

Harry shot the man an indignant look. “Hey, I could have more going on than that!” He thought about it for a second; Dumbledore was certainly expecting a lot more than that, after his vision of Mr Weasley. Harry doubted the headmaster would believe that Harry had any kind of natural talent in Occlumency... they would have to give the man something good. “Tell him about the corridor dreams.”

“Pardon?”

“The dreams Voldemort keeps sending me, of that corridor in the Department of Mysteries. Tell him you saw those in my head. It’ll make him think he’s right, at least about Voldemort trying to influence me through our connection.” If Dumbledore was busy patting himself on the back, he wouldn’t look much further. “If you don’t give him anything he can use, he’ll start to suspect both of us.”

A sudden realisation hit him, making his blood turn cold. “If he realises I know about the magic blocks and you aren’t the one to tell him, he’ll know you’re not loyal to him.”

On the contrary, Snape didn’t look concerned. “He cannot expect me to seek out every last secret in your mind without making you a vegetable. Considering he currently believes you shed his incredibly powerful compulsion charms from sheer *stubbornness*, I do not think it will surprise him to find that you are equally stubborn enough to force me away from your deepest, darkest secrets.” Then he gave an almost predatory sneer. “I have been serving two masters for long enough to know how to manipulate the truth for my own benefit. Trust me, Potter; I will be fine.” Then he snorted derisively. “Though if you decide to remove Albus as permanently as you will the Dark Lord, that would make my life easier.”

Harry couldn’t say he hadn’t thought about it. “If I kill him, people will declare me the next Dark Lord before his body’s even cold. And if it looks like an accident, he’ll be martyred.” He smirked sharply. “I plan to publicly disgrace him before he can even *think* about toddling off on his ‘*next great adventure*’.”

“Then you had best be prepared to deal with the Dark Lord as soon as possible,” Snape returned. Then he tapped the wall pointedly. “Come; we’re wasting valuable time. We can discuss these plans further while we duel — it’ll be good for you to practice multi-tasking.”

There was a vindictive look on Snape’s face that made Harry’s heart sink in trepidation, even as he obediently hissed at the snake to open a passage.

He was going to be so very sore in the morning.

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Harry dragged himself back up to Gryffindor Tower an hour past curfew, his duelling injuries healed but his muscles still sore from use — working with the HA was nowhere near as gruelling as working with Snape, and after a lazy Christmas Harry was woefully out of shape.

Still, it had been a productive session — between dodging curses and flinging back his own, Harry had managed to talk more freely to Snape than he had since the summer; about