

goes, and if that means turning to Potter... she'll never come to Dumbledore, though. The only flaw in our plan."

"Harry won't come to Dumbledore either," Remus revealed. He still felt sick when he thought about what the headmaster had done to his cub. If the goblins hadn't scanned him... Severus raised an enquiring brow, but Remus shook his head. "His secrets aren't mine to share. But safe to say, Harry trusts the headmaster about as much as we do, these days. Perhaps even less."

"Interesting." The word was barely a murmur, Severus' low voice making Remus' spine tingle in a way he couldn't turn off, even after all these years. "There's no point in planning too far ahead now. The things we fear may never come to pass, or at least not for a while."

"We should be so lucky," Remus returned, draining his wine glass. He was tempted to top it up, but that would be a foolish move. Between the warmth of the fire and the buzz of the wine, he was too comfortable already. It wouldn't do to push too hard and lose all his precious gained ground.

"These brats will be the death of me, Remus," Severus declared quietly, his words hanging ominously in the fire-lit room.

"On the contrary, Severus," Remus replied, thinking of the sparkle in Harry's green eyes when he spoke of his budding friendship with Draco Malfoy. "I believe they might be the saving grace for all of us. If we play our cards right."

Harry was young and foolish and naive in so many ways, but not as many as he should be at his age. And despite all that, everything he'd been through; he had so much *hope* in that young heart of his.

That sort of hope might be just enough to get them through.

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Things were tense in Gryffindor tower the night before the match against Slytherin. Even Hermione claimed to be too nervous to study. Half an hour before curfew, Harry got to his feet. "I'm going for a walk," he said quietly. Hermione shot him a worried look.

"Harry, it's late."

"I'll wear the cloak," he promised. "I just... I can't stay here. I need some air if I'm gonna get to sleep."

She didn't look pleased, but she kept any further protests to herself. "Just be careful," she murmured, watching him sneak up the stairs just enough to put on the invisibility cloak in privacy. He only had to wait a few minutes for the portrait hole to open as a couple of seventh years came through, and then he was slipping out into the corridor.

He'd told Hermione he just needed air, but really he had somewhere to be. His heart was pounding so loud he was sure anyone could hear him as he walked, but none of the few