"What have you done now?"

Harry almost snorted at the automatic assumption. "For once, nothing irresponsible," he assured. "So when I brought you down here, I implied that this main room was all there is to it. That, uh, isn't the case. And I've found this book and I think it's got the answer to our horcrux problem, and I need you to get a copy of it to Bill without anyone knowing where it came from. So I need to show you where I got it."

"You've been reading books you found in *Salazar Slytherin's* secret chambers and you don't consider that irresponsible?" Snape said sharply. "I thought a summer at Grimmauld Place would have made you aware of what kind of curses can be on books, especially books about dark magic. Are you so foolish as to test that, entirely unsupervised, where no one but you can reach?"

"I wasn't entirely unsupervised!" Harry protested. "And, uh, that's where the other part of this secret comes in. The reason it took so long to tell you. I had to get permission first."

Before Snape could start assuming the worst, Harry strode over to the office wall and hissed the password, beckoning the professor to follow. "*I brought company,*" he hissed in announcement. When he turned around, Snape was stood in the doorway, as close to gobsmacked as Harry had ever seen from the reserved man. "Professor Snape," Harry said hesitantly, "this is Salazar Slytherin. *Salazar, meet Professor Severus Snape, head of Slytherin house.*" He switched to Parseltongue halfway through. Salazar rose from his chair, looking down at Snape with calculating eyes.

Suddenly, Snape dropped into a low, reverent bow. "It is an honour, Lord Slytherin," he greeted, voice positively shaking with emotion. Harry opened his mouth to translate — only for Salazar to smile.

"The honour is mine, Professor Snape. I understand I have you to thank for keeping my young heir alive on multiple occasions." His voice was smooth, a little bit raspy, but his pronunciation was perfect. Harry gaped at him.

"Since when do you speak English?" he blurted. "Proper English, I mean! You always talk to me in Parseltongue."

"It's good for you to get used to speaking it without needing a snake around to trigger you," Salazar replied, unrepentant. "I never told you I couldn't speak English, you just assumed." He narrowed his eyes, like Harry should be well aware of his opinions on assumptions.

"He does tend to do that, my Lord," Snape agreed ruefully. Salazar chuckled.

"It is a habit I shall endeavour to break him of. And please, call me Salazar." He returned to his chair, fingers running over the head of his pet snake. "Now, I believe there is a book young Harry wants to show you."

Harry snapped back to attention, hurrying towards the copy of the book he'd left on the desk. "Here," he said, flipping it open to the relevant pages and holding it out pointedly. "The language is pretty archaic but I got Salazar to translate, and I think it's exactly what we need.