

“You might be waiting a while,” Sirius pointed out, the light in his eyes dying a little bit. “Hard to get a date when everyone thinks you’re a murdering lunatic.”

“It won’t be forever. We’ll find Pettigrew and get your name cleared,” Harry vowed.

“I’m sure you will, pup,” Sirius agreed, smiling slightly. “You’re a determined little bugger like that.” He shook his head in a slightly canine way, then brightened up. “Anyway, tell me about what the twins have been up to — you mentioned something about hexing the Ravenclaw common room guardian?”

Harry grinned, happy to regale Sirius with the tale of Fred and George hexing the Ravenclaw statue to spout gibberish instead of riddles, so they could only get into their common room by responding with utter nonsense. One day, he couldn’t wait to introduce his godfather to the twins. Though the rest of them might not be safe once he did.

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Severus strode through the corridor towards the headmaster’s office, smirking to himself when the few students he passed hurried to get out of his way. They really were far too easy to scare.

He wasn’t sure why he’d been summoned, but it couldn’t be good. He gave the password to the gargoyle, stepping up on to the revolving staircase and tightening his Occlumency shields. He was prepared for anything, wondering which loose threads the headmaster might be tugging on now.

Dumbledore was sat behind his desk, smiling genially at Severus when he entered. “Ah, Severus. Thank you for coming so promptly,” he greeted, gesturing towards the bowl of sweets on his desk. “Lemon drop?”

Severus declined, knowing the sour sweets were usually laced with some sort of mild truth-telling potion. “What did you need from me, Albus?” he asked, taking a seat opposite the desk.

“Just a chat,” Dumbledore assured, leaning forward in his chair and clasping his hands together on the desk. “Igor Karkaroff is looking a little nervous lately. I was wondering if you might have any inkling as to why.”

Karkaroff looked like a loud noise might give him a heart attack, these days. Severus didn’t blame him; the man had a lot to be worried about, if the Dark Lord was on the rise again. “I already told you the Mark is getting darker,” Severus replied, because there was never any chance of him hiding that. “Igor is merely worried about how little time he has left.”

“And do you know the answer to that?”

“If you’re asking if I’ve heard anything about the Dark Lord’s return, the answer is no, Albus,” Severus said flatly. The headmaster’s brow furrowed.