

Too loved.

It was a different kind of love, he decided. He had the kind of love that was not blind devotion, but the kind that would smack him over the head and tell him he was being a prick when he needed it. The kind that would hold him accountable.

This was not one person building a new empire. This was a whole team of them, building a community.

He sipped at his hot chocolate, and leaned against his godfather, waiting for one of them to ask him to put a name to his feelings, to *let it out*, so to speak.

But they didn't. They all just remained silent, drinking and sitting with each other and offering merely their presence to ease Harry's heart. If he had wanted to speak, they would have listened. But they wouldn't push.

When Ceri came to collect their empty mugs, Sirius quietly declared it bedtime, making Harry realise just how long he had spent down in Salazar's office. No wonder they were all worried.

Every single one of them hugged him goodnight, even Snape. The tall Slytherin paused, his hands on Harry's shoulders. "You have released me from two masters, now," he murmured, eyes meeting Harry's, voice fraught with emotion, "I don't know if you understand how impossible I believed that to be. You are a marvel, Harry Potter. But you are not an island."

Then he kissed Harry's forehead and turned him around, straight into Draco's arms. "Don't let that old fool's nonsense get in your head," he said, louder. "He is but a footnote in history, now."

Harry nodded solemnly, and let his boyfriend lead him to bed.

It felt like a lifetime since he'd last been in his room in Seren Du. So much had happened since then. He was a different person, practically.

But some things were the same. Like Draco fussing over him as he put his pyjamas on, rolling into the centre of the bed to pull Harry close, their legs tangling together. "I love you," Draco whispered, lips pressed to his hair. "Whatever you need, I'm here. No matter what."

For some reason, that did it. That loosened off the vice grip inside his chest, shook out all the emotions jumbled up inside him.

Finally the tears came.