

reputation so thoroughly the country will just want to sweep the whole thing under the rug to save face.” Then he smirked. “Besides, your Vow might insist you kill him in a public manner — I’m under no such requirements. I’m sure I can make it look like an accident.”

The two men stared at him for a long moment, and then Remus shook his head incredulously. “The Slytherins really have claimed you, haven’t they?” he sighed, and Harry laughed.

“Sorry, Moony. Comes with the family magics, I suppose.” Also from training with Snape, and dating Draco, and talking to Salazar — he was doomed from the get go, really.

“I cannot ask you to kill a man to save my reputation, Harry,” Snape insisted, and Harry stared him down unflinchingly.

“You’re not asking,” he replied. “I’m telling you, it’s not going to come to that. Let my friends and I do the work — let Amelia and Mrs Frobisher do the work. We’ll have him out before exams, at the latest.” There was no way the public would let Dumbledore continue to be responsible for children once Harry was through with him.

His face softened, and he flicked his gaze to Remus, who was staring at him in astonishment. “You’ve already given so much of your life to Dumbledore’s service, sir,” he said to Snape, “I’m not going to stand back and let you give him this, too.”

One day, he and Remus would be able to stand together publicly and admit their love, and Harry would be damned if Snape was seen as a criminal by the time that day arrived. Not after everything Snape had done for him, for the Light, for the whole bloody country.

Snape stared at him, utterly silent, for a long moment. Harry tried not to fidget under the man’s scrutiny, keeping his shoulders square.

“I think,” Snape said eventually, a tone to his voice that Harry couldn’t quite place, “it is about time you called me Severus. Only when outside school, of course.”

Harry gaped at him. “I— um—“

Beside Snape, Remus smiled. “I think what Severus is trying to say, cub, is that he’s very grateful for your support, but let’s not get you set on murdering the headmaster quite so easily.” He twined his fingers with Snape’s, their shoulders pressed together. “Much can happen between now and the end of the year. But I will not see either one of you throw yourselves on that bastard’s sword.” His amber eyes flashed gold, determination written in every inch of his body. “We are a family, and we will figure this out as a family. For now, all you have to do is prepare for the new school year. Severus, you’re welcome to borrow as much of my old lesson plans as you require, if you’d like them.”

Good old Moony, reminding them what was truly important — academic preparedness.

Harry flashed a quick smile. “I, uh, for what it’s worth, si— Severus,” the name felt strange on his tongue, “I’m not sure what this Slughorn bloke is like, but I’m glad you’re going to be the new Defence teacher. If... if we’re heading into a war, the students need all the preparation they can get, and I know you won’t go easy on them.”