

to leave before sunrise, but that was easy enough. With a bit of begging on Harry's part, Hogwarts was kind enough to squeeze a little owl-sized passage into the existing dungeon vent system, so Draco could come and go as he pleased.

Harry could hardly believe it had taken them so many weeks to figure out.

Plenty of people noticed the spring in Harry's step in the following weeks, but most of them seemed to attribute it to Gryffindor's success against Hufflepuff, leaving them in perfect position to take the quidditch cup unless Slytherin absolutely trounced the badgers in April.

That was nice, too. As was the blowjob Draco gave him for an impressive snitch catch.

With the rest of the world falling to shit around them, Harry needed bright spots like that to keep him going. To keep all of them going — because if he looked like he was starting to falter, the entire castle's morale would plummet.

They were counting on him to lead them to victory against the Dark, and he needed to look like he had that well in hand. There was no room for him to be scared, or sad, or exhausted. Not in public, at any rate.

He was Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, and he had a duty to uphold.

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The Dark Lord was angry.

Severus was just glad it was aimed at someone other than him, for once. His last few summons, his master had not been impressed with the lack of information Severus had to offer — about the school, or Dumbledore's whereabouts, or Potter's progress in classes.

He didn't believe that no one had heard from Albus since the man's disappearance, even though that was perhaps the only genuine truth Severus gave him.

Last time, when he had been summoned after the attack on Hogsmeade to discover Bellatrix dead and Rodolphus mere moments from the same, Rabastan missing his casting arm from the mid-bicep down — the punishment Severus had received for not warning his lord how capable the students of Hogwarts were had been intense.

But tonight, the Dark Lord's ire was directed at Fenrir Greyback. Just looking at the man made Severus' blood boil — this was the *monster* that had turned Remus when he was just a child, revenge for a father's slight against wolves. Greyback was exactly the reason werewolves had such a bad reputation as bloodthirsty, savage beasts. The reason Remus struggled to get a job, to be served in shops, to be given a modicum of respect by the wizarding world at large.

This man was the reason that Remus had learned to hate himself, and Severus despised him for it.

"You have always prided yourself, Greyback, on being the *alpha*," Voldemort sneered at the hulking form kneeling at his feet. Even as a man, Greyback had more of the wolf to him than