

the boy.”

Severus’ spine tingled. Ah; now they were reaching the heart of the matter. “Pardon?”

“Harry has been... unlike himself, this year. Withdrawing himself from Miss Granger and young Mr Weasley. Spending a lot of time alone. Improving extraordinarily quickly in his classes. Quick to anger, and convinced of his own correctness. He is, perhaps... a little too mature, for his age. I worry about the side-effects of the Dark Lord’s resurrection ritual. If there was any backlash.”

...Albus was trying to make Severus believe that Harry Potter was some sort of shade of Tom Riddle, a puppet walking around the school.

How stupid did he think Severus was?

“That would be concerning,” he agreed, frowning. He played out his anger, though he knew he had no choice. He never did, when it came to this man. “If you insist, Albus, I will attempt to teach the boy. And I will check his mind for outside influence, while I’m there.” He would not crack the child like an egg and take those secrets straight to the headmaster, as Albus so clearly hoped.

“Excellent. Thank you, Severus; your dedication is, as always, greatly appreciated. You will go to Harry with the news the day before he is due to return to school. No need to dampen his festivities with such things, after all.” The twinkle was back. “I would not ask this if it were not of utmost importance — we must stay abreast of Voldemort’s plans, especially if they involve Harry.”

*Yes, because then they might interfere with your own,* Severus sneered in his own mind, while his face stayed passive.

“If the boy is hiding anything, Albus, rest assured I will find it.”

And there was that smile, that twinkle that Severus so hated. The one that said everyone was playing perfectly into Albus Dumbledore’s hands and they didn’t even realise it.

“Thank you, my boy. I knew I could count on you.”

Severus bowed his head to disguise the hatred twisting his lips. One day, the old fool would get what was coming to him. Severus longed to be there to see it.