

“How’s Harry?” Remus pressed, stomach sinking when Severus looked concerned once more.

“Currently, he is well. I have it under good authority that he’s started holding his little defence club sessions in the Chamber of Secrets.”

Remus goggled at him. “That’s...” It was either genius or madness. Perhaps both.

“Indeed,” Severus agreed, eyes amused for a moment. “We shall have to see how that plays out. But Umbridge certainly isn’t willing to let it go; not after he embarrassed her in front of the Minister. She asked me to provide Veritaserum for a little *chat* she wanted to have with him last week.”

“And you told her where to shove it?” Sirius asked hopefully. Severus’ lips quirked.

“I told her I would be delighted to oblige,” he drawled, waiting a beat, “and I gave her a bottle of simple syrup. Salazar knows the fool woman won’t bother testing it first.”

Remus laughed, patting Severus’ thigh. “Devious snake,” he murmured fondly, ignoring the brief expression of disgust that Sirius pulled.

“Using Veritaserum on minors is enormously illegal, and no matter what free passes she has from Fudge, I will not be complicit. Even if it weren’t Potter,” Severus said. “There’s far too many of the little idiots running around that school with secrets the Ministry mustn’t learn.”

That was all too true. Remus brushed a kiss on his jaw, briefly inhaling the man’s comforting scent. “I’m glad the students have you looking out for them,” he said. “Even if they don’t realise it.” No doubt they all thought the evil Dungeon Bat was on Umbridge’s side, stealing all their joy.

“All the professors are doing what we can in Albus’ absence,” Severus said instead, not acknowledging the compliment. “With any luck, we may be able to keep them safe long enough to reach summer, when hopefully this whole mess can be put to bed for good. The students can go home and tell their parents about the gratuitous use of Blood Quills as punishment, and both Umbridge and Fudge will be out before they can say Hogwarts.”

Remus desperately hoped that was the case — that would be the quietest, easiest outcome of it all.

But he knew how Harry’s school years usually ended, so he didn’t raise his hopes too high.