

“Hello, Tom!” Harry greeted cheerfully, taking a few more steps forward. His heart lurched at leaving Draco behind, but this was the plan.

Everyone else would take care of the crowd, and Harry would deal with their leader.

Stood at Voldemort’s side, ramrod straight and face entirely impassive, was Severus Snape. He looked almost *bored* by it all, his wand held in his hand but lax at his side. As if that made him any less dangerous.

And on Voldemort’s other side, curled up in the grass, was Nagini.

The final horcrux.

“*Potter*,” Voldemort hissed, in English but with such venom it almost sounded Parseltongue. “Facing your death like a true Gryffindor, I see.”

“Oh, but haven’t you heard?” Harry replied, still in that same cheerful tone, “I’m the heir of Slytherin now!”

Voldemort’s face twisted in fury, and a bolt of green light shot from his wand. Harry ducked, hoping those behind him were still paying attention. “You make a mockery of the name of Salazar Slytherin!” the Dark Lord crowed. “I shall destroy you, and claim my rightful place as Slytherin’s *true* heir.”

Harry continued to duck and dodge and shield as they talked, keeping half an eye on Snape. The man was edging ever closer to Nagini, behind Voldemort while the man was distracted.

“Yeah, see, if you had the ability to do that, you would’ve done it by now,” Harry jibed. “But the family magic doesn’t want you. You *fail to meet the requirements*.” He had to conjure a shield to block another Killing curse, and apparently the first thing on his mind to do so was an entire wooden door, which shattered on impact. A chunk of it came flying back at him, cutting deep into his left arm, and he winced. Not doing that again, then.

“You lie!” Voldemort roared. “It is you who is falling short, Harry Potter — I felt your wards fail, felt your magic weaken as you came of age. How did it feel, Potter, to know that the headmaster you trusted had betrayed you so? Continued to damage you, even now? How did it feel, to have your maturation *stunted*?” There was a mocking sneer on his thin lips, but Harry just laughed, shooting a dark curse he’d learned from Remus that would turn someone’s elbow joints backwards. It didn’t hit, but he hadn’t expected it to; he just needed to keep all the attention focused on him. *Find your moment, and take it*, Salazar had told him. But Harry couldn’t find his moment until Snape had taken care of the last loose end.

“Actually, Tom, I feel pretty fucking fantastic,” he drawled, ducking low and coming up with a spell already glowing on his wand. He put the full force of his magic into it, and though it hit Voldemort’s shield it was still strong enough to send the man skidding backwards. Snape was forced to quickly sidestep out of the way — right behind Nagini. Perfect.

“You didn’t actually *believe* that whole thing about Dumbledore’s blocks fucking up my magic, did you?” Harry asked incredulously, seeing Snape raise his wand. “Honestly, Tom,