

was supposed to be teaching it to him would prompt them to consider where the Potions Master's loyalties truly lay.

"Come in," Snape called curtly, when Harry knocked on the door. The office looked as it always did — but for the exception of a softly glowing bowl of silver liquid on the desk.

"Why do you have a pensieve?" Harry asked curiously. Snape warded the door for privacy, and glanced at the stone basin.

"Albus thought it might be necessary, for me to hide *important* memories. In case your Occlumency training should go awry."

Harry wasn't sure how things would go so awry that he would end up in Snape's own mind, but stranger things had happened. "That was generous of him. Don't suppose he left anything useful in it?"

Snape smirked briefly. "Sadly not. Now, I'm sure we can both agree that the last thing you are in need of is more Occlumency tutelage. Anything further would take you into the realm of falsifying your own memories, which, while potentially useful, is not a skill you necessarily need right now. The Dark Lord is very likely aware of the connection between you now, but I have faith in your current abilities to keep him out of your side of the connection." He leant against the edge of the desk, long legs stretched out. "With that in mind, I thought it best to use these lessons to continue our studies from the summer. Far be it from me to deny a perfect opportunity when it arises."

He was right — if Dumbledore expected Harry to be with Snape for the next few hours, it was an excellent time for Harry to get in some duelling practice. Harry looked around the office skeptically, eyes lingering on the shelves covered in jars of strange liquids. "This isn't really the best place for it."

"I was hoping you might be able to help with that. Come here." Snape walked to the back wall of the office, and pointed at the stone. Harry stepped closer, confused — then he noticed the tiny snake engraved in the grey slab. He smirked.

"You just want to go back to the Chamber," he accused lightly, and Snape's eyes narrowed.

"If you would prefer I have you sit here and *read* about the spells I wish to teach you, you are very welcome to," he drawled. Harry snorted.

"No, thank you." He paused, concern brewing. "Will Dumbledore not expect you to give him some kind of report on my progress?"

"And I shall. If he requests visual proof, I am an expert at falsifying my own memories," Snape said matter-of-factly. "But, to be blunt, I believe Albus is expecting these lessons to be a complete and utter disaster, in which I shall discover all the secrets hidden in that thick skull of yours, and you shall be even more convinced that I am evil incarnate." His eyes flashed with amusement. "I will feed him some lies about your mind being full of little else but exam worries and boys, and make my disgust at having to sift through such things very clear."