

body. He may never know; not until he tried to draw even more magic, or manipulate the wards further, only to find them out of his reach.

In the back of his mind, Hogwarts was laughing.

.-.-.-.

Naturally, the first person Harry went to after breakfast — for a generous stretch of the definition of person — was Salazar, who took one look at him and smiled wider than Harry had ever seen from him before.

“You knew this was going to happen,” Harry accused, and Salazar laughed.

“I did not know when,” he confessed, “but I could feel the change coming. Even as a portrait, my magic is connected to the castle.” His dark eyes fixed knowingly on Harry. “It feels good, doesn’t it?”

Harry flopped down on the sofa, letting out a long breath. “It feels amazing,” he said honestly, running a hand through his hair. “I— is this what my full adult power will feel like?” He couldn’t imagine it, having that much magic running through his veins. Killing Voldemort would feel as easy as swatting a fly.

“Not quite. Your Slytherin magic is strengthened by the connection to the castle; your other family magics won’t have that. But the boost is quite similar — always elevated for the first forty-eight hours. It’s a good thing it’s a weekend, or you’d have a lot of explaining to do when you cast spells in class.”

Harry grimaced slightly; yes, he’d have to make sure he had his power properly contained before Monday’s classes began.

“Can I pour that extra magic back into the wards?” he asked. “I don’t need it, not now — and the wards have been lacking for *so long*.” His despair was audible; the whole concept of Dumbledore binding and warping the castle’s magic like that hit a little too close to home for Harry’s comfort.

Salazar’s eyes were sympathetic, and he stroked his pet snake’s head, leaning back in his chair. “Of all the heirs I have met in recent centuries, I am most glad this power has found you, Harry,” he said solemnly. “Often the ambition of a Slytherin can become warped, surpassing their own good sense — it gladdens me to see you care more for this school’s wellbeing than your own magical ability.” He smiled; a sad, wistful thing. “Dear Hogwarts does so much for the magical youth of this country, it deserves to have such a steadfast champion.”

Harry blushed, even as something warm and happy swelled in his chest. “Hogwarts was the first place I ever truly called home,” he replied softly. “It deserves better than what it has become under Dumbledore’s thumb.” He would see it become better, if it killed him.

“It certainly does,” Salazar agreed, smile turning into one of pride as he looked down at his heir. “Come; tell me about the other heirs — I can only assume they share your same