

companionable arm around Draco's shoulders. Slughorn's gaze followed the movement, and Harry wondered what he was thinking. Did he see this as a sign of Harry sinking further into the Dark, or of him playing the saviour and redeeming the previously irredeemable?

Slughorn stuttered out a few more platitudes, then squeezed past them and left the shop. Once he was gone, Draco let out a quiet noise of disgust. "I'm so glad I don't have to deal with those *suppers* of his," he muttered derisively.

"You should be," Harry agreed, reluctantly dropping his arm from the blond's shoulders when a pair of Hufflepuff girls eyed them strangely. He was still probably being too obvious, practically pressed against Draco's back as the pair of them surveyed a display of fudge, but he didn't care. He was hanging out with his boyfriend in public, even if they were pretending to be just friends. It was more than he could have hoped for last year, for sure!

"Has he told you anything useful, yet?" Draco reached for some dark chocolate and cherry fudge, then grabbed a packet of the chocolate-orange flavour with a quick grin to Harry, tucking it in with his own purchases even though they both knew it was for the Gryffindor. Harry smiled back, forgetting the question for a moment.

"What? Oh. Uh, not really?" Snape was so sure that Slughorn had to know something important, that there was a reason Dumbledore had brought him back to the castle, but if there was he was keeping it close to his chest.

Then again, Harry was struggling to find a non-suspicious way of asking for information about Tom Riddle, so perhaps he just hadn't found the right questions yet. It was hard, when he was fully aware of what lies Dumbledore may have filled the man's head with.

"Maybe if I stop skiving off his suppers he'll warm up to me a bit," he admitted, making Draco snort.

"Yes, that would help."

With all their layers of clothing, it was starting to get a little *too* warm in the shop, and with the crowd pushing them so close together Harry was finding it increasingly difficult not to settle a hand on Draco's hip or brush a kiss across his temple. So they wrestled their way to the till, had a brief but silent argument about Draco paying for all of Harry's sweets — which, naturally, Draco won — and braced themselves with more Warming charms before heading back out into the street.

It was jarringly quiet, compared to what both of them were used to in Hogsmeade. The street was practically empty — no one lingered, keeping their heads down and heading straight for their next shop. Harry doubted the weather was entirely to blame.

The only people who weren't hurrying to get out of the open were the guards patrolling the village. Harry grinned to himself at the sight of Kingsley leaning up against a lamp-post, wrapped up tight in heavy robes and a wool hat covering his bald head. "Hey, Kings," he greeted cheerfully, heading towards the man. Kingsley straightened up, nodding towards him.