

Severus let him into the office, where he did a double-take at the sight of Longbottom. “You still can’t find him?” Draco pressed.

“He was with you last night, yes?” Severus asked his godson. It was a testament to how serious the situation was that Draco didn’t even blush.

“In the Room of Requirement,” he confirmed, nodding. “We both left just after midnight. I went through the shortcut down to the dungeons, he left through the main door.” His grey eyes were fearful as they met Severus’. “Uncle Sev, what if it’s Death Eaters? I know there are loyal students in the school. What if... what if *He* has Harry?”

Severus placed a hand on his godson’s shoulder, squeezing gently. “If the Dark Lord had a plan to kidnap Harry Potter, I would know about it,” he assured confidently.

“Sir—“ Longbottom cut in hesitantly, “what— what if they’re not working to You-Know-Who’s plan? What if they decided to... y’know. Take initiative?”

Severus snorted. “Death Eaters are not known for their *initiative*, Mr Longbottom. Young Death Eaters most of all.” He didn’t know all of the loyal students within the school, but he knew enough to know that they did not have the brains nor the skill to catch Harry unawares, not even if the boy was... distracted. Not after all the training Severus had put him through.

“Unfortunately, gentlemen, I believe we’re looking at something worse than Death Eaters,” he told them grimly. “There’s only one person who can manipulate the school wards in a way that even an heir cannot fight back.”

The two boys shared a look of slowly dawning horror.

Albus Dumbledore had finally reclaimed his Chosen One.

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The world returned to Harry in fragments, fuzzy around the edges and ringing in his ears.

He was horizontal. Not on the floor — something soft. His limbs were splayed, a tightness around his wrists and ankles that grew tighter when he tried to move.

He was tied to a bed. Blinking away the fuzziness, he craned his neck, confirming the suspicion. A plain double bed, pale grey sheets, ropes thick with magic wrapped securely around him, connected at the other end to the sturdy wooden posts at each corner of the bed.

His attacker had let him keep his glasses on. How *kind* of them. He looked around — the room was nondescript, with cream-coloured walls and no features but the door directly opposite. No portraits, no wardrobe, not so much as a side table. There was a candle bracket on each wall, but that didn’t do Harry much good.

Beyond that, everything was... muffled. Like Harry was in a jar with the lid on, trapped away from the rest of the world. He couldn’t feel his connection to Hogwarts, outside of a faint persistence in the very back of his mind.