

down to the dungeons. He was sweating with the effort of resisting the magic by the time he burst into Snape's office, startling the man. "Help me," he gasped, throwing himself down into a chair, gripping the edge of the desk hard. Snape leapt to his feet, locking and warding the room with a spell as he rushed to Harry's side.

"What happened?" Cool fingers gripped his chin, raising his head so the man could look him over.

"Dumbledore. Cast a spell on me," Harry bit out. "I think— Compulsion, again."

Snape straightened up, waving his wand over Harry. He frowned. "Sit still." He began to chant quietly in Latin, waving his wand in a complicated motion. Much like it had with the goblins, a ball of black glowing magic began to form over Harry's sternum, growing until Snape suddenly wrenched his wand upwards and the ball dissipated. Harry felt the foreign magic smothering his core melt away, and sucked in air like a drowning man. Snape's hand came down on his shoulder, steadying him. "Easy, Potter." His voice was surprisingly gentle, and he waved his wand again, no doubt checking Harry for any other spells. "You're clear."

Harry slumped back in his chair when Snape released his shoulder, running a hand through his hair. "Thank you. Merlin, that was awful. Does it always feel like that?"

"Being cursed, once you're aware of your own magic?" Snape clarified. Harry nodded. "Not always to that degree — Dumbledore's spell was exceptionally powerful — but yes, it's always... uncomfortable. If you're that sensitive to it now, I suspect the headmaster won't be able to put so much as a light Tracking charm on you without you noticing."

Harry was glad for that, but he hoped he never had to experience it all the same. "Was it the same one as before?"

"I cannot be sure, as the goblins removed that before I had the chance to study it. But it was a powerful Compulsion charm designed to make you both reckless and extraordinarily trusting of the caster, so it's likely, yes."

"I felt like I just wanted to run up to the headmaster and tell him everything," Harry said with a shudder. He blinked, and there was a glass of water being pressed into his hands. He took it with a grateful smile at Snape, downing the cool liquid.

"It is... concerning that he felt the need to refresh the charm. Likely he thinks you're just shedding it as you grow older — not uncommon with adolescents, as their magic is constantly growing and changing."

Harry caught on to what Snape wasn't saying. "But it means he's starting to suspect I'm not under his thumb anymore."

The Potions Master nodded. "You'll have to be incredibly careful in the next few weeks. He will believe the charm is strongest — he may expect you to come to him, or to Weasley and Granger. It will look even more suspicious if you continue on as you have been."