

“But what could Albus gain from having Horace back?” Remus paused. “You think his Wizengamot seat, perhaps?”

“That is likely some of it,” Severus agreed, adjusting the heat of the flames beneath his cauldrons. “However... Horace taught for a very long time before his retirement. Almost as long as Albus, even.” His lips thinned. “Long enough to have taught young Tom Riddle.”

Remus, ever quick on the uptake, looked at him in alarm. “You think he knows something?”

“I think Albus suspects he knows something.” Albus was horcrux-hunting now, the incident with the ring had made that clear. Bringing back Horace Slughorn was no coincidence. “And I think Albus is hoping the chance to teach Harry Potter himself is enough to loosen the man up enough to share his knowledge.”

A faint growl emerged from Remus’ throat, sending a prickle of something not quite fear but not quite arousal down Severus’ spine. One of these days he would have to address his inappropriate reactions to his partner’s wolf-noises, perhaps.

“Should we be worried about Harry?” came Remus’ immediate concern. Severus shook his head.

“I’ve told him to try and keep in Horace’s good books. Find out whatever it is Albus is after, if he can. But he’ll be fine — he’s got sensible friends, even if he defaults back to an idiot Gryffindor.” He smirked slightly. “Draco will keep him in line.” Severus wasn’t worried about Harry Potter; not as far as Horace Slughorn was concerned, at least.

Remus chuckled. “I suppose. Poor bugger, having to deal with the Slug Club,” he teased, laughing at the reflexive shudder of disgust Severus gave just hearing the name. So much of his school time wasted while that odious leech tried to draw him into some *lucrative* potions scheme or another.

“If it gets us a step above Albus, it’ll be worth it.” Harry could handle it. He was used to people trying to manipulate him for his fame.

Finally, Severus was able to add his last ingredients to the cauldrons, using a tricky bit of magic to make sure everything was added in perfect intervals, identical in every one. He could feel Remus’ gaze on his back, still impressed even after he’d seen Severus do this a thousand times by now. And yet it still made pride flutter in Severus’ stomach, just a little.

“I still don’t see why you’re taking on this workload,” the werewolf sighed. “You’re the Defence teacher now, this isn’t your responsibility.”

“Technically it is,” Severus countered, striding over to lean against the wall beside Remus. “Albus left providing for the school *optional* in Horace’s contract — I suppose the old slug refused to spend his summer slaving away in a lab.” He sneered to himself. “Anything Horace chooses not to brew is passed on to me. And, as you can see, Horace chose not to brew anything at all.”