

“The Dark Lord believes that I am a double-agent for him; he believes that I have fooled you into thinking I have repented my Dark ways and have offered myself as a spy, feeding you only the information he gives me,” Snape declared curtly. Looking around the room, it was clear Voldemort wasn’t the *only* one who believed such a thing. “If Boot goes back and admits he named me, the Dark Lord will just believe that I have convinced you of my innocence despite the accusations. However, if you question me in front of the entire population of Hogwarts and I am forced to reveal my true loyalties, you will be signing my death warrant.”

“Yeah, because we’ll kill you ourselves when you confess you’re a loyal Death Eater,” someone muttered, though Harry wasn’t sure who. It might have been Sirius, keeping up appearances.

“No, because when word reaches the Dark Lord that I am not as loyal to him as he thought, he will drain the very magic and life from me through my Dark Mark,” Snape retorted icily. “There is nowhere I can hide from him, not with this connection. Breaking my cover and keeping me in the castle will not protect me.”

“*Moreover*,” Amelia interrupted loudly, before a proper argument could brew. “It is completely unethical — not to mention *illegal* — to question that many people under Veritaserum without due cause. There’s a reason it’s such a tightly controlled substance.”

“It’s not like they’re going to arrest you for it or anything, though, is it?” Fred reasoned with a shrug. Amelia looked distinctly unimpressed.

“Not at this moment, but if we have any hope of building a competent government once this is all over, the public need to know that we are not the kind of people who throw away our morals in times of conflict,” she pointed out, steely-eyed as she surveyed the group. “The Ministry may be in tatters, but I will still uphold its values the best I can while we work to save it. We aren’t questioning anyone else. The only decision that needs to be made tonight is what to do with those Boot named.”

The conversation turned to that, and Harry thought he saw Snape relax, ever so slightly. Beside Harry, Remus ran a hand through his hair, and pressed his shoulder a little heavier against his pseudo-godson’s.

Harry couldn’t imagine being Snape, having to weather such accusations regularly, having to actively cultivate suspicion around himself. He would be glad when it was all over, and the masks could be dropped. Even if that kind of distrust wouldn’t go away overnight.

Harry was fully prepared to defend Severus Snape to the death. The man was family, after all.

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It was decided that keeping eight Death Eaters under guard in the castle was too risky; they didn’t have the manpower to keep them watched carefully, and with Hannah Abbott in such a precarious state none of the three remaining heirs wanted to divert the wards into keeping them captive. The girl had awoken three days after the accident, but she still could not move.