

had thought he was the only person to find such a place, despite clear evidence of how many students over the years had done the same thing.

He wondered how long the castle had been aware of this foul magic within its walls, crying out for someone to do something about it, but too weak to be heard.

Looking around, Harry saw a slightly moth-eaten silk scarf, and quickly wrapped the tiara up in it. Sending a mental thanks to Hogwarts for the tip-off, he hurried out of the room, only one destination in mind. He only paused once — to check the person he was after was actually present. Then he made a slight detour; not to Snape's quarters, but to his personal lab a few doors down. He knocked, stepping back to wait, not caring that he didn't have his invisibility cloak with him. He hardly needed it these days; the castle would warn him if he needed to hide.

Snape answered the door with a scowl, which deepened at the sight of Harry. "Potter," he spat, then narrowed his gaze, no doubt catching the feel of the dark magic Harry carried with him. "Get in here."

He ushered Harry inside, warded the door, and turned to him. "What's the matter?"

Harry set his wrapped bundle on the nearest workbench, carefully dislodging the scarf until the tiara was visible. "Found it just now. Or rather, the castle showed it to me." He hadn't kept his new status as true Lord Slytherin secret from his family, or Draco. Snape knew about Harry's new connection with Hogwarts' magic. "How many more of these damned things can there be?"

"This may well be the last," Snape murmured, scanning it with his wand. "Other than the snake, of course. But you remember what Bill said — any more than eight or nine splittings and the soul becomes too unstable to exist."

Harry did a mental count — his scar, the locket, the diary, the cup, the ring, the snake, and now this. Seven horcruxes. Only six made intentionally. The number clicked in his brain, a trickle of cold running down his spine. "I think there's one more."

Snape raised one dark eyebrow at him. "What makes you say that?"

"Voldemort knows Arithmancy, right? Think about the numbers of magical power; three, seven, nine. He's definitely made more than three, we know that. And nine would be too many — also if he was going for three threes, the objects would probably come in threes, but they don't. But seven... it's more powerful than the other two, and it makes sense. Seven horcruxes — seven anchors to the mortal world. And if mine was an accident, that makes it an extra — so that gives him eight."

The Potions Master's lips thinned in thought, his brow furrowed. "You're forgetting, of course, that there is another anchor. The original soul piece, within him. Seven horcruxes would make eight soul pieces in total. And eight is a terrible number for such things. It is far more likely that he intended for six horcruxes — totalling seven pieces of soul — and, as you say, the fragment within you was an unintended extra, shaken loose from his already fractured soul when the Killing curse rebounded on him."