

Harry grinned — it would be nice, having a new person to gush about Draco to. Everyone else was a bit sick of it. “Deal,” he agreed, getting to his feet and leaving her in the parlour by herself.

He just wanted both her and Neville to be happy. Whether it was together, or not.

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Severus had been expecting the summons from the moment he’d heard about Arthur Weasley’s attack.

“You wanted to see me, Headmaster?”

Albus smiled genially at him across the desk. “Ah, Severus. Come in, come in. Lemon drop?”

Severus resisted the urge to roll his eyes, sending the bowl of sweets a disparaging glance. Albus just chuckled. “I have a request to make of you, my boy. A rather necessary one, I’m afraid.” The man’s twinkling gaze grew serious behind his glasses. “I must ask you to teach Harry Potter Occlumency.”

Severus let his face twist in outrage. “Albus, you cannot believe Potter has the brain capacity for such a thing? The boy is barely more intelligent than a flobberworm.”

“Now, now, Severus; Harry has been doing remarkably well in his classes, lately.” Severus hid his smirk; a little *too* well, for Albus’ liking. “Regardless, it is imperative that he learn to close off his mind. This vision he suffered, from Nagini’s mind... it speaks of dark forces at work. I’m afraid I have recognised Voldemort behind Harry’s eyes, and we must make sure he is not able to get a proper foothold. Harry has seen too much — Headquarters, the faces of the Order members, even beyond that. We cannot allow that information to get into the wrong hands.”

“Albus, you can’t be serious,” Severus continued to protest. “Why don’t you teach the boy? He will trust you far more.”

That made Albus smile, false concern hiding his satisfaction with Harry’s perceived loyalty. “I would if I could, but I’m afraid the Dark Lord’s anger at my person is enough to bring him to the surface. I attempted Legilimency on young Harry after his vision — to try and see for myself, of course, to find a way to help him — but the mind that rose to fight me was not his. I fear my presence within Harry’s mind will merely draw Voldemort through even stronger. It must be you, Severus.”

Severus did not point out that, should Voldemort *actually* be residing in Harry Potter’s mind, having him — a spy, supposedly loyal to the Dark Lord — enter it with the intention of doing anything helpful was as good as signing his own death warrant. Perhaps Albus was finally trying to dispose of him.

“I know it will be difficult to get Harry to trust you, but you must try. He needs to learn to close off his mind. And... you, my boy, need to learn how far Voldemort has his claws into