

with Draco the night before, and he wouldn't let Snape punish him for his tiredness, less he accidentally admit the source.

To his surprise, Snape was stood in front of his desk when Harry arrived, rather than at the wall ready to enter the chamber. Harry cocked his head curiously. "I have a different lesson in mind for today," the Slytherin declared. He gestured for Harry to sit.

"What kind of lesson, sir?"

"Legilimency," Snape said, and Harry's eyebrows rose.

"I... but I thought my Occlumency shields were fine?" He hadn't felt much since the Azkaban breakout, and at night the only dreams he got were of the endless dark corridor. Voldemort was fully aware of the connection now, and making sure things only got through when he wanted them to.

"They are. I will be teaching *you* to perform Legilimency," Snape said, to Harry's astonishment. "It will be beneficial for you to know what an intrusion of the mind feels like from the other side — perhaps, should the Dark Lord ever become... vulnerable, the skill may allow you to dig a little deeper when he draws you into his own thoughts."

"But..." Teaching Harry Legilimency meant Snape allowing Harry into his mind. The Slytherin nodded, mout in a thin line, clearly of the same thought.

"It is necessary. I have used the pensieve, for once. And I am confident in my ability to throw you out of my mind should you go searching for something I do not want you to see." He peered down his large nose at Harry, and Harry knew then that no matter how much progress had been made between them, how much they had become family due to their shared love of Remus Lupin, if Harry violated this trust he would *never* be forgiven.

"I'll behave," he promised. "Tell me what to do."

Snape drew up a chair to sit opposite him, and set his wand in his lap. "You know the incantation. To truly breach the mind, you must have absolute focus — there are billions of moments and memories inside a single person's brain, and if you do not know exactly what it is you are looking for, it can be easy to get lost in there. The hardest part is not the spell itself, but removing yourself from the other's mind."

Harry's fingers tightened around his own wand, attempting to stop them trembling. "I could get stuck?"

"In an untrained mind, yes," Snape said with a short nod. "I have enough skill in Occlumency to eject you myself, though I will not until you have gained a feel for it. First, I will lower my shields for you, so you can see what it is to enter a mind without resistance. We will work upwards from there. Are you ready?"

Harry nodded, meeting Snape's near-black eyes, imagining he could see some of his own trepidation reflected back at him. He took a deep breath. *Focus*.