

“He seems... displeased with what I have told him I found in your mind,” Snape said, pursing his lips. “The headmaster seems to believe even more strongly than before that the horcrux within you is... controlling you.”

A startled laugh burst from Harry’s lips. “He what?” That was the most ridiculous thing he’d ever heard! “I thought he agreed that I wasn’t possessed?”

“Not possession,” Snape corrected. “Albus believes that as his compulsions on you have eroded — not that he explicitly admitted to ever doing such things, merely referencing how you were *growing older* — it has allowed the horcrux to start to influence your own soul, turning it dark. Making you more like the young Tom Riddle he remembers.”

“The only thing I have in common with young Tom Riddle is that we both saw through Dumbledore’s bullshit,” Harry muttered. “Why is this a problem?” He didn’t understand why it had Snape so bothered.

“Because, you Gryffindor fool — if Albus can convince himself of this, then he can convince others. He doesn’t need to tell them of the compulsions, or the horcrux; he certainly hasn’t mentioned either of them to me. He merely needs to play on your *connection* to the Dark Lord, the one half the school knows you have thanks to your dorm-mates blabbing about your vision before Christmas. He will mention how since the Dark Lord returned you have become colder, more withdrawn, more intelligent. You have made new friends — powerful friends — and you have pulled away from his own guiding hand. Exactly as another young boy once did in these halls.”

With dawning horror, Harry began to see the problem.

“He’ll have the whole of wizarding Britain against you before you can even graduate,” Snape finished grimly.

“But... surely no one will believe him?” Harry said weakly, already knowing the answer.

“He’s Albus Dumbledore,” Snape pointed out, “many people would believe the sky to be green if he told them. And as far as the general public is concerned, he knows you better than most. If he tells them your behaviour has changed, who are they to argue otherwise. Especially when he is not wrong.”

Snape had a good point. All those things, everything Dumbledore was using as a sign of Harry’s turn to the Dark — they were all technically true. He was applying himself better in lessons, he was not putting up with the gawping of the general public as much. He had split quite explosively with Ron and Hermione, and had a powerful and influential new circle of friends. Just as Voldemort once had, his original followers.

And he was definitely turning away from Dumbledore’s *guidance*, which to many in this country was a sure sign of darkness.

“What do I do?” he asked. Snape leaned back in his chair, thoughtful.