

Harry's eyes stung at the corners, and he resolutely ignored it. "I... thanks, Severus." He paused, thinking on the words he didn't think he'd ever said, not to the Potions Master's face. "I wouldn't be alive if not for you." Not just the training. His help within the castle, the one adult Harry could count on even when everything was going to shit. Constant and solemn-eyed and always pushing Harry to be *better*, to stand taller, to learn his worth and demand others do the same.

"You probably wouldn't," Severus agreed wryly. "But my life would not be worth living had I let you die."

Unable to stand it any longer, Harry turned, hugging the lanky Slytherin hard around the waist, letting a few tears escape into the man's black t-shirt. Slowly, Snape's arms closed around him, his head tilting down to rest against Harry's.

It was a while before they got back to categorising ingredients.

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They ate dinner together in the kitchen, one last time as a family.

Of course, it wasn't *actually* one last time — they would be back for visits, definitely. At least two weeks every summer, Sirius had promised. No matter how far-flung the family got, how many kids they ended up with, whatever was going on in their lives; two weeks, every summer, for the entire Black family.

"All settled at the Manor, then, Cissa?" Sirius asked, passing his cousin the bottle of wine to pour.

"Just about," she confirmed. "I daresay it's going to be rather quiet, rattling around that old manor by myself." A touch of sadness tinged her voice. "I'll have to find a hobby."

"I thought you already had a hobby?" Snape remarked, "meddling in everyone else's business." The tone was snide, but it just made Narcissa laugh.

"If you did not want me to *meddle*, Severus Snape, you would not have asked me to come with you."

"Come with you where?" Remus asked, frowning in confusion. "Is this about that errand you ran the other day?"

To Harry's astonishment, Snape *blushed*.

Under the table, Draco gripped Harry's knee tightly, and when Harry glanced at him the blond looked like he'd come to some incredible realisation. Harry was just about to ask him to share, but then Snape spoke again.

"I was *going* to do this on Palace Pier," Snape bit out archly, glaring at Narcissa. "But then someone reminded me that such things may cause a fuss amongst the small-minded muggles. And is now insisting that it would be best done before we return to Hogwarts. In case I *lose my nerve*."