

A thoughtful hum escaped Harry, and he leaned back in his chair. "Maybe after quidditch." The match against Slytherin was drawing ever closer, and he had little free time as it was.

"Naturally. You just focus on beating Slytherin, for now," Lupin agreed with a chuckle. "I know we're not supposed to play favourites, but I bet Severus five galleons you'd win. He seems to think Mr Malfoy can pull it out of the bag, even after his time off for injury."

Harry tried to imagine Professor Snape placing a bet on the quidditch, even if it was in Slytherin's favour. "Y'know, Professor; I think the Snape you know and the Snape I know are two very, very different people."

That made Lupin laugh, the sound clear and somewhat raspy, unexpectedly loud in the quiet office. "I should certainly hope so, Harry," he agreed, a strange sort of look in his eyes. "Severus really isn't as bad as he makes out to be, though. He just has a reputation to uphold."

Harry made a face to show exactly what he thought of that. "If you say so, Professor."

"Speaking of reputations to uphold," Lupin drawled, sitting forward in his chair a little. "Draco Malfoy. Care to share?"

Harry's cheeks grew hot, and he almost spilled his tea. "What? I don't know what you mean. We're just friends."

.-..

Remus stared at the teenage boy in front of him, red-faced and staring at his hands, squirming evasively. *Oh, no.* "I'd say that 'just friends' is baffling enough in itself." Harry blushed even brighter. "You can tell me anything, Harry. There's no judgement here." *Even if you're dating a Malfoy*, he added in his head, trying to imagine what Lily would do in this situation. *Just act the same way she did when she found out about Severus.*

"There's not much to tell, really. I bumped into him in Diagon before school started, and he was... civil. I think, really, we just got off on the wrong foot as first years. Ron's always been worse at antagonising him than I have. And now there's no compulsion on me, I just... don't want to fight him? Then he found out about the whole heir thing — okay, he found out because I told him — and he's actually been really helpful with all that. Obviously, he was raised about as pureblood as it gets, he knows all about the old traditions, even more than Neville does. So we were civil, and then we kept bumping into each other, and we kinda just... became friends? Now we meet up when we can, which isn't that often because there's no way we could do it during the day when someone might walk in, but I promise I'm really careful when I'm out after curfew. I'm always wearing the cloak."

Remus' eyes grew wider as Harry rambled, hardly taking a breath, and the whole situation became inordinately clear. *Oh, cub, you have no idea, do you?*

Forget what Lily would do in the situation. Prongs would laugh himself sick at his oblivious little boy.