of you to make it!” He clapped Tom’s back jovially, as if he hadn’t attempted to strangle the teen two days before.

“Thank you for having me,” Tom smiled politely, if a bit strained. Harry snorted and even Hermione looked a little knowing.

Yule was technically yesterday, but Harry had wanted a small gathering for he and his friends to exchange presents face to face for once. The Malfoy gala was always on the 24th, so the 26th was a good day for it. Harry and Sirius had been invited to the Malfoy’s as the current Head Black and heir, but considering the events of the morning, they weren’t able to make it. (Harry knew Sirius didn’t consider it much of a loss, though it did disappoint his dear cousin Narcissa.)

Neville was the first of his friends to rise from his seat and greet Tom. “It’s nice to finally meet you, Gaunt.” Neville offered his hand, which Tom shook politely. “We’ve heard about you from Harry and Hermione often.”

“A pleasure, Longbottom. And please, call me Marvolo.”

“Then call me Neville.”

Ron didn’t look too pleased at his presence, considering Hermione looked very eager to talk academics with Tom, but wasn’t *too* rude about it. Draco, of course, assessed the new arrival, found him adequate despite his association with the disgraced Gaunt family, and properly shared introductions. Then of course there was Luna.

“You two do make a striking couple,” the blond girl beamed, oblivious to Sirius sharply honing in on those words, “When’s the wedding?”

Sirius sputtered, “*Never* !” while Harry gently patted Luna’s head and Tom’s lips quirked into a smirk.

“He still needs to court me properly,” Harry explained to the Ravenclaw. Tom rolled his eyes, an eyebrow raised at the bouquet still in Harry’s hand. “The *wizard* way.” They ignored Sirius wailing in the kitchen, telling Remus to “*Make them stop talking about young love! Remus! They’re not listening to me!*”

“Huh,” Neville blinked at them, while Draco and Ron also looked quite surprised. Hermione, on the other hand, grinned knowingly. “I thought Sirius was just overreacting.”

“Did he really catch you two in bed?” Draco whispered scandalously. Everyone knew he had inherited his mother’s love for gossip. “How *improper*, Harry.” He gleefully admonished.

“Wait,” Ron squeaked, “you’re *dating* ?!”

“Wow,” Tom remarked. “You were right. Your friends are actually more amusing than Viktor and the other Durmstrang students.”

After a hearty lunch prepared by Remus and Harry, they went back to the sitting room to exchange presents.

Harry gratefully accepted all his friends’ presents. Ron had given him some homemade treats and a handknit Weasley sweater, made lovingly by his mother. Draco and the Malfoys had given him quite a nice pair of matching winter cloak and gloves. Hermione got him a classy leather journal, his name embossed on the corner of the back cover (Harry and Tom shared a private moment of amusement, as it matched Tom’s own boyhood journal). Luna, of course, then gave he and Tom actual matching handcrafted necklaces.

Neville presented him with some plant-based potions materials in vials, no doubt from the boy’s greenhouse. Additionally, he shyly gave Harry, Sirius, and Remus a shared present - an old framed picture of Frank, Alice, James, and Lily. He admitted he had found it when looking back at old photo albums of his parents over the summer. Lily and Alice were both visibly and joyously pregnant in the picture, and Harry wasn’t ashamed to admit that the image filled him with a feeling of sadness and regret. Sirius and Remus looked quite teary eyed as well, and the three of them overwhelmed Neville with a group hug.

Sirius and Remus had given him a new broom, the Firebolt, to Harry’s nostalgia. In return, Harry, the joker that he was, gave them a His and His set of collars and handcuffs for a specific kind of play. Sirius’s wail of “ *You’re thirteen!* ” and Remus looking up at an imaginary god with such a red face was worth it.

Harry gleefully gave all his friends, bar Tom, matching wand holsters. Very high quality ones, near indestructible, and charmed to the very thread. And also in absolutely ridiculous colors that they simply could not glamour differently or change, so “ *Yes, Draco, you will have to deal with the neon green despite it clashing with everything you own.* ”

“It feels rather Power Rangers, doesn’t it,” Hermione muttered as she inspected her hot pink holster. From beside her, Ron didn’t know what Power Rangers was, but he did know that neon orange didn’t look any better with his red hair. Neville, thankfully, had the least offensive bright scarlet, though Luna was delighted over her eyesore of a neon yellow one.

Tom eyed his gift from Harry warily. “I do hope mine is different.”

Harry scoffed, “You’re just jealous I didn’t get you a holster as well.”

“Not if it’s in the same color spectrum as theirs are,” Tom dryly said as he opened the gift. Then squinted when the box revealed another wrapped box. “You’re kidding me.”

Harry beamed.

Five boxes later, which had everyone very amused, Tom revealed an envelope with a giftcard to McDonald's. Sirius, Remus, and even Hermione (the three who knew what the yellow M meant in the first place) barked a laugh or giggled. The other three wizard boys were simply confused and Luna had started stacking the boxes into a tower two minutes earlier, but still saw some humor at the gift.

"You're a terrible imp," Tom grumbled, but kept the giftcard anyway. "I shouldn't give you your present at all."

And despite Harry making "gimme" motions the entire time, Tom, to the surprise and delight of everyone else, gave them all even just a little something.

"Oh my god," Neville, the first one to open his, whispered in awe. His eyes had that gleam that it took when he got particularly passionate about Herbology, which was both terrifying and endearing. "This plant is illegal in thirty-two European countries."

Everyone looked up from their own gifts in bewilderment.

"Not in the United Kingdom," Tom breezily said. "I checked all the laws to make sure. Perfectly legal to own a Nightmare Cobra Vine, and no laws against breeding it."

"Isn't that poisonous?" Draco apprehensively eyed the plant, which was safely enclosed in a bubble charm, but still. He scooted a few inches away from Neville.

"And carnivorous," Neville grinned, and maybe Harry had rubbed off on Neville a bit. Or possibly encouraged some aspects of his personality. (Or possibly it was the years of friendship with him that hit the final nail on the coffin of Neville's sanity towards plants.) "I'm going to need a new greenhouse. And lots of mice. Thank you, Marvolo. Marry me if Harry doesn't."

None of the other presents were as exciting or exotic as Neville's, though they were still very much pleasantly surprised. Combined with the revelation that Marvolo had no romantic interest in Hermione, and the exclusive autographed picture of Viktor Krum, who had rapidly grown in popularity in the Quidditch scene after his professional debut this past summer, well, Ron's attitude towards Marvolo had greatly improved. Draco was also impressed with the two potion's books he had gotten, both of which were not available for purchase anywhere in Britain. Hermione got a rather simple yet very well made box case for personal items such as jewelry and the like. Luna, too, received a book, though in her case it was a second edition publication of Newt Scamander's *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. Even Remus and Sirius were grateful for their gifts, Remus's being a box of magical Swiss chocolate truffles that boasted being one of the best, and Sirius's being a bottle of quality whiskey, which Harry had told him his godfather preferred.

Then there was Tom's gift to Harry.

Harry poked the wrapped box. It had some weight on it, but not a lot considering the size of it. "I hope it's Hufflepuff's Cup," he joked and was about to begin unwrapping it when he caught the carefully straight face Tom was making.

“You didn’t,” He accused, and when Tom tilted his head to look away, he kicked him on the shin. The last time Harry’d seen the Cup was at their little cottage with all the other former Horcruxes. “You didn’t!”

“How could it be Hufflepuff’s Cup?” Remus asked, baffled. “It’s been lost for decades!”

Harry opened the box and revealed that it was, in fact, Hufflepuff’s Cup.

“I found it in the family vault,” Tom said blandly, the liar that he was, “gathering dust. I thought, well, might as well give it to the one Hufflepuff I know.”

Everyone stared at him, and then at the cup.

“I’m bringing it to dinner the first night we’re back,” Harry’s eyes gleamed. “It’s going to be like Ravenclaw’s Diadem again. People are going to lose their shit. *Zacharias Smith* is going to lose *his* shit. It’ll be great.” Tom, fully expecting that to be the outcome, didn’t even blink.

“Well,” Draco started, “what’s next after that then, Harry? Slytherin’s Locket?”

“Maybe for his birthday,” Tom replied. “Or an engagement gift.”

Sirius, in a move befitting of an adult, threw one of the empty gift boxes straight at Tom’s face.

Chapter End Notes

i was intending the christmas part to not be this long but it grew so it gets to be its own chapter. bellatrix can wait until next time lol
(i'm.. gonna pick a beta soon...i promise...)

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Thanks to my new beta, Piff, who's been sprucing up this fic so that it's less of a grammatical mess. I'll be going back through the past chapters and pretend that I didn't have a million mistakes.

Second to the last chapter for third year, then we go to fourth 8)

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

All throughout the train ride back to Hogwarts and dinner, all everyone could talk about was Bellatrix's now infamous Hogwarts break-in. How did she do it? Why? Everyone wondered, though some eyes strayed towards Harry, wondering if she was aiming for revenge.

Of course, all talk around Harry quieted once people noticed that he was drinking his pumpkin juice from a rather peculiar goblet.

"Harry," Justin hesitantly said, "your cup is different." Beside Justin, Ernie and Susan squinted at the embossed leaves and finely wrought handles on the golden cup.

"It was a Christmas present," Harry proudly turned the cup and displayed the badger for everyone to see. "It's rather nice, isn't it?"

"Helga Hufflepuff's cup!" The Fat Friar cheerfully called out from where he drifted a few feet above. "My my, Little Potter, I think that's the real thing!"

Everyone heard it. Heads snapped to the Hufflepuff table and people rose to get a better peek at the legendary cup, because *of course* Harry Potter found another historical artifact. A few seats away, a shocked Zacharias Smith fell to the floor in his haste to get out of his seat and scramble towards him. Colin Creevey snapped a picture of the boy almost instinctively, and Harry had never been more proud.

"Someone must really like you to give you that as a Christmas present," Hannah muttered, faintly incredulous.

"That-" Zacharias sputtered furiously, face red and blotchy, "that doesn't belong to you!"

Harry grinned wider.

To Zacharias' disappointment, his family opted to let the cup stay in Harry's trustworthy hands. Finders keepers, as they said. Grandmother Smith in particular seemed very grateful to Harry and the mystery gifter for the rediscovery considering how their family had lost it in the first place.

"Terrible business it was," the old matriarch clicked her tongue, "I told Hepzibah to stop telling everyone our family had it but she was too confident in her ability to hide it. Didn't even tell us where she kept it hidden. Then what happens? She shows it to the wrong man and pays the price for it."

Harry, who knew the entire story from Tom himself, did his best to keep a straight face.

"I think Lady Smith likes me," Harry beamed at his friends at breakfast a week later, showing them a new letter from the woman, pictures of her grandchildren and grandnieces attached. "She's trying to set me up with one of her family members."

"Getting betrothal contracts thrown at you already, Harry?" Cedric sympathetically asked a few seats down the Hufflepuff table.

Ron snorted. "A little too late now, don't ya think?"

"I have a type," Harry declared nonchalantly, and by lunchtime the rumor on the grapevine evolved from Harry having a "type" to Harry having found a lover in Italy over Christmas break that he was to wed after the semester ended. Nevermind that he's still only thirteen and the practice of marrying young ended centuries ago.

"What's your *type*, Harry?" Tom purred over the mirror that night, and Harry was more amazed of how the news travelled so fast rather than the fact that someone gossiped with Tom. Harry bet it was Neville.

"Not you," Harry lied cheekily before rudely hanging up and going to bed.

The Defense Club reconvened the weekend after the students' return. Professor Flitwick gleefully taught the fifth years and above *Incarcerous*, while Harry had the younger ones apply *Emancipare* to the dummies bound by the older students' spell. After an hour of practice, the half-goblin led the club to the quidditch field and instructed everyone how to play his fucked-up version of Freeze Tag.

"Harry," Hermione looked at him disapprovingly, as if it was his fault that this game existed. Which, considering Freeze Tag was a muggle game that Professor Flitwick unlikely played as a wee boy, was fair enough of an assumption.

“I didn’t do it,” Harry insisted though, as colorful team headbands were passed around, “this is entirely Professor Flitwick’s creation.”

“I thought I got away from PE when I started Hogwarts,” Hermione sighed as she fastened the turquoise headband with the number “100” on her forehead. Ron, Ginny, Fred, George, and Lee Jordan sported the same headband, only with a “50” on theirs.

“This is gonna be fun,” Fred grinned, twirling his wand while George bounced on his feet beside him.

“The prize better be worth it,” Draco sniffed. He, Neville, Luna, Cedric, Cho Chang, and Roger Davies all sported lavender headbands, Cedric having the 100 point one.

Harry thought about the vial of Felix Felicis Professor Flitwick has requested from Snape, separated into six singular servings and smiled. “Good luck.”

Team Pastel Pink won. Daphne Greengrass and Lavender Brown working together rose a few eyebrows, but it was effective. With Angelina Johnson, Alicia Spinnet, Gemma Farley, and Tracey Davis, it was downright cutthroat the way they dominated the field and captured a third of all the headbands.

“Congratulations!” Harry handed his classmates their little bit of Felix Felicis. “You guys rocked.”

Daphne coolly nodded at him, perfectly poised and pretty as if she just didn’t spend the last thirty minutes sprinting around the field and casting *Emancipare* to free her teammates when necessary. “Your instruction of the spell was adequate,” she said in a clipped tone, which was practically a glowing review from her.

In contrast, Lavender batted her eyelashes at him, tapping the vial coyly against her lips while asking, “If I took this, would you answer truthfully if I asked what your *type* specifically is?”

“Not you,” Harry said brazenly, and instead of being offended, Lavender laughed.

A month into the semester, he got a note from Snape.

The Potions Professor doesn’t spare him a glance as he gave Harry back his homework, but Harry’s eyes immediately zone in on the words ‘*My office, 7pm tonight*’ written in red ink at the bottom of the parchment. His lips quirked, tapping his parchment once to grab the professor’s attention before giving him a barely discernible nod.

“May I help you, professor?” Harry asked from the seat Snape had gestured him to sit on as the man stood looking out the window.

There was a few moments of silence before the dour man spoke. "I find myself in a conundrum, Mr. Potter." Snape flicked his eyes to him, lips tugging into a frown as he spoke. "Are you aware of the impression you made to the Headmaster when we met you the first time?"

Harry furrowed his eyebrows. "Not particularly, but considering how the few interactions I've had with Professor Dumbledore have gone, I have the inkling that it was not a good one."

"He thinks you're the Dark Lord." Snape said simply, gaze fixated on Harry's face.

"Say what now?" Harry blurted, filter and pretense gone as his eyebrows rose incredulously. That... that was not what he expected. His little act was always meant to just remind Dumbledore of Tom and make him uneasy at the thought of Harry following his footsteps. Yet if he thought about it for a moment, he could see why the old man came about his theory.

Harry squinted at Snape and saw Snape's eyes flash in equal surprise and... satisfaction?

"A year ago the idea would have seemed plausible to me," Snape continued. "Up until this school year, your mannerisms when not under the eyes of your peers were indifferent at best, sociopathic at worst. There was a discerning, almost inhospitable aura around you yet you were surrounded by friends who knew nothing of your nature. To myself and the headmaster, it seemed as if everyone was being fooled, while only we saw the truth. But I see now that that was not the case."

Harry thoughtfully tapped his fingers on his chair. It was true that Harry had been very lax about his deception game. It was a fun idea, at first, but as all things went, it just ended up boring to keep up. It was one of those things that would've been more fun had Tom been around to do it with him.

So Harry simply shrugged, "Things change."

Snape gave him an irritated look. "Don't play games Potter. The headmaster isn't someone you want as an enemy, and thinking that the consequences of your little act won't lead to that is foolish and arrogant. The moment he's certain that you've turned colors he will not hesitate to force you down. For all that he's pacifistic, the mistakes he made with the Dark Lord are not ones he will allow himself to make again."

"Why are you telling me this?" Harry cut in, and the rude interruption made Snape twitch in irritation. "You've already pointed out that I've stopped with my act. What does it matter now?"

"Suspensions aren't easily dismissed, Potter," Snape growled. "You did something to Lockhart, that much he suspects-"

"Lockhart's disappearance was his own damn fault-"

"-and don't think he doesn't have eyes all around the castle-"

“I haven’t done anything wrong-”

“-and I’m trying to warn you, you stupid boy!” The professor snapped and Harry fell quiet.

Warn him? What?

“You may not be the Dark Lord himself, or an incarnation of him, but he is not dead,” Snape whispered and Harry watched as the older man gripped his forearm tightly. “And you, you will be caught between a murderous madman seeking revenge and a meddling old man who sees you as a sacrifice for the greater good.” Snape caught him in the eyes, and with a pained grimace sighed.

“I hated your father, and I will until I die, but you are also Lily’s son. I can’t in good conscience keep you blind from what is about to come when she sacrificed herself for you. I’ve done enough. Now get out.”

Harry, bewildered by the entire visit, didn’t take any time heading for the door. But he hesitated, and before Snape could yell at him again to leave, sighed heavily and said something Tom was going to admonish him for when he found out.

“Your life debt has been fulfilled.”

He hastily left the room before Snape could do more than inhale sharply in shock.

“You what,” Tom flatly said after Harry recounted the event.

“I panicked, okay?” Harry whined, his voice muffled by the fact that he lay face down on his bed. “I was expecting.. I don’t know. Some threatening and posturing. Not like.. that weird ass way of showing concern for me. Like... what the fuck. *Why* the fuck.”

Tom sighed and rubbed his temples in exasperation. “In some ways, Severus Snape is a complicated individual. What remains consistent however is his... guilt over your mother.”

“He’s bad at letting go, isn’t he,” Harry snorted, thinking about the grudges and the life debt and Snape’s final moments way back then. “Well now that he’s not obligated to save my ass all the time, maybe in this life he’ll actually find peace.”

Though, knowing Snape, that was unfortunately unlikely.

Harry doesn’t tell any of his friends about his chat with Snape. Though Draco must have picked something up from his mood because the blond stayed beside him throughout the day barring classes they don’t share. Harry could appreciate the thought though, and the fact that Draco knew when not to ask and to just carry on as normal.

Of course, what wasn't normal that day is the two of them meeting the rest of their friends at the courtyard, only to find a very upset, red eyed, and sniffling Luna being cuddled by Cho and Cedric. Neville sat by Cho holding Luna's hand for comfort, while Hermione sat across Luna eyeing any too curious passerby's sharply. Ron was awkwardly beside Cedric but provided his own brand of comfort by handing the younger girl unwrapped chocolate drops as she needed.

"Who am I hexing?" Draco scowled to Harry's amusement. Who would've thought Malfoy would develop a soft spot for Luna Lovegood?

"You can't hex my sister!" Ron protested then mumbled, "Even if she was being a bitch."

"Language, Ron! And you can't call your sister that either!" Hermione smacked the boy's shoulder. However no one else reprimanded the insult and Harry blinked, because what the hell did Ginny do?

"There was an altercation," Cho explained gently. "Cedric and I broke it up before it went any further, but Ginny is with Professor McGonagall right now and they might be calling her parents later."

"What?" Harry was stumped. First Snape, now Ginny? Things were going sideways this week.

"She hasn't talked to me in months," Luna sniffled, looking small curled up against Cho. "I tried to spend time with her during Christmas break but she didn't want to."

"She completely ignored Luna at the Ottery St. Catchpole Christmas party too," Cedric added, remembering. "Which I kinda thought was weird considering they're friends."

Harry thought this whole thing was weird too, because he remembered Ginny and Luna being best friends. Heck, he and Ginny named their daughter after her. He was sure this argument never happened the first time but then again, he was a bit self-absorbed with the whole Sirius thing happening.

"Ginny's jealous," Ron then revealed uncomfortably, "During the entire break she was complaining about how Harry's been paying more attention to Luna than to her. That you didn't invite her to your Christmas party but invited Luna."

Well, Harry thought as everyone stared at him, this was awkward.

"Ron," he said slowly, "I've never even talked to your sister."

"Mate, I'm like the last person you have to explain yourself to," Ron said. "I'm pretty sure she just stares at you when you're in the same room. I've seen it happen like a million times."

"Because that's how you get someone to pay attention to you," Draco drawled, "Just stare at them until they stare back. It's not as if Harry doesn't have dozens of people staring at him every day already."

“She’s just a girl with a crush.” Cho told Luna sensibly. “We do stupid things when we like someone, and it’s very easy to get jealous. Give her time and she’ll realize a boy isn’t worth throwing away a years long friendship, even if it’s the Boy Who Lived.”

“Hey,” Harry mildly protested, “I’m totally worth it.”

Everyone, including Luna, snorted.

Harry’s feelings for Ginny were complicated.

Objectively speaking, she still looked the same. She still talked the same, acted the same. It was still Ginny, Ron’s little sister that had stared at him wide-eyed when he showed up at the Burrow one morning after being broken out of Privet Drive by her brothers.

But Harry could admit that there was a reason why, even if he can rub shoulders with the likes of Malfoy, he couldn’t do the same with her. Why a year later he’d made no move of having her close as he did with the others. And it was because she would never be his Ginny.

She would never be his Ginny, because Diary Tom Riddle never happened to her.

It was probably pretty fucked up, Harry mused, on how Tom Riddle was the root and base of their relationship. There was something intimate about being the only two people who had been so deeply touched by the soul pieces of Voldemort. Ginny almost died being connected to Voldemort so invasively and Harry actually did die for the same.

He loved her, he really did. Their years together were wonderful, and they had created a beautiful family that Harry to this day missed dearly. But he thought it would be unfair to this Ginny to have her close to him when he still saw his Ginny, his first spouse and the only one who understood what it felt like to carry a piece of the most despised Dark Lord of the century.

(A few lifetimes ago, Harry had bumped into a middle aged Ginny in Muggle London. She had given him a fleeting apologetic smile before she disappeared into the sea of people and he had felt lightning struck all day.

He’d told Tom his jumbled mess of thoughts and Tom had listened. There’d been jealousy swimming in his eyes, but beneath all that, there’d been understanding.

“Once, during our engagement, we got roaring drunk in our apartment.” Harry recalled. “And she admitted to me that sometimes she wished she still had the diary. And I was fine with it. ‘Cuz it sounds fucked up and all, but there were moments in that life where I didn’t feel whole. I was missing something. And I wished I still had your horcrux in me because I realized I was missing *it* .”

“You’ll never feel incomplete again,” Tom had promised.)

“I’m sorry,” Ginny looked downcast as she apologized to Luna at lunch a few days later. “I was angry and jealous and stupid. You’re my friend and I miss you.”

“I’m sorry too,” Luna took Ginny’s hand shyly, “I didn’t mean to make you feel left behind.”

The other students politely pretended that the two second years weren’t crying beside the Gryffindor table while Harry made a decision.

“Hey, Ginny, was it?” He grinned at the redheaded girl who looked shocked at being addressed. “Why don’t you sit with us? A friend of Luna’s is a friend of ours.”

Luna beamed.

Chapter End Notes

wow it got serious there at the end

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

a long serious chapter? what, this fic actually has plot? and i didn't wait two months to update again this time? what in tarnation

“Thank you,” Luna said, a few days into her and Ginny’s friendship honeymoon. “I won’t ask why, but I know you don’t feel comfortable around her. So it means a lot to me having her around with us.”

Harry looked at her, unsurprised at her strange capacity to see what everyone else didn’t and gave a wry smile. “I’m not about to keep any of you from being friends with other people. My feelings aside, if she makes you happy then who am I to get in the way of that? She was your friend first.”

Luna looked at him, uncharacteristically serious, before she gently smiled. “Marvolo is lucky to have you.”

They were words that he’s heard in many iterations, many times, in many lives. But somehow, the way Luna said it made Harry a little bashful. In a rare moment of truthfulness, he admitted “I wouldn’t know what to do without him.”

The blonde second year patted his cheek. “Oh Harry,” she said sympathetically, “You’re soulmates. I don’t think he’d know what to do without you either.”

On Friday, the day before the Valentine’s Day Hogsmeade weekend, Cormac McLaggen approached their group during lunch.

Harry was never friendly with McLaggen in his first life, and barely interacted with him this time around. He distinctly remembered him being a pompous ass though. Hermione could write an essay about his shortcomings after taking him as a date at one of Slughorn’s parties. Still, he had maybe said two words to McLaggen these three years, and they were “Excuse me” while passing each other in the loo.

So it came as a surprise when McLaggen cockily smirked down at Harry and asked “Would you like to go to Hogsmeade with me tomorrow, Potter?”

“What?” Draco coughed, barely catching himself from choking on his food. Ron, who was taking a drink, wasn’t so lucky and sprayed pumpkin juice all over his plate to everyone’s disgust.

“You’re asking Harry out on a date?” Ron wheezed.

“It’s none of your business, but yes,” McLaggen rolled his eyes before giving Harry a piercing look. “What do you think, Potter?”

“I’m flattered and all,” Harry said slowly, very aware at all the eyes watching the scene because Hogwarts was full of nosy as fuck teenagers. “But I’m going to have to decline.”

McLaggen frowned, “Why?”

“He really doesn’t have to explain himself to you, McLaggen,” Neville frowned back.

“And he doesn’t really need his friends to speak for him, Longbottom,” the older Gryffindor bit back. “I’m just asking, as someone who’s interested in *you*,” McLaggen pointedly said to Harry, “Why I’m not being given a chance.”

Everyone knew McLaggen was an asshole, and that was enough of a reason for anyone to decline a date from him. But also, Harry was the Boy Who Lived on the throes of puberty and really, he should’ve seen it coming when the speculation about his ‘type’ started. People were interested in his love life and while the plan was to wait until fourth year to reveal anything, maybe Harry could get away with a little preview.

“I can’t go on a date with you because I’m already spoken for,” Harry nonchalantly said, pretending he didn’t notice the way the other students’ thoughts turned at his words. “And they would be very upset if I went off on dates without them.”

“Tch,” McLaggen scowled. “Figures you’re taken already.”

Harry grinned. “Oh, you don’t even know.”

On Monday, actual Valentine’s Day, two owls fly in and lower an extravagant bouquet of roses, chrysanthemums, and tulips - all red and a blatant declaration of love - on Harry’s lap at breakfast. His friends grinned in various levels of amusement and knowing while the gossipy students burst into speculative whispers. Harry couldn’t help but laugh and keep a silly grin on his face all day. Hopefully the gourmet chocolate truffles he sent pleased Tom as much as the flowers did him.

Of course, the peace couldn’t last.

A few days before Easter, the entire castle was awoken in the middle of the night by an alert from their professors.

“Stay in here,” Professor Sprout sternly commanded, looking pale and concerned for her students. “Prefects, make sure everyone is accounted for, please. And do not, in any

circumstances, open the door until the lockdown has been lifted.”

Once Professor Sprout left and shut the entrance to their dormitory, one of the sixth years collapsed into one of the couches. “They did the same thing when Bellatrix Lestrange broke into the castle over winter break,” the sixth year’s terrified voice was loud in the deathly silent common room. “She’s back.”

That of course just made the atmosphere worse.

“They would’ve tightened security after the first time, wouldn’t they?” Hannah asked nervously, her hands wringing the edge of her night shirt.

“We should be safe here,” Susan assured her. “Surely they have something planned for this time.”

“Load of good the dementors were,” Ernie grimaced and Harry had to agree. They were as helpful guarding the castle as they were last time, only with less nightmares at Harry’s end.

Harry sighed, scratching his unruly hair and making Justin snort when he noticed it only made the messy bedhead worse. “Well, I need to take a piss,” Harry said after Cedric had counted all the first years as present. “Be back in a minute.”

He yawned as he headed to his and his yearmates’ bedroom, intending to use the adjacent bathroom to do his business. He muttered a curse when he stubbed a toe against Justin’s trunk and rolled his eyes when he notice the mess their dorm room was. Nonetheless, he placed his wand on his bedside table before shuffling into the bathroom and reaching to turn on the light.

That’s when all his senses blared alerts at him.

Harry barely had time to cast a wandless *Protego* when he saw a bright light bounce against his shield and exploded a few of the bathroom mirrors and sinks. One of the water pipes even burst and sprayed water all over, including on Harry. Wide eyed, he saw Bellatrix Lestrange’s sickly sweet smile through the shimmer of his shield.

“Hello, little ickle Potter,” she crooned, “I’ve been waiting to meet you for a *very long* time.”

Wasting no time, Harry threw another wandless spell - *Reducto* - knowing fully well that he needed to get to his wand *now* and made to sprint for it. For the umpteenth time since he woke up in this lifetime, he cursed his young body for being unaccustomed to wandless magic. All the private exercises and training, and yet he’s already fatigued from the *Protego* and *Reducto*. (Granted, he highly suspected that the spell he blocked was a more potent Blasting Curse.) He had hoped prison had dulled down her skills, but for someone who spent over a decade in Azkaban, Bellatrix was *fast*. She paid no mind as Harry’s spell glanced her shoulder - in fact, she even cackled - and had no problem gripping the back of Harry’s sleep shirt and throwing him to the back of the bathroom.

“Fuck,” Harry hissed after the back of his head had met the unforgiving floor. Seeing another bright light of a spell coming his way, he rolled to the side and stared at the scorch marks it

left. “You really have it against me, huh?”

“It’s nothing personal, baby Potter.” Bella slowly stalked towards him as he scrambled to his feet, an *Expulso* on his lips and fingertips. “But for my Lord--”

“Harry!” Cedric’s voice echoed meters away, and the image of Cedric’s dead body dropping in front of him from way back then flashed in his mind, and no, he can’t let that happen *again*-

“*Expulso*- ”

“Holy *shit*- ”

“*Incarcerous*- ”

“*Sectumsemptra*!”

‘Oh,’ Harry weakly thought as he watched Cedric and another seventh year take Bellatrix by surprise quick enough to incapacitate her, ‘No wonder Snape was pissed I used this on Draco, the fatality of it aside.’

He collapsed to the floor, shivering as the curse cut all over his body and blood started to soak through his pajamas and seep to the floor. Despite being thoroughly drenched in water, his body felt like it was on *fire* .

“Harry?” Cedric scrambled to kneel beside him, face white as a sheet as Harry’s blood flowed freely. “Get the professors! Tell them there’s been a serious injury!” He yelled at another pale and shocked upperclassman while the one that had arrived with him had her wand pointed at a thoroughly tied-up Bellatrix. Harry idly noticed her hand shake as LeStrange let out another cackle.

“Hey,” Cedric gently tapped his cheek, shakily saying, “Stay with me, okay? Hang in there. Madame Pomfrey is on her way.”

“No time,” Harry mumbled weakly, and Cedric paled even further. “*Vulnera Sanentur* . Three times.”

“I don’t- I don’t know that spell.” Cedric whispered as protest, but tightened a bloody grip on his wand and pointed it at Harry. “But I’ll try. Just *hang in there* , okay? I’ll try.”

Harry managed a small quirk of a smile. He can’t die here. Not now, and not like this.

“Vul-- *Vulnera Sanentur* .” Nothing happened, and Cedric choked a sob. “*Vulnera Sanentur. Vulnera Sanentur*. Harry, *no* , don’t close your eyes- *Vulnera Sanentur! Vulnera Sanentu* --”

Tom will actually *murder* him in the afterlife if he died right now.

Harry woke up.

His eyelids felt heavy as he struggled to open them but a pressure around his hand had him meeting the red-rimmed and tired eyes of his godfather.

“I think I’m seriously considering sending you to Durmstrang next year,” Sirius whispered. “You gave us quite a scare there Harry.”

Harry’s throat was too dry to speak, so he offered his godfather what he hoped was a reassuring smile. Only that seemed to just break Sirius instead.

“I almost lost you,” Sirius wept, head bowed over Harry’s bed and a deathly grip on Harry’s hand. “I can’t. I *can’t* . Losing James and Lily broke me, but losing you would *destroy* me.”

“I’m okay Padfoot.” Harry rasped, carefully reaching to pull his godfather in for a hug. “I’m okay.”

“You were supposed to be *safe* .” That, Harry could agree with. Because how the fuck did Bella get into the Hufflepuff dormitory?

“Where’s Moony?” He asked instead after Sirius had had a good cry, looking around and finally noticing he was at St. Mungo’s instead of the Hogwarts infirmary. “Wait, what day is it? How long have I been out?”

“It’s Moony’s turn to actually go home and sleep in a real bed. And you’ve been out for three days,” Sirius sniffed, catching his own tears with his fingertips. He attempted a wry grin. “You lost a lot of blood, and you had a head injury. The healers also said you had magical fatigue. I’ve honestly never seen so many potions fed to one person before.”

Harry looked at his arms and peaked at his chest to see no signs of scarring. “I’m guessing there was a lot of dittany involved too.”

Sirius smoothed the hair on Harry’s head gently. “I hope that will be all the dittany you’ll need in a lifetime.”

Remus also cried when he saw Harry being prodded by his healers but *awake* .

“Oh no,” Harry despaired as he patted the werewolf’s back, “there’s gonna be a lot of crying this week, isn’t there?”

“We were all worried,” Remus sighed, voice quiet, “Especially once we saw how bad it was. We thought- You looked *dead* , Harry. We thought she got you.”

“She got the kiss.” Sirius added. “After the extent of your… injuries were leaked, the public practically demanded it. Heck, Cissy was leading the charge even. She was *furious* . Fudge and Dumbledore are being called into question now, because this shouldn’t have happened in the first place.”

Harry didn’t care about Fudge or Dumbledore right now. “I want to talk to Marvolo,” was what he said instead. Sirius and Remus exchanged a look, and a conversation in that look,

and Sirius sighed.

“I’ll owl him,” his godfather acquiesced. “I’ll make sure to send his headmaster a letter as well, so he can let Marvolo go off campus to visit.”

Harry spent a few more hours of being poked by his healers and fed way too many potions, but Remus and Sirius barely left his side throughout it all. Remus even gave him reading material.

“Witch Weekly?” Harry raised an eyebrow at the magazine. “Oh, there’s an article about me and my love life.”

He was almost done reading through the article speculating on his *mysterious paramour* (apparently everyone in entire wizarding Britain knew about the flowers he got) when Tom finally arrived.

“You look like you haven’t slept,” Harry blurted, staring at Tom’s ruffled appearance. Tom’s lips pressed into a firm line and he practically stomped towards Harry’s bed before wrapping his arms around Harry and pressing him to his chest.

“And *you*,” Tom gritted, “Are a goddamn idiot. You’re *lucky* you didn’t lose any limbs.”

Surreptitiously, Remus dragged Sirius with him out of the room to give Harry and Tom some privacy, despite his godfather’s protests. How perceptive of him.

“I didn’t exactly mean to get into a deadly duel with Bella, you know.” Harry grumbled. “I can’t believe she got the jump on me.”

Tom clicked his tongue and sat at the edge of the bed. “She had always been one of my best Death Eaters for a reason. Plus we both know how much of a pain it is to re-train our bodies and having to wait for our magical maturity all over again. Your thirteen year old body stood no chance, not for long.”

“Lucky you, you’ll be seventeen in a few months.” Harry sighed. “Still, the way that went bothers me. Really, if we think about it the whole Bellatrix thing is full of mysteries.”

Tom nodded as he started stroking Harry’s hair. “She shouldn’t have been able to break out of Azkaban in the first place.”

“She got into Hogwarts not only once, but twice.” Harry added. “And then got into the Hufflepuff dormitory.”

“There are many holes in Hogwarts,” Tom said. “She could’ve gotten in any of the secret entrances. Anyone determined enough could find at least one of them.”

“Or she could’ve gotten help. She said something before it ended. She said ‘my Lord.’” Harry looked at Tom whose fingers froze and eyebrows furrowed. “I mean, it could have

been her insanity talking and she was just trying to avenge your presumed death...”

“But we’ve lived long enough to know better than to presume things.” Tom let out a deep breath. “Something we didn’t anticipate is going on. First Lockhart, and now Bella. You just can’t keep out of trouble, can you?”

Harry grinned cheekily, “It’s the Potter Luck.”

Tom stayed for the rest of visiting hours, even having dinner with them in Harry’s room.

“I think Karkaroff was on the verge of a heart attack when he realized it was Harry Potter asking for me,” Tom dryly recalled, earning a barked laugh from Sirius and an amused grin from Harry. “The man seemed to think it was improbable that I’d be friends with the Boy Who Lived.”

Harry and Tom shared a humoured look, both of them knowing full well of what Karkaroff must be thinking. The Durmstrang headmaster knew Tom’s true identity, after all.

The next day, Harry received more visitors. And gifts. Loads and loads of gifts.

“They’re from well wishers,” Draco explained, looking like a huge weight had been lifted the moment he laid eyes on Harry. “Get well gifts. You do remember you’re kind of famous, right?”

Hermione finally pulled away from hugging and crying on Harry’s shoulder, sniffing. “Everyone’s been so worried. We didn’t know what happened for a while.”

“Professor McGonagall told everyone in Gryffindor that they caught Lestrage but someone got injured, at first.” Neville said with a quiet rage. “They wouldn’t tell us who for a while, but then everyone found out it was a Hufflepuff, and then it got out it was you, and...”

“We went straight to Professor McGonagall and Neville almost blew up her desk,” Ron continued, unhappy at the recollection himself. “‘Cuz she should’ve told us, not let us find out through rumors.”

“At least she’s good as dead,” Neville scowled, and Harry knew very well how much Neville hated Bellatrix Lestrage during his first life. The hate this time one topped it by a mile.

“How is Cedric holding up?” Harry asked as he and his friends started to go through the presents. “I think I traumatized him.”

“Harry,” Hermione admonished him at his callous wording before sighing. “He’s been avoiding everyone. Only Cho’s actually seen him since the incident, and I think they actually

let him go home for the week. He's Hogwarts' hero right now and I think he actually hates it."

"He saved my life," Harry said simply. "And I'm gonna make sure he knows it."

Cedric came in the early afternoon the following day, when everyone was still in class. As he did for every person that visited him, Harry felt a stab of guilt at Cedric's haggard appearance. The older boy somehow looked younger in casual clothes but the eyebags under his eyes betrayed his age.

"Well, come in," Harry gestured from his bed. God, he couldn't wait to get out of the hospital. "I'm glad to see you Cedric."

"I'm glad to see you too Harry." Cedric smiled faintly as he sat on the visitor's chair by the bed. "And before you ask- yes, fame has so far been overrated."

"Welcome to the club, Hogwarts' hero," Harry grinned at Cedric's grimace at the title. "Seriously though, how are you?"

"Traumatized," Cedric half-joked. "But Dad has me seeing a therapist to help process what happened. The nightmares are getting less violent too, now that my subconscious knows you're awake. More importantly, I'm glad you're okay and I'm sorry I couldn't do anything."

"You saved my life," Harry pressed. "From what I've been told, you were the first one to charge towards the dorm rooms when the explosion happened and the *Incarcerous* that got LeStrange was from you."

"You were bleeding in my arms and I couldn't do anything about it," Cedric despaired. "I kept trying to cast that spell but nothing was happening, I couldn't do it-"

"It was unfair of me to have put you in that position in the first place," Harry said sharply. More gently, he placed a hand over Cedric's tight fist, "It was an unfamiliar, high level spell and you were stressed as hell at the time."

Cedric huffed. "I *know* , but.. Professor Snape was the first to arrive you know? I don't think any of us have seen him so *horrified* . It was all a haze after that point, but I distinctly remember watching him perform the same spell effortlessly and it stuck with me. So the next day I begged on my knees, asking him to teach it to me and didn't stop until he agreed."

Considering Snape invented the spell that almost killed him in the first place, of course Snape would be horrified. And if Harry's release of the life debt hadn't freed Snape from it, this should have.

"I was planning on working for the Ministry after I graduated, you know," Cedric said after a few moments of silence. "My dad works there, so it seemed like a sure choice I guess."

"But...?" Harry prompted, curious.

Cedric gave a small smile. “I’ve been talking with Madame Pomfrey about becoming a healer. I’m already taking the right NEWTs for it, and the whole incident got me thinking... I want to help people, and I want to help them this way. It’s going to be way harder than just going into the Ministry but it’s worth it, I think.”

Harry thought about the Cedric of his first lifetime, the Cedric that died too young and senselessly. The Cedric he had visited the grave of every year at his death anniversary, mourning at what he was and could have been. This Cedric won’t end up the same if Harry could help it, and the determination in this Cedric’s eyes only strengthened Harry’s resolve.

“You’d be great,” Harry grinned.

The next morning Sirius laughed as he threw the day’s issue of the Daily Prophet at Harry’s lap.

‘*The Hogwarts’ Hero and His Damsel in Distress?*’ the headline proclaimed over a picture taken from a distance through St. Mungo’s window, showing Cedric and Harry sharing smiles while Harry had a hand over Cedric’s. Harry looked for the author of the article and yup, sure enough, it practically screamed Rita Skeeter.

“I’m not a damsel in distress,” Harry pouted as he read the article. “And I’m pretty sure Cho would eviscerate me if I tried to take her man.”

“It must be a slow news day for this to be headlining news. Your interview with the aurors got relegated to the lower front page.” Remus dryly said as he drank his coffee. “*Your* man is going to retaliate, isn’t he?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Harry beamed. It was always amusing when Tom got a little showy and possessive, as evidenced by Valentine’s Day. “It’s not like they’re crediting the flowers to Cedri- oh, wait, no, they are. Marvolo is gonna be *pissed*. I bet I’m gonna get something *good* soon.”

“I hate to admit it,” Sirius grumbled, “but Marvolo is starting to grow on me.”

Remus and Harry stared at Sirius incredulously.

“What?” Sirius asked defensively. “That doesn’t mean I want you marrying him any time soon!”

Remus snorted. “As if you could even stop them.”

“*Remus* !”

Harry was discharged on a Monday, a week and a half after being admitted.

“I’m free,” Harry cheered. “No more bedrest! No more potions! I can wear something other than pajamas again!”

“Enjoy your ten minutes of sunshine, Mr. Potter,” Madame Pomfrey said, rolling her eyes in fondness. “Back to Hogwarts we go.”

“Education waits for no one,” Harry nodded sagely.

His return perfectly coincided with lunch time, so Harry burst into the Great Hall with a shit eating grin, exclaiming, “Honey, I’m home!”

He saw Draco facepalm as the rest of student body and staff cheered.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

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

“I think we should break up,” Cedric said to him, dead serious, when Harry sat down for dinner. “Cho and I made out in front of the Great Hall and got detentions for PDA, yet people are still asking me if your arse is as perky as it looks.”

Harry peered at him. “You got a letter from someone whose name starts with M, didn’t you?”

“Your actual boyfriend is as terrifying as I would expect from someone who gave Neville a barely legal carnivorous plant.” Cedric didn’t look cowed or offended, just amused. “He’s threatened to flay my skin if I ever touched you inappropriately.”

“Oh, that’s tame for him,” Harry beamed. “Sorry about that, he gets a little possessive.”

“I’m sure I’ll meet him soon enough.” Cedric said dryly. “You’ll be at the World Cup this summer, won’t you?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, but more importantly, *do* you think my arse as perky as it looks?”

“Oh dear,” Neville stared at the peculiar blue envelope Marvolo’s owl had dropped, along with a small wrapped package. “Is that a Howler, Harry?”

Ron’s head snapped up from his breakfast plate and relaxed when he saw that the envelope wasn’t red. “Oh, thank god it’s not the screaming kind. The twins get enough of them and I don’t want my ears to ring for the entire morning, thanks.”

“Is it from you-know-who?” Hermione whispered, and Harry choked a laugh at the unintentional wording. Across from him, Draco snorted pumpkin juice through his nose and coughed noisily while Neville grimaced. “I mean,” Hermione amended hastily, “*You boys, honestly*, I meant Harry’s secret ‘friend.’”

With a flourish, Harry unsealed the Howler. It fluttered in his hand and rose up, the wax seal forming an imitation of Tom’s lips as the enchantment took its course.

“Do forgive me if I alarmed you by sending you a Howler, *my darling*, but the recent articles in the papers gave me the desire to take credit where is due.” Tom’s dry voice echoed through the Great Hall, making almost everyone curious about the mysterious voice. “As pleasant of a man Diggory might be, I’d rather not have my efforts to be kept mistakenly under his name. It is already rather difficult for me, knowing that he can see your *lovely* face every day in person while I am countries away, but I suppose I cannot begrudge or resent him for it. He did save your life after all, and I’ve thanked him for it.

“Regardless, *darling*, to celebrate your good health and discharge from the hospital, I’ve enclosed a small gift for you. It’s not quite the certain locket I’ve promised you but it will do for now. And don’t protest, *love*. You know I would give you the world if you so much asked. *Yours*, M.G.”

Harry struggled to breathe. His hands had been over his face ever since the first term of endearment, and only his friends could see that he was smothering his giggles, not embarrassment.

“He laid it a bit thick, didn’t he?” Ron muttered, ears red in second hand embarrassment. Draco snorted in agreement, gleefully looking at the general student populace’s expressions.

“He went absolutely old fashioned,” Draco smirked, “Oh, the gears are turning in everyone’s heads.”

“You’re enjoying this way too much Draco,” Neville sighed.

Hermione, rolling her eyes at the burst of whispered gossip all around them, poked Harry instead. “What did he get you?”

Harry unwrapped the small package, revealing a brooch in the shape of a coiled snake, glittering emeralds and diamonds set on the metal to make the pattern of its scales. “He’s such a sap sometimes,” Harry huffed, “A snake for my patronus. Emeralds for eternal love and of course, for the color of my eyes. And diamonds because he’s a showoff.”

Lavender Brown, who had been hovering by their group since Tom’s howler opened its mouth, squealed. “Your man sounds so romantic and wonderful. I cannot wait to see who it is!”

Harry’s eyes flickered to the headmaster. Dumbledore had gone quite still and pale, no doubt the familiar voice of a teenage Tom Riddle haunting his thoughts right now. His lips curled into a smirk, “I can’t wait for it either.”

“That was a ballsy move, Tom,” Harry greeted over the mirror, amused. “Dumbledore was a second away from a stroke after hearing your voice, I think.”

“You mean it didn’t kill him after all?” Tom mockingly looked sorrowful. “Pity.”

The rest of the year passed by peacefully. The only notable event was when Rita Skeeter published another article, proclaiming to the Daily Prophet readers about how Harry was currently in a *menage a trois* with Cedric and the mysterious M.G. In response, Cho daringly climbed Cedric’s lap and gave the man the snog of his life and the rest of the students a big fat middle finger, earning herself even more detentions from McGonagall. (Harry suspected

Flitwick was rather amused about the entire thing.) More than a few people got a little hot and bothered by it, but no one made any more comments to Cedric about Harry's arse.

There were three more Defense Club sessions and in the wake of the Bellatrix Incident, attendance skyrocketed. Practically the entire school attended the last sessions and Harry gleefully conscripted the Hogwarts' Hero into being Flitwick's second assistant.

Dumbledore always looked like he was about to drag Harry to his office but Harry never received a summons or a note, and Snape continued to avoid speaking to him about *anything*. No doubt the headmaster's theories and expectations had been shattered the moment he heard Tom Riddle Jr.'s voice coming from the howler, but it was the inaction that made Harry even curiouiser.

Ginny approached him the day before the Hogwarts Express was to take them home and said, "Thank you."

Harry merely smiled, patted her in the head, and that was that.

"Five finger rule," Sirius sternly told the two teenage boys, who looked far too amused at his show of authority. "You can't get any closer than that."

"How puritan," Tom muttered while Harry rolled his eyes.

"We're not about to snog on the couch, Sirius," Harry said. "Marvolo hasn't even kissed me yet."

"*Good*," Sirius clapped their shoulders and squeezed firmly. "And if you're going to *any* room, keep the door open."

"It's like Catholic school all over again," Harry sighed exasperatedly as he dragged Tom away from his godfather.

"Shame about your godfather's rule," Tom idly said. "Here I was thinking that we'd cuddle."

Harry squinted at Tom. "Fuck that, we *are* cuddling," He declared. "Besides, Sirius said he actually likes you, so he won't curse you. Much."

"Why do you always get the overprotective parents?" Tom grumbled, but complied and let Harry hang on to him like a limpet.

(When Sirius caught them blatantly disregarding his stupid rule, he pouted spectacularly. Remus looked upward to the gods in prayer and smacked some sense into the ex-convict.)

It took five consecutive days of Tom coming over during the day and leaving at nightfall for Remus to ask, “Where have you been staying for the summer, Marvolo?”

“The Durmstrang summer dorms,” Tom replied. “I sold my mother’s old home after she died and I won’t be allowed to access my father’s estates until I turn seventeen in a few months. I haven’t seen any point in finding alternative accommodations considering I don’t need much space.”

The only thing true about what he said was where he was staying. Harry suspected that Tom just liked terrorizing his schoolmates by his mere presence alone.

But Remus was frowning, and Harry could see him thinking quickly about something. Harry had a guess what it was, and Sirius stood no chance in refusing the request.

“You’ve been portkeying everyday?” Remus asked. At Tom’s raised eyebrow and shrug, unable to admit that he just apparated, the werewolf’s frown got deeper. “International portkeys are quite expensive.”

“Barely a dent to my inheritance, I assure you.” Tom drawled. “It’s worth it just to spend more time with Harry.”

“You’re ridiculous,” Harry couldn’t help but say.

“Still, it’s not practical,” Remus pressed, and Harry can recognize the look in his eyes. “You could just stay with us for the summer. It would be more convenient and would save you time and money.”

Both of Tom’s eyebrows rose and he stared at the werewolf. “I wouldn’t want to impose.”

“Don’t worry about it. Go pick a room, and we can arrange for your things later.” Remus clapped a hand on Tom’s shoulder before heading towards where Sirius was.

“You can take the bedroom across mine,” Harry beamed.

Tom smirked, “I suppose it would be terribly improper if I asked to just share yours.”

They both ignored Sirius distantly wailing, *‘You what?! Moony! You’re enabling them!’*

Apparently Cho had decided Hermione, Ginny, and Luna needed to experience a typical witches’ slumber party and had invited the three to her house to spend the night with some other Hogwarts girls. Draco, having found out somehow, immediately thought that it was a good idea and invited himself over to Harry’s place. Naturally, Ron and Neville were dragged along too. Cedric received an invitation as well, though he hadn’t showed up yet.

And as Harry expected, there was something hilarious about watching a teenage Dark Lord Voldemort playing Exploding Snap with his friends and giving Ron love advice.

“I understand you’re hesitant and shy, Ronald,” Tom said, laying down another pair of cards from his hand, “but Hermione is the type of girl you’d have to be direct with. If you like her romantically, you have to tell her clearly that you do.”

“Marvolo’s right,” Draco added, catching a pair of cards before they exploded, “Get yourself together, Weasley, or else she’d get nabbed by someone else.”

“Anthony Goldstein had been staring at her more lately this year,” Neville hummed contemplatively. “He might ask her out when we come back to Hogwarts.”

“He wouldn’t!” Ron exclaimed before he slumped. “No, he totally would. Hermione is great and Goldstein is all, blond and better looking and why would she pick me over him?”

“Because she likes you too?” Draco rolled his eyes, “*Merlin*, are you daft? Have you not been listening to any of us?”

“She does spend more time with you than any of us,” Harry said. “And she sits beside you all the time. And helps you with your homework. And partners with you for everything unless I’m there, but our bond is totally sibling-like and completely platonic.”

“I thought she just doesn’t want me to look like an idiot, and like, give Gryffindor a bad image or something,” Ron groaned. “I know I’m not as book smart as any of you so she has to look over my homework to make sure I’m not failing completely. She’s just being nice.”

Neville muttered something suspiciously like ‘emotional depth of a teaspoon,’ and Harry patted Ron gently. “We all think she likes you. Why won’t you give it a go and see?”

“Who likes who?” Cedric asked as he entered the room carrying a glass container, “Hey guys, sorry I’m late. Mum wouldn’t let me leave until the cookies were done.”

“We’re talking about Hermione and Ron and why they’re destined to be together,” Harry said as they all descended upon the container of cookies. “By the way, Cedric meet Marvolo, Marvolo meet Cedric.”

Cedric did a once over at Marvolo and smiled, “Nice to finally meet Harry’s mysterious boyfriend. Thanks for not flaying my skin.”

“Nice to meet the person I’m supposed to be in a threesome with, according to the Prophet,” Tom dryly replied and everyone snickered. “Thanks for looking after the imp for me.”

“I don’t need looking after. I can take care of myself,” Harry said, pretending to look offended when Neville rose a skeptical eyebrow and Draco rolled his eyes hard enough to hurt. “And stop posturing, Marvolo, you’re getting territorial for no reason.”

“As you wish, *darling*,” Tom drawled.

By the time Neville won the round of Exploding Snap, they’ve suitably convinced Ron to maybe try and ask Hermione out. He’d apparently already invited her to the Quidditch World Cup with his family and she’d accepted, and everyone collectively thought that Ron was

being completely thick because Hermione didn't care a whit about Quidditch and it said volumes that she'd go with him for the Cup.

They transitioned over to a wizarding board game and Draco's grumblings about his upcoming birthday party.

"Father's been pushing me for more 'political associates,'" Draco scowled. "I can't make the same old excuses anymore, since everyone knows I'm genuinely close friends with all of you by now, or at least suspects I'm not playing nice for shady purposes."

"They're not giving you a hard time, are they?" Neville was the first to ask, surprisingly. "I know you're not particularly close with your housemates now."

The Slytherin waved the concern off, but still looked appreciative of it. "Blaise has been making comments and Pansy's been insufferable, but they haven't tried anything. The Malfoy name means a lot more than everyone else's except maybe for Greengrass, but she doesn't care for anything except for her sister and Davis."

Tom, who knew about the inner workings of the Slytherin house better than anyone, said, "You won't be trying for the Slytherin Court, then?"

Ron looked up from the board game, "Slytherin Court?"

"A power play and political game within the house. It's been tradition in the house for centuries. Some of us think it's unnecessary and ridiculous at this day and age, of course, but it can't be denied that a group that oversees and leads the house has been beneficial as a whole." Draco sighed, "My father will be disappointed, but no, I won't be. Disregarding the fact that I barely have allies in the house, I already know it's not for me."

"Besides," Harry added, "it'll be hard to find a crown big enough for the size your head would be, had you become 'King.'"

Draco threw some dice at him.

Cedric won the board game. Then because they're teenage boys and Sirius insisted on keeping stock in muggle junk food, they raided the pantry and piled an assortment of snacks in the living room while they gossiped even more. They didn't sleep until well past three in the morning, stomachs stuffed with crisps and butterbeer. Everyone politely didn't stare when Harry and Tom settled beside each other, the older teen caressing Harry's face and running a gentle hand through his messy hair.

Of course, Sirius rudely woke them all up the four hours later by jumping on them as Padfoot.

Draco's birthday passed by unspectacularly, as did Harry and Neville's. They were just the typical Heir of an Important Wizarding Family parties, and Tom managed to excuse himself

from them. Thankfully, Draco and Neville took no offense, Draco even explaining how he hadn't told his father about the existence of a Gaunt. The Malfoy's rebellious stage was just beginning, it seemed.

And so the morning of the Quidditch World Cup came bright and early. Very, very early.

"I don't understand why we have to wake up at four in the morning," Harry squinted. "We have tickets. Our tent spot has been reserved for the past year. Why can't we spare another hour or five of sleep?"

"It's part of the experience, Harry," Sirius grinned, looking way too cheerful for the hour. "Now come on, our portkey is due to go any minute now."

"Come on, Harry," Tom pressed him against his side. "If you're good, we can meet up with Viktor before he gets busy."

The official that checked their tickets and tent number was clearly a pureblood, considering his idea of 'muggle attire' was a bathrobe and pajama pants. A few meters away, Harry could see one of the officials as he remembered, wearing a nightgown and declaring to anyone that asked that the breeze was nice on his privates.

The crowd was already significant when they arrived, and it would only get worse as the day went on. His friends knew his tent number and they had agreed to meet there around one in the afternoon, giving Harry and Tom some more time to sleep and meet Krum.

One of the wizards who guarded the Bulgarian team's massive tent must have been a recent Durmstrang alumni, considering he paled when Tom approached and yelled into the tent in Bulgarian, "*Krum! Your, uh, friend Gaunt is here!*"

"What do you *do* to them?" Harry asked accusingly at the older teen, who only smirked in response.

"*Marvolo, it's nice to see you,*" Viktor Krum greeted in German when he exited the tent. "*Here to cheer me on?*"

"*You have enough cheerleaders, I would think,*" Tom dryly said, also in German. Harry watched their interaction curiously. "*I think the Irish are going to win, anyway.*"

"*You wound me, my friend.*" Viktor then looked at Harry, eyebrows raising once he realized who his friend had brought to him. "*Your special friend is the Boy-Who-Lived?*"

"Harry, this is Viktor Krum," Tom introduced in English this time. "Viktor, Harry Potter."

"A pleasure," Viktor said, his English heavily accented, "Forgive me, Potter, if my English is a bit poor. Marvolo has taught me vell, but as I understand my accent sometimes gets in ze vay."

"It's fine," Harry shot Tom a look, then in German continued, "*If you rather we speak in German, I can. Marvolo thinks he's being funny by not telling you, but his humor is a little fucked up.*"

Viktor grinned toothily. “ *Ah, his particular type of humor is not a secret in Durmstrang. Has he told you about the incident with our classmate Nikolajsen?* ”

Harry lit up, “ *Oh, I think we’re going to be great friends, Krum .*”

“ *Please, call me Viktor.* ”

Tom should’ve expected this to happen.

Viktor was told to stop socializing an hour and a half later, just in time for Harry and Tom to start heading back to their tent to meet up with Harry’s friends. Harry thought that this friendlier version of Viktor was actually fascinating. No wonder his first Hermione had kept up her friendship with him throughout adulthood.

Draco and Neville were already there, and that was a friendship Harry was curious about. Their counterparts in Harry’s first life were amicable with each other, but no one would ever say they were friends. Too much bad blood, but since that bad blood between didn’t exist this time, their closest friend excluding Harry was each other.

“Did you run away from your father, Draco?” Harry grinned at the blond. “I would’ve thought he’d parade you around for a bit, with all the foreign officials around.”

Draco scoffed, “He’ll have plenty of time for that later. We’re at top box with the Minister.”

Cedric, Cho, Hermione, Luna, and the Weasleys arrived a few minutes later. Hermione looked harried at the rowdy crowd they had to no doubt go through since their tent was at the common grounds as opposed to the Malfoy’s and Black’s VIP spots.

“Mate, you think we can bunk with you instead?” Ron asked, amazed at their luxurious tent. Sirius had splurged a bit.

The twins, noticing an unfamiliar face among their group, crowded over to the very handsome stranger.

“Could it be, Forge?” George asked, peering at an impassive Tom.

“I think so, Gred,” Fred grinned.

“You must be Harry’s mysterious paramour,”

“The love of his life,”

“His darling sweetheart,”

“His sugar daddy-”

“Marvolo Gaunt,” Tom grinned toothily. “A pleasure to meet you. You must be Fred and George Weasley.”

“Well done, Harry,” Fred patted the younger boy in the back. “You did good.”

Harry preened. “I thought so myself.”

“You two make a pretty couple,” George gleefully said. “Witch Weekly is going to have a field day.”

Cho, who was looking between Tom, Harry, and Cedric with a contemplative gaze, turned to her boyfriend and announced, “I suppose you can have your threesome just once.”

Cedric’s face flamed red and he choked.

Chapter End Notes

After extensive googling, I found that there is no canon mention of what language Durmstrang students use as a whole. Considering they accept students from the Baltics down to Bulgaria, and that German is the arguably the most common non-English language around West-ish Europe, I figured German is a safe bet for Durmstrang students to speak with. Harry and Tom know German because they've reincarnated as such at some point, implying it in an earlier chapter by mentioning Tom's life as a Hannes Braus. Tom is definitely better at it than Harry, though.

Also I've got to say thanks for all the support, kudos, and reviews thus far. I wouldn't have the drive to continue without all of you <3

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

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

The thing was, the Black party's seats, while definitely one of the best ones, weren't actually in the top box. That was reserved for the Bulgarian dignitaries, Crouch, Minister Fudge and his guests (which happened to be the Malfoy's), and the lucky Weasleys, who got such good tickets after Mr. Weasley did a favor for Ludo Bagman.

Really, Harry and Tom were only there before the game to let their friends show off a little bit. They were still young, after all, and top box seats such as theirs would make them the envy of their classmates.

And it wasn't even *Harry* that got them invited to sit at the top box in the end.

"Vell, vat a pleasant surprise to see you here, Marvolo!" The Bulgarian Minister of Magic greeted when the two of them entered. "Here to cheer for Viktor Krum, I presume? My children tell me the two of you are very good friends."

By him, the Cornelius Fudge spluttered indignantly, "You've been able to speak English this entire time?! And you let me make a fool of myself miming all day?"

"Vell, it vos very funny."

Tom, to his credit, didn't blink an eye. Harry wondered how the hell he got acquainted with the Bulgarian Minister in the first place, well enough for the man to call him by his first name. "Partly, Minister Oblansk. Harry and his family were gracious enough to invite me as well," Tom said, as he placed a hand on Harry's back. Harry inwardly rolled his eyes but pleasantly smiled back at the excited foreign Minister.

"Harry Potter!" Minister Oblansk enthusiastically shook Harry's hand. "Quite an honor! I had not known the two of you ver acquainted!"

"Not many people do," Harry said.

"It's nice to finally meet you as well, Mr. Potter." Fudge intervened, not to be outdone, and also offered a hand. From behind him, Draco made a gagging face out of his parents' sights as Harry politely shook it too. Neville slightly slapped the Slytherin on the shoulder as a reprimand.

Lucius, curiously, was intently looking at Tom with a complicated expression.

"Good to see you again, Harry," Lucius drawled, "And who is your friend?"

"Marvolo Gaunt," Tom grinned sharply, holding out a hand for Lucius to shake. "A pleasure, Lord Malfoy."

Immediately, Lucius very tellingly turned a bit pale. ‘Abraxas Malfoy, you naughty man,’ Harry thought gleefully, ‘telling your son *Lord Voldemort*’s secrets.’

“There hasn’t been a Gaunt in decades,” Lucius carefully said as he shook hands with the teenager and dropped it quick enough that it was almost rude.

“My *father*,” Tom idly commented, “didn’t carry the name. It was a bit of a surprise. More so than *I* was.”

“Marvolo is Durmstrang’s best,” Oblansk hummed, casting a twinkling eye over Tom’s hand still on Harry’s back, “My daughter is quite enamored vid you, Marvolo, but I see I have to prepare her vor disappointment. Still, you and Mr. Potter are velcome to sit by me. We have much to catch up since ve last talked!”

“You know the *Bulgarian Minister* ?” Draco later hissed as the adults mingled more.

Before Tom could reply, Fred and George cut in and echoed, “More importantly, you’re *friends* with *Viktor Krum* ?!”

The game itself went as Harry remembered. Seeing his friends getting enamoured by the Veela was *hilarious* .

He saw the Weasley twins cheering when Ireland won despite Krum catching the snitch, and he supposed he should warn them about Bagman cheating them out on the bet. Minister Oblansk was visibly disappointed at the loss, but agreed that it was a good match regardless.

After everyone tired out of the celebrations and headed to their respective tents, Harry and Tom laid down on their beds but didn’t sleep. They waited. And when the initial screaming started, they looked at each other and nodded.

“Harry, Marvolo,” Sirius turned to them as they approached the entrance of their tent, he and Remus tense at the commotion outside. “Make sure you have your wands on you, just in case. Find your friends if you can, but more importantly stay out of the crossfire. I’m trusting you to keep Harry safe, Marvolo.”

Tom nodded solemnly, helping Harry with his jacket. “We’ll be fine. Go.”

Sirius and Remus disappeared into the panicked crowd, presumably to help with the situation. “Come on, we don’t have much time,” Harry urged Tom and led the way to the forest.

They carefully avoided and kept out of sight from their friends, casting Disillusionment spells on themselves and dodging between people when one of them became particularly close.

“Here’s to hoping nothing changes this time,” Tom muttered as they hid and waited by the trees. In the distance, Harry could see the muggles being tossed in the air like dolls.

“Your followers are distasteful,” Harry grumbled.

“Why do you think I tortured them so much?” Tom dryly said. “Many of them were rather annoying.”

Whatever reply Harry had was cut off when a voice yelled - “ *Mosmorde !*” - and was followed by the distinct mark of the Death Eaters bright in the sky.

It only took another few seconds before the crunching of grass had Tom raising his own wand and incanting, “ *Stupefy* .” They heard a dull thump and quickly approached the barely visible indent on the ground.

“Hello, Barty,” Tom greeted his old follower as he lifted the invisibility cloak off Barty Crouch Jr.’s unconscious body. “Now let’s get you somewhere else.”

Tom called the house elf he’d apparently gotten over the summer, “Make sure he doesn’t escape, Hunny. If he wakes up before either of us returns, feed him and give him some fresh clothes. But do not let him know who we are for now.”

Hunny, a serious and professional looking house elf nodded, “As Master Marvolo wishes.” A snap of her fingers, and she and Barty were gone without anyone knowing they were even there.

“Well that was easy,” Harry commented as they distanced themselves away from the forest. As they were still Disillusioned, they could afford to not show any care about the Dark Mark in the sky. Though... “Can I say I’m glad it wasn’t some other dark mark?”

“The thought has crossed my mind,” Tom said slowly, looking up at his creation. The conjured snake slithered out of the skull, its sickly green color eerie against the night sky. “But considering our track record so far, I’d say that it’s but a small comfort.”

“I thought so,” Harry grimly nodded.

Hermione later told them that it was Dean Thomas, who had come to the game with Seamus, that owned the wand used for the Dark Mark. The fact that he was a muggleborn and that the wand was found in Crouch’s elf Winky’s possession absolved him from suspicion and further questioning, thankfully.

“Dad told us that it was the You-Know-Who’s mark,” Ron added uneasily despite the fact that the mark had disappeared when daylight came, “and it hasn’t been cast in thirteen years.”

Draco was unusually silent but Neville stayed by his side, a supporting hand on the Malfoy’s shoulder.

“Well enough of this depressing thinking,” Harry proclaimed after a moment. “Come on, everyone’s invited to my house for ice cream.”

Tom and Harry snuck out in the middle of the night, the day after they returned from the World Cup. It had been a while since Harry had been in their cottage and he'd missed it. It had been his and Tom's home for almost a decade, after all. Too bad they were here for business more than anything else.

And because they're actually civilized beings most days, they confronted Barty while having tea.

"You're Harry Potter," Barty rasped, staring at Harry with a twitchy expression. While the man wasn't completely insane, he still had spent time in Azkaban and that was enough for Harry to be on his guard. But he and Tom had discussed what to do with him prior to the Cup, and if there were two things they agreed on, it was that Barty could still be useful and that he was absolutely loyal to Lord Voldemort.

So Harry grinned, "I'm not the one you have to worry about, Barty Crouch Jr."

Immediately Barty's eyes snapped to the unfamiliar teenager sitting with them. Tom slowly rose from his seat, stepping carefully around the table until he was looking right down at Crouch. And with a press of his hand against Barty's left forearm, where the Dark Mark suddenly *burned*, Barty fell from his chair and onto his knees with a breathless expression.

"My Lord," Barty whispered in awe, looking up at Tom with something akin to hope.

Harry and Tom had planned to mess around this lifetime, but with the events these past few years they finally decided that their plans would have to change. If there truly was another upstart Dark Lord trying to fill the hole Lord Voldemort's death had left as they suspected, then Tom wasn't going to let it happen without a fight.

-

Interlude: Dumbledore

"Have you found out anything, Severus?" Dumbledore asked, looking out the window of his office. He'd been nothing but troubled since young Harry Potter had gotten that howler a few months ago.

The potions master was quiet, staring at the headmaster with an inscrutable gaze. "The Malfoys have not told me anything," Snape drawled carefully. "Draco is incredibly loyal to Harry, he has been careful about saying too much about him to me."

"It's important we find out who Harry's *friend* is," Dumbledore pressed, clearly aggravated. "I *know* that voice. I have it in my memories, clear as day, and I'm afraid of what that means."

"You cannot *seriously* still think the Dark Lord is playing teenager and emotionally manipulating Potter, can you?" Snape couldn't help but ask incredulously, recounting the *theory* the headmaster had presented to him months ago. "He was a madman, Albus."

Completely out of his mind ages before that Halloween night. I may not *like* Potter, but even I can admit that he isn't daft enough to fall for such blatant trickery."

"Love clouds the mind," Albus sighed.

"And so does paranoia. I believe you are very familiar with both," Snape countered unforgivingly, unflinching at the headmaster's reprimanding look. "We can't make any hasty actions, Albus. Our relationship with the boy is precarious as it is. Like it or not, he may be just a child but he is *influential*. One wrong move can destroy us."

It took a while, but eventually Albus let out another deep sigh. "I suppose you're right for now. I've been making nothing but mistakes with him, I cannot afford any more. Just let me know if you find anything else."

Seeing the dismissal as it is, Snape nodded and left the headmaster's office.

He wasn't quite sure if he should believe Lucius' admission of the Dark Lord possibly having an heir, in the company of Potter no less, but Snape could only hope his omission of it from Albus wasn't going to bite him back later.

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In an isolated house in rural Estonia, an owl delivered a letter.

The only resident of the house offered the owl a bowl of water and a dead mouse after untying the envelope from its leg, curious at the lack of a sender's name. He found out why once he opened it.

'Professor,

It's been a while. I think it's time I collect that favor...

...

Signed,

H.P.'

Quirinus Quirrell couldn't help but smile.

Chapter End Notes

you all thought i forgot about quirrell HUH

a very short chapter, but PLOT POINTS

dont worry, as soon as I'm done with finals this week, i'll be churning out the next chapter to not keep y'all waiting for more

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

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

It was August 29th when Tom finally had to leave for Durmstrang.

“You’re such a baby,” Tom said exasperated as Harry *clung*. “You know we’ll see each other again sooner rather than later.”

“I don’t think you’re actually supposed to know about that yet,” Remus commented idly while he drank his morning coffee.

“It’s cute how you adults think you can keep something like the *Triwizard Tournament* a secret.” Harry grinned but didn’t let go of Tom, instead poking him sharply under the ribs, “And I’m gonna still miss you, you prat, even if your feet is still ridiculously cold at night.”

“I’m fighting a losing battle,” Sirius mourned. “This is karma, isn’t it? For all those times I fooled around at Hogwarts. Now my godson has picked up my bad habit of letting strange boys into his bed. Forgive me, James, for all that I have sinned.”

Remus snorted, “At least you didn’t get anyone pregnant.”

Harry finally let go of Tom five minutes before his portkey was due to activate, albeit reluctantly. “You should stay here every summer until I graduate,” He told him, smiling. “Remus and Sirius won’t mind.”

“They have warmed up to me considerably,” Tom nodded. “But you know I’ll have my family estate by the end of the year.”

“I’ll have you one way or another,” Harry grinned, wagging his eyebrows mischievously. Tom looked down at him with an incredibly fond expression, and he should’ve seen it coming, really, but it was still a surprise when Tom leaned down and gave Harry a toe-curling kiss right then and there.

“Couldn’t have anyone stealing *that* away before I could get to, could we?” Tom smirked before stepping away and disappearing with the portkey.

Harry, face flushed, sputtered, “that *wanker*,” with a betraying grin on his face.

“Please tell me one of you is either good at transfiguring clothes, or know someone who does,” Ron begged with a pained face when they all met up at their train compartment.

Harry looked at him sympathetically, “that bad?”

Then Ron showed them his dress robes.

“Oh dear,” Hermione muttered, hand over her mouth in shock, “thats...”

“I’m pretty sure that hasn’t been fashion in at least a few decades,” Neville added.

Draco snorted. “More like a *century* .”

“You could probably ask Lavender,” Harry patted Ron on the shoulder. “She’s good with fashion, isn’t she?”

“Just let us buy you new ones,” Draco insisted. “Those are beyond saving. It literally smells like someone’s great grand uncle.”

“My mum spent money on this!” Ron said indignantly, “I’m not about to let her money go to waste, even if it’s completely hideous!”

“I’ll look up clothes altering charms when we get to school,” Hermione soothed Ron. “We won’t need it for a while, will we?”

“Yule,” Harry and Draco confirmed. Hermione brightened.

“Plenty of time!”

“Oh, so you guys *do* know what’s happening this year?” Neville casually asked. “My grandmother wouldn’t tell me and all my uncle managed to slip was something about a tournament.”

“Hogwarts will be the gracious host of the Triwizard Tournament,” Harry said with flourish. “Such a historic and prestigious event. Sure to bring some honor to Wizarding Britain. Nevermind that they banned that ages ago for *good reason* .”

“It was cancelled in 1792 because the school champions kept dying,” Draco informed the group. “Allegedly they added some more safeguards to make sure this time everyone came out of it alive.”

“Dying?” Hermione looked scandalized. “What kind of tournament is this?”

“It’s like the Wizard Olympics, Hermione,” Harry cheerfully said, “only with three participants, all school aged, and up until the last one full of death and destruction.”

“Sounds fun.” Neville shared a look with Ron, who looked apprehensive himself.

Ron sighed. “Please don’t get picked as a champion, Harry. I don’t think our hearts could take another year of you almost dying.”

Hermione also frowned. “I’ll curse you myself if that happens, Harry James Potter. Do not try me,” she threatened.

“Oh, trust me,” Harry laughed, “I have my fingers crossed for a relatively peaceful year.”

Ginny and Luna popped into their compartment halfway through the trip, having spent the first half of it with some of their yearmates. Ginny did wonders for Luna's social life it seemed, and the quirky Ravenclaw had more friends now than she did in Harry's first life.

Of course, it also made her more mischievous as the first thing Luna said to Harry was a sly "Congratulations."

Ginny, who was fluent in Luna's tells and had grown bolder over the summer, squinted at Harry and blinked. "Huh. Your beau finally kiss you?"

"Wow," Harry only looked at the two of them impressed. "You have got to tell me how you two do that."

"*Harry!*" Hermione near squealed. "Marvolo *kissed* you?"

"How was it?" Draco asked, scooting closer and smirking when Harry made a show of looking thoughtful. "Come on, Harry, we're *dying* to know. He's been so *noble* and *proper* to wait for you for this long, after all."

"More importantly, *when?*" Ron cut in and at Harry's raised eyebrow, shrugged. "I have five knuts on the night after the World Cup."

"You bet on it?" Harry pouted.

"Seven knuts on today, before you had to leave for the train," Neville admitted.

"Seven knuts on your birthday," Draco sniffed, knowing he'd lost long ago.

Ginny grumbled as well, "I thought it was going to be your birthday too. Five knuts."

"Twelve knuts on the day he had to leave for school," Luna said with serene satisfaction. Hermione was just as confident.

"Same as Luna for me, ten knuts."

"I'm gonna look for new friends," Harry whined, not really meaning it. "Ones that won't bet on me. I think I'll start with Zabini to replace Draco."

"Please, as if," the Slytherin rolled his eyes. " *Well*, Harry?"

"He left on the 29th," Harry said. "Planted a good one right before his portkey activated, the smug bastard."

Hermione and Luna, while smug at their own predictions, didn't rub in their win. (Much.) They did, however, use the bet money they won to buy treats from the trolley for everyone.

They always have to sit at their respective house tables for the Welcoming Feast, but Harry didn't have to be beside Ron to see how utterly devastated he was to find out that there would be no Quidditch this year. It quite possibly mirrored Cedric's own face right now.

The announcement of the Triwizard Tournament though, that got a much more intense reaction than Quidditch did. He didn't notice last time, considering all he thought about was Absolutely Not Getting Involved (for all the good that did), but many of the seventh years and some of the sixth years had that *glint* in their eyes that Harry had sometimes. Hogwarts truly bred the most foolhardy of witches and wizards.

Moody - the real one, not Barty Jr. in disguise - was their actual Defense professor this year. It was kind of a shame that Barty wasn't teaching them - he was still the best Defense professor he'd had in the end, after all, as fond as he was of Remus - but Tom had *plans*. Hopefully no one got turned into ferret this year, though. Or made to watch spiders getting tortured with the Cruciatus Curse. Or got Imperioed, as useful of a lesson that had been. (He should talk to Professor Flitwick about the Defense Club later this week, though.)

On the weeks leading toward the end of October, Draco and Harry became reluctant parents to the same Blast-Ended Skrewt for Care of Magical Creatures, Moody *did* end up teaching them the Unforgivables (only with less spider-torture) got them fighting off the Imperius Curse (Barty's bullshit about Dumbledore's orders weren't complete bullshit after all), and no one got turned into a ferret.

Before Harry knew it, the Beauxbaton and Durmstrang students were due to arrive the very next day.

The excited energy buzzed through the entire castle. Even a few of the aloof Slytherins were eager to meet the foreign representatives. But no one can deny, even if it was quite puzzling to those not in the know, that Harry seemed the most excited of them all.

"Alright, Harry?" Susan asked during the morning of October 30th. "You look like you're about to jump off to the sky any minute now."

"I'm perfect," Harry declared, grinning wide.

That afternoon the entire school was lined up at the front gates to welcome their guests. Harry fought through the crowd with his friends to stand in the front, practically bouncing at the balls of his feet. Beside him, Draco rolled his eyes and whispered furiously for him to "*Keep still*, Harry, for Merlin's sake."

The Beauxbaton's carriage was as beautiful as ever, abraxan horses elegantly leading the carriage to a gentle stop in front of the student body. Madame Maxime, the headmistress and a giantess of a woman, exited first and was followed by her students. Among all the prim and proper teenagers, Harry could see Fleur Delacour among them.

Dumbledore and Maxime exchanged pleasantries as the Beauxbaton students lined themselves up to the side, waiting for further instruction from their headmistress. It was

amazing how much more disciplined the foreign students were compared to Hogwarts’.

A younger student’s surprised shout turned all their attention to the Great Lake, where a formidable looking ship rose from its depths. From here they could see the Durmstrang crest on its sails.

The Durmstrang party walked towards them with no real urgency, but Harry could distinguish Viktor at Karkaroff’s left and Tom at the headmaster’s right. Harry couldn’t help but grin wider, slyly glancing at the unsuspecting Dumbledore, who hadn’t registered the students just yet.

And when Dumbledore’s genial face slipped from Karkaroff down to Tom, Harry was there to see the headmaster completely *freeze*. And curiously enough, McGonagall went still with shock.

Tom smiled pleasantly, looking through the crowd that was busy whispering about Krum’s presence to send a wink at Harry’s direction. Almost immediately, Dumbledore turned his head slightly to catch where Tom’s attention was, and seeing that it was on Harry, breathed in sharply. Karkaroff, on the other hand, paled at seeing the Boy Who Lived.

Harry wanted to piss himself laughing.

“Dumbledore,” Karkaroff gritted through thinned lips, “A pleasure to be here.”

“Yes,” Dumbledore barely sounded shaken, but some of them knew better. “Glad to have you and your.. students here, Igor.”

Karkaroff grimaced. From beside him, Viktor shared a raised eyebrow with Tom, who innocently shrugged. Dumbledore kept glancing back at what he saw was Tom Riddle Jr.’s carbon copy, but Tom was playing the oblivious game and blatantly pretended the old man wasn’t outright staring at him. And because Tom was a cheeky thing, he carefully broke himself from the Durmstrang crowd and went right for Harry.

Everyone - Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang students and professors alike - stared.

“Harry,” Tom greeted, looking warm and utterly besotted at the teen in front of him. His acting skills never disappointed. A Durmstrang student may have said a very empathetic ‘*what the fuck*’ in the distance.

“Marvolo,” Harry grinned back dopily. “Fancy seeing you here.”

“You know me,” the teenaged Dark Lord *purred*, “I could never resist a chance to see you.” And the gall of him, Tom took Harry’s hand to press a quick kiss on his knuckles. “I have a birthday kiss to collect at midnight, after all.”

“Get it, Harry!” Lavender gleefully shouted and a few feet away, Cho expressed her very vehement agreement to Cedric’s mortification.

Karkaroff looked like he was about to be sick. Dumbledore, they noted, was having his second near-heart attack of the year. It probably won’t be the last.

“Oh dear Merlin,” Draco said. “You two are going to be *insufferable* all year.”

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Life #18 - Schoolgirls

Part 1:

When Abigail “Abby” Anderson snuck out with the cute junior boy from the rival public school, she didn’t think it would result to her getting sent to an all-girls boarding school two states away. Her mom was totally overreacting. Well, she did have a pregnancy scare, but in the end nothing came out of that and that’s what mattered. Right?

Lady Claire’s Academy looked like an uptight place. The building was older than her grandma, she reckoned, and she couldn’t wear pants at all - just these knee-long skirts and socks that went up her entire calf. The only fashionable thing she was allowed was her shoes, and even then they had to be within uniform regulations - black, shined, and two-inch heels max.

This was going to be a long three years.

Her thoughts about the school soured further when her roommate helpfully informed her about the *hierarchy*. Nothing like her former school’s juvenile prom king and prom queen tiers, no, their Student President was basically the school’s Queen. With a capital Q. She had a court and everything too.

And she would’ve been madder about it if she hadn’t seen the proclaimed Queen, who was currently a sophomore like her, and saw how *pretty and genuine* she was. Elizabeth Song had the straightest, shiniest long black hair, thin pink lips, fair skin, smooth long legs, and deep blue eyes.

Abby was a sucker for blue eyes. They were what got her in trouble with that boy in the first place.

And she needed to avoid trouble. Maybe if she was good, her parents would send her back to her old school after a year of being the perfect daughter. No boys - or pretty half-Asian girls - to distract her from getting high grades and maybe a solid participation in one of the school clubs. Whatever they had that wasn’t like, sewing or whatever.

That plan lasted all of two weeks, when she finally encountered Song in the bathroom of all places.

“Abigail Anderson.. right?” A voice asked from behind her as she washed her hands. Abby jumped, turning to see Elizabeth smiling at her pleasantly. They met eyes.

“Oh *no* ,” Abby - *Harry* - groaned. In front of her, Elizabeth - *Tom* - went from smiling to grimacing. “Not again.”

“You can say that again,” Tom sighed. “Damn it. I was hoping last time was the last.”

“I hope that every time and I’m only disappointed,” Harry grumbled, taking some paper towels to dry her hands. “At least we’re the same age again.”

Tom hummed, inspecting herself in the mirror. “Both girls, this time.”

“I have bigger boobs than you do,” Harry gleefully pointed out and Tom rolled her eyes.

“And you’re still as juvenile as ever.”

“I’m literally fifteen.”

“Rumor has it you got sent here after almost getting pregnant,” Tom dryly said.

Harry scrunched her face. “Dammit, that’s why some girls have been looking at me judgmentally. I thought it was because I never button my blazer up.”

“Which you should do regardless,” Tom sternly pointed. “Uniform code, Ms. Anderson.”

“Yes, Your Highness,” Harry rolled her eyes and obliged.

It took them a moment to realize that they were actually getting along for more than five minutes.

“Uhm,” Harry started awkwardly. Then remembered she’d essentially been crushing on Tom Riddle this entire time. “Uhhm...”

Tom sighed. “Come on, let’s talk in my room. I have a private one.”

“That is *so* unfair.”

Chapter End Notes

throws confetti everywhere

finals are done!! tom and harry kissed!!! chapter delivered as promised!!!! hell yaaa

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

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

“This is the first time I’ve seen you in full Durmstrang uniform and I’m disappointed,” Harry pouted at Marvolo as the student congregation headed towards the Great Hall. “I was hoping it would look terrible on you. Brown tunic and brown trousers aren’t flattering at all.”

“You’re cute,” Marvolo smirked down at him, patting Harry’s cheek and ignoring the curious whispering around them. “Now which table are we sitting at?”

Harry led Tom to the Hufflepuff table, Viktor and Harry’s friends leisurely trailing behind them. The other Durmstrang students had a moment of crisis, wondering if they were supposed to sit with their two best students or if they were allowed not to be in vicinity of this strange, *nice* version of Gaunt. Who apparently had romantic ties to the Boy Who Lived.

That was going to take a while to absorb.

“Should we... chaperone?” One of Viktor’s classmates had whispered worriedly to his friend. *“Gaunt didn’t ingest anything strange on the way here, did he?”*

“Don’t be stupid, Aldrich,” the friend replied back heatedly, *“Gaunt’s business is his own. Now keep your mouth shut, he can hear you from there.”*

Viktor snorted. “Our classmates are being very funny,” he explained to Harry’s confused friends. Draco, the only one with a passing knowledge of German, snickered himself.

“It’s funny how everyone thinks Harry’s virtue is in danger,” Draco smirked as Harry rolled his eyes.

Throughout the entire dinner, eyes wandered towards their eclectic group, fighting for people’s attention with Fleur Delacour who sat with her friends at the Ravenclaw table. Ron, when he wasn’t frowning mulishly at Hermione and Viktor’s increasingly engaged conversation, couldn’t help but notice the part-veela’s allure himself. Funnily enough though, while he stared starry eyed at Fleur flipping her silvery-blond hair, Hermione would turn to him and seeing his attention preoccupied by the French witch, became rather miffed.

Finally, a composed Dumbledore stood up from the Head Table and smiled genially at the assembled students. It was like Tom’s appearance wasn’t bothering him at all.

“Our dear friends from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang,” Dumbledore started, “it is with great honor that Hogwarts welcomes you to our humble castle. I do hope dinner was to your liking, as we would like you to be as comfortable as you can during your stay. It is with great delight that I announce the beginning of the TriWizard Tournament!”

Applause littered the hall, the Weasley twins going as far as to holler cheers. Dumbledore stepped towards the podium a few meters from the Head Table, where an ancient looking case sat. Ludo Bagman excitedly approached it as well, carefully unclasping and opening the wooden case to reveal a golden cup that suddenly flickered into flames.

“As is tradition, each school will have a champion chosen by an impartial selector: the Goblet of Fire.” Dumbledore gestured to the ancient cup. “Students who wish to nominate themselves have twenty-four hours to put their name on a slip of paper and throw it into the Goblet’s flames. During tomorrow’s Halloween feast, the Goblet will then reveal our champions, who will valiantly compete for the prestigious title of TriWizard Champion and one thousand galleons.”

More clapping, and Harry could already see some students itching to put their name in already. Well, aren’t many of them going to be surprised.

“Of course, due to the danger of this tournament, some precautions must be put in place. It has been agreed by all schools that only students of aged seventeen and older are eligible for the tournament.”

“Bollocks!” George Weasley shouted, and many of the other sixth years expressed the same sentiment. It was only with Professor McGonagall’s stern call to behave that the outrage didn’t get any louder.

“To prevent any mishaps, I, myself, will be drawing an age line around the Goblet. I dare say that should you attempt to bypass it, well, you shall see then.” Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled knowingly.

“Will you be entering, Marvolo?” Neville couldn’t help but ask as everyone started to leave the Great Hall.

“I have no plans to,” Tom said simply, pressing close to Harry, who grinned and leaned back. “My only intention of being here was to be able to see Harry.”

“How romantic,” Hermione beamed. “Though it would be a shame if you don’t compete. As dangerous as this tournament sounds, I’m sure you’re more than capable of winning it.”

“Your confidence in my abilities is flattering, Hermione.” Tom huffed, amused.

Hermione, Ron, and Neville soon parted from them to head to the Gryffindor tower and not long after that, Draco left for the Slytherin dungeons with a knowing wink at Harry. Viktor too, politely excused himself to leave the couple alone.

“My curfew is soon,” Harry lightly said as the halls thinned of students. “I really should get going back to the dormitory.”

“You know this entire castle top to bottom, you’re not going to get caught if you don’t want to, invisible cloak or not.” Tom pointed out.

“You were serious about that midnight birthday kiss, weren’t you?” Harry grinned in wonder. “You’re such a sap.”

“It’s tradition,” Tom slyly said. “Midnight kiss for our seventeenth birthdays, remember?”

“It’s not tradition and you know it!” Harry laughed then looked around thoughtfully. “The old astronomy tower?”

Tom nodded. “It’s been a while since we’ve been there.”

The corridors were practically empty by now, thirty minutes away from Hogwarts curfew, but they managed to shuffle to the other end of the castle without encountering anyone. The old astronomy tower hadn’t been in use since 1904 when the current one was remodeled, and not many students knew about it in the first place, if any. The stairs leading up to the top were still safely intact, only a thick layer of dust showing how disused it was. With a soft *lumos* and a quick dusting spell, they headed towards the top of the tower where the open air and night sky greeted them.

“It has been a while,” Harry breathed. “I never came up here all this time by myself.”

“Waiting for me?” Tom teased, and he softened when Harry leaned against his side and nodded.

“Always.”

Tom gently stroked Harry’s hair before pulling away to approach one of the pillars. They always used this particular one, so if they’d been in this Hogwarts before...

“Ah,” Tom crouched and shined his lit wand near the base of the pillar, “we’ve made our mark here.”

Harry brightened, quickly going down on a crouch beside him. “Oh!” He gently touched the carved letters and numbers under the symbol of the Deathly Hallows. “C.M.34.R.G.”

“Charles Montgomery and Rosemary Graham. Life 34.” Tom remembered.

“That was the first life we got married, wasn’t it?” Harry hummed in contemplation. “That was ages ago.”

“Centuries, by our standards.” Tom agreed.

“Have you wondered lately if this is really our original life?” Harry asked quietly after a few moments. “With all the curveballs we’ve been getting, it’s hard to tell.”

Tom sighed, shifting to sit with his back against the pillar. “I’ve had my doubts myself. Things were the same as they were until the night we met. Considering the circumstances, we may not know until we ask Death ourselves.”

“I suppose that’s true,” Harry mirrored his earlier sigh and rested his head against Tom’s shoulder. “It doesn’t really matter, I guess.”

Tom offered his hand, and Harry easily slipped his through it. It was a small comfort that they both welcomed.

"1933." Tom suddenly said. "When we carved the pillar. It was the first one we did. First to test out a theory if we were reborn again, but later to commemorate that life."

"It was our sixth year." Harry recalled with a smile. "We spent the first five fighting half the time, crushing on each other for the rest of it. Everyone would roll their eyes when they heard us shouting."

"There they go again, Montgomery and Graham fighting. I wonder when's the wedding." Tom dryly quoted. "Emily would always tell me we were like an old married couple. Bickering about every little thing but always attached to the hip."

Harry snickered. "The other boys would joke about me being 'rosy for Rosemary,' because I would always turn red out of anger or embarrassment because of you."

"People actually applauded when you asked me out to Hogsmeade on an actual, proper date."

"John pissed himself laughing when I asked about how he courted Sarah. I was tempted not to make him my best man after that."

"I think," Tom stared at their still intertwined hands, "that I loved you even before then. But it was the first life I could actually admit it to myself."

"It took you long enough," Harry smiled softly, "I'd been waiting for lifetimes by the time I met you in Diagon Alley that life."

"I sometimes thought you were an idiot, for loving me so easily," Tom said. "I'd murdered your parents and caused the deaths of your loved ones, waged a war that cost Wizarding Britain almost everything, and tried to kill you multiple times, all for a hypocritical and half-assed cause born out of my own issues and insanity. I wasn't a good man, and you didn't deserve to get stuck with my mess of a soul."

"We've gone through this before," Harry squeezed Tom's hand. "If it made me an idiot to love you, then fine, but you're more than just Voldemort. Especially now. I won't deny that he's a part of you, but so is William Terrance. Hannes Braus. Elizabeth Song. Rosemary Graham. Hell, as much as you hate to admit it, even David Steel. Those people were still you at its core, and none of them were anything like Voldemort. And now, now you're Marvolo Thomas Gaunt, the 'secret son' of Tom Riddle Jr. and-"

Suddenly, Tom jolted, and Harry tensed in surprise. "Uh, Tom?"

"The secret son of Tom Riddle Jr." Tom repeated. "The *secret* son."

"What?" Harry blinked, surprised at the sudden turn of atmosphere. He was just, after all, trying to reaffirm his *undying love* to the man-

"Very, *very* few people knew about Tom Riddle Jr.'s connection to the Gaunt name," Tom said, thinking furiously. "Abraxas knew, as I personally asked him about it but I swore him to

secrecy. Evidently he broke the promise to tell his son, but the Lucius I remember was quite tight-lipped and careful with my secrets. The diary incident was an exception, not the norm.”

“Yeah, okay.” Harry nodded, still confused. “So?”

“Karkaroff knows the actual truth, but he’s a coward and I cursed his tongue to oblivion to make sure he wasn’t about to blab to anyone unless I wanted to. Dumbledore knew my mother was a Gaunt, and he’s either thinking I’m a deaged version of myself or my own son. Regardless, it’s clear that he’d never even suspected of my existence until perhaps when I sent you that howler. Additionally, he never made Tom Riddle Jr.’s identity as Voldemort as public, so that bit of knowledge is also not very common at all.” Tom continued. “Barty was just informed this summer. All the other members of my original Knights of Walpurgis took my schoolboy secrets to their graves. So, it’s safe to say that I am, for all intents and purposes, just ‘Tom Riddle Jr.’s’ *secret* son. Which leaves me one question.”

Harry tsked impatiently. “Okay, you’re lucky I know who you are because your rambling got confusing really quickly. So spit it out, what’s got you so bothered?”

Tom looked at Harry in the eyes. “Despite all that, how did *Viktor* know,” Tom said slowly, “that my ‘father’ was Tom Riddle Jr. and that *he* was Voldemort?”

Harry stilled. “Holy shit.”

“Holy shit, indeed.”

“My head hurts,” Harry groaned a bit of time later. They were still at the abandoned tower, having spent the few hours trying to figure out what the actual fuck was going on. “Let’s leave the conspiracy theories another time, please?”

Tom gave him a long suffering look. “If we leave it too long it’s going to bite us back in the arse later.”

“It’s gonna bite us back regardless of what we do,” Harry snorted. “Sorry to say but the Potter luck has rubbed off on you.”

“We should head back to our dormitories,” Tom said as he cast a quick *tempus* . Harry grimaced at seeing 1:04 am.

“Snape’s most likely patrolling at the moment, we’ll have to be even more careful.”

“I’ll cast the Disillusionment spell for good measure,” the older wizard drawled, eyeing Harry expectantly. “But aren’t you forgetting something, darling?”

Harry stared at Tom, and Tom stared back, eyebrow raised.

“Oh, you’re so needy,” Harry teased as he gave Tom a tight hug and looked up at him. “If you wanted your birthday kiss, you just need to ask.”

“You can’t call me needy when you clung to me when I had to leave for Durmstrang,” Tom pointed out. “Come on, weren’t you just saying earlier how much you love me?”

“You’re a terrible person,” Harry declared, but he didn’t mean it a single bit. “Lean down if you want your kiss, lover boy, because you’re too fucking tall for me right now. You grew again, didn’t you? How’s that even goddamn possible.”

“You’re just short,” Tom flatly said even as he leaned down. “I know you like it though. I do.”

Harry squawked, mock indignantly, “You kinky bastard-”

Tom did get his ‘birthday’ kiss. Five minutes of it.

Harry snuck back into the Hufflepuff common room as quietly as he could, but was met with a disapproving cough from Cedric.

“Uhm,” Harry blinked, wide eyed at the prefect. “Hi?”

“I’m not going to ask,” Cedric dryly said, taking in Harry’s appearance, “but you might want to consider straightening up just in case someone else is awake if you don’t want questions. Because you look thoroughly snogged.”

“Marvolo and I were just catching up,” Harry grinned, slightly apologetic.

“Right,” Cedric rolled his eyes. “I’m going to bed. I just wanted to make sure you did come back tonight.”

Harry, aware of Cedric’s heartfelt concern towards his well being, was genuinely touched. “Thanks, Cedric. Sorry I kept you waiting so late. We honestly didn’t notice the time.”

Cedric ruffled Harry’s already messy hair with a fond grin, “Don’t worry about it. You think Cho and I haven’t abused our prefect privileges a little bit? But seriously, go to bed now. Goodnight, Harry.”

“Goodnight! I always knew you and Cho have done a little hanky-panky in the prefect’s bathroom!”

“Keep it down, Harry!”

The next day, crowds of students loitered in the Great Hall just to watch who exactly had the balls to put their name in the Goblet.

True to memory, Fred and George’s attempt at bypassing the age line with their aging potion was met with hilarity when it firebacked at them and turned them into old men with long

white beards. They took it with good enough humor, but Harry could see they really were disappointed that they wouldn't be able to compete.

Cedric was met with cheers from fellow Hufflepuffs when he entered his name, as did Angelina Johnson from the Gryffindors. Various students from all houses followed suit throughout the morning. Almost all the Slytherin seventh years and some sixth years submitted their names, outdoing the other houses by their number of self-nominees. Ravenclaw surprisingly had the least amount of interested participants.

"Are you sure you won't be nominating yourself, Marvolo?" Viktor asked as he fingered his own slip of parchment. The Beauxbaton students were currently in a line as they entered the tournament one by one. Other Durmstrang students also politely waited their turn. *"You would blow everyone out of the water."*

Tom hummed, flipping a page of the book he and Harry were reading casually. *"Don't you wish to be a champion yourself?"*

Viktor grinned with a shark-like smile, *"Now where would my pride be in that, if I am not measured against you?"*

"Wow," Harry said, "The testosterone here is strong. Careful, I think every girl in this hall can smell it."

"Regardless who is our champion, Durmstrang does want to win," Viktor eyes Tom. *"We all know very well that Marvolo is our best shot at victory."*

"Have faith in yourself, Viktor. You're more than capable of representing our school." The teenaged dark lord smiled at his friend. Viktor returned it before walking towards the Goblet.

"He's your friend," Harry whispered quietly to Tom as they watched Viktor and the other Durmstrang students enter their names. "I don't think he actually realizes the weight of your secret."

"I don't think so either," Tom smiled bitterly. "But I didn't survive for as long as I did my first life without being unhealthily paranoid. Betrayal, even from the most unlikely of places, is a familiar face."

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Life #29 - That one time Tom almost got shot by Harry's father

WARNINGS: Age-difference, heavily implied sexual situation between a sixteen year old "Harry" and a thirty-three year old "Tom", pls dont kill me, this is fiction, I don't actually endorse this.

“I need you to take my virginity.” Harry, or Jennifer as she was known in this life, said to him through the phone.

Tom, now known as Anthony, hung up. He took a deep breath and silently counted to ten before answering the following insistent ringing of his cellphone.

“Harry,” Tom gritted out, “I’m thirty-three.”

“The age of consent here is sixteen, I checked,” Harry said. “And it’s only this one time.”

“I can still get arrested if someone finds out, Potter!” Tom scowled. It was fortunate that he was in his own home at the moment, else somebody probably would have called the cops on him already. “Find a boy your own age, for god’s sake.”

“But they’re all so *young*,” Harry whined. “I feel like a creep.”

Tom pinched the bridge of his nose in a show of being So Done with This Shit. “Pot, meet kettle. I still actually think of myself as over fifty years older than you most days, you know.”

“It’s evened out by now, surely,” Harry pressed. “I’ve been older than you a few times. Hell, I was your father once.”

“I was old enough to be your grandfather the first time, Potter.” Tom dryly pointed out. “And I’m currently twice your age.”

“I always did fancy an older man.”

“For fuck’s sake,” Tom sighed, aggravated. “Why in god’s name do you need your virginity gone anyways?”

“We had unicorns for Magical Creatures class last week,” Harry grimaced. “That bullocks about ‘purity’ and shit, you know. Now everyone knows I’m still a virgin and the boys in my year and above have been insufferable, trying to get to me first. As if I’d drop my pants for the first boy that gives me an offer. *Gross*.”

Tom made a noise of disgust. “Distasteful. Teenagers are disgustingly crass.”

“Right? No respect at all!” Harry sniffed. “I’ve hexed most of them and sent them packing to the school clinic but I think half of them have an Amazonian complex because they keep coming back.”

“I still would rather not sleep with you, though.” The older man said even as he looked up plane ticket prices to Massachusetts, because as much as he hated to admit it, he can’t say no to the brat. It was quite annoying not to be magical in this life though, while Potter dilly-dallied around in Ilvermorny.

“When are you free? I’m at home for the weekend, but after Sunday I won’t be until winter break,” Harry brazenly continued. “Dad’s going out on a hiking trip in January, you can come over then. That good with you?”

Tom made a disgruntled noise. “Why do I get a feeling that it’s going to go terribly wrong? Why aren’t we getting a hotel room?”

It went absolutely terribly wrong.

“Oh, fuck-” Tom cursed as he jumped off the bed, barely managing to dodge the pellets from the shotgun.

“Dad!” Harry squealed as she scrambled to both cover her naked body and stop her father from murdering an equally naked Tom. “Dad, no!”

“Who the hell are you?!” Harry’s father yelled, preparing another shot and making Tom pale as he hurriedly put some goddamn pants on. “Jenny, stay back! I’ll take care of him!”

“Uh, I’m sure this is just a misunderstanding, Mr. Garcia-”

“Daddy, put the gun down!”

“Is this one of your magic teachers, Jenny?! I swear, you pervert, if you’ve been taking advantage of my baby girl-”

Seeing another shot incoming, Tom did the only thing he could do. He jumped out the window.

‘Thank fucking god it was a one-storey house,’ he thought as he ran off half-naked in the snow, an enraged father on his trail. ‘I’m going to fucking *kill* Harry next time, because *I told him so*.’

Chapter End Notes

((strokes imaginary beard)) hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm....

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

~~surprise~~

i just felt really inspired this week

Also ~feels~ incoming

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

“At last,” Dumbledore addressed the entire hall, “it is time. We are about to see who have been chosen to become our Triwizard champions!”

A roar of applause echoed throughout the crowd. People were literally jumping in their seats, eager to find out who was to represent each prestigious school.

At the turn of the hour, the Goblet’s flame flashed an intense bright blue, flickering only once and surging up in fiercer flames as it spat out the first slip of parchment.

“Beauxbaton’s champion is Fleur Delacour!” Dumbledore shouted, and the powder-blue clad students burst into enthusiastic cheering as Fleur stood up, smiling prettily as she confidently strode towards the Great Hall’s side-chamber. Not before giving the smitten crowd an elegant curtsy, of course.

“Please not me, please not me,” Harry kept muttering, fingers crossed as the Goblet spat out another name, to all his friends’ amusement.

“Hogwart’s champion is Cedric Diggory!”

“Yes!” Cho jumped excitedly for her boyfriend, giving a pleasantly shocked Cedric a big peck on the cheek before he followed Fleur’s footsteps.

“I was kinda rooting for Angelina, but I suppose Cedric isn’t a surprise,” Ron muttered quietly, clapping for their friend like the rest of them.

“And finally, Durmstrang’s champion is...” At a glance at the parchment, Dumbledore faltered for only half a second, but it was enough for Harry and Tom to straighten up in attention. Harry suddenly felt a sinking feeling in his gut. “Marvolo Gaunt!”

His stomach dropped.

To his credit, Tom showed none of his own shock, striding confidently up towards the chamber with only a distant acknowledgement towards the Hogwarts headmaster. Even as the rest of the Durmstrang contingent clapped loudly, Harry could still make out some murmurs of confusion, as none of them had even seen their classmate approach the Goblet at all.

Viktor, Harry noted with a sick feeling, did not look a single bit surprised.

“Marvolo?” Cedric looked incredulously at the apparent Durmstrang champion. “I thought you weren’t entering the tournament at all?”

Tom gave the Hufflepuff prefect a thin, humourless smile. “Someone apparently decided otherwise for me.”

“Vy would you be here if not to enter?” Fleur asked, perplexed. “It eez a great honor.”

Before Tom could say any more, their headmasters, Crouch, and Ludo Bagman entered the room to officially meet the three champions. Karkaroff looked stiff as he stood by Tom, and Dumbledore spared him a calculating stare before turning his attention back to the Ministry officials.

‘Well,’ Tom grimly thought as he barely listened to Bagman’s rambling. ‘At least it’s not Harry in this mess this time.’

“At least it’s not me in this mess this time?” Harry weakly smiled when Tom and Cedric were finally released from the long winded session with the judges. The group had snuck in an empty classroom to talk more in private.

“Small mercies,” Neville wryly said as everyone else sighed, some in relief.

“I mean, with your luck you would’ve become like, the fourth champion or something,” Ron added and Harry grimaced because yeah, that wasn’t fun the first time and he wasn’t actually keen on repeating it again. For the record? Swimming in the Great Lake in fucking February was the worst task of them all. If one discounted the Cedric dying part during the last one.

“I didn’t put my name in,” Tom gritted, and clenched his teeth when Viktor remained silent and wouldn’t look at him.

“Someone did, but why?” Cedric asked, perplexed. Hermione nodded in agreement with the older teen.

“I mean, Ron’s right,” Hermione said. Ron perked up and preened a little, which was kind of funny. “If anyone was going to be unwillingly entered into the tournament, all bets would be on Harry. Sorry, Harry.”

Harry waved Hermione’s apology. “Nah, I’d have bet on myself too.”

Draco was looking contemplatively at Tom, and carefully asked, “I’ve been meaning to ask, and feel free to tell me not to pry because it’s hardly any of our business but... Professor Dumbledore knows you-- or at least, recognizes you, doesn’t he?”

Trust Draco to pick up the clues quickly and come to an accurate conclusion.

“My father,” Tom halted, acting hesitant, “was a Hogwarts student. Back when Dumbledore was still deputy headmaster to Armando Dippet. From what I know, he and Dumbledore were not very... cordial with each other.”

“I can imagine why,” Viktor finally spoke, snorting, and Tom shot his friend a sharp glance. Viktor twitched, looking almost apologetic over his slip but the damage was done. Draco, Hermione, and even Neville became very, *very* curious.

“That’s quite some time ago,” Hermione cautiously commented, noticing the suddenly tense atmosphere between the two Durmstrang students. “Your father must have been quite on his years when he had you.”

“Even so, I still look very much like him,” Tom said, a bit bitterly. “And that is enough to have his guard up around me.”

“Some people really have a hard time adopting the mindset that ‘the sins of the father are not the sins of the son,’ huh?” Harry said, laying a hand on Tom’s shoulder as comfort.

The Hogwarts students finally had to go back to their dorms fifteen minutes later, still with no idea as to why someone wanted Marvolo to compete in the tournament. It was only with Tom’s insistence that Harry followed Cedric back to the Hufflepuff dorms, and it wasn’t without a loaded look sent Tom’s way.

On their way back to the Durmstrang ship, Tom finally confronted Viktor.

“Why did you enter my name?” Tom sharply asked, stopping the both of them in their tracks. The accusation echoed strangely in the moonlit corridor end that they were at. Viktor looked at him from the corner of his eye warily, very well aware that Tom had his wand hidden in his sleeve, ready to be in hand. “I know it was you, Viktor. I can practically taste the guilt coming out of you. Is Durmstrang’s victory that important to you?”

“It was out of necessity,” Viktor said. “Believe me, if there was any other way-”

“Another way for what?” Tom cut in, in a rare show of impatience. “Tell me what the meaning of this is, because from my standpoint, it does not look good for you.”

A complicated and frustrated expression graced the Bulgarian’s face and it had seemed that he was about to speak, but stopped and shut his mouth. Viktor’s eyes flickered away from Tom’s gaze. The silence between them was deafening.

“I thought you were my friend,” Tom said, almost mournfully and Viktor looked stricken at the betrayed tone his voice took.

“*I am*,” Viktor insisted, “I promise you, I did this only because I had no choice. It was you or Harry,” At this, Viktor made an unnaturally pained choking sound but he continued, gasping, “And I knew that if it had been Harry, you would kill me if he got so much as a scratch on him from this tournament.”

At the mention of Harry's name, Tom's wand snapped right into his hand and he crowded Viktor against one of the corridor's stone pillars, wand pressed against his friend's throat. "What do you mean," He snapped, voice unforgivingly cold, "that it was me or Harry?"

Viktor, for the first time he'd known him, looked *terrified* of Tom. He stared down at who he believed to be Lord Voldemort's son and knew without a doubt that his life was in danger right at that moment.

"I can't say it," he roughly whispered, "I can't say *anything* . Please, Marvolo. Trust me."

Tom snarled, an unspoken curse already at the tip of his wand when he finally noticed something peculiar against Viktor's skin. A sliver of moonlight illuminated ink moving around Viktor's neck, most of it hidden by their uniforms high collar. With a careless movement of his wand, he slashed the fabric open and revealed the image of dark, thorny vines wrapped around Viktor's throat.

"A curse of silence," Tom realized with horrified clarity, watching as the curse literally choked Viktor for the secrets he had already shared, and warningly tightened to keep him from saying any more. Viktor couldn't so much as nod in confirmation, hissing at another particularly tight squeeze from the curse, but his defeated eyes said it all.

The former dark lord took a deep, shaky breath before summoning his patronus. The silvery snake peered at him curiously. "Tell Harry to meet us in the Room of Requirement," he ordered, carefully keeping his eyes on his friend, "it's urgent. And don't let yourself be seen by anyone."

The snake nodded in understanding before slithering through the air in the direction of the Hufflepuff dormitories.

"Come on," Tom dragged a resigned Viktor back into the castle, "we'll figure this out."

"Fuck," Harry said blankly when he laid his eyes on the curse. "*Fuck* ."

"It's nothing I've seen before." Tom said, aggravated. "This might be someone's personal creation."

"Did you really have to tear his uniform though?" Harry commented idly, even as he peered at the inky vines himself. "I mean, if you wanted to rip his clothes off, surely all you had to do was ask?"

Viktor gave an amused chuckle. "First Diggory, and now myself? Perhaps the rumors are true, that the two of you really are amassing a harem."

"Nice to see you can still joke while you have a very dark curse on you!" Harry said brightly, patting Viktor comfortingly on the shoulder.

"I do apologize for my rash assumptions, Viktor." Tom solemnly said. "I'm afraid that I do not react to any possibility of betrayal very well."

“I understand your position, Marvolo.” Viktor sighed tiredly, touching his neck gingerly, “My actions were incriminating. I myself am sorry I pulled you in as an unwilling participant of the tournament. Also for stealing your Potions essay to get your name.”

“How long?” Tom quietly asked, choosing to ignore the desecration of his homework. “You don’t have to say if it triggers the curse.”

“Not long,” Viktor reassured. “Since this summer. What I can and cannot say are rather peculiarly particular. I admit that I’ve had practice in finding out.”

“That could’ve been dangerous,” Tom frowned disapprovingly at his friend, but Viktor only smiled.

“Ah, to think our dear schoolmates have told me for many years that you have no heart!” Viktor teased. “I appreciate your concern, Marvolo.”

“There’s no point in asking why either he or I had to be in the tournament, is there?” Harry hopefully asked, though he knew it was moot point. Viktor shook his head apologetically.

“I’ve reached the limit of what I can say,” Viktor said. “I’m afraid that if I try to say any more, the curse will kill me. I’ve been led to believe that it is even capable of snapping my neck.”

“Why is nothing ever simple?” Harry whined to their amusement.

Tom peered at the cursed markings again, eyebrows furrowing. He carefully reached to touch the ink, but with a light brush of his fingertips felt the burn of a very, very familiar dark magical trace.

“Harry,” Tom whispered, a little wide-eyed. “Touch it.”

“What? Are you sure?” Harry looked at Viktor’s neck unsurely. “Won’t it hurt him?”

“Just be gentle.”

“You know,” Viktor said, “I’m pretty sure this starting to sound like something out of a teenage girl’s dream.”

“Sorry, you’re not my type,” Harry blithely grinned before poking the older teen’s neck. Instantly, he recognized the magic it was casted with. He shared an incredulous look with Tom.

“The locket,” they simultaneously said.

That changed *everything* .

Dumbledore desperately wished he could drink an entire bottle of firewhiskey.

“His son,” Snape uttered, still with shock, as they both sat in terrified silence. “He has an heir?”

“He looks and sounds just like him,” Dumbledore sighed, clenching his chest. Merlin, his heart couldn’t keep up like this. “So much that I actually thought that it really was Tom Riddle, human once more.” But with how much Dumbledore knew Tom destroyed his soul, he would never look anything but inhuman. No glamour charm or potion in the world could hide such a monstrous appearance, so well and for so long, especially not under his watch.

“Potter doesn’t know the Dark Lord’s original identity, does he?” Snape paced around the room. Lucius must have known, it would explain how tight-lipped he was, despite having this virtual stranger be so closely acquainted with his son. “Considering you only just told me the Dark Lord’s relation to the Gaunts, you’ve kept it a very close secret, haven’t you?”

“In the years after Voldemort’s inception, I felt immense regret,” Dumbledore sighed. “I make mistakes, Severus, as all men do. And Tom was my biggest one, though these past few years I’ve been afraid that Harry was going to take that dubious honor soon. Perhaps I should have informed the world the fate of Tom Riddle Jr., and what he had become. But the part of me that won insisted that just because Voldemort was a monster, doesn’t mean Tom Riddle Jr., a boy I failed due to my own prejudice, should be regarded as one as well. It was the best courtesy I could give him.”

“You’re frustrating, Albus,” Snape said as he looked out the window. “A complicated, frustrating mess. I respect you, but many days I can’t help but loathe you as well. I can’t help but think that you’ve brought this all on yourself. And whatever happens, everyone else is unfortunate collateral damage.”

Dumbledore smiled, “This is my penance. I believe it will haunt me even through death.”

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Life #34 - As Charles Montgomery and Rosemary Graham, 1930's:

Tom, or Rosemary as she was called nowadays, stared across the street from a very familiar building.

It was strange, how normal it looked. Her memories of it always painted it as a dark, dreary place, but now she wondered how much of that was her mind tainting its image. Or perhaps it was because of the London weather, or the incoming world war.

It was 1934 now. She and Harry (or Charles, as he was known) had graduated Hogwarts a month ago. They were getting married (Married! Tom still couldn’t quite grasp her head around that!) in three months time. Really, Tom should be meeting with her mother soon, to talk about the final reception menu, but. Well.

She was here instead, staring at Wool's Orphanage where her seven year old self was.

As if summoned by her very thoughts, a young, so *very* young Tom Riddle Jr. stomped out of the orphanage building, dutifully ignoring everyone else as he approached his favorite reading spot.

She could take him away, she realized, the reckless thought latching on to her mind. This Tom didn't have to be an unhappy orphan, living a horrible lonely life. This Tom didn't have to become Lord Voldemort.

Harry would understand, she thought as she briskly crossed the road, approaching the gates of Wool's. Harry would be the perfect father for him. Harry would--

In a blink, Tom found herself back in her and Harry's house in Yorkshire.

"What?" She rasped, looking around disoriented. But she was just...?

"Tom?" Harry called from the doorway, looking perplexed. "When did you get back?"

"I was just somewhere else," she blankly said, looking out the window and seeing their familiar yard. "How did I get here?"

Harry made a noise of confusion, but before he could say anything else, Tom spun on her heel and apparated back in a familiar London alleyway.

Little Tom Riddle was still reading under his tree. She looked at her watch, and it was only two minutes ago that she was here last.

Hurriedly, she started her approach towards the orphanage again and -

"Why am I back here?" She asked, almost hysterically and making Harry jump in surprise. "Why can't I go near him?"

"Tom," Harry warily said. "What are you talking about?"

In a rush of sudden anger, Tom grabbed Harry and sideapparated them back into the London alleyway.

"That was dangerous!" Harry snapped, "Either of us could've gotten splinched!"

"There," Tom pointed, ignoring Harry's reprimand. "He's right there! We can afford to take him with us, can't we?"

Harry's eyes trailed from Tom's finger to the small figure in the distance and his face dropped. "Oh, Tom..."

She dragged him towards the building, not noticing the pained expression that had overtaken Harry's face and -

“Why?!” She yelled, grabbing a nearby lamp and smashing it on the wall. They were back at the house again. “Who’s doing this?!”

Harry grabbed her by the shoulders and she resisted, at first, but was overcome with sudden exhaustion as he held her closer in his arms. “Tom, we can’t.”

Tom made a frustrated, confused noise.

“We can’t,” Harry whispered. “Whatever has been happening to us, we can’t knowingly get near any of our other lives. Trust me, I’ve tried it before and it has never worked. And I’m sorry, I know what you wanted to do but we just... *can’t*.”

“There doesn’t need to be a Voldemort,” Tom murmured into Harry’s shoulder. “If I- if Tom Riddle Jr. just had someone who *cared*.”

Harry sighed, pained. “I know. God, do I know. But it doesn’t work that way it seems. And it fucking sucks. I wanted a refund ages ago.”

Tom weakly rolled her eyes, breathing deeply to calm her wildly beating heart. “How did you find out?” She asked quietly.

“I tried saving myself, once.” Harry admitted. “We were still new to this- this whole rebirth thing. Life five, I think it was, back when I was that French architect, you know?”

“You made for an atrocious Frenchman.” Tom huffed.

“I’m a Brit at heart, darling,” Harry smiled down at her. “But as I was saying... I had a customer in Little Whinging, and it was ‘86. Two houses away I saw little Harry Potter dutifully weeding the garden under the hot summer sun. He was barely six. I wanted to take him away.”

“Just like I did.”

He nodded. “And the same thing happened. I couldn’t approach him. I tried calling out to him, but it fell on deaf ears. No one even noticed what was happening either.”

“Have you tried again since?”

“Two lifetimes ago,” Harry breathed into her hair, “I tried saving your mother.”

Tom stilled in shock.

“It was another dimension from this one, I’m sure of it now.” Harry said. “I looked us up and neither of our identities existed in this one. But back then, you had just died six months prior, I think it was.”

“We died old then, didn’t we?” Tom remembered. “I went in my sleep.”

“Hmm, I was planning on passing on at the turn of the new year, myself,” He reminisced. “But I was wandering the neighborhood one last time, and Merope was just there. A couple

of meters in front of me, trying desperately to find someplace safe to bring you into the world.”

Tom swallowed dryly, knowing how it ended. “But you couldn’t help.”

“I couldn’t help.” The bitter smile on Harry’s face mirrored her own. “It sucked.”

“Thank you, anyway. For trying.”

Harry kissed her sweetly then. “I did it for you.”

Chapter End Notes

Can I just revel with everyone how much this fic has evolved since I started it two years ago? Initially I started it as a crack fic with bare threads of knowing where to go with it, but it's become more like a half-humor, half-serious fic with something more??? Like man, what happened. I've done my best to integrate the "pre-hiatus" chapters with the more current updates, secretly band-aiding plot holes and doing call backs to details people have likely forgotten by now because I am seriously invested in this and want it to be a good fic people can reread and enjoy time and time and again (even if I know ppl get really iffy about the pairing and ALL THE GAYS and it's enough to turn potential readers off from it), especially as a pick-me up on bad days (seriously, when reviewers tell me I've made their bad day better with my fic, I get the warm fuzzies inside). Is it tropey as fuck some times? Hell yeah it is, but it's part of the fun in it, isn't it? I've tried my best to bring the best out of all characters, because I hate to bash (even if bully Dumbledore a lot LOL), and I'm glad people have been positively receptive about it. (NGL tho, I really don't know how to write Ginny tbh, which explains how scarce she is most of the time. Also she and Luna are still honeymooning.) ANYWAY I'm rambling now, but I just wanted to get that all out.

I really enjoy writing this though, and I'm determined to see this all the way through. By my estimates, we're only maybe half-way or a bit less through the entire fic so you know there's more to come. Thanks to everyone who stuck with me or came back to this fic after my initial year-long hiatus, I hope I don't let you down.

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

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

“Traditionally, silencing curses are cast on the tongue,” Harry commented as he and Tom poked and prodded an amused Viktor. He flicked his wand and casted a wordless spell, pursing his lips when Viktor’s neck glowed red. “The tongue is easier to cast on for such a personal curse, due to the concentration of saliva and blood, plus the soft tissue makes it easy to carve runes for some variations of the curse. Nowadays though, people prefer the *Silencio* for temporary and minor use or the Unbreakable Vows for a more severe and long-term spell. There’s also been some speculation over the years about whether the *Fidelus* can be applied to a non-physical idea or concept, but as that is a complicated piece of magic no one has actually been successful in trying.”

Viktor hummed, looking thoughtfully at the rambling teenager. “Kuznetsov?” He recognized, and Harry looked up in surprise before brightening. “Ah, you’ve read his works?”

Tom snorted, “*read them*, he asks.” Harry’s lips twitched in a grin.

“I’m... a big fan,” Harry idly said. “I’ve got most of his books practically absorbed in my brain.”

“Aren’t his books restricted in Britain?” Viktor dryly asked, rolling his eyes when the other two just looked at each other and shrugged unrepentantly. He supposed that’s where Durmstrang’s only copy of *Secrets of the Ten Darkest Arts* went. “I enjoy his books as well. Very informative. I read them a lot when I was younger and when this curse was put on me, they were the first I went to for ideas.”

Harry couldn’t help but be a little bit flattered. And smug.

Harry hummed. “Unfortunately, Marvolo’s suspicion of this being made by its caster is true. Someone who knows very well what they’re doing and very, very well versed in the dark arts. Because in addition to choking you for those particular secrets you’ve got, you’re right in that it can definitely snap your neck. Or slit your throat, it’s not exactly clear which. We’ve got to be careful that we don’t trigger *that* particular bit of spellwork.”

“Partly a potion, wouldn’t you say?” Tom said, gesturing Viktor to open his mouth and dutifully observing the inside. Viktor kind of felt like he was in the hospital. “Concentrated, likely brewed and bottled on a full moon, in a diamond vial.”

“Runic ritual or wand crafted curse?”

“Runic ritual. Amber as the central stone. Luckily not on Samhain or Beltane, else we’re looking at spring before we can get this reversed.”

“Damn, I’m not as good with rituals as you are.” Harry pouted.

Tom sniffed. "Very few people are."

"You two are terrifying, you know that?" Viktor said. "To figure all of that out, some very dark magic, within ten minutes of diagnostics. Not that I'm scared, I find this all amusing despite the unnecessary wand poking you two do on the curse that can kill me."

"Aw, don't worry Viktor," Harry patted the older teen's cheek. "We'll make sure you'll live to do a hundred more Wronski Feints without your pretty little tattoo. There's still a better chance that your neck will snap during Quidditch than it will from this."

There were currently three Slytherin's lockets.

The first one was the original horcrux. Previously in Kreacher's possession, he and Tom had swapped it out with Regulus Black's fake, the second locket, after the debacle with Lockhart in second year to make sure that yes, it actually was Tom's original horcrux. Lockhart had opened the chamber while being possessed by the third locket, which had an unidentified soul piece belonging to what felt like to be one of Slytherin's other descendants clinging on to it.

The diary, Hufflepuff's cup, Ravenclaw's diadem, the Gaunt ring, and the locket were all confirmed as nothing but empty husks, the bare echoes of Tom's soul pieces on it. (They always suspected that Death, or whoever kept meddling with their lives, had a hand in that.)

Nagini, or what would've become Nagini, was just a regular magical snake this time around. And since Harry didn't vanquish Tom this time around, he himself had never been a horcrux at all.

"Who could possibly match Voldemort in Dark Lordiness, other than Voldemort himself?"

Harry wondered after they sent Viktor back to the Durmstrang ship to rest, carefully stretching a red string from one pin to another on his board. "Grindelwald is still in prison, and I'm pretty sure he has the magical presence of a bowtruckle after being there for the past couple of decades. And *he* certainly doesn't have a kid, right?"

"Not that we know of. He and Dumbledore only had eyes for each other until the end, right?" Tom said as he watched his companion complete his Board of Conspiracy. "I feel like this is some sort of desecration of a historical magical site."

Harry blinked at him, a parchment with a crudely drawn Lockhart on one hand and another push pin on the other. "What makes you say that?"

Tom gave him a flat look. "You've turned Slytherin's personal library in the Chamber of Secrets into an FBI investigation room. You've made a conspiracy map on his wall."

"I covered it with a cork sheet," Harry protested. "I can't exactly push the pins into stone, can I?"

“You’re a wizard,” Tom looked up at the ceiling, exasperated. “There are things called *Sticking Charms*, you know.”

“The muggle way has a sort of flair to it though, doesn’t it?”

Tom sighed. “You’re impossible. Well while you do this and poke Viktor some more, I have to go to Gringotts in a few hours to sort out my ‘inheritance,’ now that I’m ‘seventeen.’”

Harry hummed absentmindedly as he continued with his work. “The goblins won’t behead you on sight, will they?”

“I’m not you,” the former Dark Lord snorted, which, fair enough.

“Perfect time to find a new wand from your vaults, I think,” Harry pointedly looked at the yew wand Tom still openly used. “Ollivander will recognize that on sight during the Weighing of the Wands.”

They both paused.

“I think I’ll keep it,” Tom’s lips twitched as he fought off a grin. “It was my *father’s*, after all.”

Hermione joined them for lunch with three tomes in hand. “Where’s Marvolo?” She asked, looking around for the Durmstrang champion. Viktor shifted uneasily.

“He’s at Gringotts,” Harry said breezily. “Since he literally just turned seventeen, he has to meet with the goblins about his inheritance and stuff like that.”

Hermione perked up in curiosity and looked like she wanted to ask about it more until Draco picked up one of the books and made a questioning noise.

“I didn’t realize we had books about the tournament in the library,” Draco said, cracking open the one titled *For Glory - The History of the Triwizard Tournament*.

“I asked Madam Pince about it,” Hermione explained. “I figured we should know everything about the tournament now that Marvolo has to compete in it.”

“I’m sure he’ll appreciate it,” Neville added, picking up one of the other books himself. Ron scrunched his nose at the thought of reading all that.

“Surely I can just get a summary, right?”

“Here you go, Harry,” Luna’s voice drifted from behind him and delicate hands reached around to pin a badge on his robes. Harry looked down on it and snickered when he saw it flash between the Durmstrang school emblem to ‘Gold for Gaunt’ in bright red letters.

“You finished it!” Draco looked delighted, standing up to look at the basket of badges in Luna’s hand. “These are fantastic,” he said as he held up one that said ‘Fanatic for Fleur.’

“You even made one for Delacour?”

“She stayed up all night making them,” Ginny said, wearing a ‘Digging the Diggory’ one. “We’re gonna go pass it around to everyone today.”

“Thanks for helping me with the charm,” Luna beamed at Draco. “It wouldn’t be as good as it turned out if not for that.”

“No problem,” Draco said. “You know I would’ve helped you make some if you told me you wanted them to be done by today.”

“When did you two possibly have time for all that?” Neville then asked, and Harry was surprised to note a very subtle unhappy tone in his voice. From the minute tightening in Draco’s face, the Slytherin noticed it too.

“We had a bit of time before curfew, after we all met up last night.” Draco explained, a bit succinctly. “Luna caught me on the way back to the dungeons.”

Draco and Neville stared at each other for a moment too long. Harry’s mind spun wildly.

‘Is this a love triangle?’ Harry thought, looking between his friends. ‘I mean, I always suspected Neville had a thing for Luna in the first life for a bit then, but Draco too? Don’t tell me their first actual fight would be over a girl?’

“Oh my,” Hermione whispered from across him, probably coming to the same conclusion as he did.

“Hey,” Ron, bless his willful ignorance, said “can I have one of the Fleur ones?”

“Where’s your house pride, Harry?” Cedric asked, eyeing Harry’s Gaunt badge.

“You really should be grateful I’m not declaring to everyone that I’m *Digging the Diggory*, Hogwart’s Hero,” Harry said.

Cedric thought about it for a moment and cringed a little. “Fair enough.”

Tom came back to the school grounds late afternoon, looking very smug.

“Oh dear,” Harry muttered, eyeing the *new ring* on the older teen’s hand. “Something ended up being a good surprise.”

Tom met him with a peck on the forehead, making some nearby sixth year girls ‘awww’ at them fondly. “Good news?” Harry asked.

Tom grinned, “Oh, you’d *never* guess which family I just became Lord of.”

Harry knew that look in his eyes. Tom definitely wasn't talking about the Gaunts. "Oh dear," he repeated.

Tom showed him the new ring. Harry *choked* .

Professor McGonagall bumped into them a bit later and again had that strange look on her face when she looked at Tom. Harry didn't actually think she'd recognize him, considering she was a few years off from going to Hogwarts at the same time as Tom Riddle, but apparently he was wrong.

"You look quite like a popular upperclassman from my era at Hogwarts, Mr. Gaunt," Professor McGonagall commented and Tom made a show of understanding.

"My father was a Hogwarts student, Professor," he politely said. "Class of 1945."

McGonagall peered at him. "I don't suppose his name was Tom Riddle Jr., was it?"

Tom's eyebrows rose up in actual surprise. He didn't confirm it, but the reaction was enough for McGonagall to smile fondly.

"I may not have personally met or saw him, but he was well talked about during my first few years as a student here. He was a brilliant student like no other and I believe he has a trophy for his service to the school still in the trophy room. I admired him as a student quite a bit."

"He had some fond memories of Hogwarts, I believe," Tom cautiously said and the older witch nodded.

"I admit only knowing his face from the old yearbook, but something about it is rather distinctive." McGonagall continued. "You look very much like him."

"People say that a lot."

"It's a shame he practically disappeared after a few years," McGonagall sighed. "Though I suppose not so much, if he was able to settle down and start a family."

"Right." Tom nodded, feeling increasingly awkward as the conversation continued. Noticing this, McGonagall gave another smile and nod.

"I'll leave it to you then, Mr. Gaunt. I'm sure you'll be as great as your father was." McGonagall turned and gave Harry his own nod. "Mr. Potter. Good day to you both."

"That," Harry said once his Transfiguration professor was out of sight, "was weird. As fuck."

"*I'm sure you'll be as great as your father was,*" Tom quoted, a bit aghast. "Dumbledore tells no one anything, does he?"

The next day, Tom's Ancient Runes class was interrupted by Karkaroff fetching him for the Weighing of Wands ceremony. Unsurprisingly, Rita Skeeter was there as well. And from the looks of it, Delacour and Cedric had already had their turn with the reporter, as there were quite some unhappy expressions on their faces when the lady practically dragged Tom to a corner of the room.

"Mr. Gaunt, isn't it?" Skeeter smiled, her parchment and quill floating beside her. "Durmstrang's champion! I'm Rita Skeeter, the Daily Prophet's best reporter."

"Ah," Tom flatly said, unimpressed. "You write those gossip ridden articles about Harry."

"You've read my work then!" Rita gleefully ignored the pointed comment. "I have many readers who would be interested in learning more about you, you know. Other than being Harry Potter's, hm, mysterious paramour is more romantic than boyfriend, isn't it? You're also a long lost member of the thought extinct Gaunt family! Very exciting."

"Yes, though that has nothing to do with the Triwizard Tournament, does it?" Tom smiled warningly. "I'm afraid to say I'm not much of a fan of yours, Ms. Skeeter. I find your articles distasteful, and if I had a say in it, you would've been sued for all the false words you've written about Harry. I have no desire to speak to you about anything, and if you press, then I can show you what *exactly* they teach in Durmstrang."

Rita didn't get this far into her career without experiencing some threats herself. She grinned toothily. "Can I quote you on that, *Mr. Gaunt*?" She taunted, pointedly reminding him that the Gaunt name had nothing in terms of political power, not even a minor lordship.

Well no matter. Two can play at that game.

Tom crossed his arms, looking down at Skeeter as she caught sight of the new ring on his finger. "You can quote *Lord Peverell* on that," he smirked, eyes glinting at her severe falter in confidence, "Ms. Skeeter."

Rita very wisely retreated after that, but not before a mutinous glare in Tom's direction after they took a group photo of the three champions.

A few moments later, Bagman, Crouch, and the three headmasters enter the room followed by Ollivander himself. The wand maker stopped in his tracks, clearly recognizing Tom for who he actually was.

"Right," Ollivander said, face neutral, "let's get this started."

Cedric went first and Tom half-listened to Ollivander talking about the wand's make and properties. He could respect Cedric's care for his wand, as there were far too many witches and wizards who didn't treat theirs properly, but other than that he could care less. Wandlore was more of Harry's thing, anyway.

Tom was second, and he set his yew wand in front of Ollivander with gentle care. Dumbledore barely gasped, but it was obvious that he recognized the wand himself.

“Yes, this wand,” Ollivander flickered his eyes to Tom’s unmoving face. “This is one of mine, but I sold it to a young boy fifty-six years ago.”

“I inherited it.” Tom said. “From my father.”

“Yew, thirteen and half inches. Phoenix core feather.” Ollivander continued to inspect the wand. “It has a brother, did you know? A wand with a feather core from the same phoenix.”

“I may have heard about it,” Tom carefully confirmed, looking at the pained and resigned face on Dumbledore at the corner of his eye. He was *so* tempted to smirk.

Ollivander hummed. “Of course you would have, all things considering.” He flicked the wand, and bright sparks shot out of it and trailed down in the air. “Your... *father* . He did many great things with this wand. Terrible, but great.”

“At what point does referring to myself as my father stop being weird?” Tom wondered out loud as he and Harry laid in Tom’s bed, having snuck the Hogwarts student in the ship and into Tom’s private room.

“Never,” Harry declared. He also kicked the other’s shin. “Your feet is still too goddamn cold.”

“And you’re still a blanket hogger,” Tom grumbled.

“Oh, suck it, darling.”

“Is that an invitation, sweetie?”

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Life #18 - Schoolgirls

Part 2:

“I’m so sick and tired of this!” Harry huffed as she plopped down on Tom’s bed. “Nothing but rules and regulations, do’s and don’ts, should and shouldn’ts! If another old, greying hag preaches to me about my body being a temple one more time I’m going to burn this building down! This place is a smothering hell hole and how have you not gone crazy from this yet?!”

“My orphanage had me exorcised when I was a child, Potter,” Tom calmly pointed out as she meticulously brushed her long hair. Harry tried not to stare at her soft, milky thighs not hidden under her skirt or long socks. “I am quite familiar with such strict expectations coupled with shady practices hidden under the pretense of religion.”

“No one can possibly be happy about things are,” Harry insisted. “Most of the girls here look absolutely miserable under the meek and subservient attitude. The only time they really bright up is when you’re around.”

Tom put her brush down, turning in her seat to look at the other girl. “I’m given more leeway than anyone else. And in turn, I extend the same courtesy to my schoolmates as much as I can.” Tom admitted. “My... Court... assists me in this. We devised a system that may not be much, but it works. The girls can get away with two and a half inch heels, a carefully hidden necklace, a touch more makeup than allowed... The little things we can.”

Harry sat up, eyebrows furrowed. “We can do more,” she said. “We have to push. It’s the twenty-first century, for god’s sake, not Victorian England. None of us are going to burn in the flames of hell if we wear some goddamn lipstick.”

Tom, seeing the fire in her companion’s eyes, pursed her lips. “I have a plan,” she admitted finally, catching Harry’s whole hearted interest. “It may get us expelled.”

Harry grinned toothily, “ *Perfect* .”

“Well if it isn’t Little Miss Teen Pregnancy,” A snide voice said from behind her. Harry turned from inspecting the incoming zit on the side of the forehead to see Margot Devlin and her little entourage sneering at her.

Great. Teenage girl posturing.

“I don’t know how you think biology works, but just because I’ve seen a dick doesn’t mean I’m magically pregnant,” Harry huffed, turning her attention back to the mirror so she could touch up her eyeliner. “Trust me, if I actually *am* pregnant, everyone would know.”

“Oh right,” Margot scoffed, flipping her shiny red hair over her shoulder. It did nothing for Harry, for all that she got hearts in her eyes when Tom did the same action. “You’re too busy eating Song’s pussy nowadays.”

“Wow, you pray with the nuns with that mouth?”

“Shut it, Anderson,” snapped one of the girls at Devlin’s side. God, this bathroom was rather crowded at the moment, wasn’t it?

“Whatever,” Harry rolled her eyes, grabbing her bag and making her way to the door. “Enjoy your days as a plastic goody little two shoes, Margot.” She grinned and winked at the other girl, who looked about to protest at her leaving. “I heard there’s going to be some changes around here.”

“Wait a minute-”

“How long have you been here, anyway?” Harry asked while she did Tom’s nails with clear polish. “Are you one of those girls that have been under Lady Claire’s nurturing hand since preschool?”

Tom scoffed. “No, I only started freshman year, actually. My mother thought I was getting too unruly.”

“Damn, what’d you do? Wear a bikini to the beach?”

“I punched my 8th grade homecoming date in the face.”

“What.” Harry gaped and Tom smirked mischievously.

“He was being too handsy with me, despite telling him for weeks that we were only going as friends,” Tom said lightly. “I broke his nose. There was a lot of blood, and mother wasn’t happy about how much got on my dress.”

“Holy *shit* .” Harry gasped. “Was the dress okay?”

Chapter End Notes

Two things:

1) idk why I had it in my head that Minerva and Tom went at some point at Hogwarts together, but when I went to double check I found out I was wrong and off by two!! years. OOPS. *bandaids carefully*

2) everyone makes Harry ~Lord Peverell~ and dont get me wrong, that trope doesn't put me off stories most of the time, but then my brain was like "but wait. tom riddle is also a peverell descendant AND from the older brother. if there was going to be a Lord Peverell why cant HE be it." so i made it so. because I can. the power of a fanfic writer is amazing.

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

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

“And his eyes swirled with almost mesmerizing darkness, reminding us all that the dark history of the Gaunt line ran true.” Draco read out loud as Harry wheezed in between giggles, “Who is Marvolo Gaunt? Is he truly worthy of being the newly appointed Lord Peverell? Is he truly worthy of our darling savior, Harry Potter?”

“What an irritating woman,” Tom scoffed, glaring at today’s issue of the Daily Prophet. Already people were whispering about Tom, but thankfully Harry practically pissing his pants from laughter helped lessen the damage to his image. Not that he actually cared about what the peanut gallery thought about him, but Tom still had his pride.

“She’s right you know,” Harry cheerfully said. “Your face is ‘ *like a Greek statue, carved in marble. Beautiful but with an ice cold intensity that left people wanting to keep close and stay away.* ’ ”

“What sweet words you have, *darling* ,” Tom rolled his eyes.

“Is this really your newspaper?” Viktor asked, unimpressed at Skeeter’s article about the champions. Unsurprising considering it made Fleur sound as vapid as possible and Tom look like a budding dark wizard. Cedric, even if he had the most complimentary words, had nothing more than a paragraph.

The Beauxbaton students muttered angrily over the article, a translated version making its way throughout the students for those less English-inclined. Harry suspected Blaise Zabini had something to do with it. The Durmstrang students also were *very* unhappy about the accusations and the image painted of their star champion. They may not be friends with Gaunt, and they may certainly be half-afraid of him at the very least, but they were very *proud* . And some British journalist flapping her highly biased mouth... Well, the mainland Europe journalists certainly weren’t about to take that lying down, especially when it came to their best youth.

International relations were starting off great, thanks for asking.

“The Daily Prophet is practically half a gossip rag,” Ron said. “Skeeter’s a bitch, but she gets people buying the bloody thing.”

“And she can’t get fired, because there’s a rumor that she has a very extensive amount of blackmail against very prominent people,” Neville added. “So no one wants to risk lighting that fire.”

“Hmph, surely she’ll get her dues soon.” Hermione frowned unhappily, looking thoughtful. Harry was very much reminded that his Hermione had trapped Rita in bug form in a jar when they were teenagers. “ *Someone* will make sure of it.”

Harry usually had so much going on that he kind of... neglected his relationship with Hagrid. He had nothing against the half-giant (and he still gave Tom shit about framing him back then, though it seemed Hagrid didn't remember what ol' Tom Riddle looked like), but other than taking Care of Magical Creatures as an elective he rarely, if ever, spent much time with him. That was on Harry, he would admit.

So it surprised him to even get the note about checking out the Forbidden Forest around midnight. Not that he wasn't going to do it either way.

"Hey Cedric," Harry whispered and poked his sleeping upperclassman, "wake up."

It took a few more pokes and a good shake for Cedric to groan and blink sleepily at Harry's floating head.

"What the *fuck*-" Cedric scrambled in his bed, and really, it was a good thing Harry had a silencing charm up around Cedric's bed. "What are you doing here, Harry?" He hissed at the grinning fourth year.

"Helping you with the first task, come on!"

Grumbling, Cedric put on his shoes and a robe over his pajamas, knowing that sometimes it was best to go along when Harry woke you up in the middle of the night for some escapade. Neville had warned him very well.

"Are we going out of the castle?" Cedric whispered as they walked the halls under Harry's invisible cloak. "Where did you get this cloak anyway? Invisible cloaks are pretty rare."

"I stole it." Harry cheerily informed him, and Cedric was immediately resigned in not knowing if the boy was joking or not. "Well, technically it was mine to begin with. So more accurate to say that I stole it back. A story for another day, perhaps."

"I don't think I actually want to know." Cedric said dryly, and wasn't surprised when Tom appeared from the shadows and approached them. "Hello, Marvolo."

Tom nodded in acknowledgement. "He didn't tell you anything, did he?" He asked, quirked a knowing eyebrow at Harry, who flapped his invisibility cloak cheekily in welcome.

They shuffled under the cloak, a little tightly with two full grown teenagers dubiously following the lead of a way-too-cheery fourth year. Thankfully they weren't too far from the Forbidden Forest, their apparent destination.

"Is that Hagrid?" Cedric whispered, "With the *Beauxbaton* headmistress?"

"A bit of half-giant love going around, yeah," Harry cheerfully said, leading the three of them towards a well-sized shrub. "So, there's your first task."

"Ah yes," Tom's dry voice said over Cedric's choking, as they watched a Chinese Fireball snort fire at a wrangler and the Hungarian Horntail growl menacingly at the surrounding

dragon tamers. “Three seventeen year olds against full grown dragons. Nothing could *possibly* go wrong.”

“Could be worse,” Harry grinned at their dubious expressions. “At least it’s not Newt Scamander’s suitcase.”

Cedric looked very much confused at the reference, but Tom sighed and rolled his eyes hard.

“No,” Tom said *very* firmly. The fourth year students and Durmstrang pair sat at the courtyard the next day. “I’m not going to even *try* to outfly a *dragon*, Harry.”

“It’s a *terrible* idea.” Hermione looked reprimandingly at Harry and Ron, who was about to agree with his friend. The boys having more times than not enabled Harry to do stupid shit, after all.

“I don’t think I have ever even seen you near a broom,” Viktor mused. “Have you been holding out on me, Marvolo?”

“He’s a very... *efficient* Beater,” Harry smiled innocently despite Tom’s flat look. “I’ve had trouble dodging his bludgers before.”

Neville looked slightly perplexed. “I thought you didn’t care about playing Quidditch, Harry?”

“Have you been holding out on us, Harry?” Draco pursed his lips. Harry knew that while Draco didn’t join the Slytherin team his second year this time around, he still enjoyed the game very much. Really, he should’ve tried out ages ago because Slytherin’s current seeker was abhorrent. It was starting to get embarrassing.

“I can play,” Harry said easily. “But I’m *so* busy, so I haven’t bothered with the team or anything.”

“Fair enough,” Ron sensibly nodded. “He has enough stuff trying to cock things up, doesn’t he? Quidditch is great, but I think some of us’ll get heart attacks if you pull some ‘Harry thing’ during a game.”

“Harry-thing?” Harry raised an eyebrow at the redhead, who glanced at the others.

“Ah,” Neville said, understandingly. “Like hang off his broom with one hand to dodge.”

“Attempt a Wronski Feint during a match,” Draco added.

“Jump off his broom to catch the snitch,” Hermione sighed.

“With his mouth,” Tom’s lips twitched at the exasperated sigh Harry’s friends let out simultaneously.

“What?” Harry grinned, “Sounds like perfectly viable actions to me.”

Viktor blinked at all of them. “Vey are, I don’t see ze problem with any of vem. Catching a snitch vid your mouth is perfectly legal.”

“Nevermind, Cho, I don’t think I want to know what they’re talking about,” they heard Cedric say a few feet away.

“Cedric,” Cho dragged her boyfriend towards the group, “ *Dragons* .”

“Oh, right!” Hermione pulled out a book appropriately named ‘ *So You’re Crazy Enough to Tackle a Dragon* ’ from her bag. Considering she only found out about the dragon thing two hours ago and was only in the library for fifteen minutes today, it was impressive. How she always did that, Harry didn’t know to this day. “For a tournament who’s determined not to get anyone to killed again, dragons are kind of a poor choice, aren’t they?”

“One of them was a Hungarian Horntail,” Cedric said. “You know, only arguably the *most dangerous breed in the world* ?”

“Damn,” Ron whistled, having lived with Charlie who might as well have been a walking dragon encyclopedia since he was ten. “Whoever gets that one is *fucked* .”

“I heard they’re nesting mothers,” Harry cheerfully revealed, a detail he did not mention last night.

There was a pause. Tom grimaced and Cedric turned slightly green.

“I regret everything,” Cedric groaned. “I’m going to *die* .”

“You’re not allowed to die,” Cho frowned fiercely at him. “We had our dress robes *custom made to match* . Come on, *Hogwarts’ Hero* , you have some dragon taming to learn, because I didn’t import magical Chinese silk for nothing.”

“Cho,” the Hufflepuff prefect, looking less sick, smiled at his girlfriend’s way of comfort, “I love you.”

“You guys are sickently cute,” Harry said, interrupting the lovely moment.

Draco, Hermione, and Neville all snorted. “Says *you* .”

The sun shone brightly on the day of the first task, very apt considering the champions were facing against possible death. The castle inhabitants talked among themselves in anticipation, wondering who would be the first to claim a win. Virtually all the teenage students wore Luna’s buttons supporting at least one champion, Professor Sprout in particular puffed up proudly to show her ‘Digging the Diggory’ one.

“You have a plan?” Cedric asked nervously as he and Tom went into the Champions’ Tent. “I really hope I don’t get the Horntail.”

“Hm,” Tom hummed, nodding politely to Delacour, who didn’t seem surprised at the mention of the Horntail. Her Headmistress did inform her about it, good. “I’m impartial to the

Swedish Short-Snout myself.”

It was then Ludo Bagman whirled in, a small bag in hand while he gathered the three champions around him. “I hope you are all prepared!” He grinned, holding out the bag open towards Fleur. “Here is your first task! Come on now, you all get one each. Ladies first!”

Fleur flinched as her hand touched something moving inside the bag, and delicately took out a miniature version of the Chinese Fireball with a number 2 on its neck. “I will be going second then?” She asked and was relieved at Bagman’s confirmation.

Cedric was next, picking out the Swedish Short-Snout and going first. “Going first is a fair trade for getting the Snort-Snout,” he said, giving Tom a sympathetic look.

“Ah, and that leaves the Hungarian Horntail for Mr. Gaunt,” Bagman patted the Durmstrang student with no shortage of pity, to Tom’s disgust. “You’ll be going last. Your task is to collect the golden egg placed among your dragon’s nest. Points will be given or deducted on based on your performance and the the state of the other eggs in the nest. I wish all of you luck!”

“Oh yes. Because luck is going to get us through a face to face encounter with a nesting dragon,” Tom dryly said after Bagman had left the tent to start the event. Cedric gave a wry smile and even Fleur giggled a bit, easing the tension a little. A few minutes later, they heard cheers and then gasps from the crowd outside when Bagman undoubtedly revealed the conditions of the first task.

“Well,” Cedric said as Ludo Bagman called for him to come out, “see you on the other side.”

“I hope he’s okay,” Hermione murmured as Cedric left the arena successful, but with a rather nasty burn on his face. Nothing Madam Pomfrey couldn’t cure of course, but it was natural to worry when a full grown dragon breathes fire at your friend’s direction.

“Give him a higher score, you biased coward!” The Hogwarts students heard Cho Chang yell at Karkaroff, who scored Cedric with a measly four out of ten. Harry didn’t know if his Cho was ever as fierce as this Cho was pre-Cedric’s death, but Harry found that he much preferred her with this much spirit. She tended to be *hilarious*.

“It’s kind of messed up that they have the headmasters as judges, isn’t it? Then our Ministry officials. It sets it up for bias in scoring.” Hermione commented after Fleur’s turn with the Chinese Fireball. Like last time, she had tried to charm the dragon asleep and again it had awakened and burned part of her uniform. Despite that, Madame Maxime had given her a strong score.

“Cheating and bias is all part of tradition, right Draco?” Harry asked the boy beside him, but got no response. No wonder, Harry thought when he turned to the Slytherin, when he had his eyes practically glued towards Neville and Luna who sat two rows ahead.

Harry really needed to find out what actually was going on with the three of them.

“I know Neville’s hair is really shiny today, but no need to practically burn him with your gaze. I’m sure he’d tell you what product he uses nowadays.” Harry couldn’t help but tease, poking a bit at Draco’s vanity more than anything else. So he was a little taken aback at how alarmed Draco was at his words.

“I wasn’t staring at him!” Draco said defensively, ears turning pink. “I was just wondering why they weren’t sitting here with us. And *Luna’s* hair is shinier.”

Harry was going to comment on Draco’s denial, but Bagman had called for Tom and of course he had to give all his attention to him.

Tom stepped into the arena with his back straight and head held high and the Durmstrang students roared in excitement while the rest of the arena cheered politely. The teenage dark lord didn’t acknowledge his adoring fans, but what he did do was find Harry amongst the crowd of spectators and with a smirk, blew a kiss and wink at his direction.

Various girls in Harry’s surrounding area swooned.

Not one to be embarrassed at such a display, Harry stood up and made a show of blowing back his own kiss. Then because Harry was a little shit at heart, he yelled, “Kick some dragon arse and I’ll let you touch mine!”

“Oi, mate, come on,” Ron whined with no real meaning. “I’ve had enough hearing about your arse.”

Tom grinned wickedly in response. He twirled his wand with his fingers, and at the start of the timer, casted a wordless spell on himself.

Then he pocketed his wand. And started walking towards the Hungarian Horntail.

“What is he doing?” Hermione exclaimed as many other people startled in panic. “I thought he said he was going to blind the dragon like Viktor suggested?”

“Oh, what a *show-off*,” Harry guffawed to the confusion of his friends. The Hungarian Horntail *was* one of the most reptilian of dragons, and they *did* successfully try a certain theory a few lifetimes before... How could Harry have forgotten!

The audience quieted in shock when they heard hissing. From *Gaunt* .

With a stoic face, Tom kept eye contact as he talked in *Parseltongue* to the frightening dragon, who flickered her tongue as she gazed intently at him. With careful movements, Tom gestured to the dragon’s nest and the Horntail’s head jerked at its direction, squinting for a moment before finally growling deeply.

“Oh my god,” Draco watched, slack jawed as Tom confidently strode towards the nest, the Horntail’s head snaking beside him as she kept a close eye on him and her eggs. The other spectators were equally stunned, and gasps were heard when the Durmstrang champion merely picked up the golden egg and with a bow and more hissing, walked away from the most dangerous dragon breed without a *scratch* .

As soon as Tom was out of range of the dragon, who had immediately wrapped herself around the nest protectively and threatened any tamer who came close, he rose an expectant eyebrow at the judges table as he held up the golden egg with one hand. Bagman was strangled speechless, only barely managing to do his duty and proclaim Tom's success. In the same table, Dumbledore had his hands held up to his mouth like a prayer and Karkaroff had taken the shade of ashen white.

"T-the scores for Marvolo Gaunt!" Bagman announced as the judges held up their scores. "A ten from myself! An eight from Mr. Crouch! A nine from Headmistress Maxime! A - *shocking* ! - five from Headmaster Dumbledore! A ten from Headmaster Karkaroff! This puts Marvolo Gaunt in the lead with a total of forty-two points!"

"Dammit, Marvolo!" Harry shouted, startling the still shocked crowd. "You smug bastard! That was not *kicking dragon arse* !"

Tom, to the additional surprise of his classmates, barked a honest-to-god laugh.

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Life #77 - (Where Tom is the 'Chosen One' and Harry is his 'Malfoy')

Part 2:

Tom didn't have a wand.

Altair - Harry - stared from across the Hogwarts courtyard, where the two sides were at a standstill. In front of each side, the Dark Lord Thanatos and David - Tom - stared intensely at each other. Everyone knew - this was it. This was the going to be the end.

And Tom didn't have a wand.

As dust and dirt caked his entire body, Harry couldn't help but compare this to his and Tom's own faceoff. Weary, yet resolute students, professors, aurors, and many other Light families on one side. Tired yet proud dark witches and wizards on the other side. Harry's own parents were right behind him, his beloved mother unnoticeably trembling in fear against him. Fear for her son.

Tom didn't meet his eyes. Nothing to give away their relationship with each other. Tom's fists were clenched at his sides, and he glared fiercely at the masked dark lord in front of him. As far as Harry could tell, Tom had nothing in his pockets, his arms were bare of a holster, and no one but one other had realized what Harry did.

Tom didn't have a wand.

“We do not have to fight, young David,” Thanatos’s raspy voice echoed through his ebony mask. “Surrender now, and I will show mercy to everyone.”

Harry fingered his own wand - blackthorn, unicorn hair, twelve and a half inches - and made his decision.

Tom bared his teeth at the inhuman wizard. “I fight to the death, fake lord.”

“Without a wand?” Thanatos sounded amused, “Very well. Kill them all, my loyal followers.”

Before anyone could so much raise a finger, Harry broke from his mother’s hold and *ran* .

Because if Tom didn’t have wand, then Harry would give him one.

“David!” He yelled, and everyone looked on in shock as he tossed his wand towards who they believed he hated. Tom reflexively caught it and Harry gave a bewildered Tom a shark-like grin. “Give him hell!”

“ *Avada Kedavra.* ”

“No!” Tom and the Burke parents yelled in horror as Altair/Harry dropped dead in the middle of the courtyard, wide eyes unseeing towards Tom’s direction. He barely noticed Harry’s wand warming in sorrowful acceptance of its new master.

“A pity.” Thanatos said emotionlessly as he slowly lowered his wand. “Young Burke had promise.”

“David,” Tom’s friend Amy, shaken at the callous and public murder of their schoolmate, whispered in surprise. “You’re crying.”

In all the years they’ve known each other, Tom had never shed a tear in front of his friends. So it was no wonder they were captivated by the tears streaming steadily down his face.

“Put Altair somewhere safe, please,” Tom said, voice steady. “I’ll be right back. I have a dark lord to *destroy* .”

At the end of it, Thanatos was dead and Tom was still alive.

He distantly watched Harry’s parents weep over their son’s cold body. Even in death, Harry still managed to have a smile on his face.

(They usually died together. And even if they didn’t, watching the other die first never got any easier.)

“I’m sorry,” Tom hoarsely said as he kneeled by Harry’s empty side. “He died for me. And I’m so sorry.”

“No,” Mr. Burke sighed and his wife shook her head as well. “The fault is ours. We signed up to serve... him willingly. Altair never wanted to, we knew yet we still forced him into service. But we thought it would keep him safe from the Dark Lord, and now we know we thought very wrong.”

At the aftermath, Tom gave only one speech.

“Altair Burke was my hero,” he said to a crowd of thousands, his Order of Merlin a heavy weight against his chest. “He risked himself to spy Thanatos’ ranks for me. He shared life-saving information for no recognition. He gave me his wand and sacrificed himself, just to make sure I had a fighting chance of winning. I may have been the one to deal the final blow, but that final blow wouldn’t have been possible without him.”

“He saved my sister and I in Diagon Alley last summer,” a young woman beside a ten year old girl stood up and said.

“He helped us escape the Dark Lord’s manor,” a group of varying witches and wizards followed.

One by one, people revealed how they were helped by Altair Burke during the final stretch of the war. No one could have possibly imagined how much one teenage Slytherin was able to do. Tom couldn’t help but be fond at how much of a busybody Harry had been during Tom’s year on the run.

Tom held Altair’s - *Harry’s* - own posthumous Order of Merlin in his hands and held his head high. “Remember him, the Boy Who Died. The boy I loved.”

((“*The Boy Who Died?*” Harry indignantly screeched, when Tom finally met him at the Afterlife King’s Cross a month after his speech. “That’s such a godawful name, you dick.”

“Don’t worry,” Tom mirthfully said, fiercely grabbing Harry into a tight hug. “I think after my very apparent suicide, they’ll be calling us the magical modern day Romeo and Juliet.”

“I missed you too, prat.” Harry sighed.

“Now let’s not talk about that life ever again, alright?” Tom said.

Harry gleefully cackled. “Oh, you wish!”))

Chapter End Notes

i discovered the tomarry discord server and was given life. thank u, u crazy bastards.

also thanks to nyx_the_author for suggesting to put a reminder what life was which for the extras i write!

AND YEAH I KNOW THE SPEAKING TO THE DRAGON WITH PARSELTONGUE IS 99% FANON BUT THIS FIC IS TROPE-TASTIC ANYWAY. LET ME HAVE MY FUN ;;;;

Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

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

A loud screechy, wailing sound filled their ears.

Cedric scrambled to pick up his golden egg from where he dropped it, quickly shutting it closed to stop the ear-shattering sound. Everyone let out a sigh of relief when the room was finally blissfully quiet.

“Blimey,” Ron grimaced, picking at his ear, “what the *hell* was that?”

“Mermish,” Tom said, recognizing the horrible sound. “I suspect we’ll have to listen to the egg underwater.” Tom wiggled his ears, scrunching face a little as the ringing in his ears persisted for a few more seconds. Harry thought it was an adorable expression.

“There are merpeople in our lake!” Hermione exclaimed. “Maybe the second task has something to do with it?”

“You packed your swimsuits, right?” Harry asked the two champions brightly.

“You’re not suggesting we’ll be swimming in it, are you? The second task is in February!” Cedric said, appalled. “It’ll be freezing out!”

“They just made us face dragons,” Tom pointed out dryly. “I think hypothermia is the least of their worries when they expect us to have *Warming Charms* in our repertoire.”

A hand went up in the air, and Draco waited for everyone’s eyes to land on him before speaking. “So are we *not* talking about Marvolo talking down a Hungarian Horntail with Parseltongue?” He asked. “Because you know, that was kind of *insane* .”

“Not that the parseltongue came as a surprise when you think about it,” Neville added. “The Gaunts were rumored to have ties to the Slytherin bloodline.”

“I don’t see what’s there to talk about,” Tom bounced his golden egg with one hand idly. “I came, I saw, I conquered.”

Harry, who really couldn’t help himself, snorted. “Not my arse, though.”

“From the way you keep mentioning it, I think *you’re* the one who *really* wants *me* to tap it.” Tom shot back over Hermione’s exasperated exclamation of ‘*Boys!*’

“It *is* a perky butt,” Luna smiled dreamily like she always did. “I’m sure it’s also very nice to touch, as it is to look at.”

“It’s a defining feature your fans are very fond of,” Ginny nodded sagely.

Draco, Harry much amusedly noted, discretely checked if his own butt felt nice in his own hand. He *also* noted that Neville gazed at the Slytherin's action contemplatively. That was definitely interesting.

"It was very impressive, Marvolo. I did not realize that dragons understood parseltongue." Viktor said, putting the conversation back on track. "Though I do believe you gave some people a heart attack with your little stunt."

"It's fascinating!" Hermione exclaimed brightly. "I mean, incredibly risky had it not worked, but there's so little information about parseltongue because of the stigma. And Harry -"

"Tells us jack shit," Ron snorted.

"Tells us *barely anything*," Hermione pointedly looked at the sheepish redhead. "And considering parselmouths are so rare - it's *amazing* that Marvolo and Harry are even acquainted - this kind of discovery is groundbreaking!"

"Hey, does that mean Harry and Marvolo are sort of related?" Ron asked in realization.

"Everyone with British wizarding blood is related in one way or another," Draco dryly reminded. "The Black family alone has had their fingers in every family pie for generations."

"You and Draco are related, in case you forgot Ron," Neville added. "And if we pull out the family trees, I'm sure we can trace relations between all of us but Hermione and Cho."

Cho cheerfully high-fived a bewildered Hermione. "My family immigrated just before I was born. We haven't had the time to 'mingle' with the bloodlines," Cho explained.

"Potters married into the Peverell line," Harry answered Ron's question. "And so did the Gaunts. Totally different brothers though, and that was *centuries* ago."

"I honestly just thought Harry got it from You-Know-Who," Hermione said, pursing her lips in thought. "It sounds like a silly theory, but it made sense to me."

"I just say that magic," Harry wiggled his fingers and waggled his eyebrows, looking very ridiculous, "works in mysterious ways."

As predicted, ' *Durmstrang Champion Marvolo Gaunt is a Parselmouth* ' was a front page headline the next two days. The reaction to it within the castle was actually better than how everyone had reacted when Harry's parseltongue abilities were leaked. It probably had *something* to do with *talking down an angry dragon* .

The champions received a lot of attention the days following the first task, and Rita Skeeter was on a warpath with her articles. Tom was gleefully compiling the articles and talking with one of his schoolmates, whose parents were prominent lawyers in the mainland, to sue her with later. He also received many letters, either to tell him off for using *such a dark ability* or to praise him for the same thing. Two dragon reserves already inquired if he had any interest

in being a dragon tamer, to which he respectfully declined. The howlers - well, he burned them on sight.

With five marriage offers, three upcoming interviews with mainland Europe journalists, and six job offers right off the bat, well, Tom was finding this surge of international fame quite amusing. Shame he already had plans.

A few days later, the Yule Ball was announced. Suddenly all the girls in the castle turned *predatory*.

"I'm a bit terrified," Neville murmured while they passed a gaggle of fifth year Gryffindor girls that eyed and giggled at them. It was just the boys today, the girls having disappeared for the afternoon. Harry suspected they were planning their Yule Ball preparations. "I feel like a piece of meat on display."

"At least you're not a famous Quidditch player." Harry grinned, and Viktor side eyed the young Hufflepuff. Viktor has had no less than seven propositions today alone, and he was about tired of it.

"You are lucky, Boy-Who-Lived," Viktor said dryly. "You and Marvolo going together are very much a given, else you would have your share of propositions as well."

"I'm only doing my civic duty to keep this imp from the unsuspecting public," Tom smirked before Harry could reply. "He's a real party animal. Next thing you know he'll be jumping off the roof."

"It was *one* time," Harry pouted.

"I don't want to know," Cedric declared and Draco snorted. They entered the kitchens, and after being mobbed by a dozen enthusiastic house elves and an uncomfortable encounter with Crouch's former elf Winky, they settled around one of the available tables where they all helped themselves on their tea and baked goods of choice. "Everyone got their dates, then?"

"I heard from a very reliable bird that *someone* finally got their Gryffindor courage together to ask our resident bookworm," Harry announced. Ron turned bright red as the other boys clapped or said their congratulations.

"Oh, Merlin, I made myself look like an idiot," Ron buried his head in his hands with horror. "I'm surprised she even gave me the time of day after that."

"She was ecstatic, Ron," Neville patted his housemate gently. "Ginny wouldn't stop teasing her this morning."

"It was about time, Weasley. Your pining was getting sickening," Draco sniffed.

"Well I'm going with Cho, of course," Cedric said, diverting the conversation. "We know Harry and Marvolo are going together and Viktor here is having trouble with finding someone who won't want to climb him like a tree by the end of it."

“Zat’s one way to put it.” Viktor deadpanned.

“Neville? Draco?” Harry asked carefully. “Who are you two going with?”

Almost immediately, the atmosphere dropped.

Tom raised an eyebrow and exchanged a look with Harry, who didn’t realize things were this... bad?

“I’m going with Astoria Greengrass,” Draco said stiffly. “She’s Daphne’s younger sister. They asked me to take her as a favor since she’s too young to go without an older student.”

“I’m going with Luna,” Neville smiled coldly at Draco. “She asked me since Ginny is going with Dean.”

The two of them stared at each other intensely, and it was getting too uncomfortable. Harry wasn’t *quite* sure if this was hostility or sexual tension, but Cedric and Ron started shifting uneasily, and even Viktor was slightly perturbed at the charged atmosphere their light hearted conversation had taken.

“Well,” Tom cut in, looking incredibly bored at the developing drama, “More importantly, how are the state of your dress robes, Ron?”

Tom looked *very good* in Durmstrang’s official red dress robes. Harry gave him a very enthusiastic double thumbs up.

“You look nice too, *darling*,” Tom’s lips quirked into a smirk. He offered an arm to the younger teen, which Harry settled into naturally, before they made their way to the Great Hall.

“No corsage?” Harry cheekily asked, to which Tom rolled his eyes.

“This isn’t prom, Potter.”

Many other students complimented the couple, and Colin Creevey even snapped a photo of the two of them, which he promised to only give to Harry and Tom.

“You are a very beautiful couple,” a Beauxbaton student and her date had gushed at them, which considering the two French witches looked like honest-to-god models, was very flattering.

“I hope I’m Prom Queen again,” Harry grinned. Tom sighed.

“ *This isn’t prom* , Potter.”

McGonagall was waiting for the champions at the entrance of the Great Hall, and she smiled fondly at the two teenagers. Cedric and Cho were already with her, looking absolutely perfect.

“You two are stunning,” Harry greeted the couple, and Cho giggled as they exchanged kisses on the cheek. Cho’s silvery-gold cheongsam shimmered in the light, and Harry’s inner girl salivated over the beautiful dress. Tom also eyed it appreciatively. Cedric wore a more traditionally English-style dress robe, only with a vest made with the same material as Cho’s dress and a cut that subtly matched the other. That material must be the Chinese magical silk Cho was talking about then, and Harry didn’t blame her for importing it.

“You all look wonderful!” They heard Hermione say as she and Ron approached the group. Hermione shone in her floaty, periwinkle-blue dress and made up hair. Ron’s dress robes had undergone a severe transformation, with fewer frills, a modern style, and a lush dark red instead of the drab brown pattern it originally had. They didn’t match, but they looked adorable together, with Ron’s permanently red tipped ears and Hermione’s pleased glow.

“If I didn’t know better, I’d say those are brand new dress robes.” Harry commented.

“Lavender is a miracle worker,” Ron nodded fervently.

“Ah, here we are then, Miss Delacour,” McGonagall said. “Mr. Diggory, Mr. Gaunt, come on, we need to line you all up.”

“Looks like you found yourself a date after all, Viktor,” Tom raised an eyebrow at his friend, who arrived as Delacour’s arm candy. Viktor quirked a smile, shrugging.

“Monsieur Krum was the only one who managed to look me in ze eye when he asked,” Fleur smiled.

McGonagall lined the three couples up, Fleur and Viktor in front, Cedric and Cho in the middle, and Tom and Harry at the back. There were only a few stragglers left making their way to the Hall, and it was just about time to start the ball.

The music started and McGonagall gestured for them to make their entrance pair by pair. Harry felt everyone’s eyes on them, and heard appreciative whispers from some as they took their place in the middle of the beautifully decorated hall.

“Don’t step on my feet,” Tom whispered into Harry’s ear as he placed a hand on Harry’s hip and assumed the waltz position.

Harry snorted. “Which one of us was a ballerina again?”

Before Tom could retort, they started the dance.

Dinner tasted better than it did the first time, but Harry supposed being a champion’s date instead of actually being a champion made things more enjoyable. Despite the looming threat that was sure to happen eventually.

After dinner, the Weird Sisters took the stage and Harry dragged an exasperated Tom back to the dance floor. “Might as well have some fun, yeah?” He shouted over the excited cheers of the ball attendants as the opening notes of ‘Do the Hippogriff’ started.

Tom rolled his eyes but his eyes twinkled in fondness. "Party animal."

As the dance floor filled with teenagers and even some professors, their friends joined them at the near middle of the crowd and had a good time changing partners and dancing with each other. Harry finally saw Neville and Luna midway through the band playing 'This is the Night.' The two of them looked cute together, Luna shimmying to the music as they approached them.

"Finally! I almost thought you guys didn't make it!" Harry beamed at the two of them. "Where's Draco?"

Neville made an odd face, gesturing towards the side of the room, opposite from where Neville and Luna had come from. Draco, seeing that their attention was on him, looked away quickly and pretended to be engaged in conversation with Astoria Greengrass.

"Are you two fighting?" Hermione quietly asked, curiosity finally winning over. "You two have been weird all year."

"It's nothing," Neville insisted. "Come on, we came here to dance."

"Teenage drama, here we come," Tom muttered to him. Harry sighed.

"We'll never escape it."

Midway through the Weird Sisters' set, they switched to one of their slower songs, getting people to partner back up with their dates for the romantic slow dance. Harry saw a flash of the camera from the corner of his eyes as he laid his head on Tom's chest and swayed - hopefully Colin had gotten their good side.

"This is nice," Tom said lightly, stroking his palm down Harry's back. "How much would you bet on us making it on the front page again tomorrow?"

Harry snorted into Tom's chest, looking up at the amused teenaged dark lord. "No bet." Harry poked him on the side, getting a small jump from Tom. "I'm the Boy Who Lived and you're Durmstrang's controversial champion, we're totally gonna be on the front page sometime this week."

"Oh?" Tom smirked, eyes glinting dangerously - a sign that he was about to do *something*. "Then I hope you don't mind what picture accompanies the article."

"What are you talking about - " Harry started but was cut off by Tom's lips covering his own. Someone behind him may have gasped.

Well, when in Rome...

Harry was about to get *really* into their impromptu kissing session if not for Snape barking out "*Potter!*" and forcibly pulling them away from each other. He pouted at the white-lipped Potions professor, who looked equal parts stormy and properly scandalized. Harry publicly making out with someone who could possibly be Voldemort's son would do that to anyone, he supposed.

“Please avoid snogging on the dance floor, Mr. Potter, Mr. Gaunt,” Snape gritted out, barely managing to flicker a glance at Tom. “Have some *decency* .”

“Boo! I was enjoying that show!” Lavender hollered over the catcalls and snickering.

“Sorry, professor,” Tom said, unruffled. “We got caught up in the moment.” A Durmstrang student audibly snorted at that and was then elbowed by his friend.

Snape looked pained, pinching the bridge of his nose and glaring at the other students. “The same goes for *all* of you,” he growled before turning on his heel and heading back to the professor’s corner of the hall.

“Party pooper,” Cho sniffed.

Entertainment over, the surrounding couples resumed their slow dancing. A few feet away, Colin Creevey gave Harry and Tom a wide grin and a thumbs up, waving his camera with the other hand.

“I wonder how high he’ll auction that picture to the papers for,” Tom hummed as they went back to their swaying.

When they finally decided to take a break from dancing, Harry dragged Tom out of the Great Hall towards a supply closet many generations of Hogwarts students were familiar with.

“How scandalous,” Tom murmured as they settled into a corner of the spacious closet, just behind a tall rack of various supplies. They were barely visible if someone happened to briefly look inside, hidden in the dark as they were.

“You were the one who kissed me in the middle of the Great Hall!” Harry protested. “Also move a bit, I think there’s a broom digging into my back.”

The two of them stilled when the closet door was flung open and someone was shoved into it, before another person followed suit and shut the door behind them. Harry and Tom blinked at each other in the dark.

“What is it that you want?” Draco snarled at his assailant. A hand slammed against one of the shelves.

“I want you to make up your mind,” Neville lowly said. “I’ve given you months of space and time to think about it but you’re still- still dancing around the issue!”

Harry’s ears perked up in interest. Tom pinched his hip in reprimand.

“It’s not that simple!” Draco whispered furiously. “My parents have expectations! You can’t possibly understand-”

“Oh, don’t go there, Draco,” Neville scoffed.

“They’ve been pushing for an- an *agreement* with the Greengrasses since Astoria turned thirteen.” Draco scowled. “You know I can’t just shack up with you. It’ll be a scandal to both our families!”

“Oh for Merlin’s sake, it’s not like we’re getting married!” Neville said. “We have *something*, Draco. Don’t tell me you’re just going to throw it away like nothing.”

The Slytherin faltered. “I’m- I’m not. Throwing it away, that is. I just-”

“You know I’d wait for you,” Neville said softly, and there was a shuffle of clothes that signified Neville giving the hesitant Draco a hug. “If you just, say *something*. *We’d* wait for you, Luna and I.”

Harry sneezed.

Everyone in the closet froze.

“There’s someone else in here, isn’t there?” Draco sighed, defeated in the arms of the Gryffindor.

“It’s just us,” Tom wearily announced through the darkness, and Harry sheepishly laughed.

“In our defense,” Harry said, “we were here first.”

An awkward silence filled the closet.

“Right,” Neville coughed, sounding a bit strangled, “we were just - “

“Explaining this weird sexual tension you two have been exuding the past few months? Yeah.” Harry wryly said.

“How about we all get out of this closet,” Tom sighed.

-

Life #42

“Someone called you my sugar daddy today,” Tom said in the middle of dinner. Harry choked on his food.

“What?” Harry wheezed, coughing and thumping his chest once he dislodged the chicken from his windpipe. “*Sugar daddy?*”

“I’m a twenty-three year old English literature graduate working at a bookstore and you’re a thirty-one year old CEO of a booming company,” Tom pointed out. “We live in a multi-

million dollar home that *you* paid for out of your pocket. My wallet is full of cards linked to *your* bank account. I haven't had to buy clothes with my own money since we met. You literally bought me a *Bentley* for my birthday."

Harry was about to protest, but he thought about it for a minute and put his fork down in defeat. "You asked for the Bentley."

"I was *joking* ," Tom said. "If I knew you were actually going to buy me whatever car I said I wanted, I would've asked for a Maserati."

Harry took a big gulp of his wine. "I'll get you a pair of socks next time, then."

Chapter End Notes

spent the half the chapter listening to the Weird Sisters' Magic Works to get into the Yule Ball mood

and yes, that closet is big. why do you think its popular with the students in the first place?

i never referenced life #42 but the scene came to me in the shower one day so i had to write it

Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

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

They all exited the closet and was met with a mildly amused Luna. She blinked at them.

“Well, I suppose it’s symbolic,” she declared. Harry shared a giggle with her. Luna then turned to Neville and Draco, and seeing the uncertain expression on the Slytherin’s face, raised an eyebrow at Neville.

“You’ve had your turn,” she said airily, looping her arm around Draco’s and dragging the sputtering Slytherin away. “*I’ll* drive those wrackspurts away, don’t you worry, Draco.”

Neville watched the blond pair walk away, both fond and exasperated. Harry squinted and couldn’t believe he missed the obvious infatuation the Gryffindor had. Then again, it sounded like he and Draco were at odds for most of the year for that same reason.

“Ah, young love,” Harry sighed.

“I don’t want to hear it from you,” Neville dryly said.

The young Potter grinned at his friend. “Do we finally get to gossip about your love life drama now? Because Hermione and Cho are dying to know what’s up.”

“Nosy,” Tom muttered, brushing some dust off his robes and doing the same to Harry’s. “No need to humor him right now, Neville. I’m sure you want to follow the other two.”

Neville shrugged and smiled. “I supposed it won’t hurt to save Draco from Luna’s tender care,” he said. “I’ll fill you in more another time. You two enjoy the rest of the night without worrying about us.”

“But drama sustains me,” Harry whined as Tom rolled his eyes and dragged him the opposite direction.

“I have an idea,” Harry brightened.

“Oh dear,” Tom said, warily following the force that was Harry Potter to the gardens. Harry looked up at him expectantly in front of a shapely sized bush.

“I am *not*,” Tom said firmly, “going to be caught horizontal with you by a *bush*. There are lows I’d rather not do, *Potter*.”

“Oh come on, *darling*,” Harry grinned toothily, tightening a claw-like grip around Tom’s bicep. “It’ll be worth it, I promise.”

“My back is freezing,” Tom muttered, feeling the snow seep through his clothes after Harry insisted they lay on the ground behind the shrubbery. “Move over a bit, let me get my wand-”

“- run far, far away, Snape!” They heard Karkaroff whisper harshly a few feet away. “Surely you’ve noticed the mark getting darker by the day! The Dark Lord won’t have any mercy for traitors like us!”

“I think there’s something crawling on my arse,” Harry whispered to Tom, who gave him a harsh silencing look.

“Don’t put me in the same category as you, Karkaroff,” Snape drawled contemptuously. “I didn’t give names for my freedom.”

“That’s not your hand, is it?” Harry asked.

“That’s not my hand. If you’re about to interrupt another conversation you got us in...” Tom warned.

“No, you’re only a *turncoat*,” Karkaroff said snidely. “Consider this as your final warning from me: watch out for - “

Whatever was crawling on Harry then bit his buttcheek. *Hard*. Harry gasped in surprise, his knee jerking suddenly and hitting Tom right in the *gut*. Tom wheezed at the particularly painful hit - *damn Harry and his bony knees* - and in retaliation, smacked the younger teen on the arm.

“Something bit me!” Harry shrieked, scrambling to brush off *whatever* it was.

“Oh for fuck’s sake,” Tom snarled, rubbing at his midsection tenderly. “Damn your Potter luck - “

“*What*,” they paused at the frigid voice above them, “are the two of you doing down *there*?”

“Nothing, Professor Snape!” Harry cheerfully said. “We were just looking for something I dropped.”

Snape gave them a dirty look, and a few feet away Karkaroff made a hasty retreat. “I can only be thankful it wasn’t your *trousers*, Mr. Potter.” Snape’s face tightened when Tom snorted in amusement.

“Sorry for the interruption again,” Tom said as he stood on his feet, smiling pleasantly in a way that quickly unnerved the potions professor. Tom forcibly pulled Harry up from the ground, despite the younger teen’s protests. “I think it’s time I walk him to his dorm.”

“See to it, Mr. Gaunt,” Snape gritted out, eyes flickering between the two of them, uncertain. “I better not see *another* instance of impropriety from the two of you.”

“Maybe a trip to Madame Pomfrey first, though,” Harry murmured thoughtfully, rubbing his aching bottom a bit. “I think that was a rather horrible spider bite. Not exactly how I wanted

my arse bitten for the first time to go.”

“Good news, my arse is fine!” Harry declared to his friends the next morning.

“It sure is, Harry!” Parvati Patil giggled as she and Lavender passed by on their way to the Gryffindor table.

“It’s too early to be talking about Harry’s arse,” Ron sighed.

“But is it too early to be talking about the new happy trio?” Harry then turned to Neville. Draco sat between him and Luna, turning a little pink and Harry’s waggling eyebrows. “I heard you’ve been converted to their *salacious* ways, Draco.”

Draco sputtered, the one embarrassed for once. “Don’t say it like *that*,” he said. “And we rather you not declare it to the *entire castle*.”

“Oh!” Hermione gasped softly, clapping her hands in happiness. “Congratulations?”

Luna smiled pleasantly, “It was a long time coming.” Neville shrugged in agreement.

“And here I thought you’d be getting a boyfriend *after* I did,” Ginny pouted. “I’m kind of jealous with how everyone’s been pairing off. Dean was wishy-washy the entire time last night and all of the other boys are too worried about the twins doing something to them if they dated me.”

“Don’t worry, Ginny,” Harry patted the young girl consolingly. “Love will come to you.”

“Speaking from experience, he’s right,” Tom dryly said. “Just hope the gods don’t pair you up with a mischievous troublemaker with possibly some of the worst luck I’ve ever encountered.”

“Who says *you’re* not the one with the bad luck?” Harry grinned. “You’re the one that ended up with *me*, after all.”

“Your godfathers sent me a Christmas gift,” Tom idly informed Harry while he wrote on the floor. “I’m surprised Sirius didn’t leave a curse on it.”

“Remus probably caught it before they sent it,” Harry mused. He flipped through their pages of parchment, checking through his mental list for anything they’d missed. “How are you feeling, Viktor?”

Viktor, currently shirtless with runes inked all over his torso, shrugged. “Could be better,” he said wryly. The silencing curse continued to slither around his neck. “I admit that I wasn’t prepared for you two to find a solution so fast.”

Harry and Tom shared a look. “Marvolo knows a lot,” Harry grinned. Viktor raised an eyebrow.

“Should I even ask if we’re safe to do a ritual here?” The Bulgarian looked around the cavernous stone room. Hogwarts history wasn’t something Viktor was well versed in, so he hadn’t heard about Salazar Slytherin’s Chamber of Secrets until an hour ago when the two parselmouths had dragged him into an abandoned girls’ bathroom and spoke to the sink to reveal a hidden entrance. Because of course those two would know how to get to such a place.

“Slytherin was a paranoid bastard,” Tom reassured Viktor. “This is possibly the most secure place in the castle.”

“Just make sure you close your eyes if you hear hissing or something moving through the pipes,” Harry said. “Just in case.”

Another thirty minutes later, preparations were finally complete. Harry handed Viktor a bright blue potion to swallow and instructed the older teen to sit in the middle of Tom’s freshly drawn ritual circle.

“You might feel a bit of tingling around your neck,” Tom explained, picking up a perfect sphere of amber from the table and handing it to his friend. “Hopefully we don’t decapitate you.”

“Very comforting,” Viktor dryly said.

Harry snorted. “He’s very good at that. Okay, ready when you are.”

Viktor sighed, cupping the amber sphere near his throat. “Let’s do it.”

Tom cleared his throat as he and Harry took opposite ends of the circle, touching the outermost line with their fingertips. “On the count of three, focus your magic. One, two, three
- “

A loud booming sound, a bright light, and a sudden force had Tom and Harry flying away from the circle and straight into a wall.

“Oh my god,” Tom heard Harry gasp while he cradled his aching head. “Please tell me we didn’t kill Viktor Krum!”

Tom squinted through the cloud of smoke that suddenly filled the entire room and saw Viktor’s figure hunched over on the circle. “Viktor!” He yelled, getting up to his feet to briskly make his way towards his friend. “Viktor, are you alright?”

Viktor groaned, weakly raising a thumbs up at Tom’s general direction. “That wasn’t supposed to do that, was it?”

“No, definitely not,” Tom said, looking at the shattered pieces of the amber sphere scattered around the floor. “I was expecting vomiting, not an explosion.”

“Now that you mentioned it,” Viktor pressed his lips together, looking very, *very* queasy.

“Oh thank god you’re not dead,” Harry sighed, then paused, peering at Viktor’s sickly face. “Oh, is it bucket time?”

“It’s bucket time,” Tom dryly said.

Harry fetched and handed over the bucket just in time for Viktor to vomit up an unnaturally dark purple sludge. “That’s disgusting,” he wrinkled his nose in distaste at another particularly wet heave. “God, that’s gross. But at least we know the potion part worked.”

“The ink on his neck is fading slowly,” Tom observed. “The more he lets out of his system, the more it fades. The ritual worked, I believe. I suspect the explosion was simply magical backlash, though I’m not certain *why*.”

Harry patted Viktor’s shoulder in sympathy. “It’s gonna be a lot of sludge, I’m afraid. Water?”

“That had to be the most disgusting thing that had ever come out of my mouth,” Viktor sighed fifteen minutes later, when the nausea finally settled. “And considering my mother would complain about the kinds of things I’d eat as a child, that is saying something.”

“How are you feeling, though?” Tom asked seriously. He looked through some vials and selected a leaf green colored potion to hand to his friend.

“I am fine now, thank you,” Viktor said, smiling at Tom’s concern. “What’s this for?”

“Mouthwash,” Tom wryly smiled. “I can smell your breath from here, and it’s worse than a dragon’s.”

“The curse mark has completely faded,” Harry poked Viktor’s bare neck, making the older teen startle a little. “Should we try if it’s actually gone? Tell us, Viktor, who was it that put this curse on you?”

“I was unconscious when the curse was applied on me,” Viktor said and he blinked in surprise at the lack of warnings on his neck. “So I didn’t see *who* did it, but I know that it was a man named Rookwood that took me to them.”

Tom’s head snapped to Harry, whose eyes lit up in recognition. “Rookwood is supposed to be in *Azkaban*,” Tom said tersely.

“He’s one of the people that Karkaroff ratted out,” Harry remembered. “Could he possibly have escaped when Bellatrix did? Either way, surely a convicted Death Eater disappearing from his Azkaban cell is noteworthy enough for all the papers to report?”

Viktor suddenly straightened up, face tight. “The last task,” he gritted. “Whoever is responsible for this, the last task is absolutely important to them and it was imperative that either of you won.”

Harry knew he and Tom were thinking of the same thing. "It's a trap," Harry said. "They're going to abduct Marvolo on the third task. But why do it that way? Why not just straight up kidnap either of us? They would've had plenty of opportunities to do so."

"There's a superstition that a soul that goes through a set of trials comes out of it stronger," Tom said carefully. Harry fought off sending Tom a look that conveyed ' *Really? Was that your reason last time?* '

"Well, assuming plans don't change, we have some time to figure out a counter to whatever nefarious plot awaits poor Marvolo," Harry sighed dramatically. "The moment you came into the picture, the bad guys started forgetting about me. *Tragic* , really."

"I think we're all grateful it's not you in the middle of this," Tom rolled his eyes and Viktor snorted.

"I wish I can say more," Viktor shook his head, rubbing the heel of his palm against his forehead firmly. "But everything feels scattered. I can't concentrate on a single point."

"A side-effect of the ritual. You need a good night's rest and you should be right as rain in the morning." Tom stood up, brushing dust off his legs before helping the other Durmstrang student up. "Come on, let's get you into bed. Though we might have to check up on you in a few hours to make sure you're still intact."

"Sleepover!" Harry grinned. "I can't wait to scandalize more traditional people."

"How much did you sell the picture for?" Harry casually asked Colin Creevey after plopping down beside him during breakfast. The morning issue of the Daily Prophet had the image of Tom dipping down to kiss Harry mid-dance plastered front and center of the first page. It really was an excellent picture. Colin outdid himself this time.

"Uh," Colin stuttered, unsure at the sudden attention Harry's question directed at them. "A good amount. A really, *really* good amount."

"Good," Harry beamed, patting his young housemate on the head. "I'd hate to find out that they think I'm *cheap* ."

"You've used the same school bag for the past four years," Tom boredly said as he continued to read the news article. "It's one extra book away from ripping at the bottom, yet you still insist on keeping it despite many of us offering to buy a new one for you."

"Nothing a good charm can't fix," Harry insisted. "I can make this bag last forever."

"Oh look, that Skeeter woman is now saying we're having a threesome with Viktor now," Tom snorted, ignoring Harry's pouting. "Seems like she did hear about our *sleepover* . 'Poor Cedric Diggory, left wayside with only heartbreak and sorrow as company.'"

“Definitely no heartbreak and sorrow here!” Cedric called out a few seats away. “Please, Viktor, you can keep them!”

“You can always just join us anytime!” Harry hollered back.

Viktor at least, didn’t look embarrassed about the article. In fact, he was very amused and planned to send the page back home. “My mother will find it hilarious,” he told Harry. “My aunts have been too interested in my dating life lately, despite my indifference to it.”

“Everyone knows you have only one true love anyway,” Tom said. “You’d marry a quidditch pitch if you could.”

“The snitch would do,” Viktor grinned.

“Should I be offended, *Monsieur Krum* ?” Fleur Delacour asked airily as she delicately sat on the space made beside Viktor. “And ‘ere I thought you enjoyed my company ze other night, *yet ...*”

“I promise that it is nothing against you,” the Durmstrang student smiled, amused. “I hope you did not take any offense when I said that I had no further romantic inclinations towards our relationship.”

“Vat a shame,” Fleur sighed. “I suppose myself alone cannot compete against being in a harem vid the Boy Who Lived.”

“Damn right it’s *my* harem,” Harry grinned.

Tom snorted. “Whatever you say, sweetie.”

“ *And while you’re searching ponder this, we’ve taken what you’ll sorely miss,* ” Cedric repeated to the group, “ *an hour long you’ll have to look, and recover what we took .*”

“We have an hour to look in the lake for what we’ll sorely miss,” Tom explained. “So yes, we *are* going to be taking a dip in the lake during winter.”

Ron, after a moment of thought, solemnly said to the two champions, “I’m sorry for your balls - “

“Ron!” Hermione exclaimed exasperatedly. “ *Warming charms* !”

“They’re sensitive parts, Hermione!” Ron protested. “Warming charms might not be enough!”

“The lake is freezing cold,” Cho lightly agreed. “If it wasn’t for all the magical creatures in it, everyone reckons it would at least have an ice layer on top.”

“God have mercy,” Cedric sighed.

“There is no god here,” Neville patted Cedric consolingly. “Just some slightly sadistic headmasters and ministry officials.”

“ *Slightly* sadistic,” Draco rolled his eyes.

“And it could only get worse from here,” Harry cheerfully declared. Then deflated. “Oh wait, shit.”

Tom, who knew exactly what Harry remembered, smirked. “You didn’t think they’d take material possessions for ‘what we’ll sorely miss,’ did you? With these stakes?”

Cedric looked confused. “What else would they use?”

“I think the question is,” Viktor replied, “ *who* would they use?”

The group paused, then looked at Harry and Cho.

“They wouldn’t,” Cho gasped, aghast. Cedric grimaced.

“They would,” Harry pouted. “Dammit.”

Life #63 - dancing pandas, singing butterflies:

Harry woke up to the sounds of an angelic choir and his housemates sniggering in the background.

“What the fuck?” He groggily opened his eyes and stilled when he saw that he was surrounded by multi-colored butterflies. “What the *fuck* .”

“I think someone’s wishing you a Happy Valentine’s, Adam,” laughed his friend, Marco.

Harry stared at the butterflies for a few more minutes, knowing very well who was responsible for this. As did everyone else in his dorm room, if the constant sniggering was to go by.

“It’s too early for this,” Harry fell back into bed, covering his head with his blanket. The butterflies kept singing.

“It’s almost noon, Adam.”

“*Too early!*”

Harry turned back once he saw dancing pandas greeting his arrival to the Great Hall. The singing butterflies continued to sing hymns around his head. Someone from his house table whistled and catcalled, while others found laughed at the picture the situation made.

“What, don’t you like it?” Tom’s smirking face met his unimpressed one. “After all the conjuring and charming I did myself?”

“You’re *ridiculous*,” Harry said.

“I’d rather hear you’re mine, but that would do.”

Chapter End Notes

sorry sorry for another slow chapter but the next one is definitely the second task ;;;
thank u for bearing with me and can i just freak out at over 10k kudos??? what the actual
fuck you guys are going to kill me.

Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

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

Harry warily opened his eyes on Valentines' morning.

Seeing as there were no flower petals, sparkly balloons, or god-forbid *singing butterflies* around his bed, he deemed it safe to crawl out of the covers.

Justin watched him a few feet away, looking very amused. "Expecting something, Harry?"

"It's going to be an interesting day, I'm afraid," Harry said wryly.

Hermione accosted him while he was walking down to breakfast with Cedric.

"What did Marvolo get you for Christmas?" She asked, eyes glinting. "You never said."

"Hot wild sex," Harry automatically deadpanned, causing some nearby Beauxbaton girls to gasp and giggle. Cedric wheezed and Hermione looked at him with an eyebrow raised, only a dusting of pink on her cheeks. "I'm kidding, by the way. Sirius might actually cut his dick off if we have sex before I turned seventeen."

"That's..." Cedric trailed, a bit disturbed.

"Forget I said that," Harry hastily waved it off. "Anyway, he got me a journal."

"A journal?" Hermione blinked, clearly not expecting that answer.

"It's *symbolic*. We have matching ones with our names engraved and everything."

"Cute," the Gryffindor witch snorted. "So I hope you know that he's doing something extravagant today."

"Ah," Harry stopped in his tracks, finally noticing the unsure looks from the Durmstrang students that flickered between him and a figure a couple of meters away. "I was afraid of that."

"Happy Valentines', Harry," Tom smirked, holding out an enormous bouquet of roses for Harry to take.

"You said you weren't doing anything for me this year," Harry squinted at him. "I knew you were lying, you bastard."

"Now, *my love*," Tom grinned down at him, and some of Tom's nearby schoolmates hastily backed off. Harry could see why some people got scared of that toothy predatory grin. "What kind of boyfriend would I be if I didn't show my affections for you today? You're the sun of my life, after all."

“Oh my god,” Harry groaned, the tips of his ears turning alarmingly red. “Sometimes you’re so *embarrassing* .” Even more than Harry was at any given day.

Tom looked smug at that, which was to be expected considering he made it a hobby of turning Valentines’ to be a completely embarrassing affair for Harry most lifetimes. Especially when they had an audience like they did now.

“I can’t decide if that’s cute or terrifying,” Ginny said from the sidelines. Ron looked absolutely overwhelmed, probably thinking he would have to match up to that for Hermione.

“I think it’s cute,” Luna smiled. Draco and Neville shared an uncertain look with each other behind the Ravenclaw girl’s back.

Harry reluctantly took the ridiculously sized bouquet from Tom’s hands and was already about done with the day when Tom took out a small black box.

“I’m going to kill you if that’s a ring -” Harry hissed, though honestly Harry probably deserved it if it was, considering the number of public and tacky proposals he’d given Tom so far.

“I don’t have a death wish,” Tom dryly said, referring to how Sirius would undoubtedly attempt to strangle him again if he proposed this soon. “I promised you a locket, didn’t I?”

Okay, maybe the day wasn’t so bad, if only because of the look on everyone’s face when Harry walked into the Great Hall with Slytherin’s locket (the real, former horcrux one) hanging from his neck. Especially Dumbledore’s.

(The headmaster was probably growing concerned that the trend would have Harry getting the Gryffindor sword from the Sorting Hat somehow. Harry was so, so tempted to actually do so.)

“Are you certain we cannot take Krum instead?” Snape asked, looking pained. “Certainly his friend would do.”

Dumbledore pinched the bridge of his nose, sighing. The innocent piece of parchment - *Marvolo Gaunt-Harry Potter* , was written on it - in front of them not so much as fluttered. “The Ministry was insistent. The tournament, as we are all very much aware of, is meant to be a *spectacle* . Having a Hogwarts student, the Boy Who Lived nonetheless, as a rival school’s person they’ll ‘sorely miss’ *is* a spectacle.”

Snape scowled. “Blast this damn thing. It has brought nothing but trouble.”

“I am as happy with the events so far as you are, Severus,” Dumbledore said. “We can safely assume Marvolo Gaunt is no doubt related to Voldemort. That locket he gave young Harry is worrying proof. The question that has been plaguing my mind is how? If, as we suspect, he is

Voldemort's son, then who was the mother? Why haven't we heard anything about him until now?"

"It wasn't Bellatrix Lestrange, let me tell you that," Snape snorted. "She would've sang about it to the ends of the world, that insane witch."

"Sirius and Remus haven't been able to tell me anything either." Not that they were talking to him either way, Dumbledore thought a bit sourly. "Karkaroff hasn't told you anything else?"

Snape shook his head. "Just that vague warning. Which only puts more credibility towards the son theory."

"If only young Harry would stop rebuffing my attempts at a private talk," Dumbledore sighed. "For now, we'll have to see how things turn out. And hope for the best."

"Please tell me we're getting warming charms," Harry pleaded at his head of house. Professors Sprout and Flitwick looked at him and Cho, amused.

"Can I at least change to my worst robes?" Cho asked. "I mean, the lake isn't really very..."

"We've got it covered, Ms. Chang," Flitwick cheerfully said. "Now come on now, we need to get preparations underway."

"And yes, you're getting warming charms," Sprout added. "And hot chocolate afterward."

"Oh, sweet," Harry said. "But I do hope you all know that I'm not a very good swimmer."

"Ah," Cedric paused in front of Tom, Viktor, and the rest of Harry's friends. A certain Hufflepuff was glaringly absent. "So no need to panic about Cho missing yet. Good to know."

"They have contingency plans if the champion isn't able to retrieve their hostage, right?" Hermione wrung her hands worriedly. "They wouldn't let anything happen to students."

"It should be fine," Neville consoled her. "Think of the outrage if anything happened to Harry."

"Let's not," Ron hastily said. "My mum's rampage alone is terrifying enough to think about."

"Add it with Sirius and Remus," Draco very helpfully added.

"And me," Tom grinned toothily at them. There was a pause as everyone in their vicinity took a moment to imagine it. They *shuddered*.

“If ve are done thinking about ze end of ze vizarding world,” Viktor casually said. “It is probably time for ze champions to meet vid ze judges.”

“These look unflattering,” Cedric muttered, plucking at his Hogwarts-slash-Hufflepuff themed swimwear. Tom wore the same, only in Durmstrang’s maroon, and Fleur’s powder blue one had the feminine cut. Regardless, they were still ridiculously skimpy for the cold February weather.

Tom made sure to apply the warming charm around him as Ludo Bagman started explaining to the audience the conditions of the task. It’ll be a boring watch for them, no doubt, as they had no way of seeing what happened under the surface of the water. How the Ministry thought this would be a good task for the showboating they were *supposed* to be doing, Tom didn’t know.

“Good luck,” Fleur quietly said to the two other champions, her lips pressed thin. “Zey took my sister and I am *very* unhappy about it. You feel ze same way, yes?”

Tom tsk’ed. “Holding our loved ones underwater and under the guard of merpeople - definitely annoying.”

“At least it’s not something like dragons again,” Cedric said dryly. “I’ve had enough of facing fire breathed by a dangerous magical creature for the next year or two.”

Fleur cracked a smile. “No dragons, just vatever creatures inhabit zis lake of yours,” she said lightly.

“The giant squid isn’t in the area, is it?” Tom blandly asked, making the other two give a *very* thoughtful pause.

“If the champions are ready!” Ludo Bagman cheerfully exclaimed, the crowd cheering in excitement. The three champions straightened and got their wands in hand. “The second task begins in three, two, *one* - !”

At the sound of sparks coming out of Bagman’s wand, the three champions swiftly performed the Bubble-head charm on themselves and dived into the water.

Even with the warming charm surrounding his body, Tom could still feel a bit of chill from the lake. Diggory and Delacour had gone on separate directions, no doubt starting the search for their hostages. They didn’t exactly know where in the lake the merpeople were, after all. So he took a moment to float his wand in front of him, making sure it didn’t stray too far from arm’s reach, and wordlessly performed his Searching Spell.

His wand lazily spun around before stopping and pointing towards northeast, the general direction Delacour went. Already behind as it is, Tom took his wand and with a circular flick behind him, propelled himself forward with a minor wind spell.

It paid off to be a long-lived genius with a wide array of spell knowledge most times.

He carefully avoided the grindylows, having no desire to engage with the creatures especially under a time crunch. Neither of the other two champions were around when Tom finally found the merpeople village, and Tom swam closer to see that the three hostages were still there.

Harry looked eerily dead, under enchanted sleep and looking pale through the murky water. The guarding merpeople watched him closely as Tom cupped Harry's bitingly cold cheek before severing the rope tying Harry down to the rough stone slab. With a tense nod to the merpeople, he started making his way up to the surface.

"Goddamn you're heavy," Tom gritted, wrapping an arm around Harry's limp form before propelling himself up again with a spell. "Not to mention those robes adding ten pounds." Harry didn't reply, which honestly was for the best. He would've squawked indignantly before later sulking and talking his ear off about healthy weights and being a '*growing boy, you arsehole*'."

"And the first to come up with his hostage is Durmstrang's Marvolo Gaunt!" Bagman exclaimed. Tom barely registered his schoolmates' elated roars, trying not to drown because of Harry's sudden sputtering and flailing.

"Oh for - " Tom pinched Harry's side, earning a yelp from the younger boy. "Calm down, darling."

"That," Harry breathed, "was the weirdest fucking experience. I never want to be under enchanted sleep underwater ever again, alright?"

Tom rolled his eyes as he led both of them towards the champion's platform, where Madame Pomfrey was waiting with blankets and delicious hot chocolate. "Come on, let's get out of this awful lake. I hate swimming."

Surprisingly, it was Fleur Delacour that emerged from the lake next, looking more worse for wear than expected. She had her sister clinging to her, coughing weakly and blinking through the water all over her face. Cedric followed just a short two minutes afterward, a minute over the allotted hour, also with his hostage.

"She ran across the grindylows again, but managed to save her sister this time," Harry murmured so only Tom could hear. "I'm guessing Cedric helped."

True to Harry's thoughts, midway through Bagman's enthusiastic yelling, Fleur interrupted him.

"I want to exchange my points vid Monsieur Diggory's," she said firmly, tightening her blanket around her as she spoke. "He helped me vid ze grindylows ven he could have finished long before I would have. Had it not been for him, I wouldn't have been able to save my sister and finish ze task."

Cedric looked shocked for moment before Cho snapped him out of it with a nudge and a raised eyebrow. Then he was protesting and arguing against it with Fleur, who looked amused at his attempts to make her budge with what already seemed to be an unchangeable stance.

Bagman coughed after a few minutes of deliberation with the other judges. Madame Maxime had her lips pursed unhappily, which meant Fleur ended up getting her way anyways.

“The scores for this task are then as follows: a full fifty points for Marvolo Gaunt, forty-five points for Cedric Diggory, and forty-three points for Fleur Delacour.” Bagman announced. “That leaves the standings the same: Gaunt currently dominating at first place, Diggory at second, and Delacour at third.”

“Cheers,” Harry said, lightly bumping his cup of hot chocolate with Cho. “We survived.”

Cho sighed. “We’re going to smell like algae for a while.”

The Witch Weekly article about Tom and Harry’s illicit relations with Viktor and Cedric respectively was under the name Katie Smith, but Rita Skeeter’s writing style was distinct enough for it to be blatantly her under a pseudonym.

“Someone doesn’t seem to understand the meaning of *cease and desist*,” Tom looked almost gleeful at the obvious disregard of the law Tom’s newfound lawyers had enforced on her. “I’ve tried being *nice*, but she’s only giving me more to work with.”

“She’s a persistent little bug,” Harry said, looking over the gaudy article filled with nothing but speculation and bare scraps of ‘proof.’ Harry swore one of the pictures was from over a year ago.

“Why does she keep insisting I’m - I’m -” Cedric flailed, blushing as he skimmed through Cho’s copy of the magazine.

“Entangled in forbidden love with the Boy-Who-Lived?” Cho helpfully quoted from the article.

“*Gay*,” Cedric said. “I’m only *a little* bi-curious, really!”

Cho hummed thoughtfully at her boyfriend, “You are very *pretty*.”

“What does that have to do with anything?!” The Hufflepuff prefect groaned.

“Aesthetics,” Cho said very firmly.

“*She is rather too interested in our relationships, isn’t she?*” Viktor muttered to his friend in German. “*I don’t see the point, personally. What is so interesting about imagined romantic affairs? Even my coach and teammates from the national team had been asking about it.*”

“ I think the thought of you ‘finally showing’ sexual interest is exciting to her readers and your fans, ” Tom scoffed. “ Ignore them, Viktor. They’re just being crude .”

“ Fame and gossip go hand-in-hand, my friend ,” Harry patted Viktor’s shoulder. “ You’re gonna have to deal with this for a long time. But you’ll tell me if you have the hots for Marvolo, right? ”

“ Of course. You seem like the type to want to watch anyway, ” Viktor joked, then blinked. “ Ah, wait. ”

“ I don’t know what kind of thought just came from that, but it sounds like we should be worried, ” Tom side-eyed him warily.

Viktor’s eyebrows furrowed and he scratched his neck absentmindedly. Despite the curse having been lifted, echoes of it still itched his skin sometimes. *“ I was supposed to collect Harry’s blood. ”*

“What,” Tom and Harry said flatly. Their simultaneous reaction caught the attention of their other friends, who had been respectfully ignoring the German interaction until now.

“Is everything alright?” Neville asked carefully, sharing glances with the others.

“Uh, yeah!” Harry said way too cheerfully. “We just need to borrow Viktor here for bit. Maybe to make-out or something, who knows.”

In a blink, Harry and Tom practically hauled a befuddled Viktor away, leaving a confused crowd in their wake.

“That,” Draco dryly said, “was not suspicious at all.”

Life #59: 2.5

Their boss - Michael Cooper, resident hard-ass, perfectionist, and the most terrifying man in the building - didn’t seem to have a life outside of work. Dale, resident project manager, observed that he was first to arrive and last to leave, without fail, every day at 5:30 PM other than Friday. Friday’s were everyone’s favorite, since Cooper clocked out at 3 PM, which meant everyone else was free to leave at their leisure right after. Still, Emily from accounting swore that the man didn’t seem to have a social life, and he *definitely* didn’t talk about his personal life. The only person that insisted that Cooper wasn’t as bad as everyone thought was his secretary Carrie, but she can’t exactly talk shit about her boss, can she?

“Wait, back up,” Dale raised a hand to stop Carrie from her chatter. “Did you say Cooper took you out for dinner?”

Carrie, a sweet summer child that was barely in her mid-twenties, beamed. “Yes! He invited me and my fiancé as thanks, since I caught that paperwork discrepancy and he was really nice about it! Mark was so charmed, especially when he started asking about our wedding plans and recommended us some good places he can put a good word in for us--”

“*Cooper*.” Andy, a regular victim of their boss’ criticisms, raised his eyebrows sky high. “Nice?”

“What would he know about weddings anyway?” Another man named Harley muttered.

Carrie looked all of them, puzzled. “He’s married, though? I mean, he has a ring on his finger and all.”

“He *what*?”

Carrie wasn’t lying.

Emily was sure that there was some kind of weird witchcraft involved, or involuntary denial, because how could they have missed Cooper being *married*?

“Hi, boss!” Emily had approached him, way too cheery, “I was wondering, that’s a nice ring you have there. When did you get it?”

Cooper looked at her flatly, and dry as dust said, “Ms. Rodriguez, I’ve worn my wedding band every day after I got it *ten years* ago. I truly am worried about the state of your observational skills if it took you this long to notice it.”

A little shamed, Emily laughed nervously and made a hasty exit, unaware of Cooper’s very amused expression at her back.

“Ten years?” John hissed, “He’s what? Thirty-five?”

“Thirty-two!” Carrie chirped.

“He got married young!” Emily choked, “Do people even do that nowadays? Surely no one can afford getting married straight out of college anymore!”

“It’s all about budgeting,” Carrie said sensibly. “Mark and I are lucky our parents are happy to pay for much of ours, but even we have a strict spending limit. And Mr. Cooper’s recommendations helped a lot! Anything’s possible!”

“Oh, child,” Andy sighed, “one day you’ll see the true horrors of life. And boss.”

“My subordinates don’t believe I’m actually married,” Tom/Michael Cooper said, amused, as he strode around the house towards Harry. He took a moment to stop and pet their energized little pomeranian, Voldemort. (Harry, the little shit he was, called the dog - who was *supposed* to be named Marshmallow on account of her white fur - that godawful name until she only responded to Voldemort or variations of it.)

“Well they’re in for a shock at the next company picnic when you show up with a husband and two kids,” Harry snorted from the kitchen. “Isn’t that right, little flower bud?” Harry cooed at their two-year-old, Daisy, who giggled and smacked Harry’s cheek with a handful of mashed potatoes.

“Dad? You’re home!” Their eight-year-old son, Jamie, hugged Tom before enthusiastically tugging his hand towards the child’s room. “I finished the Lego spaceship! Come see!”

Later, after the kids were asleep and Harry and Tom lazed on the couch with little Voldemort on Tom’s lap, Tom hummed contemplatively. “I can see why I don’t look like a family man, much less a married one,” Tom said. “I’m still an asshole to everyone other than you and the kids.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “I’d be worried if you weren’t. You don’t stop being you when it comes down to it, despite changing lives. You’re still pretty much a former dark lord, now less threatening with a picket-fence life and 2.5 kids. Damn, I married an asshole has-been with an array of personal issues.”

“Just admit you have a type,” Tom said lightly.

“Yeah,” Harry huffed. “You.”

Chapter End Notes

i just like those fics where the big bad boss has this sweet gentle spouse and has everyone baffled how they even got married.
also harry *would* name a pomeranian voldemort, you all know it.

also as my beta put it: "Harry is a pain in the ass all year round, but Tom waits for major holidays to pull out the embarrassing stunts." which, true.

in other news, I made a new tumblr after being absent from it for say like, 4 years?
COME SAY HI AT tetsurashian.tumblr.com
im nice and gentle and dont bite \o/ i don't have much on it right now but im working on it ;;;;

Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

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

“Viktor, I want you to know that I think you’re valid and that we love you, even if Marvolo would never admit that, but what the *fuck*,” Harry very eloquently told the Bulgarian in front of him. Viktor sheepishly shrugged.

“My brain has been a bit of a mess, admittedly.”

“You might need a mind healer if you’re still experiencing side-effects,” Tom scowled lightly. “We can do legilimency on you, but that’s honestly too much of a risk with how delicate your mind can possibly be. We’re not trained for it, much less licensed.”

“As if he cares about being *licensed*. He just doesn’t want to admit that he’s not as good as he claims to be in it,” Harry conspiratorially whispered to Viktor. “It’s like getting hit with a jackhammer to the head.”

“I’m a perfectly capable legilimens,” Tom sniffed, offended. “Just because *you’re* complete *pants* at occlumency - “

“That has nothing to do with the headaches you’ve given me and you know it - “

“We’ll have to find one that keep their mouth shut, I take it,” Viktor interrupted. “Someone like myself being put under a curse tends to be prime news, after all. I should be able to ask around.”

“Right,” Tom nodded stiffly. “Now about Harry’s blood. Ritual?”

“Ritual,” Viktor agreed.

Harry sighed and mournfully said, “It always is.”

“Well, anything else you’d like to share to the class, Viktor?” Tom asked dryly. His friend had the decency to look a bit chastised. “What other ingredients does this dark wizard need? Unicorn blood? The Philosopher’s Stone, perhaps?”

“Let me find that mind healer and I’ll give you the dirty details,” Viktor replied, just as dry. “I promise I haven’t been withholding anything intentionally.”

Harry patted Viktor consolingly. “It’s alright, mate. At least we know now before I wake up to find you with a knife and vial looming over my bed. I don’t really fancy giving my blood away just like that after all. Now, let’s get out of this broom closet. And hopefully we scandalize someone *again*.”

“This is an intervention,” Draco declared, flanked by a determined Hermione and an exasperated Neville. Ron was off to the side, shrugging at Harry’s baffled look.

“We haven’t *actually* been having frisky sessions with Viktor in the broom closets,” Harry insisted.

“First of all, I *hope* not,” Hermione frowned. “Second of all, this is about what you’ve been keeping from us that involves Marvolo and Viktor. We’ve let it be for long enough, but they’re our friends too and we’re *worried* .”

“I appreciate your worries,” Harry cautiously said, “but we’ve got it handled. There’s really nothing to be concerned about.” At that, Hermione gave him a flat look that said that she didn’t take his word for it at all.

“Something happened with Viktor though, right?” Ron asked. “Like, that was as obvious as the sun, mate.”

Harry scratched his head, thinking of a way to put it delicately. “Uh, yeah. Someone’s got it out for Marvolo, we think.”

Then his friends shared peculiar looks with each other. Something about that rang alarm bells in his head.

“Another thing, Harry. Do you...” Hermione hesitantly started, “do you know who Marvolo’s parents are?”

‘Ah,’ Harry thought. ‘*Someone* spilled the beans.’ He took a deep breath and sighed before nodding in confirmation. “I take it since you’re asking that you all know too.”

Delicately, Neville nodded back, “We know who Marvolo’s father is. Sorry to say, but someone obviously wanted us to know, with all the clues they’d been slipping into our books and stuff.”

“And we’ve decided that we don’t care,” Draco said firmly. And for someone who put a lot of stock in who someone’s father was, that said a lot.

Hermione gave a wry smile, “We understand why it was kept secret. Honestly, I’m kind of offended that the headmaster - and we can’t deny that it was *him* that gave us the hints when he obviously recognized Marvolo - thought that it would drive a wedge between you and us or you and him. It’s obvious that Marvolo doesn’t have the same beliefs as his father, who he’d likely barely even knew.”

“I mean, as long as no one starts getting Unforgivables cast on them, then we’re cool,” Ron hastily cut in. “Marvolo really ain’t a bad guy. Kind of creepy sometimes, but so are *you* . So really, you two are perfect to deal with each other’s crazy.”

“Ah,” Harry said, looking at his four closest friends. Warmth bloomed in his chest, and smiling, he opened his arms. “You guys say the sweetest things. I think this calls for a group hug!”

“Oh god no,” Draco and Ron cringed together.

Tom and Viktor went into their usual classroom-slash-meeting room and stopped at the sight of Harry in a (deliberately) poorly conjured Voldemort mask.

“Marvolo,” Voldemort-Harry mockingly did the wheezing-hiss his old snakish self did. “I am your father.”

Everyone stared as Tom calmly picked up the nearest book and threw it straight at Harry’s head.

Hermione, the only other person in the room bar Harry and Tom that understood the reference, fought to keep a straight face. “I *told* him not to do that,” she said, biting her lips to keep in a laugh.

Tom sighed tiredly, “You and I both know very well how little he listens to anyone.” Harry continued to cackle on the floor, despite Tom’s very accurate hit on the forehead. “I suppose the cat is out of the bag, then.”

“The headmaster practically screamed it at us,” Neville dryly said, clearly unimpressed by Dumbledore’s efforts. “Gave us whole loaves of bread instead of breadcrumbs, so to speak.”

“Ah, of course,” Viktor nodded understandingly. “Karkaroff is also a vit of a vlavvermouth.”

“Hah! So that’s how you know!” Harry exclaimed, finally having an answer to a question that had been plaguing both he and Tom’s minds. “Was he warning you? Did he straight up say it or give you clues?”

“I don’t think he intended it to ve anything,” Viktor blandly said. “He is acquainted vid my father, and vey sometimes partake in some fireviskey. Karkaroff is, after all, *infamously* loose-lipped, so it should ve no surprise that he is even more so ven inevriated.”

Harry pouted. “And here Tom and I were thinking of conspiracy theories on how you found out.”

“I, for one, am glad that it was just Karkaroff blabbing his mouth rather than the information being readily available out there,” Tom scowled.

“Yeah, there probably would be like, a hundred people who would want to kill you because of your... father,” Ron said, making a face. “Some of our classmates probably would lose their minds, honestly.”

“More importantly,” Neville said, “Rita Skeeter would have a field day.”

“Perfect,” Harry brightly said. “Sasha misses live human, I think.”

“Sasha?” Viktor murmured in question while Hermione rolled her eyes and smacked Harry’s shoulder.

“You are *not* feeding the basilisk Rita Skeeter,” Hermione chastised. She pursed her lips. “Sasha deserves better than an insect for dinner.”

Harry barked a laugh and Draco and Ron also joined in the snickering. Tom, on the other hand, just grimaced. For good reason.

“Harry, darling,” Tom said, looking pained. “Can you please take off that ridiculous mask? Hearing you laugh with that face on is going to give me nightmares.”

Harry, of course, just wrapped his hands around Tom’s arm and pressed against his side, still wearing the Voldemort mask. “Oh, my love, you say just the sweetest things.”

Tom merely summoned the book from earlier from the floor and into his hand, just to smack it right on Harry’s forehead again.

“A curse?” Hermione gasped, looking at Viktor worriedly. After Harry finally stopped wheezing in laughter, they started to fill the other four in on what they’ve been hiding the past few months. “You got it all removed, though, right?”

“It’s a complicated piece of magic. Impressively so. I wouldn’t be surprised if Harry and I actually missed something.” Tom admitted lightly. Harry shrugged.

“It’s structure is pretty archaic.” Harry added. “And considering Viktor is still experiencing side effects, well...”

“Impressive, though,” Draco murmured. He peered at the pair contemplatively. “Old dark magic like that isn’t easy to have access to, much less learn about.”

Harry smiled innocently. “We were bored one summer.”

“You alright, though, mate?” Ron asked Viktor, who shrugged.

“Could ve worse,” Viktor said. “At least I still have my head attached to my vody.”

“What?” Hermione exclaimed. The other three fourth years looked equally alarmed.

“We told you, we weren’t gonna get you decapitated.” Harry insisted. Viktor just looked amused.

“ *What?!* ”

“It’s desecration!” Cedric fervently yelled. “It could permanently disfigure the site-”

“It’s a Quidditch Pitch, Diggory.” Tom flatly said. “It will be fine.”

“At ze very least ze grass is looking greener now, yes?” Fleur added. “Ze snow vas quite harsh on it.”

The three champions had just come from a meeting with the tournament judges to see what the third task was going to be. As with last time, they had changed the Quidditch Pitch into a hedge maze, and no doubt will have a variety of traps and magical creatures as obstacles to slow them down from getting to the cup in the middle of the maze.

“There are plenty of wide open grassy spaces around us,” Cedric continued. “Why did they have to use the pitch? We could be playing games in there instead! Some of us haven’t played a game the entire school year!”

“Vell then vy don’t you use those other open spaces for your games?” Fleur asked.

“The goal posts!”

Tom rolled his eyes. “I imagine the spectator stands would have something to do with it.”

“They didn’t exactly care about the spectators last task, though, did they?” Cedric huffed.

Fleur nodded. “It vas a terrible task. Even vid my own difficulties aside.”

“Either way, the last task is a month away.” Tom said. “They can’t redo the maze now. And from what Bagman explained, it seems like the points we’ve gotten so far only matter in determining who goes into the maze in what order.”

Cedric hummed, looking at Tom from the corner of his eye. “I think I can outrun you.”

Fleur, twirling her silvery blonde hair, huffed in amusement. “You boys ‘ave not seen virsthand how light my feet are. Vorry about outrunning me, I say.”

“Oh, you two are adorable,” Tom smirked. “I’ll make sure to get a headstart when I go in the maze first. Maybe I’ll even let you two see the cup before I take it myself.”

The three champions stared at each other in the middle of the empty hallway, ready for the challenge the third task was going to bring.

“I look forward to ze challenge, monsieurs,” Fleur smiled prettily, but her eyes shone with fire.

“I’ll treat you both to ice cream with the prize money, don’t worry,” Cedric grinned to match Fleur.

Amused, Tom snorted. “I’ll see you two below me on the podium in a month.”

With a turn of their heels, Cedric and Fleur went on opposite directions to the side of the hallway. Tom stayed in place for a few moments, waiting.

“Right, the Great Hall is that way,” Cedric coughed, shuffling back to where Tom stood. His cheeks were dusted with a soft blush.

“Zis castle looks ze same everyvere,” Fleur muttered as she joined back with them.

Tom, unable to help himself, laughed. “Are you sure you two will be fine in a maze?”

The morning of the third task, Karkaroff stiffly informed Tom that his family was here to cheer him on.

“I’m an *orphan*,” Tom flatly reminded his headmaster, who made a half-pained half-terrified face at the tone he took.

Nevertheless, he obliged and followed Karkaroff to the meeting place, and was mildly surprised at who was there to greet them.

“Surprise,” Remus smiled gently at the stunned teenager. Sirius was right beside him, pouting more for show than anything. “I hope it wasn’t presumptuous of us, Harry said it was alright.”

“I’m...” Tom faltered, not knowing what to say. “Thank you. It’s nice having you here.”

“School pride has me cheering Diggory on,” Sirius said. “But it won’t be so bad if you win.” Then he side-eyed the Diggory’s and lowered his voice to a whisper. “And between you and me, I don’t think anyone wants Amos bragging about his son any more than he already is. The man has been insufferable.”

“I’m surprised you’d know,” Tom deadpanned. “I didn’t even think you left the house.”

Sirius blinked for a moment, surprised at the cheek, but barked out a loud laugh and clapped Tom’s shoulder firmly. “You’re growing on me,” he cheerfully said, “you’re kind of like mold, I suppose. Harry’s mold.”

“I can’t tell if that is an insult or not,” Tom muttered, a bit affronted. Still, it felt... nice, this show of familial acceptance. Especially from people who were so very important to Harry. Remus looked at him and Sirius knowingly, a fond expression on his face.

“Right, let’s get to the Great Hall,” Sirius cheerfully said. “It’s been a while since I’ve had a Hogwarts’ meal. The apple crumble has always been to die for.”

Harry was delighted to see his godfathers, and smirked smugly at Tom’s raised eyebrow. The brat always liked to rock the boat that was Tom’s emotional constipation towards everyone that wasn’t Harry.

The Great Hall was rife with excitement over the final task. Throughout the meal, students would go up to the three champions to show support towards their favored to win. Luna and Ginny had made more badges, walking around the tables to distribute them to anyone who wanted one, some sporting badges for all three champions. The media and politics between the schools' home countries may not be getting along much (at all) but at least the young students were, having months of shared experience of dealing with their schoolmates' lives in danger and 'Gaunt and Potter's spectacle of a love life.'

"I want you to know that if you lose I'm dumping you for the winner," Harry told Tom, who gave him a dry look.

"We can work out an agreement," Cho brightly said to him, even as she had her arms around an exasperated Cedric's arm.

"For the sake of your sanity, Diggory, I won't lose to you," Tom smirked.

"So god help me," Cedric sighed.

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Life #59, part 2: Company picnic

"Do you see him?" John asked two minutes after he and Dale arrived at the park. It was the company's semi-annual picnic, and Carrie had cheerfully informed him that the boss had in-fact RSVP'd his family this time, instead of opting out of the entire social event altogether. It was probably the fact that the CEO was actually going to be in attendance instead of trotting off somewhere in Paris or the Bahamas.

Dale squinted around, "Nah, but there's Emily, Harley, and Andy by the appetizers."

"A lot of people actually showed up," Emily said when they joined the group. "I've seen him once or twice, but he disappears from sight not soon afterward."

"What about his wife though?" John asked. "She's the one we're most interested in."

Harley shrugged. "Maybe Carrie would know?"

"Know what?" Carrie's chipper voice asked from behind Andy, and they turned to see Carrie holding a toddler and with two unfamiliar men.

"Oh! Is she yours?" Emily's eyes sparkled at the adorable child, who shyly smiled before burying her face into Carrie's shoulder. "I didn't know you had a baby?"

“What? No!” Carrie laughed. One of the men by her - strawberry blond, blue eyes, gorgeous dimpled smile - laughed.

“She’s one of mine, actually,” the stranger said and held out a hand in greeting. “I’m Robin, and that’s my daughter Daisy.”

“She’s so adorable, I might die from cuteness,” Carrie cooed at the toddler before handing her to her father. She gestured to the other man, “And this is my fiance, Mark!” Mark simply waved with a reserved hello to the others.

“I haven’t seen you around before,” John said to Robin. “What department are you from?”

“We’re from all sorts, but we share the Big Bad as a boss,” Dale joked. “If none of us have seen you around, you’re probably one of the lucky ones.”

Carrie’s eyes turned wide, which was the first warning sign in hindsight. But Robin merely raised his eyebrows as he settled Daisy on his hip. “The Big Bad?” Robin asked.

“You know,” Dale continued, waving a hand, “Mr. Cooper? The Big Bad, kind of like the wolf in Little Red Riding hood, just waiting to eat us. He’s rather terrifying.”

Robin fought to keep a straight face, the second warning sign. “I see,” he said simply, though it looked like he was tempted to laugh.

Mark, looking a bit confused, turned to Carrie and asked, “Are they talking about Michael? I thought he was quite nice; I don’t see how he’s terrifying at all.” The last sentence he directed at Robin, who snorted. Third warning sign.

Andy, who had kept quiet until now, warily looked at the very much amused Robin. “...Do you actually work here?”

“No, he doesn’t,” the voice of their boss, Cooper, sent a chill down their spine. He grinned toothily at them. “I see you’ve met my husband, Robin.”

“Husband?” Emily wheezed.

“Oh, sorry, I forgot to give my surname. Robin Cooper,” Robin (Harry) smiled. “Michael’s told me a lot about you guys.”

“I’m Jamie!” A young boy holding their boss’ hand piped up. He grinned at them, and heartstrings were pulled, “Do you work with dad?”

“So cute!” Carrie wailed into her fiance’s arms, who patted her consolingly. “I want one too!”

Michael (Tom) rolled his eyes, and looked pointedly at his subordinates. “If you’re done gawking, I need to take my family to meet my boss.”

“Family,” Emily wheezed again, once the Cooper family was out of hearing range. “Oh my god, he looks like a model husband and father.”

“Where’s the beer?” John asked. “My world view has changed. I need a drink.”

Chapter End Notes

sees last update date... looks away....

hi im alive i was just getting my ass kicked in school nbd

the chapter isnt as long as i wanted it to be but the next chapter will sure to be exciting for everyone bc THIRD TASK. the plot will start to unravel.

tumblr plug-in: my sparse blog tetsurashian.tumblr.com has some doodles and always taking in questions anon or not. I might start posting out of context snippets in there too but ~who knows~

Art plug-in: the beautiful bone-kun made [THIS WONDERFUL FANART](#) from the mcdonald's scene in ch 9 and im always crying at it its to beautiful

Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

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

“You seem tense,” Draco commented, looking at Harry from the corner of his eye. Harry chewed on his lip and shrugged.

“I feel like something is about to go wrong any minute now,” he admitted. He looked around at his friends, including an equally tense Viktor. As a precaution, Harry had the Bulgarian’s wand on his person, the hornbeam wand a weight in his pocket.

“Welcome, everyone!” Ludo Bagman announced from the field. He and the three champions stood at the mouth of the maze, the champions cutting a far more impressive figure than Bagman. “Tonight is the night you’ve all been waiting for - the third and final task of the TriWizard Tournament!”

The crowd roared in excitement. Harry’s own enthusiasm was dampened by the sense of impending doom, though he and his friends clapped and smiled along with everyone else.

“And of course, it wouldn’t be a TriWizard Tournament without our three champions,” Bagman grinned. “From Hogwarts, we have the dashing Cedric Diggory! From Beauxbatons, we have the ever elegant Fleur Delacour! And of course, our current reigning champion is Durmstrang’s very own marvelous Marvolo Gaunt!”

The Durmstrang contingent, along with other various supporters, stood up to let out deafening cheers. Harry couldn’t help but smile at the show of overwhelming support.

“For the third task, we have devised a fantastic maze filled with many challenging obstacles. In the center of the maze lies the coveted TriWizard Cup, and the first to take it will be our top champion!” Bagman continued. “The champions will enter the maze according to the points they’ve accrued thus far - Mr. Gaunt will go first, Mr. Diggory second, and Ms. Delacour third. If a champion is unable to continue, they are to send red sparks from their wand to signal so. Do note though, that it means a forfeit from the tournament, and the champion will not be able to reenter the maze.”

Without himself and Viktor in the tournament, Harry wasn’t sure how things were going to play this time around. Harry had faith in Tom in getting to the Cup first, but in their private discussions they could admit that anything could happen once he actually grabs it with his own hand. Will it be a portkey again? Or an innocuous trophy? More importantly, will it lead to this dark lord that’s been dogging their footsteps the past few years?

Harry hoped though, that regardless, there won’t be any unnecessary casualties this time.

“Good luck,” Cedric offered the other two sincerely as the seconds counted down ‘til the start of the task. “It’s been a pleasure competing against you both, as crazy as the entire thing has been.”

“Crazy is an understatement,” Tom drawled before forming a small smirk. “But the pleasure is the same.”

“I agree,” Fleur said. “See you on ze the other side, boys.”

A loud bang came behind them, Bagman yelling, “First in, Marvolo Gaunt from Durmstrang!”

Tom sprinted into the maze, instinct taking over the first five minutes as he navigated deeper into the maze. When he finally heard the second bang that signalled Cedric’s entrance to the maze did he slow down to catch his breath and survey his surroundings. The hedges rustled around him, the space behind him disappearing and a fork ahead of him appearing with the shifting of leaves.

“Left or right, huh?” Tom mused, looking down both identical paths. He twirled his wand contemplatively before swiftly shooting a spell down the right side pathway. A moment later, the air filled with the shrieking of young acromantula. Tom snorted. “Left it is, then.”

Three minutes after Cedric’s signal, another bang meant Fleur had joined the other two champions in the maze. Tom heard the distant sounds of blast-ended skrewts exploding and Cedric loudly cursing as he continued down the straight path. He quickly turned a corner and came face to face with a figure of a person. One he knew very well.

“A boggart,” Tom acknowledged and Harry’s doppelganger smiled.

“You’re his boggart?” Hermione murmured confusedly, looking at Harry. Other people around them were also glancing at his direction. Harry shrugged, unconcerned, and sent a crooked grin her way.

“And he’s mine.”

After a beat of silence, Ron blinked. “Wow, that’s kinda fucked up.”

“Playing games, Tom?” Boggart-Harry crooned at Tom, who frowned. It was a good thing no one else could hear the boggart, as that name would raise quite a few questions. Boggart-Harry stared at him impassively before clicking his tongue in disgust. “Of all the people I could have - “

“How cute that you think you could affect me,” Tom rolled his eyes and leveled his wand between the boggart’s eyes.

Harry snorted as they watched as Tom ruthlessly put the boggart back in hiding, scoffing at the trunk it came from.

From the looks of it, Tom still kept his lead though the other two were quickly gaining on him. Cedric had lost time dealing with the nest of blast-ended skrewts but Fleur was fortunate enough not to have met with much trouble thus far.

“I’m terrified,” Viktor whispered in German to Harry, leaning towards the younger boy slightly but keeping his face transfixed on Tom’s image. “Something is going to happen, and I feel like I can’t breathe until everything is all over.”

Harry gazed at the Bulgarian and wrapped a hand around his wrist, catching his eyes intently. (Eat your heart out, Skeeter.) “Trust in him,” he said. Viktor clenched his jaw and was about to say something when a few people in the crowd started gasping.

Tom knew he had taken a turn away from the maze’s center, but well. He had promised Harry.

“Nothing personal, Cedric,” Tom assured his fellow champion, even as he blocked the Hufflepuff’s path. “But this is as far as you’ll go.”

Cedric, looking far more than ruffled, huffed a breath. He tightened his grip on his wand and determinedly met the other boy’s eyes. “If you’re gonna make me go down, I can at least make sure I bring you with me.”

Without warning, Tom sent a stunner at Cedric’s way, which was hastily reflected off with a shield. Undeterred, another silent spell was shot out of Tom’s wand, followed by another, and another, and another. Cedric struggled to dodge the relentless barrage of spells while Tom didn’t even break a sweat.

From the corner of his eye, Tom saw the hedges move and open to reveal Fleur coming to an abrupt stop in front of them. The three of them paused to survey at each other as the hedges shifted again to trap them in a circle. From the distance, they heard Ludo Bagman exclaiming, “A duel of champions!”

Fleur flickered her eyes from Cedric to Tom, and the Durmstrang student saw the spells coming before before they even rose their wands. It made sense, after all, for the other two to team up against him first as the bigger threat.

“Good try,” Tom muttered the same time he sent a spell that had vines sprouting from the ground to grab at Fleur. The witch cursed and as she struggled with the vines wrapped around her ankles, Cedric casted a stunner towards Tom - not that it did much when Tom easily flicked it aside and returned it in kind.

“Wow, this is kind of irritating,” Cedric sighed after dodging, grinning to show it was in good spirits. Fleur darkly muttered something in French as she stomped at the now-limp vines.

“Like I said, it’s nothing personal,” Tom said. He carefully eyed the pathway that was beginning to form behind the other two champions and minutely tapped his wand against his thigh. He pointed his toes towards the direction of Cedric and Fleur, who were ignorant of the spell planting itself under Tom’s feet.

“Neither is this,” Fleur returned a moment before sending a petrifying spell alongside Cedric.

The moment the spells hit Tom’s shield, it didn’t simply bounce back to its casters. Instead it was redirected to the ground, where Tom’s own personal magic interacted with it to create a sudden rumbling of the earth before the ground under the Beauxbaton and Hogwarts champions fell out from under them.

Tom didn’t look back from his sprint towards the new pathway, though he did snort at Cedric exclaiming a very incredulous “What the fuck!”

It takes a few minutes and a few turns, but Tom was confident of his path. The Cup was on the other side of the hedge in front of him, and only a sphinx stood in his way.

“A riddle for you,” the sphinx said. “If you answer it correctly, I will let you through. If you answer it wrong, I will eat you.”

“Sounds fair,” Tom said dryly.

“Some try to hide, some try to cheat; but time will show, we will always meet. Who am I?”

Ah, sounds like a familiar friend.

“It can’t be anything other than Death,” Tom answered. The sphinx smiled toothily.

“Very well,” she said as she moved aside.

The Cup shone just yards away, sitting prettily and innocently under the moonlight. If Tom wasn’t so sure that it was trap, he would probably feel a bit more than wariness at the sight.

“Let’s see who you are then, dark lord,” Tom murmured before taking a hold of the cup with his own hands.

Confused murmurs swept through the audience as the Durmstrang champion didn’t immediately appear after grabbing the Cup. One minute, two minutes, three minutes - where was Marvolo Gaunt?

“Fuck,” Harry clenched his hands, watching as Bagman, Crouch, and the headmasters conferred, just as baffled as everyone else. He and Tom had expected it, for the task to play out like it did before, but it didn’t make it any less concerning.

“What’s going on?” Neville asked Harry, whose lips thinned at the heavy question. Neville then turned to a pale Viktor, who was also looking at Harry for answers.

“I don’t know for sure,” Harry carefully said. His eyes sharpened when Karkaroff whitened after an involuntary jerk of his left arm. A scan of the professors’ box had Harry seeing the same happening to Snape. He lowered his voice and his friends moved in closer. “I can’t say anything here. But I think after tonight, some things are about to change. And not for the better.”

The familiar tug of the portkey was expected, feeling like being surrounded by howling wind and swirling color. The unceremonious landing on soft, cold soil was also expected, as was the sight of Rookwood standing patiently on the sides.

What wasn’t expected was the cold, hissing laughter of a familiar voice.

“Wonderful job with the last task,” a clammy hand delicately rose Tom’s chin to meet eyes with the apparent mastermind behind it all. Tom breathed in sharply, and felt nothing but ice in his veins.

“Congratulations. As expected of ‘*my son* ,’” said the chilling image of Voldemort.

Chapter End Notes

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first of all, sorry for the delay! the next chapter won't be long this time (no for real im srs). i've started on it already i promise so i won't keep you guys waiting in anticipation for long.

second, happy holidays everyone! i hope it's been a good few weeks and i hope everyone starts 2019 well! for 2019 im gonna try to update more often especially when things are getting JUICIER. also reply to comments more but its like replying to text messages - im really bad at it :sweats:

another thing: pls look at [this cute af fanart from Claire_Dimlight](#) akldjalksdj ;;; thank u so much aaaaaaaa

Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

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

“You’re dead,” Tom stared at Voldemort. “Your horcruxes are *gone* .”

“Ah, those little things,” Voldemort scoffed, pulling away from Tom and waving a finger in a circle, casting a spell that left Tom frozen in position with his hands behind his back. “Is that what ‘I’ did? Trinkets with pieces of me that left me *vulnerable* ?”

Then, Tom noticed it. This Voldemort had a *nose* . Less ashen complexion. More human looking. The red eyes were the same, and the forked tongue was new but unsurprising, but this was... a different Voldemort, albeit *still fucking bald* . (Harry would get a kick out of that, he thought distantly.)

“No wonder your father died, if he settled for horcruxes,” this Voldemort sneered.

“Where did you come from?” Tom sharply asked. “There’s no spell or ritual that could have possibly let you travel dimensions.”

“Not recorded, no.” Voldemort eyed Tom amusedly as gestured to Rookwood to prepare something behind him. “But all it takes is the knowledge of your ancestors and... poking a hole, so to speak. You’ve met one of Salazar Slytherin’s dear great grandsons, yes?”

“The locket?” Tom’s mind whirled. “You sent it here?”

“A test. And an opportunity.”

“Send the locket to see if the dimension travel will leave you intact,” Tom murmured. “And as a scout, I suppose. If your counterpart existed here, he would’ve taken notice of a Slytherin locket identical to his. But you couldn’t have known what happened to it after it breached the wall - unless you had a specific kind of tie to it.”

“My, my, aren’t you clever,” Voldemort mused. “Well, you are supposedly my son, after all. I’ve always been proud of my mind. Shame about the face though, it would’ve been better if you looked a lot less like your filthy grandfather.”

“From what I’ve seen, my genes’ choices were rather slim,” Tom neutrally said. “All things considering, I’d rather have this face than my namesake’s.”

“I’ll concede to you on that.”

Tom watched as Rookwood prepared a cauldron behind Voldemort, taking out vials of liquids and powders and a very elaborate dagger that had Tom tensing at its sight. Voldemort smiled humorlessly at him, picking up the dagger and running a finger gently against the blade’s edge.

“The power of ancestors is a very curious thing,” the otherworldly man hissed quietly. “A very *powerful* thing, and I admit that the trip between worlds has left me... drained. Which is why I’m in need of your cooperation, *my son* . Help me regain some of my lost magic, and I’ll let you run back to your *beloved Harry Potter* .”

“You’re lying,” Tom sneered. “You wouldn’t just let me go after all the trouble you went through just to get me here.”

Red eyes flickered to him and Voldemort rasped a chuckle. “Rookwood, fire the cauldron.”

“Yes, my lord.”

Voldemort picked up a vial, shining the few drops of red liquid in the moonlight. “A shame we couldn’t get more than this. You and young Harry did an impressive job with the young Krum. Rookwood had to call in a favor to get the scant drops of Harry Potter’s blood that we have.”

“Spider animagi are useful fellows to be acquainted with,” Rookwood quietly said as he emptied a light, glimmering powder into the cauldron. “My friend was rather delighted with the chance of biting Harry Potter’s bottom, and would be happy to do so any other time, my lord.”

Tom flared in irritation. “The bite Harry received during the Yule Ball. *Of course.* ”

“It is quite curious how attached you are to the boy,” Voldemort hummed. “Of course, since your *father* died when you were quite young, proper guidance was remiss during your childhood.”

“I received better guidance than he - or you - could have ever given,” the teenager grinned unkindly. “You’ll find no sympathy nor relationship from me.”

“A shame,” Voldemort stared at him coldly. Tom looked at him in the eyes and matched the intense, blood red gaze with his own. Voldemort waved a hand and a misty orb appeared over his palm, showing the image of Harry and Viktor still sitting worriedly in the stands. “It would be easier for all of us if you would cooperate tonight. You think the silencing curse was the only thing on your friend? That was just the red herring.”

A sudden grip on his shoulder jolted Harry, taking his attention from the increasingly worried crowd to the ashen Viktor.

“Viktor?” Harry asked, alarmed. “Viktor, are you okay?”

“I think,” Viktor rasped, “I’m about to vomit.”

That itself was concerning, but the blood red sludge that came out of Viktor’s mouth and onto the floor had everyone surrounding them exclaiming in shock.

“We need a professor!” Hermione yelled. “Someone get Madame Pomfrey!”

“Holy shit,” Neville quietly cursed from behind Harry as he struggled to keep Viktor upright. Beside him, Draco looked pale white.

“We need Severus,” Draco said faintly. “That- if it’s what I think it is - That’s very, *very* dark magic.”

“Stay with me,” Harry urged the shivering Durmstrang student. Around them, Viktor’s classmates hovered worriedly at their schoolmate, one of them even conjuring a bin for Viktor to vomit into. Another one carefully banished the discerning sick on the floor, while another started a spell to monitor his vitals.

“What’s going on!” Madame Pomfrey broke through the crowd and sucked in a breath at Viktor’s state. Professor Snape followed, and like Draco, stopped in his tracks as he very obviously recognized the curse. Karkaroff was silent and ashen at his student’s condition.

“He needs St. Mungo’s,” Snape snapped at Pomfrey and Karkaroff. “We have to floo him in immediately.”

Suddenly, Viktor jerked violently and fell forward hard.

“Stop it,” Tom gritted, not taking his eyes off the panicking crowd around his convulsing friend. Inwardly, he was cursing himself for falling for the trap. He and Harry should’ve been more *thorough*. And no doubt Harry was similarly thinking the same at the moment. “What do you need?”

Voldemort’s victorious smirk only made Tom angrier. “Rookwood, let’s start.”

Shredded fairy wings, crushed boom berries, powdered erumpent horn, scorched fluxweed. A vial of unicorn blood and a drop of re’em blood. Tom frantically took note of the ingredients Rookwood carefully put in the cauldron one by one, but he couldn’t recognize what this Voldemort was possibly making. A feat, considering his centuries worth of experience.

“Bone of the ancestor, unknowingly given, share your magic to your descendant for he shall bring glory to your name,” Rookwood recited, dropping a brittle femur into the potion. Tom watched as the Death Eater picked up the vial with Harry’s blood in it, glancing at Tom minutely before uncorking it and gently dropping the liquid in. “Blood of the enemy, forcibly taken, strengthen your foe for he shall not be defeated once again.”

“What is left is the flesh of the son, willingly given,” Voldemort said as he looked down at Tom with a mockingly gently smile. “What do you say, *my boy*?”

‘*Go to hell*,’ Tom wanted to say, but he knew that if anything else, he had to get out of this shitshow alive. He nodded. “Flesh of the son, willingly given.”

Voldemort's grin was toothy as Tom's arm was forcibly presented to him, and he was almost careful as he pulled up the sleeve of his shirt and skinned his forearm with his dagger.

Tom didn't cry out at the blinding pain coming from his forearm, and a distant part of him wondered if this was karma for when *he* had gotten *Harry's* own forearm slashed by Pettigrew. ' *What goes around, comes around, I suppose* ,' he wryly thought.

"I wonder if you will try to kill me one day," Voldemort whispered as he patted Tom's cheek with blood stained fingers. "I look forward to it - I'm sure you will grow to be a wizard that could have stood by my side as my right hand. *Could have* - if you grew up properly that is."

"Flesh of the son, willingly given, renew your father with your power for he shall rise again - as the Dark Lord Voldemort."

Tom watched in horrified fascination as the potion glowed and swirled with powerful magic while Rookwood finished the ritual. Voldemort filled a silver chalice with it, drinking an entire cup's worth, and afterwards breathed in deeply before letting out a chilling laugh. "*Power* ," Voldemort hissed as his body exuded a suffocating aura, "is oh so *sweet* ."

Snape felt another sharp pain on his left forearm and he swallowed the dread building up inside of him. '*No* ,' he thought desperately as he and Pomfrey struggled to keep Krum stable as they rushed across the castle grounds to the nearest Floo-connected fireplace. '*Please, God, no. Never again.* '

This tournament was a disaster from the start, and of all things that could have topped it all of, his dark mark acting up like 'back in the day' was the worst possible scenario. Snape could only fucking *hope* that Gaunt came back still on Potter's side of things, because he may hate the brat and was slightly terrified of the duo altogether, he wouldn't wish the betrayal *Lily* had felt when *he* had turned to the Dark Lord's side on her son, *ever* .

(Later, he was going to finally drink the entire bottle of firewhiskey he had been eyeing since the Durmstrang contingent arrived at Hogwarts grounds. He fucking deserved it.)

Harry was starting to panic a little bit.

Okay, that was a lie. He was already panicking. A lot. He just didn't show it.

But his heartbeat was racing a thousand times per minute - Viktor may be actually dying this time, Dumbledore looked like he was about to march to him at any second, everyone around him was in various states of hysteria, and Tom was still fucking missing.

Merlin, if the prat was actually dead, Harry was going to bring him back to life just to kill him himself.

(Then maybe jump off the Astronomy Tower. After he made sure this dark lord they're dealing with was eating dust first.)

Tom was probably going to continue the apparent family tradition of patricide. Once he got out of this situation.

Voldemort was *gracious* enough to slow the bleeding from the patch of skin he had taken from Tom's arm, but not actually heal it. It was going to scar terribly, especially being involved in a magical ritual, and no amount of dittany was going to help it. And god did it itch like mad.

Also apparently, gloating and monologuing was a personality flaw that was just ingrained in him, because even with the power of ancestors or whatever cowshit Voldemort was saying, he was just as chatty as Tom had been when he was Voldemort.

The horror and shock was gone from Tom's system at this point - he was just incredibly bitter and angry now. Harry always said he didn't do emotions like a normal person, but did either of them really, after all they've been through?

So Tom watched as the newly refreshed Dark Lord called his marked inner circle - the ones of this dimension, who probably wouldn't know that this was a brand new model and not the one they signed up for during the last war. Then with that done, Voldemort retrieved the almost forgotten TriWizard Cup with a wave of his hand, levitating it over Tom's head. He eyed it, eyebrows raised in mild surprise.

"As promised," Voldemort hissed quietly, "consider it your reward for your cooperation."

Tom looked him in the eyes and flatly said only one thing: "Fuck off."

Voldemort laughed, and let go of the Cup. The last thing Tom heard before the portkey took him away were the sounds of apparition and Voldemort saying, "Say hello to Harry Potter and Dumbledore for me."

Tom landed on the cold hard ground in front of the maze with a groan, hands still bound behind his back with magic, and the Cup gently rolling away from him.

And all hell broke loose.

IM SORRY VIKTOR ITLL BE BETTER SOON Q_Q i feel bad now ive been...
torturing him too much.....

anyway i was. supposed to finish this two weeks ago. but as always things happened
:eyes:

i'll start returning the other life snippets back next chapter, for those itching for a new
one, don't worry!! in the meantime, i hope you enjoyed this chapter :)

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