

All Hail the Dark Lord, Or Something Idiotic Like That

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All Hail the Dark Lord, Or Something Idiotic Like That

by [NinjaPandaScholar](#)

Summary

Harry Potter had a plan...it wasn't a very good plan, but at least it was simple.

Step 1: Don't die from the insanely difficult ritual

Step 2: Cause as much chaos to the timeline as possible before getting killed and/or arrested

As it goes, it was really simple...until it became clear he wasn't traveling back in time alone. Now the whole plan has to change.

Step 1: Don't die from the ritual

Step 2: Kill off current Dark Lord

Step 3: Establish following to become new Dark Lord

Step 4: Overthrow Ministry

Step 5: Cause as much chaos to the timeline as possible

Step 6: Keep boyfriend alive and not mad at him

It was a work in progress, but plans hadn't worked out well for Harry in the past regardless. Oh well, it's not like he could make things worse...

Notes

I'm aiming for this to be a relatively short fic, but these do tend to get away from me, so no promises. Leave some notes if there are things you would like to see or directions you would like me to explore. I've only pre-written about 3 chapters, so I'm flexible for changes.

The Rebellion

The Unspeakable was paying much more attention to the speed he was walking at than he ever had before in his life. He couldn't walk too fast or his co-workers would ask what was happening and pay him more attention, but if he walked too slow, then that would be suspicious too. It shouldn't be so difficult to walk innocently, but when you were hyper-aware that you were absolutely *not* innocent, something as simple as walking became much more difficult than ever before in his life.

After the war he'd decided that he was really just done with having to deal with people, so he'd dramatically changed the direction of his life to bury himself in research as an Unspeakable in the Department of Mysteries and almost step completely out of the society around him. He had done an excellent job at losing himself in his job. He actually did so well that he hadn't even realized the world around him had become unrecognizable and rotting from the core of society until it had been way too late.

He took in a breath and continued his walk to the lifts that would take him away from where he'd found a home and acceptance and back up into the society of hate and shame in the heart of London. He wistfully looked at the dark marble walls, very aware this was more than likely his last day as an employee of the Ministry of Magic...hell, it was probably his last day as someone who wasn't wanted for crimes against society.

"Unspeakable Smith," a voice called from behind him, causing his heart to pound more heavily. The man turned slowly and almost let out a whimper at the sight of the red hem of the obscuring cloak of his supervisor. He had no idea or even theories on how Supervisor Davids always recognized them on sight and was even more confused why he insisted on using their ridiculous code names when it was just the two of them in a meeting.

"Supervisor," he gave a little nod of his hooded and obscured face. "Can I help you?"

"Before you leave," the tall Unspeakable stepped almost uncomfortably close to his subordinate, something he was want to do to put people off their guard and make them feel a bit wrong-footed in their interactions. "I would like an update on your active project."

The younger Unspeakable wanted to scream in frustration. His supervisor had a habit of asking for updates when least expected, and this was absolutely *not* the time. “I have made some moderate headway,” he explained in as neutral of a tone as he could pull off. “As you are aware, my supply has been restricted. If my test cases were fresher and more plentiful...”

“Your headway, Unspeakable Smith,” the supervisor cut him off, clearly not wanting to hear his gripes about resources and the restrictions placed on his specific area of research. Neither the ministry nor the Department of Mysteries would ever admit to the general public they had a small department...well, one person, who researched soul magic...the darkest of magics.

“I’ve extended viability of the host and there were some slight changes in responsiveness from my last test subject,” he ground out, trying to not draw attention to the pocket of his robe that he was overly aware contained an object that would clearly be highly illegal for him to step onto the lift with...or frankly even have on his person since it was not from his research.

Supervisor Davids just nodded his hooded head and reached into his own pocket. “Have you left the weekly copies of your notes for the project on my desk?”

The younger Unspeakable frowned, not that anyone could see. He always left his notes for his supervisor. He’d never been late turning them in even once. It was odd he would suddenly ask. “Yes, sir...”

“Brilliant,” the man nodded again, his hand coming out of his pocket and holding a clear, but unremarkable crystal. “You will need this for your project, Unspeakable Smith. I wish you luck.”

He reached out his hand in confusion for the crystal. As soon as the crystal touched his skin, he was even more entirely confused. The crystal felt alive with swarming electric waves of magic. Unspeakables were trained to sense magic around them, but he guessed even an average wixen would be able to feel the ambient energy of this crystal. Besides the unassuming crystal being enormously magical, it was also clearly not going to help him in any of his projects. It was the lightest magic he’d ever felt in his life. He imagined a phoenix’s magic would feel similar as the lightest of all magical creatures.

“Sir...I don’t think...”

“Have a good weekend, Unspeakable Smith,” the man turned, ignoring his protest. “Your research has been groundbreaking, and *you* have been an asset to this department. Keep the crystal...you’ll see how it fits in soon enough.”

The younger Unspeakable slid the crystal in the opposite pocket to the other object on his person and shook his head in bemusement as he stepped through the doors of the lift when it stopped. His supervisor had always been an enigmatic drama queen in his opinion, not that he’d ever say that to the man’s face...well, hood. The lift doors closed and the Unspeakable was painfully aware that he’d officially just broken multiple laws, enough to get him sent to Azkaban for life.

With a deep breath, he forcefully let go of his tension and pushed the hood from his head, running his hand through his long, red hair before pulling a hair tie from his wrist and shoving it into a knot at the base of his neck, just wanting it out of his way and not distracting. He should just cut it, he thought for the thousandth time, even though he never did. The lift dinged and he once more took a steadying breath before stepping into the atrium.

“Ah, just the Unspeakable I could use,” a man said off to his left side, causing his heart to almost stop in alarm once more. He slowly turned and plastered as kind of a smile as he could fake onto his face as the head of the Department of Relocation and Retrieval walked up to him.

“Mr. Finch-Fletchley, how can I help you?” he held in his grimace at almost the last person on the planet he wanted to run into right then...or really ever, stopped him.

“Call me Justin, please,” he said with a dismissive wave of his hand. “We *did* go to school together. I know it’s the end of the day, but we’ve run into a ward issue that we could use an Unspeakable to help with. It’s pressing and needs to be handled today.”

Not only were wards nowhere near his specialty, but he might just give everything away in his desire to crucio this monster to within an inch of his life if he had to spend any time at all with him. “I’m sorry, Mr. Finch-Fletchley...I really don’t know a lot about wards, but I can recommend someone...”

“Weasley!” Another voice called from behind him, causing him to turn and grind his teeth at *literally* the last person he wanted to run into...the Head Auror. And what use were their obscuring hoods anyway if people kept calling out their bloody names and title?!

“I already claimed Weasley,” Finch-Fletchley crossed his arms and frowned at the tall, well-built man that towered over the former Hufflepuff when he joined them.

“You have a ward issue,” the auror gave him an exasperated look with flinty eyes. “Collins called for you a specialist from Gringotts...that isn’t the Unspeakables’ job. I, however, do actually require the services of Weasley here.”

“You aurors,” Finch-Fletchley grumbled but did turn to head back towards the lifts. “One of these days, we won’t need you anymore...”

“I welcome the day,” the auror placed a hand on the Unspeakable’s shoulder that made him distinctly feel like he was being arrested. “For now though...you do still need us.”

The Unspeakable cleared his suddenly dry throat. “What do the aurors need my help for?” he asked in almost a rasp.

“Nothing,” the hand steered him away from the lifts and towards the doors. “Did you get it? Please tell me you did. Merlin, I almost had a stroke when Justin stopped you...It’s just your luck to run into that prat on today of all days!”

The Unspeakable’s eyes widened, and he had a moment where he both felt like it should have been blatantly obvious that Neville Longbottom would be at the center of this little orchestrated treason and also like his world had just been turned on its head that the Head Auror was plotting against the ministry. “I don’t know what you’re talking about...” was the most he could get out through the haze that had settled on his mind.

Neville snorted with no humor. “Don’t worry, Weasley. I don’t know what it is you were asked to get. None of us were told everything. There are too many legilimens around these days.”

“I still don’t know what you’re talking about,” he now stubbornly replied as they got closer to the doors to the outside world and where he could escape.

Auror Longbottom gave him a little smirk. “Fine, but please tell him now that I’ve done my part already that I’m in if he needs anything else...I’ll do whatever...there isn’t much I can do legally anymore, but he knows I’ve been wanting to leave this job behind for a very long time now...”

The Unspeakable paused...this didn’t sound like a trap. What Longbottom was saying was treason in itself, not even mentioning if he was actually part of his crazy plan.

“Longbottom...” he said softly, taking a chance on the young boy he remembered from Hogwarts. “I don’t even know what’s going on...I promise.”

With a grin and a chuckle, Neville clapped him on the back fondly before a sad look settled in his eyes. “I guess that makes perfect sense...if it helps any...this was Hermione’s plan. You know she was the one that set it up so that none of us would have all the information. She was the one that initially pushed me to the head of the line of aurors...I don’t know how, but some kind of bureaucratic magic only she would have known.”

He actually hadn’t known that. He was only recently conscripted into this coup even if he’d suspected it was quietly going on for a long time now. At the stabbing pain that hit him in his heart at the mention of Hermione, he suddenly wished he’d been included much earlier. “We shouldn’t be talking about this here,” he anxiously glanced over his shoulder.

Neville rolled his eyes. “I’m the Head Auror...I have a permanent privacy ward I can activate, which I did as soon as we walked away from Finch-Fletchley,” he motioned to a bracelet that radiated a steady stream of magic that caused the Unspeakable to nod in appreciation...and definitely want one of those for himself.

“Look...my part is done,” Longbottom said quietly, even with the ward. “That means this is all coming to a head now...take care of yourself and don’t let him do anything stupid. I know this was Hermione’s plan, but we both know how Harry gets...If he’s going to listen to anyone, it’ll be you, Weasley.”

The Unspeakable gave him a short nod, wishing he'd not been as isolated from Longbottom as he had been. However, if all this had been planned by Hermione, that was probably a part of the plan as well. He'd never heard anything against Longbottom in the ministry gossip mill, causing him to believe the man was completely sold into the ministry propaganda and mission. It was genius...and also very lonely.

"I don't know what I can do, but I'll try. I do know how he gets very well. It was good to see you again, Neville," he said with a little smile.

Longbottom touched his bracelet and the shimmer of magic around them dissipated. "It was good to see you again too, Percy. Don't be a stranger...I'm only a few floors above you," he winked before turning, his red robes flowing behind him, as he strode in long steps towards the lifts.

Percy stepped into the twilight of a winter evening feeling like he was stepping into a new world...or maybe an old one he recognized from his nightmares. This is what he remembered the war felt like, when you didn't know who you could trust, when any day could be your last. With a sharp twist, he didn't even pause in his apparition away from the marble building that suddenly felt exactly like a prison he was leaving.

Percy appeared expertly on the stoop of twelve Grimmauld Place and immediately opened the door without knocking. The oppressive wards felt like water as he walked through them. Thankfully he was welcomed, or it would be fire he would be trapped in until his corpse was unrecognizable instead of the uncomfortable pressure before he was standing in the gloomy entry hall.

"About time," a tired-looking portrait commented by the door. "He's been pacing all day and mumbling to himself. If I was alive, I'd have cursed him already."

Percy rolled his eyes at Walburga Black. The woman had eventually given up on trying to get them out of the house and they'd come to a very tentative truce...especially when Kreacher had been killed. That had been the turning point in Walburga's attitude. She now looked at Harry with a hard look and gave him a little nod when he walked by. Percy figured he should have realized sooner that Harry had some kind of plan to avenge the elf that he'd filled the

portrait in on, but he'd been so caught up in his research in the Black library and in the Department of Mysteries...what he was using to run from his grief, that he hadn't been paying much attention to what Harry and an old portrait had been doing.

He made his way up the familiar staircase to the room where he knew Harry would be in, and what he'd just learned to be a ritual room...he'd thought before that Harry kept the door closed since it had been Sirius's room and there were too many memories for him to face it, but no, it was because he'd set up a highly illegal dark magic ritual and practice room...honestly, Percy couldn't judge. He knew a lot of other things Harry was involved in, so this should have frankly been expected. His own area of research was the darkest of magics, and apparently, they were about to commit some kind of treason anyway...no, he honestly really didn't care at this point.

Percy slowly opened the door and peeked his head into the room. Harry Potter was counting under his breath while slowly stirring a bubbling cauldron...not that anyone would recognize this man as Harry Potter anymore. It'd been a very long time since the press had caught him on camera due to come fairly illegal glamour charms and the fact he spent most of his time in the muggle world or back alleys in the wixen one now, and they probably wouldn't even associate this man with their image of the Boy-Who-Lived if they did see him.

While the rest of them had changed more inwardly, Harry had gradually marked his internal changes externally, dramatically changing his looks from what the wixen world imagined him to be and look. His hair was longer than Percy's at this point and in a long braid down his back liberally sprinkled with grey strands well before the grey should be there, he'd fixed his vision so no longer wore glasses, he had multiple silver piercings in his ears, eyebrow, and nose, and the tattoos had gradually been added as well. Most of the tattoos were actually runic magic for protection, focus, stability, fortitude, and many other things that Percy hadn't fully researched. Some of the tattoos were clearly sentimental though with a silvery otter on his wrist for Hermione and a lion that Percy knew was for his youngest brother on his right ankle among many others representing those they'd lost.

He waited until Harry finished counting to step in. "I got it," he said quietly, patting the pocket of his robes.

"Thank Merlin," Harry closed his too green eyes and breathed out in relief. "Did anyone try to stop you?"

“I ran into Justin on the way out,” he sneered, walking over to the potions set-up. “Neville actually stepped in and got me out. You *could* have told me that the big, bad Head Auror was actually in on all this,” he gave the man a withering look from the other side of the steaming cauldron.

“Need to know,” Harry mumbled but also gave him a little sheepish shrug. “Forgive me?”

With a sigh, Percy shook his head, a fond smile on his face. He never could hold onto any anger with Harry, hadn’t been able to for a very long time. “I suppose everything and all the compartmentalization makes sense now that Neville let it slip that this was all Hermione’s plan...you at *least* could have told me that. And if you say, ‘need to know’ again, then I’m sleeping in the guest room and your cold feet can just suffer.”

“Prat,” the man grinned at him before walking around the table and pulling him into a kiss that still startled and excited him each and every time.

Their very confusing relationship had started when Percy had stayed over to make sure Harry wasn’t giving into his grief after the latest major tragedy a few years ago, then he needed to make sure that Harry got out of bed and ate, then there was the Black library with all the wonderful literature on soul magic in it, then Harry had taken to sitting with him and asking about his day, then he’d just never left...eventually, somehow, he’d been relocated from the guestroom to Harry’s room and they’d never gone back. They’d never really defined anything, but Percy was positive that didn’t matter to either of them in the slightest at this point anyway.

“Hey...” Percy put his hands on either side of Harry’s neck and looked into his eyes, seeing the pain as he did every time they were close. “How dangerous is all this? It’s time to actually tell me. No more ‘need to know’ no more compartmentalizing information. We’re in this together...I know I wasn’t very helpful there for a while...”

“We all grieve differently,” Harry shook his head, putting his hand on top of Percy’s. “You got me through my grief, and it took a while for you to face your own. You were there when I needed you to physically pull me out of bed, and you needed me there for you to just sit with you in the library...you didn’t need to be in on the plans, not when it all hit...”

“It’s time now though,” he insisted steadfastly. “Yes, you got me through Hermione’s death and what h-happened to Ron...Now, I’m here for you...Since I stole this from the Time Room, I’m assuming all this has something to do with time-travel...?”

Percy took the vial of time-dust from his pocket and placed in on the table beside them. “There’s enough in there for three time-turners, but I still don’t see how that’s going to help us at all...even if you could get it to work together without a physical time-turner that would hold it, that would still only be about a day you could go back.”

Harry’s face lightened up into a genuine smile at him, making Percy not regret for a minute that he’d just thrown away his entire career for a vial of sand. “That’s the point of this potion and the artifacts I’ve had to track down, repair, and the runes all over the floor.”

“That’s not for aesthetics?” Percy smirked at the ritual circle with scribbled runes that took up most of the room. “I thought you were just a shit decorator.”

“Ha, ha...though I am that as well,” Harry deadpanned and shrugged his braid back over his shoulder before rolling up his sleeves, baring many more runes and spidery lines. “Merlin, some days...most days, I wish Snape had lived. I’m sure he’d have taken Hermione’s plan and figured it all out months before I did...I found her notebook in her desk, but even then, it took me weeks to slightly work out the basis of what she’d been doing. She put all this into motion years ago though...right after Teddy was taken...”

Harry’s step faltered and his eyes glazed over. “Hey...” Percy put a hand on Harry’s hip, trying to bring him back to reality. Sometimes without warning his brain would disassociate, usually when he said something without thinking that pulled the trauma right back to the forefront of his brain. Percy had seen Harry stuck this way for hours before and only hoped this time wasn’t as bad as those.

“Hey, come back to me,” he rubbed circles on Harry’s back and tried to get him to focus back in. “Don’t leave me now...you have a lot of explaining to do...months and months of planning without me. Come on, what would Snape have done? Tell me.”

Harry slowly blinked as his eyes focused slightly back in. He reached a hand up and touched the small silver bar he had through his right eyebrow. This caused him to take in a steadying breath. Percy just smiled at him kindly. He’d noticed that it helped Harry to touch something

that was different about him than from when the trauma had happened, something that reminded him that time had moved forward. Personally, he believed it was why Harry had changed his appearance so much so that he would have those reminders that he was different, that time had progressed.

“Sorry about that,” Harry shook his head and gave Percy an apologetic smile. “Erm...right... the potion. Yeah, so Snape could have figured it out ages ago...”

Percy stepped back and let Harry move forward like he hadn't just gone catatonic for a minute, pretending that nothing had happened. “Even so, I think he might actually be proud of what I've done...not that he'd ever say that on pain of dismemberment,” Harry motioned to the now purplish colored gloop in the cauldron.

“It was the artifacts that were bloody difficult to collect though, and that was partially my own bloody fault in not keeping the ones I had already found for a rainy day,” he grumbled as he motioned to his old invisibility cloak that surprisingly had an interesting-looking wand on top of it and a cracked black stone. “I had to track down a tiny, black stone in a forest and do a bit of grave-robbing for the wand...Dumbledore won't mind though, or at least he'd better not...anyway, not his problem anymore.”

“Ok...so if we say that I actually follow any of this,” Percy sighed, sitting on the stool over in the corner of the room. “I'm getting the idea that the time-dust will interact in some way with all these objects, runes, and potions and that something time-related will happen. Are we talking time-travel or dimension travel?”

“It never gets old just how smart you are,” Harry grinned at him as he bottled the purple potion. “Yes, we're talking time-travel. Without getting into specifics, it's an old ritual that Hermione found in a book in the Black library...which I think might be bound in human skin...not going to think about that...”

Percy shuddered. “Right...so we're definitely talking dark magic then? Can I be of any help?”

“Actually, it has to be an infusion of pure light and dark magic within three vessels each,” Harry patted the objects on his cloak. “Thankfully, I knew where to find some items of pure dark magic...actually, figured that one out on my own and am quite proud of it, but the light

magic was a bit more difficult. It was bloody difficult to convince a unicorn to stay and listen to me instead of running away like I was the devil himself, but I did finally get some freely given unicorn hair. That was the hold-up along with finding a couple more pure light items since people wouldn't really work for the ritual. I don't know anyone at this point whose core is completely light anyway...not after everything..."

Percy winced. He was well aware that his core was extremely dark after all his work in soul magic, and with the little he knew Harry had been up to, he was certain his (sort-of) boyfriend's core was even darker than his own. "Yeah...I can only imagine what Mum would say if she saw us now..."

Molly Weasley had thankfully died of a bad case of dragon pox before Ron had been taken. She would not have survived losing Fred, Ron, and Hermione or even Bill, Fleur, and Victoire moving off to America to escape what was happening. Arthur was a shell of himself, but he was doing his best to hold his remaining family together. Most days that meant just making sure George was surviving and that Ginny hadn't self-destructed yet.

"Riiight..." Harry didn't meet his eyes.

Percy was suspicious. Was he planning to see Molly Weasley again? "Just how far back are you planning to go, Harry? No one has gone back more than a few days, but it'd take years to make a difference in this mess. Even if you did, what would you do? This wasn't one person like Voldemort, this was society, this was the ministry, it was fear."

Harry walked over and leaned into Percy, putting their foreheads together, breath mingling. "I'm going back as far as I absolutely can...I think I have enough power personally to make it about six years."

Percy's brain seemed to skid to a stop before he even tried to process that impossibility. It was easy math, Harry was 27, so that would put him at 21...it was before things had gotten really bad, but they'd still lost people before then...they'd lost Teddy before then even if it'd taken them years to actually figure out what happened...Percy held still as Harry's fingernail traced up and down his neck. It was clear this was goodbye...well, the *hell* with that!

"So, since we're going together, that means we can go back twelve years then," he put a hand over Harry's and stilled it.

“No...”

“No, you listen to me, Harry Potter,” he pulled the man even closer to him. Whatever crazy, suicidal plan this was, he was in. Harry was absolutely not doing this alone. “There is no way I’m letting you leave me here alone...if it’s dimensional travel, then I’ll be here without you and never see you again. If it’s time-travel, then we’ll still never be together. You know I wouldn’t have just moved in and made myself a part of your life without everything that happened...plus, who is going to stop you getting stuck in your head if I’m not there, huh? You will *not* be leaving me!”

“It’s too dangerous...” he protested with a firm shake of his head. “It’s time-travel, not dimensional, which will bring even more risk...I also don’t know if I’ll end up in my younger body or if there will suddenly be two Harrys which causes even more problems and risk.”

“Like I fucking care if I live through this if I don’t have you!” He growled, holding tightly to the strong shoulders of the man in his arms like a lifeline. Harry was literally the only good thing in his life anymore. He didn’t bloody care what they were to each other, they were all each other had, Harry was his home, and he was not giving that up without a fight.

“If one person can go back six years, then double the magic and let’s go back twelve! You’ll be fifteen and I’ll be nineteen, and it’ll be before we lost them all. Whatever your...or Hermione’s plan was going to be, it *has* to be even more effective if we get there earlier...more time *has* to be better than less. Plus, I was working for Fudge at nineteen...that would put me at the heart of the ministry. I can be useful.”

Harry closed his eyes and let out a breath. “Hermione didn’t have a plan; she didn’t get that far before she was killed in the raid, or at least she didn’t write it down...I can’t ask you to be a part of what I’m going to do. This is asking too much of anyone.”

“Would it still work if you were fifteen?” Percy just raised an eyebrow and pushed forward. “Because whether I’m going or not is no longer in question. You can bloody well just get over that. The question is now if we need to temper our magic to not go back as far or if we should try for the furthest distance back possible. So, what is this plan? What do you want to do to change the world?”

Harry looked him deeply in the eyes and Percy knew that whatever he was about to say would probably be the most insane thing he'd ever heard in his life...and that he was in whatever it was. "Being fifteen may make it a little more difficult, but it can be done...if we can save Teddy..."

"*What* are *we* doing, Harry?" Percy asked again, putting as much stress as possible into the 'we.'

With a sigh Harry broke eye contact and turned to pick up the potion. "Percy...*I* will be becoming the next Dark Lord."

Percy was positive he'd heard that wrong...no that's what Harry had said... "Excuse me... isn't there another one of those gallivanting around about then?" Percy coughed out. "He might take a bit of offense to being dethroned."

Harry shrugged and gave him a wicked smile. "Oh, love...do you really imagine I give a gnat's arse about what offends dear old Voldy? It's frankly Dumbledore we should be more worried about."

"Right...so, we're planning to wreak as much havoc as possible until we're taken out by Dumbledore, Voldemort, the Ministry, or the Order...that sounds like a Harry Potter plan," Percy nodded and sat back down on his stool to watch the preparations happening around him. It was insane, and they probably wouldn't live through it, but he decided it was better than the doing nothing they were currently stuck in.

"Ideally, we wouldn't be taken out...at least not until we actually change things," Harry rolled his eyes and rummaged around in a box for the unicorn hair.

"Do you actually have a plan for how to do that?" He sighed, not being very optimistic that a plan existed.

"Er...sort-of..." Harry grimaced some. "I'm not sure when exactly we'll actually end up, and that changes things a bit. Plus, now that I'm going back six more years than the original plan,

that puts most of my initial plans in disarray...especially since Voldy and Dumbles are still alive.”

“Is there any reason why we need to do this right now?” Percy asked next when he’d deduced that Harry was in-fact planning on them traveling back in time that very evening from the activities going on around him. Suddenly, he had the passing thought that he should possibly shower and put on clean pants if they were going on a trip, especially if he were about to see his mum again.

“I’m sure the time-dust will be missed...plus, Neville’s part will also not go unnoticed,” Harry looked up at him and gave a grin that Percy had come to be a bit afraid of. “The runes aren’t drawn in charcoal...they’re drawn in the ashes of a dementor...Nev is super hardcore, and I wish I’d known to tell him that when he was eleven and doubting himself,” Harry chuckled. “Remind me to tell him when we see him in the past.”

Percy’s eyes widened at the dark drawings on the floor that he’d felt dark magic bleeding from but which he’d assumed was from the runes themselves. He’d taken Ancient Runes in school, but their usage in dark magic was not in the scope of his studies, that was all Harry. “Bloody hell...yeah, I think Azkaban will be missing one of its guards eventually...”

“Yep, and any legilimens worth the title will tie it all back to me once they interrogate Nev... he knows that and is prepared. Hopefully we live through the spell and can make sure he’ll never have to go through that, but well...his days are numbered and mine are too before I’m Undesirable Number One again,” Harry explained, a hard, blank look in his eyes. “Personally, I’d like to leave this time before I have aurors trying to break through my wards or a friend is tortured.”

“Right, so we go back in time and plan when we get there,” Percy agreed and stood to take off his work robes to leave just his slacks and a t-shirt, showing off his Unspeakable mark on his wrist. “What can I do? Do you know if we’ll be able to take anything with us? I can pack us some bags.”

“Nope, we’ll probably end up starkers when we arrive if we don’t just meld with our younger bodies,” the man was now dripping some of the purple potion between the runes on the floor, causing them to glow an eerie dark glow.

“So, no taking funds with us...or wands...or books,” Percy was deeply frowning, not liking that one bit.

“We’ll have the library still when we go back, we might just have to sneak around Sirius to get into it...” Harry’s eyes slightly dazed, but he shook his head and kept going instead of sinking into his mind. “There is a crystal in the box over there that had the unicorn hair in it, would you find it for me? It’s the light match to the resurrection stone. I paid almost half my vault for that in Knockturn Alley. Bloody black market prices! I know, hypocritical, since I’m a dealer myself, but still...”

Percy pulled a clear crystal out of the box and frowned deeply at it. It was radiating magic, but it was a light grey haze...it was definitely not pure light magic. He knew Harry could sense magic, but light magic was absolutely not his specialty at all, and he hadn’t been trained like Percy had with the Unspeakables. “What’s this supposed to be, Harry?”

“It’s a seer crystal, said to be given by Mother Magic herself to the world. Those with the Sight can connect as one to the magic of the world,” Harry stood up and stretched his back. “I most assuredly do NOT have the Sight, but it is an object of pure light to balance the dark of the other stone.”

“Yeah...you got scammed love,” Percy grimaced, feeling terrible as Harry’s face fell dramatically.

“No...we can’t do the spell without a match to the resurrection stone...” the man sank down dejectedly, clutching his chest, breaths coming short. “I’ll kill Aiken! He knows not to scam me!”

“Wait...” Percy frowned and walked over to his robes, feeling his pockets until he pulled out the clear crystal his supervisor had given him not hours ago. “Is this what you need?”

“Why in Merlin’s name did you just happen to have a seer crystal on you?” Harry jumped up and rushed over to take the stone. “This *does* feel a little different than the other. Merlin, you’re amazing!”

“You haven’t been trained to feel magic like I have, and if you don’t have the Sight...well, it’s an easy scam,” he squeezed Harry’s arm to show him that it wasn’t his fault. “Honestly, your friend Aiken might not have known himself. As for why I have it...I really don’t know. Supervisor Davids handed it to me on my way out of the ministry earlier. He said I’d need it...wait...you think he might be a seer?”

“That would mean he would know what we’re doing,” Harry stopped mid-turn from where he’d been heading back to the runes. “What did he say to you besides that you’d need it?”

“He just said something about my work for the department being good and wished me luck...” his eyes narrowed as that flippant sentence seemed much more laden now. “Bloody hell...”

“You always said your supervisor seemed to already know what was going on before you told him,” Harry shook his head and continued setting up. It wasn’t like there was anything they could do about it at the moment anyway.

Percy saw the ritual start to take shape as the invisibility cloak was laid on a rune with the unicorn hair, the resurrection stone was laid with the seer crystal, then Harry put down the wand. “What matches the elder wand?” Percy asked, not surprised at all that Harry had thought to track down the Deathly Hallows when he read that they would need dark objects. Personally, he had a sneaky suspicion that Harry might actually be classified as the Master of Death, whatever that meant.

With a deep sigh, Harry pulled his own wand out of his pocket before Percy cried out at the sharp snap when he broke it. “Why did you do that?” He gasped, only catching on when Harry gave a tired sigh and pulled a long phoenix tail feather from the core of the wand.

“A phoenix tail-feather from a wand that was mended by the elder wand,” Harry sadly placed the feather across the death wand. “You said we couldn’t take our wands back...I’m really hoping I’ll be young Harry when we get back and will already have it on me, if not, we’ll have to get new wands anyway.”

“We’ll need to get new wands regardless,” Percy put his wand on the workbench with a sad, parting look at it. “Wands grow with you over time, and we’ve progressed past our old wands at this point. If we end up in our younger bodies, we’ll probably still need to get a new wand

and use our old ones as back-ups maybe. Mine would probably completely revolt the first time I cast anything dark. Yours had a light core...no telling what it would do if you tried to cast with it back years ago with your core the way it is now.”

Harry grimaced. “Well...one more thing on the to-do list.”

“Yeah...the list that currently reads: don’t die, solve Voldemort issue, establish a following, overthrow the ministry, don’t die again,” Percy trailed off with a shake of his head. “Try not to have complete meltdowns every time we see someone we’ve lost...”

“Merlin...I’m not the person that should be doing this,” Harry sat back down on the floor and wrapped his arms around his knees. “I’m not going to be able to hold it together. Neville should have been the one...”

“That’s why we’re going together,” Percy walked over and physically pulled him back up to standing. “You don’t have to do it alone, and you know that, while Neville is apparently a dangerous badass, you are the only one of us that actually fulfills the whole Dark Lord requirements.”

Harry snorted. “Unintentionally...it’s not my fault that dying turned my core dark...probably the Hallows as well.”

“Reading almost everything in the Black library was a bit more intentional though,” Percy kissed the top of his head with a smile. “Now...if we’re going to do this, let’s just do it. I’m more concerned about the Unspeakables coming after us than the aurors since Supervisor Davids apparently knows what we’re doing.”

“Eh...he seems to approve at least,” Harry shrugged but still picked up his silver knife and sliced a gash in his palm. “You want to do it, or you want me to?” He held out the knife to Percy.

“Are there like a thousand elements to this ritual?” He grumbled, picking up a clean knife instead and slicing his own palm with a wince.

“You have no idea...I’ve been putting this together for over a year,” Harry dripped three drops of blood in the middle of the circle. “You next...this is the time to back out if you want. You’re committed once you add the blood.”

With an eyeroll Percy added three drops of his own blood to the middle of the circle. “I have a feeling I was committed from the day I moved in here after Ron was taken.”

“See you on the other side then,” Harry gave him a quick kiss before unfolding a parchment with a very long spell in Latin on it and began to chant.

He couldn’t breathe...it felt like all the air was forced from his lungs and he was being crushed in a vise. Then, he was too large, he was stretched over all space and time. He had no body. Was his soul anchored to anything anymore? Then...there was nothing, no thoughts, no feelings, nothing. With a painful crash, he finally drew in a deep, painful breath and clutched at his suddenly solid once again chest. “Bloody hell,” he groaned and rolled over on a bed he didn’t remember getting into.

Something Resembling a Plan-ish

Harry Potter groaned in pain and cursed Hermione, the Ministry of Magic, Merlin, Voldemort, and Dumbledore for good measure. He really didn't want to open his eyes and deal with whatever was around him. He couldn't hear Percy breathing and he seemed to be in a bed, so he guessed they hadn't crashed onto the floor of Sirius's room in the past...he hadn't been looking forward to explaining to a freaked out Sirius why older versions of Harry and Percy Weasley were lying naked on his floor anyway. That would just be awkward!

He was naked though...if he'd ended up in his younger body...Harry reached up and hissed at touching a tender spot in his eyebrow. "Bloody hell..." he groaned. They'd come back in their current, older bodies, but his earrings had disappeared like his clothes.

It was a quick, wandless conjure to have new silver studs to put in all his piercings, which he did while checking out the room he was in. It took all of half a second to check out his old bedroom at Privet Drive. It was an odd juxtaposition for Harry to be standing in his 27 year-old body in his old bedroom in a house he'd never wanted to see again in his life. What was more confusing though, was where was young Harry?

Briefly freaking out that Harry might be at Hogwarts while he was in Surrey, he cast another wandless spell to see the date and time. Wandless magic was extremely tiring, and he realized he was quickly reaching his limit when he saw with a grimace that he was back in time to right after the dementor incident and before his fifth year. He didn't *think* he'd been taken to Grimmauld yet, but his memory was grasping back twelve years, so he could be wrong.

Hedwig hooted from where she had just landed on the open windowsill, and it was all Harry could do to keep himself from disassociating in his surprise and the emotions that overwhelmed him. With a deep breath and a couple tears that escaped his eyes, he smiled at his first friend. "Hey girl...if you're here, then young Harry must be here somewhere too, right?" Hedwig just hooted and flew over to her perch unhelpfully.

He hadn't planned on having to actually talk to his younger self, especially this early in his trip, but he figured it would be better to do that clothed than starkers at least. After a quick rummage through his school trunk, Harry pulled out the larger of Dudley's old clothes. He'd grown quite a bit since he was fifteen, not as much as he would want, but enough that he was thanking Merlin that Harry was still using Dudley's castoffs when even then there was a good

inch at the bottom of his trousers. He didn't even try to put on his younger self's shoes. He'd figure out that situation later.

About the time he was finally, mostly covered, his eyes fell on the familiar sight of his wand lying on the table beside his bed. Now Harry frowned in earnest. If he'd just survived being attacked by dementors, then young Harry wouldn't even be going to the loo without his wand...frankly, it'd been a habit he'd formed then and hadn't changed in all the years since.

"Hedwig...did I somehow take the place of little me?" He turned a concerned gaze to the owl who didn't seem put off that her human was much older than before.

He wasn't sure how it was possible, but it seemed that somehow his older self must have over-written his younger self. With a pang, it hit him that he'd basically just killed his younger self unintentionally. Logically, that wasn't exactly what happened since young Harry was still a part of him, but ever since he learned they would be coming back this far, he'd kind-of hoped a younger version of himself would get to grow up with a much less traumatic life...to get to actually be a kid for a little while longer, or really for the first time.

Hedwig ruffled her feathers and dipped a beak in her water bowl. "Right...no time to freak out," Harry began to pace. "Once the Dursleys wake up, they'll clearly notice I'm not the me they know, and casting anything with that wand will have the ministry down on us immediately since I'm pretty sure the dementor thing has already happened," he explained to his owl.

Hedwig cocked her head and just looked at him, seeming to wait for him to come to a decision. "We need Percy," he finally decided. "He can cast a glamour on me or some other super-secret Unspeakable mojo to get me looking fifteen again. Then I need to get a new wand, trace-less if possible, then I guess we need some kind of plan."

He quickly sat at his desk and jotted down a note to Percy setting a meeting for the Leaky Cauldron just as soon as humanly possible. "Can you take this to Percy Weasley?" He asked Hedwig. "He'll look a bit different than last you saw him, and I'm not really sure where he was living now in this time. I would guess London somewhere, but I'm not sure."

The owl looked offended as he tied the letter to her leg. "Sorry...I was just checking," he smiled. He'd missed Hedwig so very much. "I know you are the absolute best owl in all of

existence. Oh, and please stay with Percy after dropping off the letter because his owl will be too recognizable for a lot of the people I'll be with, so you'll be better for us to communicate with each other."

With a quick nip to his finger, Hedwig was off, leaving Harry to have to scramble to find a way to get to the Leaky Cauldron and get out of the house before his relatives woke. He was desperately hoping he had enough time before the Order members picked him up to take him to Grimmauld Place since he really needed to disappear for a day. It was imperative that he get a new wand and buy some clothes that fit him. Even if he planned to find a way to temporarily look fifteen, there was no way in hell he was going to stay fifteen consistently. Most appearance spells wore off in one's sleep anyway, so he'd at least need some bigger pajamas if nothing else. And shoes...he grimaced at the holey and tight trainers he pulled onto his feet. Briefly, he weighed the pros and cons of using just a bit more wandless magic to expand them, but he was already feeling very tired from what he'd done so far and didn't want to be unable to defend himself if he ran into trouble on the way to London.

Tight shoes and ill-fitting clothes and all, Harry grabbed his old wand and used just a bit of wandless magic to unlock his bedroom door and sneak downstairs. It was laughably easy to get out of the house and actually very irritating how easy it was for Harry to spot his Order watcher and avoid the snoring lump in the bushes. Really! It was shameful. Granted, he'd lived through a war, a police state where he was part of the rebellion, and his business in general also tended to be on the shadier side, but still, these people were mostly aurors and knew they were guarding a supposedly defenseless child that had already been attacked once over the summer!

Trying to quell his irritation with the knowledge that he was 27 now and poor-defenseless Harry was dead for all intents and purposes, he ran several streets over and behind a closed department store before he raised his old wand outwards to call the Knight Bus. One loud crack later and an offensively purple bus appeared before a young man Harry didn't *think* he'd ever seen before jumped out.

"Welcome to the Knight Bus, transportation for the stranded..." the lanky man trailed off once he got a look at the pierced, tattooed, muscled, wild hair flying, and poorly dressed wizard in front of him. "You ok, mate?" He frowned in a mix of concern and worry at what Harry might do or if he were dangerous.

"I'm fine," Harry tried to look unassuming, mostly unsuccessfully. "I had a bit of trouble with the missus. She threw me out in me skivvies and cast an incendio at all my stuff. Thankfully, I was holding my wand and me mate down the street lent me some clothes," he

gave a wry chuckle at the end. He wasn't sure where the accent he was trying to put on came from. He thought it might be a mix of Hagrid and Mundungus, but thankfully the Knight Bus conductor seemed to buy it.

"Merlin, you've had a rough night of it then. Sounds like you really put your foot in it," he laughed and stepped aside for Harry to board the bus. "I'm guessing the Leaky to get a room?"

"Called it in one," Harry answered wryly.

"You got fare?" The man frowned now, rightfully thinking that might be a bit of a challenge.

Harry had scrounged enough from his school trunk for fare though and handed it over, with the extra for hot chocolate. Merlin, he could use some hot chocolate! He just missed spilling his delightfully chocolatey drink on himself as the bus was off once more with a lurch and bang. Though Percy regularly assured him that no one would recognize him anymore, Harry still hadn't been anywhere in wixen society for years without a heavy glamour, so it was with a deep sigh and grin over the rim of his mug that he took a moment to enjoy anonymity while in his own skin.

There were a few stops before him, so Harry had just finished his hot chocolate when the bus screeched to a halt outside of the Leaky Cauldron. "Thanks, mate!" He waved to the conductor.

"Good luck with the missus!" He yelled back before the bus was off again.

"Am I the missus?" Percy stepped forward from the shadows with an amused raise of his eyebrow.

"No, she was being entirely unreasonable," Harry grinned widely at him and took his hand, needing to be reassured he'd made the trip in one piece. "Burned all my clothes you see...I have no idea what brought it on...might have been when she learned I'm gay, but your guess is as good as mine."

Percy's clothes at least fit, though he was wearing an outfit he wouldn't be caught dead in anymore. Harry was missing the old horn-rimmed glasses though. Percy had his eyes fixed when Harry did and Harry kind-of missed the nerdy look on the man. "I'm guessing your younger self is gone too?" Percy asked as he pulled Harry into the pub and over to an empty booth where he promptly cast a privacy ward around them.

"Yeah, I feel sorry for the poor sod. I didn't mean to kill him," Harry sighed and plopped down tiredly. Between the time travel and the wandless magic, he felt like he could sleep for days.

"It wasn't an outcome I was expecting either," Percy agreed before ordering them both a firewhiskey and shepherd's pie from the very tired night waiter who didn't seem surprised at all that they were within a privacy ward bubble.

"That is *exactly* what I need. You are a brilliant, brilliant man," the younger man nodded firmly. "So...from what I remember, this is just after the dementors attacked me and my cousin but before I'm whisked off to Grimmauld and have my hearing."

Percy gave him a concerned look. "Are you going to be ok seeing Sirius again...and you know, R-Ron and Hermione?"

"Probably not," he winced and immediately took a sip of the firewhiskey that was set down in front of him. "I plan to blame everything on trauma from the dementor attack if I need to."

"Well...I'll have to come up with some kind of excuse for myself then," Percy groaned and shoved some food in his mouth to give him some time to think. "People are going to ask about your patronus...I vaguely remember it being brought up in the trial," he added through a mouthful of potato. "Were you asked to cast it in the courtroom? I don't remember."

"Ergh!" Harry downed the rest of the firewhiskey. "No, I don't think I cast it in the trial. I'm not so sure I needed it at any time fifth year besides when I was teaching that club-thing... bloody stupid trauma and dark core!" He grumbled. Harry hadn't been able to produce a patronus, corporeal or otherwise, since he'd died during the Battle of Hogwarts. "I probably shouldn't take on the club this time around...I'd probably end up teaching Unforgivables..."

Ignoring the ridiculous man's tangent, Percy continued to slowly eat his food. "I think this is actually a really good time we came back to. A lot of things happened this year we can head off. If we take out Voldemort before he's formally acknowledged by the ministry, then that will keep some of the initial political actions from being put into motion. His use of dark creatures and the snatchers in particular have to be stopped before the ministry takes note of them," Percy explained while pulling parchment and a never-out quill from his pocket.

"Of *course*, you have parchment in your pocket just in case," Harry fondly rolled his eyes at the man. He loved his nerd. "So, I guess we need some sort-of plan..."

"Do we try to initially keep things as they were so we can control the variables?" Percy was already jotting down a timeline of what he remembered happened from that year.

"Hell no! Who has the time and the patience for that?" Harry grumbled and downed the last of Percy's firewhiskey as well.

"I was going to drink that," he protested with no feeling. He knew he should have just ordered more.

"My point is that we're going to change things anyway and making me a new Dark Lord should happen sooner rather than later," he rolled his eyes and paused in their discussion to order Percy and himself another round.

"Put as number one on that list killing off Voldy. I need him out of my way. That's the one down-side to coming back this far. Between the two of us, I think we can knock out all the horcruxes before Christmas though...thankfully, killing Little Harry should have taken care of the one in him. I already checked, I'm still horcrux-free."

"I think number one is actually going to be me teaching you the age glamour charm that Unspeakable Jones was working on," Percy looked up at him with a smirk. "I think we need Harry Potter to go to Hogwarts, at least as a cover during the day while Voldemort is still knocking around. What you do at night is what is going on this list."

“Speaking of those we call unspeakable,” Harry ran a finger over the swirled lines and runes of Percy’s Unspeakable mark on his wrist. “Are you going to be able to glamour this? It may raise some very awkward questions...I think your future, possibly a seer, supervisor is probably already at the ministry.”

“No, I can't glamour it,” he winced in answer. “No one will admit to this, but Voldemort’s Dark Mark was developed from these. Rookwood taught him the magic. These basically have a mind of their own and can’t be covered easily. Knowing the Department of Mysteries, it's possible that I'm suddenly registered as an Unspeakable now in this time...I guess we'll just have to wait and see if I get called to any department meetings.”

“That'd be inconvenient. Well, better pick up a wide bracelet then, start a new fashion trend,” Harry shrugged, filing that away as something to deal with later. “Although, it’s the 90’s now...yeah, I think that was already on trend, so no problem there.”

He jotted down the note on the corner of the page with new clothes containing sizing charms for Harry added. “Right...so kill current dark lord...you have to establish a following if you’re going to take his place...”

“Can’t I just steal his current followers,” Harry pouted. It was the part of his plan he was least looking forward to.”

“Not if you want to pull over some of the moderate or light supporters. I think you would have a good sell to get Remus and Tonks to our side at the very least,” he paused in writing with a sad look.

“Yeah, show them a couple memories and I have my inner circle...same with Ron and Hermione I would assume. This *was* Hermione’s plan after all,” Harry nodded, touching an earring to ground himself and suddenly thinking this might not be as hard as he initially thought. “Also, put on there to set Remus up as the new Minister of Magic.”

Percy actually put the quill down to look at him in disbelief. “Wasn’t that going to be you? You *are* the new Dark Lord and all...”

“Nope...I’m the Dark Lord, not minister material,” Harry gave him a look to show just how much he would hate that idea. “Plus, Remus is really smart and is a werewolf so we counter the creature legislation there and we make sure to keep his record clean...unlike mine will be, so that he’ll appeal to both the light and dark.”

“Sure, sounds good to me,” Percy shrugged and wrote it down. He really didn’t care as long as the future administration they were familiar with didn’t take over...well, that and that he didn’t have to do it. “What do you want to do about Dumbledore?”

“Keep him in the dark as long as humanly possible. I hope he can be convinced to come to our side at some point, or we’ll have to figure out a way to take him out of play,” Harry growled, still having a lot of stored up anger for the man. “I think we’ll need to get Snape on our side to be able to do that though...From what I know about the man, I’m guessing my odds are pretty good there. I’m handy with Legilimancy and Obliviate these days if I’m wrong though...which, new wand, add that to the list. I can’t stand having the stupid trace on me!”

“We’ll go by Knockturn once we get a general plan going here,” Percy assured him. Both of them were much more comfortable in Knockturn than Diagon Alley these days. “I bet Sullivan’s clothing store will be open early too. He can add charms so your clothes will fit both 15-year-old you and 27-year-old you.”

“So much better than Madam Malkin’s!” Harry agreed quickly. “Also, and this is *very* important...”

Percy looked up, knowing his partner well enough to know this wasn’t actually going to be important. “Yes...?”

“We both need to pick a couple things we want to put on that list just for the sheer pettiness of it,” Harry said sagely.

He continued at Percy's skeptical look. “We’re back twelve years in time. What do you want to do to fuck up the timeline for *Percy*? I think we should get a bit of satisfaction out of saving everyone’s arses from themselves. It’s not like becoming a Dark Lord was ever on my career planning sheet during Hogwarts, so I should get to do something I want to do as well as you.”

Percy had to admit, he really liked that idea. Merlin, they both needed mind-healers! “Sure, why not,” he shrugged and immediately added the two things that came to his mind first to their list.

“No fair!” Harry pouted deeply causing Percy to smirk at him and really want to kiss that pout away. “I wanted Umbridge!”

“Oh, love, I have more access to her than you do right now,” he reminded the man as sweetly as possible. “Plus, it was *her* proposed legislation that we have to stop with this whole insane trip.”

“Fine,” Harry did take Percy’s hand and place a little kiss to the back of it though. “If she shows up at Hogwarts, then dibs transfers to me though. And don’t get caught! I’ll storm Azkaban for you, but it should be the absolute last resort.”

“Fair enough...”

“Ergh! You are such a nerd!” Harry laughed at the next thing Percy had written down. “Finish your research? You have all the time in the world for that...well, at least until we get killed or arrested by the aurors. Pick something petty, please, or I’ll feel bad. I was going to add killing Pettigrew and setting up Remus and Tonks again to the list...I miss Teddy.”

“Harry, dear...I was never allowed to tell you what my research was in, and I think it could be helpful to our cause,” Percy couldn’t help the gleeful look that came into his eyes. Without having to follow the ministry’s rules, he could now do all the things he was banned from before...well, still not legally, but at least he wasn’t trying to keep his job anymore.

Harry took the last bite of his shepherd’s pie and leaned back expectantly. “So...will the all-knowing Unspeakable finally let me in on what he’s been doing in the office all day for years now? I know it has something to do with soul magic since I can feel it leeching off of you when you come home...I might not be as good at feeling magic as you, but soul magic is part of my inner-being now.”

“Fair...” He nodded, realizing he should have known Harry would be able to detect it. “Yeah, so, my area is inferi...I’m working to give them actual sentence if not their own souls back...”

“You’re working in *Necromancy*?!” Harry gasped in a startled whisper while looking around to make sure no one was paying attention to them, even if they were behind a privacy ward. “And the ministry sanctioned that?!”

“We’re the Unspeakables,” he shrugged. “The laws tend to be tossed out regularly in the Department of Mysteries. I know, hypocritical, but it works in my favor at least.”

Harry gave him an appreciative look that bordered on lecherous. “I thought you couldn’t get any hotter, but then you go and tell me you’re a necromancer...you don’t happen to have those old horned-rimmed glasses around anywhere, do you? I might just self-implode if you do.”

Percy looked around the pub as well before leaning in with a matching grin. “When do you have to get back?” He asked with a raise of his eyebrow. “My flat is just off Diagon.”

Harry did some very creative mental math. “I would guess the Order is coming to get me tonight. I remember us flying off on brooms when it was dark, which...clearly not safe. I don’t know what they were thinking! Anyway...my relatives won’t care or notice if I’m gone all day, I just need to get back before the sun goes down.”

Percy grinned even more broadly. “Right...business first though. Let’s get you that new wand, some age and size appropriate clothes with charms on them, then...we have the rest of the day. I’ll tell the ministry I’m sick and skip out on work today.”

“Awesome! You just quit your job in the future; you should get a day,” the younger man stood and dispelled the ward with a wave of his hand.

“More like I would have been fired and a warrant issued for my arrest,” he muttered lowly so only Harry could hear.

“Potato/tomato, or whatever that saying is...” he just shrugged and excitedly pulled Percy by the hand to the back of the pub to access the alley. “I’m suddenly motivated to handle our errands as quickly as possible.”

“Bank first then...do you have your key on you?”

Harry paused with a frown. “Did I *ever* have my key...?” He couldn’t remember. He had one in the future, but when had he gotten it? It had to have been after the dragon incident when he’d had reparations and groveling and all that.

“Merlin...fine, we’ll get you a blood test too for a new key,” Percy grumbled and tapped the bricks to open the wall. “I thought you were less of a hot mess when you were younger, apparently I was mistaken.”

Harry just grinned at him broadly. “Yeah...should have warned you...that’s probably from trauma that happened from even before Hogwarts...or I was just always this way, not sure which. You love me anyway though,” he said confidently.

Percy sighed deeply. “That I do, you prat.”

“Love you too!” He threw an arm around Percy’s waist, and they strode into a very different Diagon Alley than they were used to in their time.

Ghosts Around Us

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry was extremely irritated. He'd had a wonderful day with his partner where they'd done their best to make each other forget they had so very much to do, and he was loving his new wand made of ebony wood with a core of dementor skin...he got a sick kick out of that to be sure. Now, however, he was sitting in his fifteen-year-old body on his creaky, and very uncomfortable bed waiting on people to pick him up that were ineffectual during the war at best and downright incompetent at worst.

Frankly, the only people besides his friends that legitimately made a *positive* difference to the outcome of the war had been Remus for teaching him the patronus charm, Sirius that saved his life at the end of this year before dying, Dumbledore for better or worse, Draco Malfoy who he was going to have to figure out a way to get out of all this mess, and Snape.

Mentally, Harry added Draco Malfoy to his running list of possible future followers. That prat was annoying but would make a good follower to pull over some of the darker families. He wasn't sure about Sirius...he'd never quite figured out exactly how mentally stable the man was. Sometimes he seemed fine, and sometimes...well, he would be a liability regardless until Harry figured out a way to clear his name. Thankfully, Pettigrew was now gleefully added to the year's to-do list.

Harry rolled his eyes dramatically when he heard Tonks trip over something in the house and the Order members being incompetent once more in sneaking in. Instead of just waiting on them, he shrunk his trunk and shoved it in a pocket before throwing his door open. Now, he *could* just make it known that he heard them and say hi...but Harry was definitely not that kind of person.

"Aculeo augere," he flicked his wand with the whispered incantation down the stairs.

A beautiful chorus of multiple people gasping and squealing met his ears. It wasn't a very useful charm in battle but feeling like you were being stung by a jellyfish was very satisfactory for the caster at least. "You know a herd of hippogriffs would be quieter than you lot," Harry drawled and ended the spell with a flick of his wand, smirking at the stunned group standing in his Aunt Petunia's good sitting room.

“Weren’t we picking you up because of some underage magic nonsense already?” Moody grumbled, rubbing the sting out of his good arm with a glare that was irritated but also impressed. It *was* a pretty obscure spell, but thankfully just on the right side of legal.

Harry raised his eyebrow at the man. “I’m really hoping you are the real Moody this time... and as I’ve heard you are wont to say... ‘Constant Vigilance!’” Harry smirked at him. “After dementors attacked me in the middle of Surrey, I took the Knight Bus to Knockturn Alley and got myself a new wand without the trace on it. I’ll not be held back during a fight ever again. I’m sure you can agree...”

“Er... isn’t that illegal?” Tonks loudly whispered to a now, smiling Moody... that was quite terrifying.

“I’m pretty sure I’ve done *much* more illegal things than this the past few years,” Harry shrugged unconcernedly. Merlin, he’d actually done a lot before his fifth year already... if they only knew what he’d done since... anyway... “If Voldemort wants me dead, then I plan to take him with me at the very least.”

“I hate to say it... but I agree with Harry,” Remus gave him a little smile. Harry’s heart melted. He loved Remus, he really did. He just didn’t know him as well as he would like, so the man’s death had been traumatic, but thankfully nothing to set off his already precarious hold on reality.

“Let’s maybe not tell your friends though... or Dumbledore... but you *should* be able to defend yourself and not have to risk being expelled,” Remus added at the end, giving the auror and former auror a stern look to let it go.

“Hmm... old Barty might not have been completely shit at the job,” Moody gave Harry a gruesome grin. “He was clearly channeling me and my brilliance though! Well... come on, kid. Let’s get you out of this muggle hell!”

Harry crossed his arms and stood his ground. “I’m not leaving these wards with a group of people I really don’t know very well or that I’m not sure if they are who they say they are... so, for lack of a better choice, Remus... what do I hear when the dementors are around me?

Only Remus Lupin and Ron and Hermione know the answer to that,” he tapped the tip of his wand against his arm with a challenging look in his eyes.

“I *like* him...” Moody grumbled with a little booming laugh. “Good boy!” Harry gave him a scathing look at the use of ‘boy,’ but just waited on Remus who was a little pale at having to answer that particular question.

“You hear your parents being murdered...” he said quietly. “Turn about and all since you seem very different since last I saw you, though that was about a year ago...what form does your patronus take?”

“I’ve gone through a lot in a year,” Harry shrugged with a hard look in his eyes at the question the man had asked. “And you need to do better than that, Remus, if you want to stay alive. Everyone saw my stag patronus during that quidditch match my third year. You *have* to have a better question.”

“I *really* like this kid!” Moody laughed once more and Tonks just took a step further away from the grizzled auror, a bit scared at his behavior.

Remus seemed taken aback...it was clear he actually didn’t know Harry that well at all. He gave a little sniff of the air before looking confused and inhaling even more. He turned a hard gaze on the (supposed) teen. “What was the first and unsuccessful memory you chose for your patronus?”

All right, Harry was a little impressed the man remembered that...frankly, it took him a minute since he wasn’t sure he remembered himself. The man’s continued sniffs were starting to freak him out too. “It was flying on a broom for the first time,” he finally remembered, thankfully.

What the hell could Remus be smelling on him?! It made him want to sniff himself to check, but he tried to refrain from that. He was now getting a very pointed look with another questioning sniff. A werewolf wouldn’t be able to smell his changed core, and even at 27 his actual scent shouldn’t have changed enough for someone not that familiar with him to notice...then he remembered what he’d been doing that day, and he kicked himself for prioritizing a nap over a shower.

Harry was a very stubborn person, but the look he was getting from Remus clearly said he was going to be out-stubborned until he fessed up. “Fine!” He groaned and threw his arms into the air. “Clearly, you are a very powerful werewolf with an amazing sense of smell!”

“I guess you believe we are who we say we are then,” Remus smirked at him. “Now...care to explain the very distinctive smell I’m getting from you right now?”

“Well, I was out anyway getting the wand, so I clearly swung by to see my boyfriend. I’m a teenager, and it’s been a long summer...plus, I almost *died*,” he added on for good measure. “Give a traumatized guy a break!”

“How did you sneak past the guard?” Moody frowned deeply as the implications of Harry sneaking out finally registered for him.

“You have a boyfriend?” Remus asked at the same time.

“First of all, your guards are very visible and easily distracted,” Harry informed the man with a disappointed look. “I’m assuming you didn’t train them...” that seemed to mollify Moody slightly, but now he looked very angry at the guards. “And as for my personal life, you never asked,” he accused the werewolf, who really hadn’t, even if he was stretching the truth there a bit.

“Erm...everyone, hi I’m Tonks by the way,” Tonks gave him a little smile and sheepish wave. “We should probably get going. We’re due back soon to headquarters.”

“Right...well, I hear you’re good at flying. You got your broom?” Moody huffed and turned his piercing gaze on Harry.

For his part, Harry couldn’t help a little smile at the brilliance of Percy whose Unspeakable glamour charm couldn’t even be seen through by Moody’s magical eye. “Wouldn’t side-along apparition or portkey be easier and safer?” He asked, wondering yet again why they were flying.

“We couldn’t chance registering a portkey, and Dumbledore suggested you’d appreciate flying more than side-along,” Remus answered his question.

“I’d appreciate not having to fly cross-country at night in the open with Voldemort out there,” Harry just rolled his eyes. They really weren’t taking the danger seriously yet. Thankfully, that worked in his favor since he planned on taking over...but baby-steps. Plus, he was still allowed to be irritated since all three of these people hadn’t survived the war.

“Right, well, stay close, and I’ll apparate the boy once we cross the wards,” Moody instructed the group.

“Harry, kid, brat, nuisance, Potter, dunderhead...all names I will find acceptable,” Harry glared at the older man. “Boy is *not* one of those names.”

Moody’s face remarkably cracked into that terrifying grin once more. “Fine, I’ll apparate the *brat* once we cross the wards.”

“Brilliant!” Harry grinned broadly at him and led the way out of the house with a laughing Tonks and Remus following along behind them.

Harry took in a deep steadying breath, using the distraction of him holding the paper with the address to the already clearly visible to him Grimmauld Place to take a personal moment. He wasn’t sure what was going to happen to the wards on the house when he entered. Hopefully nothing, but magic was odd and not bound by time as much as humans are, and Harry had been the owner of the house and made *significant* changes to the house itself and wards. Plus, he had a sneaking suspicion the house liked him better than Sirius...

Regardless, he really couldn’t care less at the moment. He knew he was going to have a hell of a time making it through what awaited him on the other side of that door. While he loved Remus and Tonks both, he was really not ever that close to them. He’d been much closer to Teddy. The people in that house though...Sirius, Fred, Kreacher...Ron and Hermione...he

wasn't sure he could mentally make it through the next few minutes and wished to Merlin that Percy was there with him to ground him to reality.

"Oh wow...cool," he said with as much feeling as he could muster at the house supposedly appearing...it really wasn't much feeling at all.

The next few minutes were all a blur to Harry...people were talking and he was being led into the house, he even felt the wards snapping into place around him, claiming him as their master, but all that was ancillary to the person waiting for him on the other side of the door.

"Harry!!" Sirius beamed at him and rushed over, only pausing when he wasn't sure if they were hugging people or not.

"Sirius..." Harry was almost frantically rubbing at the invisible silver bar through his eyebrow, trying to keep himself in the present. "Hey...I missed you..." he breached the distance and wrapped his arms around his godfather's middle, breathing in the smell of dust, whiskey, and aftershave.

He did briefly black out then, but it seemed to only be a second as he felt Moody shove by them and bring him back to reality. "You never told me the brat had the most braincells of you lot," Moody remarked as he walked by.

"Don't call Harry, brat!" Sirius grumbled with Harry's head still in his chest. The glamour even freaking made him seem smaller and Harry was loving being almost wrapped up completely in the man he loved so much and had missed so dearly.

"Harry actually gave him permission," Remus laughed since Moody hadn't even paused to respond.

Walburga began screeching when Tonks, of course, tripped over the umbrella stand and Harry just smiled into Sirius's shirt. He would have words with the portrait later...she was probably the only one that recognized the wards changing over anyway. Sirius was too disconnected from his family magic to have noticed, and thankfully, Dumbledore wasn't there when it happened.

“Padfoot...heads up, you might want to give our little Prongslet a lecture on safe-sex, by the way,” Remus told the man pointedly. “Probably more than a bit overdue.”

“Hey!” Harry protested with very little feeling. He’d sit through a lecture if it meant he could be with Sirius...frankly, he figured he’d be much less embarrassed at the whole thing than the other man, it might even be a bit funny.

Sirius chuckled and leaned away to look at Harry better. “You got caught out by the werewolf nose too? Merlin, we never could get away with anything in school with Moony around. Who is the lucky young lady? And erm, Moony...you might be better for that particular lecture because...you know...” He gave a dramatic nod with wide eyes.

“I don’t think he’s going to mind, Padfoot,” Remus rolled his eyes fondly at his friend. “Especially since he said he’d spent the day with his *boyfriend*.”

“Merlin! Really?! Thank Mother Magic!” Sirius almost crumpled in relief. “Remy said you’d been living with muggles, and they’re super prejudiced and that it might be best if I keep the whole being gay thing under wraps for now...but, wow! We have so much to talk about!! Merlin, it feels good to not have to keep a secret from you!”

Harry raised a surprised eyebrow. One, he’d never known that about Sirius, and two, why had his godfather thought he’d be prejudiced like his horrible family? “We really can skip the sex-talk and just chat about life, you know,” he finally responded, stepping back a bit. He really just wanted to know Sirius as a person better.

Harry was actually proud of himself; he’d gotten through that entire encounter without crying or disassociating or even blacking out for more than a second. It was a win for him. He was sure he’d pay for it with horrific night-terrors that evening though. It was just the way his luck (and trauma) ran.

Unfortunately, this wasn’t the meeting he was fearing the most. “Harry!” He heard a deep voice he hadn’t heard in several years now call out excitedly from the stairwell.

He gripped his arms, almost drawing blood and tried to breathe normally. It wasn't working. "Harry?" the same voice now spoke much nearer to him and with worry tinged it. The world disappeared and he could only hear screams and crying. Everything was pain...

Harry crashed back to reality as Sirius's scent came back into proximity and his familiar hand landed on his back. "Hey, Pup...you ok?"

Shit! Clearly, he wasn't holding it together. He tried to smile, but it was probably more like a grimace. There was the familiar haze starting at the corners of his vision once again, but he tried to push it aside as he looked at the two people now crowding out the older men. Sod it! Harry launched himself into Ron's arms, not being able to handle everything anymore. The tears flowed from his eyes as he blindly reached out and too tightly grasped Hermione's hand as well.

These were his friends...yes, they were younger versions, but they were still *his* people. They were *his* family, and he'd missed them like not being able to breathe. "Hey, it's ok...what happened?" Ron muttered with a stunned tone in his voice and the tightest grip possible around Harry's frame. "They said you were fine. Was it your relatives? I knew we should have cursed them or something!"

"Harry...it's ok, we're here," Hermione returned the crushing grip and rubbed his back with her free hand.

"What happened to him?" Sirius's voice asked from the other side of Harry's cocoon of everything he'd come back to the past for.

"I'm fine," he mumbled from Ron's collar. "I almost died and didn't think I'd see you two again," he said, it was a crap explanation for his actions, but it was the best he could do right now.

"We love you too, mate," Ron mumbled back in a surprised tone while Hermione continued to rub circles into his back.

“Oh Harry...” Mrs. Weasley’s sad voice broke into the group, causing Harry to gather himself up and finally release his death-grip on his friends. “We’re so glad you are here... why don’t you all go take a moment to yourselves and settle in upstairs before dinner,” she suggested pointedly to her son and Hermione.

Harry was grateful she recognized that he probably didn’t want this breakdown seen by the entire Order and gave her a little nod. He loved Mum Weasley and had missed her, especially her cooking. “Yeah, that sounds good...show me to my room, R-Ron?” He almost gasped out.

“Yeah...come on,” Ron uncharacteristically actually took Harry’s hand in his and pulled him towards the stairs, somehow instinctively realizing he needed the comfort.

The house was so familiar and also so different than what Harry was used to as they made their way past the room he normally shared with Percy in the future, the room he’d turned into his ritual room, and what had been his study with all the dark artifacts he’d collected. The artifacts which he traded on the black market as a sort-of job to fund the underground network of people he had cultivated to safeguard families away when they became in danger from the ministry, or more specifically the Department of Relocation and Retrieval.

“Harry...?” Hermione began.

“Wait until we’re in the room,” he mumbled, remembering Fred and George’s extendable ears well, and he hadn’t seen them around yet, which usually wasn’t a good sign.

He briefly debated what he should tell Ron and Hermione before just throwing all his ideas out and settling on telling them the truth. He’d never lied to either of them, ever, and he wasn’t about to start now. Besides, if he was going to have an inner circle, it was going to be these two...and if they disagreed with this whole plan, then that was actually a very important thing to take into account. He was self-aware enough to realize that neither he nor Percy were stable individuals. If they were going to change this insane plan for any reason, it would be because Ron, or more likely, Hermione told them it was a bad idea as the two people who would understand why they did what they did but also not have gone through all the trauma they had.

“You’re sharing with me in here,” Ron remarked, opening the familiar door and pulling Harry inside.

“Spill,” Hermione put her hands on her hips and glared at him as soon as she closed the door behind them.

Harry huffed and instead pulled out his new wand and cast a complicated privacy ward around both the door of the room and the empty portrait he knew Headmaster Black frequented. “Is that a new wand?” Ron frowned.

“What was that spell?” Hermione exclaimed at the same time.

“Right...so, sit down on something and give me a minute, ok...if you haven’t noticed, I’m having a bit of a hard time right now,” Harry plopped down on his bed and buried his face in his pillow for a second, just trying to still his racing heart and cut out all the external stimuli and ghosts around him.

“What happened this summer, Harry?” The bed dipped beside Harry where he knew Hermione had sat down with him.

He gave a wry snort, not even knowing how to start addressing that. Their Harry was dead... erased from existence, and the Harry they had now was so broken that only hope, sheer stubbornness, firewhiskey, and Percy held him together these days. “I need a drink,” he grumbled but sat up to look at them again.

“I’m going to start with ‘I’m sorry,’ and I’ll circle back around to that,” he began in a deep sigh, seeing Ron sit on the edge of his bed beside Hermione and them both look at him in anticipation. “Hermione...I need you to actually consider something for me, will you?”

Hermione looked so very confused. “Of course, Harry...what’s up?”

“What would you do, Hermione Granger, if things had gotten so bad, you couldn’t fix them. You were in the middle of hell before you even realized it’d began. Everything you cared about, everything you held dear was gone, and there just wasn’t a way to fix it,” he looked at her with tired eyes, eyes that had seen his world fall around him and his family ripped from his arms.

“Mate...” Ron began with a frown.

“No, Ron, I’m thinking,” Hermione stopped him, seeing that Harry was deadly serious. “I suppose, if there was no way to fix it, if there was no going forwards, I would try to change what already happened...like third year. We’re wixen...I know I may be more practical than the average witch, but the laws of nature don’t actually apply to us...there would have to be a way to write a new law. I guess, I’m getting at...I’d do whatever it takes, but I wouldn’t give up...”

Harry couldn’t help the dry laugh that escaped his throat. “That was always the difference between you and me ‘Mione...you would move the earth to fix it while I would burn it down in anger...”

“I’m getting really scared, Harry...where’s this going?” Ron reached out and put a hand on Harry’s ankle, trying to reassure himself his friend was there and well.

“We got there, guys...” He looked at them both. “We were in the middle and lost everything, there was no going forward and no going back, so Hermione did what Hermione does best and researched...she planned it all...and left it to me to blast my way through like the wrecking ball I am.”

“I’m really confused...” Ron began.

“Wait...are you implying...are you really...Harry?” Hermione seemed to question everything in that moment. “What is your patronus form?”

“You’re second person today I’ve had to tell that question is a crap one since way too many people know the answer, but it used to be a stag,” he told her. “I can’t cast one anymore...as a

better proof, when we went back in time third year, I originally thought it was my dad that cast the patronus that saved me and Sirius.”

“You’re really Harry?” She frowned. “But...back in time?”

“I’m really Harry,” he said with a sad smile. “But also...I need to circle back to that apology,” he said and gave his wand a wave, dispelling the glamour covering his entire body.

Both his friends gasped in complete shock and seemed to be considering if they should run or start firing off curses before it finally registered on both their faces that the man sitting with them was actually Harry. “Bloody hell!” Ron gasped, taking in the piercings, the tattoos, the scars that littered the visible parts of his body, and the long braid of dark hair littered with silver.

“Merlin,” Hermione breathed out. “I sent you back in time...” she uttered dazedly. “Did I really and truly rewrite the laws of time itself and fucking send you back in time *years*?!?”

Both men looked at Hermione like she’d just punched Malfoy in the face again. “Er...yeah,” Harry finally answered. “I’m, erm, well...I’m 27.”

“I don’t even know what to say about that,” Ron shook his head seeming to give up on even absorbing all the information. “We all knew ‘Mione was brilliant though...er, so...how do I look in your time? Got a bit of a belly like Dad or fit like you? I didn’t go bald, did I?!?”

Hermione put a hand over her mouth with a little gasp. “Ron...we’re dead...don’t you realize. When he saw us downstairs earlier...He was seeing ghosts...”

“Bugger,” Ron’s face fell. “Well...we’re changing that, right? I’d like to live to get that potbelly.”

“You are both taking this so much better than I thought you would,” Harry frowned deeply. He was waiting for the other shoe to drop. “You do realize, this means that *your* Harry...well,

it wasn't planned, and we didn't know it would happen, but...well, he wasn't here when I showed up..."

"You took his place," Hermione breathed out. "That might make sense...it would be the only way to counteract the repercussions of there being two of a person in a given time."

"Souls cannot duplicate and cannot exist in separate bodies without splitting. It only works with a time-turner because of the limited amount of time you can go back, and also why you're not supposed to see yourself since the souls will try to realign," Harry nodded.

He'd thought about it since that morning, and it made sense when taking into account that he would need to be in that time for more than just a day or two. It was one of the main reasons one couldn't go very far back in time before the ritual they did. If he didn't want his soul to split like a horcrux, then it couldn't exist for long in two locations as it would try to either pull itself together or apart.

"You know about soul-magic?" Hermione raised an interested but skeptical eyebrow.

"Some...there are parts that I'm definitely an expert in and parts that I really don't know much about. Thankfully my...significant other...partner...boyfriend...whatever, we never settled on a term, is an expert in those areas," Harry shrugged and looked at them a little sheepishly. "Er...by the way...I, erm, didn't exactly come back alone...he insisted on coming with me, the git. Didn't trust me to not just self-implode or something...probably wasn't wrong though."

Ron held up a finger and closed his eyes with a tired sigh. "Give me a minute. I'm processing...my best friend, sort-of died, but not really...Harry is still here but almost double my age, he looks like a badass and knows dark magic...Hermione is a genius, which we already knew...I die young, and she probably does too...oh, and my best mate likes blokes? I know it's not even close to the shocking bits of information, but you can't just slide it in there like we already know."

"Oh..." Harry hadn't even thought about that. They'd taken it really well the first time he told them back when he was around 19 or 20, so he hadn't even thought to put it on his list of things to break to them.

“So...yeah, I guess I do...I’ve been shagging a bloke for a couple years now, so it tracks,” he said with a wry grin, trying to make light of the information.

“Can we get back to someone travelling through time with you?” Hermione rolled her eyes at them. “Who is it? Clearly it wasn’t either of our dead arses.”

Harry raised an eyebrow at her again. “I remember you being a bit more prim with your language, Hermione...”

“I just learned I’m dead and the world apparently got so bad that killing off the younger version of my best friend sounded like an acceptable idea, so excuse me if I don’t really care about being proper right now,” she glared dangerously at him.

“Noted,” Harry nodded in appreciation. Even a look from a 15-year-old Hermione could still scare him. “You’ll figure out who it is pretty quickly even with the aging charms since I really don’t care at all to keep it a secret, at least from you two, so I’ll just say, someone you know...now, do you want to hear about my plan?”

“Er...first, why did we die and what happened?” Ron raised a questioning hand. “Personally, I’d like to know *why* you came back in time before what you plan to do while here. It’s very important to the strategy and all.”

Harry grimaced since he didn’t really want to get into it, *ever*. They needed to know, but he should probably skim over a bit of the gruesomeness for the fifteen-year-olds. “The war gets really bad,” Harry began. “It starts in earnest at the end of this year, but things have already been set in motion. You might not know the name Dolores Umbridge yet, but she’s already whispering poison in the Wizengamut. She doesn’t work for Voldy, but some of the things he does like setting werewolves on innocent families and using creatures and mercenaries to round up those against him add fuel to the flame she started.”

“So, we lost the war...” Hermione breathed out dejectedly.

“No...we actually win,” Harry shook his head and squeezed her hand in comfort. “It was too late though, the hate against creatures and anyone different, and anyone who even considered speaking against the ministry had already begun. Laws tightened, then rights were taken away, then people started disappearing. Originally, it was former Death Eaters that had either been pardoned or had served out probation or a short prison sentence, then it was those with creature blood.”

“Merlin,” Ron gasped. “But...Professor Lupin, and Hagrid...”

Harry took in a deep breath and rubbed his hand over the rings in his right ear. “When my godson was taken because he had *some* creature blood was when we started paying attention in earnest. First, we thought he’d been kidnapped, then the Department of Relocation and Retrieval was announced. They were said to be setting up a new community for those with creature blood to live in peace away from wixen to keep both groups safe...the problem was, no one ever heard from those taken again.”

“We searched and searched, but none of them would admit to taking Teddy and we couldn’t find him no matter what we did. Hermione and I got into some pretty dark magic looking for him, and even that didn’t work.”

“Oh Harry...was he...was he one of ours?” Hermione motioned to the two of them.

Harry shook his head firmly, now scratching a place on his arm he was certain would eventually draw blood. “No...Remus and Teddy’s mother didn’t survive the war,” he told them and clenched his jaw tight. “A lot of people didn’t...it’s like walking through ghosts out there...and in here,” he looked up at them.

“We survived the war though,” Ron reached out and grabbed Harry’s hand, clutching it to keep him from continuing to scratch. “We were helping you find Teddy...”

Harry nodded. “Ron was an auror...a damn good one too. He’d never been sent to work with Relocation and Retrieval though. When he started asking questions and causing them problems, he was sent on a raid of a vampire nest. He...*you*, made it out, but not before being captured and turned...”

“Right,” Ron nodded firmly and compartmentalizing that fact. “I’m not saying becoming a vampire was top of my wish-list, but I lived through it...I’m guessing I was eventually taken by this group when they found out?”

“Yeah...you made a pretty rotten vampire, just so you know,” Harry gave him a glare and rubbed a few fang marks that had scarred on his neck. Supposedly, he tasted good, which was something he never needed to know.

“I imagine neither of us took that well,” Hermione gave Harry a teary look.

Harry just snorted at that understatement. “It was when you...my Hermione, started putting her plans in motion. She’d started after Teddy, but now she was unstoppable...until she was caught helping out a kid who’d just recently been bitten by a feral werewolf...wolfsbane was almost impossible to get anymore. I was already in France, working our contacts on the other side to get the kid to safety, and the safe house was raided before you could meet up with me. Hermione and Kreacher did their best, but neither made it out...I don’t know about the kid... I think he was taken.”

Both teens looked at Harry like that was the least believable part of his entire story. “*Kreacher?*” Ron looked at him questioningly. “The evil house elf that mutters under his breath about how much he wants to kill all of us? Mate, you haven’t met him yet...or you shouldn’t have anyway, but he’s a bloody menace!”

Harry laughed. He could see now why that was so shocking. He’d forgotten how Kreacher used to be. “Yeah...he comes around once we figure out why he’s so ornery...which, yeah, it’s a good reason. Anyway, the house elves are too powerful for the ministry to leave them be for too long after everything starts, even they aren’t doing very well by the time I left.”

“Ok...so you’re coming back to stop this? What’s the plan?” Hermione asked. “I left you a way to come back, did we come up with some kind of plan together?”

“Erm...so...no, we didn’t actually get to talk about that before,” Harry grimaced. “Er...I have a sort-of plan, but I’m not so sure you’re going to approve. It’s a bit drastic, but I don’t know what else to do.”

“Mate...it wouldn't be a Harry Potter plan if it wasn't dangerous and a bit insane,” Ron rolled his eyes knowingly at his friend who was still so much the same even if he was very different.

“Well...I had some input,” he grumbled.

“The mysterious boyfriend, we know,” Hermione huffed this time. “Out with it...what are we doing to fix all this? Personally, I don't want to have to do all that research again. I'm tired just hearing about it.”

“Right,” Harry nodded firmly, his green eyes flaring. “So, I'm taking over. Once I get rid of Voldy, much more quickly this time, I'm going to take his place. You are looking at Britain's next Dark Lord.”

Chapter End Notes

I've reached the end of what I already had written, so updates will take a little more time especially since I have another story I'm currently trying to finish out as well. I'm aiming for a chapter every week or two though.

A Portrait's Blood Oath

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Right,” Harry nodded firmly, his green eyes flaring. “So, I’m taking over. Once I get rid of Voldy, much more quickly this time, I’m going to take his place. You are looking at Britain’s next Dark Lord.”

Both of Harry’s friends just stared at him with confused looks on their faces. “Hermione...I misheard Harry,” Ron turned to their other friend with a pleading look in his eyes. “I’m pretty sure I heard him say that he’s become a murderous psychopath sometime in the last decade that now wants to take over from You-Know-Who, but I have to be wrong...please tell me I’m wrong.”

“He’d better not be. I’ll not be responsible for sending a murderous psychopath back in time,” Hermione glared at their now older friend. “Explain...and it better be really good.”

In deference to his friends, Harry did actually do a little introspection to make sure he really and truly hadn’t gone off the deep end, but no he’d thought through this and had good reasoning. He didn’t think he was doing anything wrong in the grand scheme of what was going to happen to their society if he didn’t do anything. He didn’t spare more than the passing thought that he’d probably think the same if he really were a murderous psychopath though...oh well, nothing he could do about that.

“No, I’m pretty sure I’m not a murderous psychopath,” he told them confidently.

“However, I do think I’m much more practical than your younger Harry where this war is concerned, and not squeamish when it comes to handling things when they need to be handled...for instance, there are some people that really should not make it out of this alive, like Voldemort...However, I promise I will never just go around killing people for the fun of it like he does. I also will always listen to you two if there is something you disagree with that I think needs to be done, but I also might not check with you on everything since I do have over a decade more experience and foreknowledge than you do.”

Ron and Hermione shared a look. “I guess I can agree with that for now,” Ron slowly admitted. “What you described...we can’t let that happen, no matter what. If you aren’t going on a murderous rampage, then what do you mean by being a Dark Lord? I only know the title in connection to the maniac that’s been trying to kill you for years.”

“Are there some criteria or something for the job?” Hermione added on. “I just thought You-Know-Who took the title and made people use it.”

Harry gave them a broad smile that was less reassuring than he hoped it would be. “Well, there are actually criteria for what it takes to be a legitimate Dark Lord as recognized by magic. First, you need a dark core, then you need to be a master of Dark Arts, then you need a cause to champion for the side of the Dark, lastly you need a following. Nowhere in there does it say you need to torture and kill or even do anything generally deemed as immoral... whatever that means.”

“Er...mate...do you actually fulfill those requirements? I don’t think even You-Know-Who does...at least his cause seems to be hurting the Dark more than helping it,” Ron frowned even more deeply at that implication. “I suppose you have a better cause because more tolerance and acceptance is good for both the Dark and the Light, and I guess we’ll be working on getting that following, but how the hell do you change your core...and did you actually pick up a mastery in the past decade?!”

“I find myself both impressed and highly irritated at you if you have the drive to pick up a mastery, but I have to consistently remind you to do your homework every night,” Hermione grumbled and gave his leg a little kick with her foot to get her point across.

Harry couldn’t help the fond looks and the tears that built up behind his eyes. They were still there. They might be wary and concerned about his plan, but they were listening to him, and seemed to even be considering it. “I missed you both so much...”

“Yeah, yeah, keep it moving with the explanation so that I can get to my freaking out. I’m building up to a really good panic and want time for that before dinner,” Ron prompted him with an exasperated look. He really could do without the constant reminders that he was most likely dead in Harry’s time.

“Well...starting from the beginning-ish. After the war, I joined the aurors with you, Ron,” Harry took a breath and steeled himself to explain. “However, I was ‘politely’ asked to leave after just about two weeks when it became clear my magical core is almost completely dark. You can’t have an auror hunting down dark wizards who is a dark wizard himself apparently. It really made me start to question what it actually meant to be a dark wizard though when I was kicked out but hadn’t actually done anything wrong...at that point anyway. As for my core, my boyfriend seems to think it’s because I died at the end of the war and came back, and he’s really never wrong about these things so I’d believe him.”

“Died...like...huh?” Ron asked but they both were giving him confused looks.

Harry grimaced. “I can’t explain everything right now. Frankly, you both already know too much with Snape and Dumbledore running around. I’m going to have to teach you Occlumency and quick, but even now, I need you both to avoid any sustained eye contact with either of them. I’m planning to get Snape to join us eventually, but I don’t think Dumbledore will be a good idea to approach.”

“Er, huh?” Ron asked yet again, seeming stuck on a loop. “What’s Occlumency?”

“Why Snape and not Dumbledore?” Hermione looked way out of her element with the confusion he was throwing their way.

Harry breathed out a frustrated sigh, not at them but at the fact that they just really didn’t know anything when they were fifteen. “Look, there are a few books in the Black Library that I’ll get you as soon as I can sneak by the ‘adults’ to get in there. It will explain mind magic to you, something Dumbledore and Snape are both already proficient in. As for joining us, Snape is actually more on our side than either of you know right now, and he’s a dark wizard unlike Dumbledore. He’s still a git of a person, but I think he can be sold on helping us.”

“Wait, there’s a *library* in this house and no one told me?!!” Hermione indignantly protested, more upset at that than Harry proclaiming to take up the title of Dark Lord. Harry and Ron both had to laugh at her for that. The world might be crumbling around them, but they could at least still count on Hermione being upset about not being allowed in a library.

“It’s all Dark Arts and only members of the family and those added into the wards can enter,” he explained. He hadn’t even found the library until he’d been living there for a good few months and had been working on the wards. “It was very helpful when I studied for my mastery, which I actually did do, Hermione. I have a focus problem when studying that actually got worse over the years, but I’m working on it, and these help,” he lifted his shirt to show some of the focus and steadying runes he’d tattooed himself with when he realized it was either going to take some magical intervention or a mind-healer to get him the help he needed to buckle down and actually focus in on something like reading and potions and things like that which took concentration when his was completely shot.

Hermione studied the runes and frowned. “Like ADHD or something?” She asked with a nod, seeming to try to place his actions with her prior knowledge. “Those are very impressive, by the way.”

Harry shrugged and pulled his shirt back down. “I don’t know. A mind-healer was never really a practical option for me being who I am, especially after the war. I would guess it’s more PTSD, but either way, the runes help, and I was able to study with a master to get my own mastery in the field...not in Britain, of course, my master was based in Amsterdam.”

“Sweet,” Ron grinned at him widely. “I’ve always been warned off the Dark Arts, but after everything that happened last year and with You-Know-Who being back...I have to admit, I’ve been questioning the complete ban when it would help to know what *they* know when they clearly know what we do.”

“It’s not inherently evil, but that’s something I can explain another day when we have more time. I think your mum is going to call us to dinner soon,” Harry smiled at them thankfully. “For now, I’ll get those books for you, and I really do need you to work on Occlumency. If you can at least get some rudimentary shields around your mind, then I’ll teach you some useful spells and we can start planning in earnest...plus, there’s a pretty big thing that Dumbledore’s been keeping from everyone that I can’t fill you in on until your mind is protected.”

“And that’s why you’re not planning to ask Dumbledore to join our side,” Hermione nodded, understanding now. She was well aware that Harry didn’t like things being kept from him; it was tantamount to betrayal in his eyes. “He will be a problem eventually, you know.”

“And that’s why we’re going to get Snape to join us, and I’m hoping Remus and Tonks as well,” Harry nodded, well aware Dumbledore was going to be a major problem to his plan.

Hermione seemed to be sorting all the new information in her mind while Ron was already grumbling about more homework. Harry had a feeling Hermione was going to excel at mind magic. Ron...well, he might have to convince his more unfocused friend to let him spell a few runes onto him. Or maybe he should check with Percy first about the morality of putting tattoos on a fifteen-year-old...was that bad? He honestly wasn’t sure.

“You think I have time for a shower before dinner?” Harry sniffed himself while Hermione and Ron were visibly trying to recover from everything he’d thrown at him. “Remus said I smelled like sex...I should probably shower even though I don’t think anyone else has as good of a sense of smell as he does. Sirius has already been roped into a misguided attempt at a sex talk...I recommend keeping away from the werewolf after you two’s *alone* time if you don’t want to get roped into one as well.”

“Excuse you?!” Hermione sputtered while Ron’s mouth fell open. “I’ll have you know, we are fifteen-years-old, and why would Ron and I be doing anything together anyway?!”

Harry frowned deeply at the two of them. “You weren’t together yet in fifth year?” He asked, trying to remember when exactly the two became a couple. He’d gotten so used to Ron and Hermione as a couple even before they were officially a couple, it was hard to think back to when they weren’t. Even when they weren’t official, they’d still been dancing around each other and heading that direction.

“Wait...no Lavender Brown was sixth year, wasn’t she? Can we skip over that this time? It was highly annoying. Have you broken up with Krum yet?” He added on for Hermione. “That was...fourth year, but was he still in the picture our fifth?”

“What? Yes, we broke up over the summer, that was never really serious,” she sputtered. “Are you insinuating...?”

“Hermione and I are together?” Ron finished with wide, shocked eyes.

“Sorry,” Harry huffed and rolled his eyes. “This has been twelve years for me. I can’t remember everything. You two were dancing around each other for years, so I’m not extremely sure when you made it official...it might have been after the war, but I was certain there were some things going on behind my back before then. Look, just ignore I said anything if it makes you uncomfortable. You don’t have to get together if you don’t want to, but you made a really good couple surprisingly.”

“Kind of hard to just ignore, mate,” Ron was still looking a bit afraid over at Hermione, not sure what to do with this new information, or if he should do anything.

“Really, Ronald,” Hermione just sighed in exasperation at both of them. “Harry...could you maybe give us some time to talk. Go take that shower you need, and Ron and I will sort it. I think we need a little time to grieve our Harry too...it hasn’t really sunk in yet that we’ve basically lost him. I know you’re still here, but...”

“Yeah, I know,” Harry nodded with a sad look and stood to enlarge his trunk and start rifling through it. “I was sad when the skinny bugger wasn’t in the room when I popped back as well. I was hoping he’d grow up to be someone...well, not me. I’m doing my best, but I know I can’t be him...not anymore.”

“Don’t forget the glamour,” Hermione reminded him when Harry emerged from the trunk with some boxers, sweatpants, and a t-shirt.

Harry flicked his new wand, casting the brilliant spell Percy had taught him leaving a skinny fifteen-year-old standing in the room once more. “The privacy ward will stay until you two leave the room,” he motioned to the magic overlaying the bedroom door. “Mind saying anything around that portrait without a ward around it. Headmaster Black can move between it and Dumbledore’s office,” he added on with a nod towards the portrait.

Ron frowned in irritation at the portrait. “That’s an invasion of privacy!” He protested vehemently. “I want a new room!”

Harry huffed and rolled his eyes. “We shouldn’t be talking about things around the house much anyway. Plus, my glamour will fall in my sleep, so I’ll be keeping up his ward most of the time anyway.”

Hermione was studying him intently. “You may look like our Harry, but your mannerisms are even different...it’s odd seeing you with the glamour but also seeing who you are underneath.”

Harry ran his hand over the piercing in his eyebrow and tried to push aside his mounting anxiety that he’d fail. No, it was fine. If someone called him on acting differently, then it was due to losing Cedric, seeing Voldemort reborn, and almost getting his soul sucked out. Yes, it was a good excuse, and would explain his personality changing some.

“Right...shower. I’ll see you at dinner,” he nodded to them, forcefully pushing the anxiety aside. “Thank you for listening and not judging...feel free to curse me out while I’m gone though...Merlin knows I deserve it.”

“Hey...” Hermione grabbed his hand and gave it a little squeeze. “One, I sent you back in time, and two, you came to save us. We’re not going to curse you out or anything.”

“Yeah, mate...I’m mainly planning on asking ‘Mione if she thinks I’m fit,” Ron grinned widely at them both, recovering from his shock of before.

Hermione laughed, but Harry just smiled at them fondly. “Well, just don’t shag on my bed, that would be rude and gross,” he added before closing the door on the scandalized teenagers behind him.

“Merlin, I didn’t see this coming when I woke up this morning,” Ron flopped back on Harry’s bed and let out the pent-up anxiety he had been trying to hide from Harry. “What the hell are we going to do ‘Mione? I wasn’t planning on joining a Dark Lord...I’m not even a dark bloody wizard, but...it’s Harry...and it might actually be the best way to change things since he *is* a dark wizard...what do we do?!”

“I think we need a better name than ‘Death Eaters,’” she shrugged and flopped right down beside him. “What else are we going to do but join him? He seems to think that whatever Dumbledore is keeping from everyone is big, and the danger doesn’t even seem to be from You-Know-Who in the long run...I think we trust our Harry even if he’s older, rougher, and a bit more ruthless. He’s still *Harry* underneath it all.”

With a deep sigh, Ron nodded. "We should probably call the git Voldemort instead of You-Know-Who if we're now serving his competition," he snorted humorlessly. "Seems a bit disrespectful to our new Dark Lord...ergh, that's just weird!"

"Point taken," Hermione looked over at the door Harry had left through. "How concerned should we be that Harry doesn't seem to remember how to act like a fifteen-year-old and frankly also doesn't seem to care to try?"

"I'm more concerned about what happened to him in the entrance hall when he seemed to just go blank for a while. I think we might need to talk to the mysterious boyfriend about that," he shrugged before getting a horrible idea and sitting straight up on the bed. "Wait! You don't think Harry and Malfoy would ever get together in the future, do you? I swear, if he brought an older Malfoy back with him, we have to find a way to send the blond git back to when he came from!"

Hermione sat up and laughed. "I really don't know. He just said we knew the person. It could be anyone from school...sometimes animosity does translate to passion in the future though."

"I accepted the Dark Lord thing, I even accepted I died as a vampire, but I will absolutely *not* accept Harry dating Malfoy," Ron firmly protested. "Some things are just asking too much!"

"What about us?" Hermione looked at him a bit sheepishly. "Do we want to discuss that? I kind-of got the feeling that you might have wanted to go with me to the Yule Ball last year, but I wasn't sure..."

Ron was completely red at this point and cleared his throat awkwardly. "Well...yeah, I kind-of did. I mean, it was bloody hot when you punched Malfoy in third year, and well, I like your hair...and...bloody hell, Harry should just watch his mouth with the future knowledge," he groaned in frustration.

Hermione raised an eyebrow and smirked at him. "Your hair isn't so bad itself," she chuckled. "And seriously, *Lavender*? Why would you ever want to date her?!"

“I don’t *know*!” He threw his arms up. “I haven’t done it yet! Right at this moment, I don’t even like her that way!”

“Well...let’s take Harry’s advice and skip that this time around, shall we?” She grinned at him. “And...maybe we just put off any relationship decisions for a bit and try going to Hogsmeade together for the first trip? What do you think? Give it a try then?”

“Merlin, that sounds nice!” He gave her a relieved smile. “Yeah, let’s deal with trying to convince everyone Harry is 15 and not a dark wizard for now and give Hogsmeade a try. I like that.”

Hermione smiled and leaned back against the wall. “You think he could help me with my Runes homework now? Plus, wouldn’t he have to be good at Potions to get a Dark Arts mastery? How’d that work out?”

“Of course you see this as an opportunity to get homework help,” he chuckled and bumped her shoulder with his.

“It’s a valid question,” she huffed as they just sat there, letting everything sink in.

“Bloody hell!” Ron’s eyes widened. “He still has the trial! We’re going to send a dark wizard poorly pretending to be fifteen into the ministry! He’d better be able to hold it together.”

Hermione frowned. “What if the boyfriend is as much of a loose cannon as Harry is? What is he doing out there in the world while we have Harry here?”

“Bloody hell,” Ron leaned back again with a groan. “Let’s just hope he’s dating Neville or someone like that.”

Harry was much more comfortable, clean, and still had wet hair when he followed the smell of cottage pie to the kitchen where everyone was beginning to gather for dinner and after the Order meeting seemed to have just wrapped up. Right...he wasn't supposed to know about the Order yet he had to remind himself firmly. "Harry, I see you found the shower," Sirius gave him a smile and a wink when he entered the room.

Harry ran his finger across the invisible line of scars vampire Ron had left on his neck to keep himself grounded in who he was. "Hey, Siri, yeah, I'm all settled in and got filled in on this whole Order-thing by Ron and Hermione," he said, congratulating himself on staying in the moment and coming up a reason to know what was going on.

"Great, well, sit down by me and tell me all about this new boyfriend, or is he new? How long have you been together? Do I know him?" Sirius peppered him with questions while pulling Harry over to the bench and plopping him down beside where Remus was sitting by Tonks.

Harry grinned, hoping the goal of setting those two up might not be as difficult as he thought it would be. "Well..." Harry opened his mouth and then closed it with a click. He had been about to say that his boyfriend was a bit older before it dawned on him that the age gap between 15 and 19 was more remarkable and shocking than the actual age gap he had with Percy of 27 and 31. Suddenly, he realized that he might have to fudge a bit more about his relationship than he'd originally thought until more people knew his actual age.

"We met at Hogwarts, of course," he began, mind spinning as he came up with what to say. "He's actually quite the nerd and loves studying and research."

"A lot like our Moony then!" Sirius laughed and reached around Harry to punch the werewolf's shoulder playfully.

Ron and Hermione wandered into the room about that time and thankfully didn't seem like they'd been arguing or anything. Harry smiled at them broadly, hoping they would work out their relationship much faster and with less angst this time around. "Maybe this person will help Ms. Granger in getting you to do your homework then," Remus rolled his eyes at his friend.

“Hey, I did my homework for your class!” Harry protested...fairly certain he’d done really well at DADA that year. It was a practical class which usually meant he did a lot better in it since it was easier for him to focus when he was physically doing something over having to read or focus on details like Potions.

“You forget I had access to the professor’s lounge,” Remus just raised an eyebrow at him. “Severus complained about your essays enough for everyone.”

“I really do not know what you mean. I do not believe I ever discussed Potter or his work. That would mean I would have to think of him at all,” Snape drawled, standing from where he’d been in the shadows in the corner of the room.

Harry’s breath hitched and he had to quickly rub the piercing through his eyebrow. He hadn’t noticed the silent professor in the corner when he’d entered since he’d been ambushed and distracted by Sirius. His vision tunneled and all he saw was blood, so much blood, and the broken body of his professor on the floor of the shrieking shack. “*Take them...*” the man gasping, trying to give Harry his memories with his last breath.

“Oi! Harry! You’re gay?! You should have told us!” A loud voice cut into the nightmare Harry had been pulled into. The voice didn’t help though. Now Harry was in the battle, death and ash permeating the air, and saw a one-eared George standing and breaking over the body of his dead twin.

“Ow!” Harry crashed back to the kitchen at Grimmauld Place and rubbed the painful bruise that was probably forming on his side from where it seemed Ron and viciously pinched him. “Er, yeah, sorry Fred...it’s not like I really knew or was telling people before now though. Everything is still new with the boyfriend and all.”

“So, who is it?” George asked with an excited grin beside his twin, both ears in place and both twins alive and well.

Harry blinked. It didn’t seem that anyone realized what had happened besides Ron who was covering his move across the kitchen by reaching around Harry for the tea kettle on the table. Snape was giving him a dark look but he promptly left the kitchen, not seeming to care if Harry was acting strangely or not.

“How about I introduce you over Christmas or something? It’s still new, and he’s not out to his family, so I don’t want to just go telling everyone,” Harry really hoped they didn’t press the issue.

Frankly, he didn’t really think it was his place to tell Percy’s family that he was bisexual... which, now that Harry thought about it, was his boyfriend still dating Penelope Clearwater? He frowned as that thought occurred to him. Percy had better dump his girlfriend if he hadn’t already or they’d be having a row really soon; his gaze darkened at that inconvenience he hadn’t considered before that very moment. Really, he wasn’t sure when Percy had told his family...actually, he might never have told them. Everyone was dealing with their own traumas and Percy and Harry had just kind-of fallen together. Did they ever tell the remaining Weasleys, or did they just start showing up to things together and just let everyone assume what they wanted? Harry was thinking it might have been the latter since he definitely didn’t have the conversation with any of them.

“Perfectly right!” Sirius jumped in, saving Harry from his spiraling thoughts about what Arthur Weasley might have thought about his son moving in with Harry, especially when they started doing joint Christmas gifts. “Never out someone who isn’t ready yet.”

“Hey Harry,” Ginny sat down across from Harry and gave him a little smile.

Finally, someone who wasn’t dead in his time! Harry returned her smile with a little relieved nod. Now, that was something he definitely wasn’t going to do this time around. Percy would kill him, and well, ew. Dating Ginny again after the war had been one of the main pushes Harry needed to decide that he really should just give up on trying to date girls.

“Harry has a boyfriend and won’t tell us who it is,” George fake pouted to his sister, most of the Weasley’s (Harry included) looked at her out of the corners of their eyes to see how she would take the news having notoriously had a crush on him most of her life.

“Oh...” Ginny frowned for a moment and her brow furrowed. There was a beat of silence before: “Oh...ok, well, I agree with what Sirius was saying then that you shouldn’t out someone before they’re ready.”

She seemed a bit shaken but was quickly recovering. “It isn’t Ron, is it?” Her nose wrinkled with a disgusted look at her brother.

“What?! No!” Ron protested with a choke on his tea he’d just taken a sip of.

“It would be perfectly fine if it was!” Molly Weasley turned from the stove to give him a sharp slap on the back and a glare at the table, her children and husband included. Harry had a suspicion she really did think it was Ron. He could see the look on her face as she seemed to consider if it were necessary or not to move them to separate rooms.

Arthur cleared his throat. “Er, right, yes, what your mother said. Nothing wrong, not at all...”

“Ron’s actually with me,” Hermione cut in to Ron’s, and it looked like even her own, surprise. “Oh, well, I mean...” she blushed deeply while Ron just looked at her in surprise. “We’re giving it a go at least...”

“Thank Merlin!” Harry exclaimed with an overly dramatic relieved sigh. “Now I just have to get used to third-wheeling your dates, but at least we can get past all the will they or won’t they!”

“Just take your boyfriend instead of third-wheeling,” Ginny rolled her eyes at him and started passing around the rolls her mother had set down for dinner.

“Well...we’re happy for you dears,” Mrs. Weasley put the cottage pie down on the table in front of Ron and Hermione. “And you too, Harry...whoever he is.” She went back to readying dinner, clearly happy she didn’t have to reshuffle all the teenagers to different rooms.

“Right smart owl you got, brat,” Moody grumbled as he stepped into the room, the snowy owl sitting on his shoulder. “Found us under a fidelus, she did.”

“Course she did,” Harry snorted, but happily reached out for Hedwig to transfer to his shoulder, dropping the letter she was carrying in his other hand. “Hedwig is brilliant, and definitely more magical than your average owl.”

He hadn’t expected a letter from Percy already, but he was extremely happy to get it regardless. He just hoped there wasn’t something wrong. “Who would be sending you a letter with your own owl?” Tonks looked at the bird in concern. Hedwig glared at the auror...Hedwig would never let someone send a cursed letter by her to her human!

“Boyfriend,” Harry responded while he read over Percy’s short letter with a huge grin.

Harry,

Remember your trial will be moved up to much earlier in the day. Wear the grey robes we just bought, and try to tame the crazy short hair if possible. You should be able to adjust the glamour to make it look slightly tamer. Also, remember that Dumbledore will be there. Please do not curse him, physically attack him, or act like anything other than a confused 15-year-old. I will not acknowledge you during the trial, but I think I have an idea for how to be close to you during the year. Please remember I’m 19 and should not be seen snogging a fifth-year student!

I don’t know how I’ll sleep tonight without your cold feet attacking mine. Miss you already. Maybe give Ron a hug from me if that’s not weird.

Love,

Percy

P.S. – this is spelled so no one can read it but you, but burn it anyway. I know, I forget who I’m talking to, you paranoid git. I’m sure you’re burning it already.

Harry was in fact setting the letter on fire just as he finished the post-script with a small bit of wandless magic.

“Was that wandless?!” Hermione leaned across the table to see what Harry had done to the letter easier.

Harry unfortunately hadn’t caught that he shouldn’t do that, but shrugged, not really caring. “Fire tends to be a fairly easy wandless spell for me. Lumos too in a pinch.”

“Burning correspondence and wandless magic,” Moody was chuckling and shaking his head as he sat at the table. “I might have to come out of retirement to train you, brat, if you ever decide to join the aurors. I can’t believe I missed last year. Can’t say I was too upset about that until now.”

“Yeah, Pup, that does seem a bit paranoid,” Sirius bumped his shoulder with a little concerned look. If Moody agreed with you, then you should probably be worried. “Everything ok, there?”

“Huh? Yeah,” Harry shrugged. “Can’t be too careful...anyway, er, my trial is tomorrow, right?” He really didn’t remember when his trial was scheduled for, but Percy had implied it was the next day.

“You forgot when your trial was?” Remus frowned.

“No, just checking that it hadn’t changed,” Harry lied with a wry grin. “The boyfriend was just reminding me to wear my good robes.”

Harry thought he heard a mumbled, “Malfoy,” from Ron across the table, but he had absolutely no idea why he would or how Malfoy was relevant at all.

The house was completely silent with just slight creaks from it being an old building and from the wind. Harry left the room where Ron was asleep with a light spring in his step. He

hadn't seen Kreacher yet, and he missed his ornery friend. Plus, he had business with the House of Black that he wanted taken care of as soon as possible.

He made a detour through the attic where he knew there was a pocket-sized portrait in a box that would be useful for the future. The occupant was, of course, missing when he slid it into his pocket. He knew exactly where to find the occupant and planned to head straight there next. A wordless spell had him moving silently through the house, not even leaving shadows in his wake.

"Who's there?!" Walburga Black barked out from her painting in the entry hall when she felt the wards shift slightly as Harry stepped in front of her portrait.

He dispelled his disillusionment and his glamour with a smirk at the painted woman still inexplicably tied directly into the wards of the manor. It was why her portrait could never be removed. "Hello, Walburga," Harry drawled with a warning glare in his eyes.

"Who are you, and why are you master of my wards?" She hissed at the young man in front of her. She'd felt the wards change to someone earlier in the day, but she had not seen his dark wizard in the house at all. He looked like he may be a member of the Black family, but she could not place who he was. Whoever he was, he must be very powerful though for the house to choose him over her disappointment of a son who was actually the next in inheritance order. The Black Manor was mildly sentient and would choose a master that would ensure its survival and ability to maintain its magical wards. She already felt the family magic strengthening after just a few hours of being connected to this man.

Harry pulled the small portrait from his pocket. "I'm from the future where I am master of Black Manor," he told her, causing the stern woman's eyes to widen in surprise, especially as she took in her small portrait. "I know you then...you incorporated the ward stone's magic into your portrait...not something usually done in polite society or strictly legal," he smirked even more widely at her. Like Voldemort, the hateful woman had a desire for immortality. Walburga at least just made it to where her legacy had to live on, and her portrait would never be removed instead of doing something as vile as creating a horcrux though.

She glared at him for that. "You must be my grandson. Sirius is your father? I'm surprised he would allow you to study the Dark Arts, but I can feel your magic in the wards."

Harry rolled his eyes at her. “No, I’m Harry Potter...I am Sirius’s heir, but more importantly, as the ward holder, you will serve me now.”

“I serve no one, young man,” she sniffed indignantly. “Ward holder or not, you have no right to order a lady of House Black around, especially as a *Potter*,” she said as if the name were a swear word.

“Ah, but you already promised me your allegiance,” he couldn’t help the little chuckle at that. While they may have worked past their overt animosity in the future, he still really didn’t like Walburga. “Your portrait in the future said to invoke your blood oath to the Dark... You are sworn to serve the Dark, and as the rightful Dark Lord by magic, you serve me.”

The woman actually looked a little afraid and impressed as his words confirmed the oath that still rang through the blood she’d woven into the painting. “You mean to take over from Lord Voldemort?” She crossed her arms and studied the man more. He looked formidable, and his magic spoke to great power, but could he actually win against Voldemort? “I am less than impressed with your odds in this endeavor,” she concluded.

Harry just chuckled and waved her concern away. “Regardless, I expect you to keep an eye on the inhabitants of this house. I will be asking for regular updates, especially as your portrait is primely placed to hear the Order meetings.” Silencing wards didn’t affect something in the wall itself, like a portrait unless it was intentionally put over the portrait. No one had ever questioned that Walburga heard all and knew exactly what was going on in the house at all times.

She sneered at him, but she was bound by the vow she’d made to magic as an idealistic youth. “At least someone else is standing against these Light fools, even if I do not believe you will succeed against this time’s Dark Lord.”

“I already have,” Harry shrugged and put her small portrait in his pocket with a smirk and a flourish. “I think I’ll greatly enjoy doing it again this time much more though.”

“Consider having a portrait painted,” she called after his retreating form. “There is a nice place in the sitting room you could have it placed when he kills you!”

Next, Harry strolled into sitting room to grab a bottle of firewhisky from where he knew Sirius hid them in the roll-top desk. Armed with alcohol, he made his way to the Black Library in the far corner of the third floor where no one's eyes ever strayed if they were not accepted into the manor's wards. Honestly, he wondered if Sirius were even able to see it. He had barely held the wards and would probably not be interested in a Dark Arts library regardless.

Harry took in a deep breath, the familiar dusty and earthy smell of the library calming him with the slight ozone tinge of dark magic just at the corner of his senses. He, Hermione, and later Percy had spent so many hours in that library that it'd become a safe haven for him. Importantly, he knew a certain house elf that would be magically notified that he'd entered the unused space though. Kreacher had always taken on the library as a personal point of pride that none of the Order had ever entered nor thrown out any of the artifacts it contained.

Harry hadn't had time for more than a sip of the whiskey before the ancient Black family house elf popped into the library with a dark glare, probably expecting that he was going to have to run Sirius out of the space. "Hello, Kreacher," Harry took another steadying drink before smiling at the elf he'd missed as much as he had Dobby.

Kreacher stood utterly still, his large, yellow eyes wide in shock. "Yous are the wizard wearing the glamour of a child," he remarked. Harry's eyes widened at that. He was fully aware that Kreacher would have been watching everyone from the shadows, but he hadn't known the elf would be able to see through the amazing glamour he'd been wearing.

It didn't matter though. Harry sat on the dustless, and luxurious red-velvet armchair to be closer to Kreacher's height. "I am. I'm from the future. I came back to change things for all of us."

Kreacher slowly nodded. "Kreacher felt the Dark Master claim the wards. Bad master Sirius could not hold wards of ancient dark magic. Has the Dark Master come to restore the glory of House Black."

Harry's grin turned terrifying as he nodded in agreement. "I'm here to restore the glory of the Dark as well as House Black and wixen society. I will be your and everyone's Dark Lord."

Kreacher almost squeaked as he shuffled into what resembled a bow for the ancient elf. “The Dark Master should know, there is another false Dark Lord. Kreacher’s master Regulus served him before he turned from the true way.”

“Oh, I *know*, Kreacher,” he grinned even more ferally. “Kreacher...let’s talk about Regulus...”

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: The trial...

Acting the Part

Chapter Notes

I know I should be working on my other story right now, but this one was the one moving forward in my head today. I'll push forward on Ashes just as soon as possible though.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Harry awoke to the feeling he was being stared at. He was about to tell Percy to piss off and let him sleep a little longer until he remembered he wasn't in his own time and Percy was definitely not in bed with him. Warily, he cracked open one eye before he just closed it again with a groan. He absently waved his hand to dispel the silencing ward around his bed.

"Hermione, it's more than a little creepy to wake up to a fifteen-year-old girl staring at you like that," he grumbled at his friend who was sitting on the edge of Ron's bed and staring intently at him while Ron was rummaging through his trunk for clothes to change out of his Chudley Cannons pajamas into.

Hermione immediately turned bright pink. "I wasn't staring like *that*!" She protested vehemently. "I was looking at your runes. They're really impressive, and I don't even know what most of them are for. I know they must be fairly mild magic, even inked onto you, but still, they have to individually do things as well as work together."

"Yeah, mate, even I stared for a bit," Ron leaned up from where he was halfway inside his trunk and chuckled. "You can't just tattoo magic on yourself and not expect people to try to figure out what it does."

"Plus, the other ones are quite good artistically. I understand why you got the grim, werewolf, and stag, but why do you have that pretty otter on your wrist? It doesn't seem to go with the others," Hermione leaned closer, and Harry self-consciously pulled the sheet up over his chest.

“Thanks, erm, Dean Thomas actually got to be a pretty good tattoo artist, but I had to do the runes myself because of the magic and all. The otter, well, it’s your patronus...or will be at least,” he glared at their staring. Hermione leaned back with a smug look on her face at that news, whether from him having a tattoo just for her or that she mastered the patronus charm, Harry wasn’t sure. “Merlin, I got like no sleep at all and now have to wake up to you two tag-teaming me!”

“The half-bottle of whiskey by your bed probably didn’t help your sleep,” Hermione just crossed her arms and returned his glare.

With an eyeroll at her and Percy’s voice that was in his head saying the same thing, Harry sat up and moved the bottle further under his bed. “I don’t have a problem...maybe a bit of a dependency, but not a problem.”

“I wasn’t insinuating...”

“Plus, I’m not used to sleeping alone anymore,” Harry stood and stretched, getting a satisfying pop from his back, before throwing a t-shirt on to cover the runes and tattoos. “The nightmares are worse when I’m alone.”

“Harry...please don’t take this the wrong way,” Hermione began with a deep frown on her face. “But, how do you plan to make it through this year at Hogwarts? I mean, you seem to be hanging on by a thread here.”

Ron sat beside her on the bed, now holding his jeans and jumper for the day. “She’s not wrong mate. You went a bit blank there last night at dinner, and I’m sure you don’t want me going around pinching you all the time.”

“Here is going to be worse than Hogwarts,” Harry told them with a sigh. They were right, but he knew he could hold it together. He would do what he had to do to keep moving forward, no matter the cost to himself. “There are more people I lost in this house that I care about than there. Yes, I’m sure it’ll be hard, and please keep an eye on me, but I’m getting more used to all this. I haven’t even been in this time for a full two days yet. Give a guy a break to get used to it.”

He pulled his nice, grey robes out of his trunk and began to braid his hair up. Even if no one could see it, he could still feel it and wanted it out of his way. “Ooo, me next!” Hermione grinned and motioned to her crazy curls enthusiastically.

With a laugh and shake of his head, Harry pulled another hair tie out of his trunk and gathered Hermione’s tightly spiraled curls in his hands. “This isn’t going to be an every morning thing now, is it?”

“Hmm...I *did* send you back in time and am one of your first followers, so...you do kind of owe me,” she gave him a mischievous grin.

“I doubt Voldemort braids the Death Eaters’ hair,” Ron shuddered at the thought but stood to go claim the bathroom and change.

"I don't know...Lucius Malfoy's hair I might even volunteer to braid...well, right before I cursed him," Harry winked at Ron, causing Hermione to burst out a surprised laugh.

Ron grimaced in disgust at that thought. "Not a picture I want in my head regardless of if you cursed him or not afterwards. Oh, and mate, don't forget your glasses. You went to dinner last night without them. Most people know you're pretty blind and might ask questions."

“Bollocks,” Harry kicked himself in a grumble. “I fixed my eyes for that very reason. Glasses are a liability. How reasonable do you think it would be to tell everyone I got contacts?”

“We also all have a general idea that your muggle relatives are terrible, even if you haven’t actually said anything,” Hermione patted his knee while he finished up the braid and tied it off. “So, that might raise even more questions. However, I’m starting to think you might want to leave one of your piercings visible at some point. You tend to touch them when you’re anxious, and it’s an odd nervous tick when it doesn’t look like there’s anything there for you to touch.”

“I’ll gladly tell everyone I stabbed you with a needle to do it,” Ron smirked at them. “Actually, you want another one? I’m game.”

“Loving the sacrifice you’re making there, Ron,” he chuckled and tossed a sock at his friend. With a flick of his wand, his glamour was back in place. He looked in the mirror and tweaked it just a little to make his messy hair slightly tamer. “Good?”

“Easier than hair products,” Hermione nodded.

“I’ll think about the piercing, but after the trial. I haven’t seen Dumbledore yet and don’t want him to have any questions at all about me,” Harry said as he pulled the two books on mind magic he’d taken from the library the night before out of his trunk. He made sure to bury his nice new shiny locket dripping in evil darkness further down under some of Dudley’s old pants. He was not letting either of his friends touch any of Voldemort’s horcruxes this time around, and he couldn’t exactly cast the magic he needed to destroy it in the middle of Order headquarters.

“And...that’s my cue!” Ron hurried out of the room at the appearance of more homework.

“Hermione...is it morally wrong to tattoo a focusing rune on a fifteen-year-old?” Harry frowned at the empty space Ron had almost apparated from in his hurry to leave.

She shrugged and greedily grabbed for the books. “I guess it depends on if you do it in his sleep or if he agrees to it first. Merlin knows I’ve been trying to get both of you to focus more for years, so I’m not complaining.”

Harry gave it up for the moment. “I’ll turn my boyfriend loose on him if he doesn’t work on it. That’d serve him right.”

“Please tell me this boyfriend is more reasonable and less...erm...” she trailed off, not knowing how to phrase what she meant.

“Damaged?” Harry answered for her with a raise of his eyebrow. She flushed, not wanting to admit that was the word she was trying to avoid.

Harry thought about Percy though and how they compared in a way he could explain it to Hermione. They balanced each other and supported each other, but neither of them, even Percy, made it out of everything unscathed. It probably didn't help that the ministry had supported Percy's decent into fringe (and very dark) magic. Harry was a bit more chaotic and maybe more brutal, but Percy had a calculating nature to him that Harry believed could be just as destructive as his own explosive tendencies.

"Yes, and no," he finally said slowly. "You'll understand when you meet him. I would say he's definitely the more logical and reasonable of the two of us. He also doesn't melt down like I do, but I will probably be the one that reigns him in when it comes to those more ruthless decisions that will need to be made. He can be a bit scary when it comes to a doing what he believes needs to be done. He loves fiercely, but he hates fiercely as well."

Hermione turned introspective at that. She seemed to be weighing his response and what that would mean to their plans. "So, a bit like me and a bit like Snape," she finally concluded with a frown at the little she knew about her professor, but what she did now seemed to fit.

Harry's eyes widened in shock. He'd never even thought to compare Percy to Snape in the slightest. Yeah, he was definitely into research and learning like Hermione, but now that she said it... "Please don't ever tell him that," Harry laughed loudly. "Merlin, he'd have a hippogriff!"

"Anyway..." Hermione was already flipping through her new books in excitement. "When are you going to add me into these wards around the library? It better be soon!"

"I'll add you after you are able to construct shields around your mind. Actively having any Dark Arts knowledge at the forefront of your mind is dangerous with Dumbledore coming and going from Grimmauld...not that he was here much this summer if I remember correctly, but still. It's not safe until you can protect your mind," he shook his head and grabbed his robes to go hurry Ron from the bathroom so he could change for his trial.

"And you can do this Occlumency thing?" She raised a disbelieving eyebrow at him over the book.

“Both Occlumency and Legilimancy,” he nodded. “I had to work on the focus thing and get rid of a...erm, well, obstacle,” he evaded the horcrux-issue poorly. “But sometime this year, Dumbledore is going to order Snape to teach me. It was terrible and I didn’t get it down at all then, but I at least learned the basics before finding the Black library and finishing out my studies, along with what I did in my mastery. Unfortunately, the ministry starts employing more Legilimens for interrogations after the war as well...so, it was also self-preservation.”

“Right...well, I’ll start in on this, go get ready for your hearing,” she waved him off to the door, already getting more comfortable in their room and not planning on leaving for a while.

“Trial,” he corrected her with a huff of irritation. Yes, he was still irritated twelve years later. “It turns into a trial. I’ll be fine though, Dumbledore swoops in and saves the day. Honestly, I’d like to see them try to convict me for underage magic right now. I might not be very popular, but still...I’m supposedly fifteen and can share memories of dementors attacking...I could have the press eating out of my hand within minutes...not that I knew that as an actual fifteen-year-old though.”

“Don’t curse anyone,” she distractedly responded, not really paying attention to him at all anymore.

Harry made it down to breakfast wearing his nice robes and actually having remembered his glasses (spelled with clear glass lenses now). “Nervous?” Sirius asked him with a hearty pat on the back when he joined his godfather at the table already laden with breakfast items.

Harry shrugged. “Not really. They can’t expel me for saving myself and my cousin from dementors that are supposed to be under the control of the ministry...or at least they can’t and expect me to stay quiet about it.”

Sirius laughed loudly at that remark while Arthur Weasley seemed to pause where he was putting eggs onto his plate to consider the feasibility of that happening. It was like no one ever considered that Harry would be able to or even want to speak up for himself. Honestly, from where Harry was sitting, it would probably be easier on him if he was just expelled and could carry on his plans in the shadows, but he’d lived through this trial once already and knew Dumbledore wouldn’t let that happen.

“Maybe you shouldn’t say that in front of the hearing committee,” Molly Weasley sagely replied while placing the porridge she knew he liked right in front of him.

Harry couldn’t help the large smile he gave her at that. “Thank you, Mrs. Weasley.”

“No problem, dear...now, you’re going in with Arthur this morning. I’m glad you see you’ve tamed that hair a bit and have some nice robes,” she gave him a motherly smile and pat on the hand. “I suppose we have that new boyfriend to thank for making you upgrade your wardrobe some,” she added on with a knowing look. Everyone had seen his hand-me-down clothes from before, so it was a very safe assumption.

“Not really,” Harry shrugged. “We went shopping together, but he just encouraged me to get whatever I liked and felt comfortable in. Mainly I was just desperately needing some things that fit.” Percy had never cared what Harry wore, but he did make a point to remind Harry to take care of himself and get what he wanted instead of what he thought others wanted him to get. He tried to do the same with Percy, but the older man just smiled and tended to get whatever Harry said looked good on him.

“I think I like this new bloke,” Sirius decided firmly. “You’ll mention to him you have an escaped convict for a godfather though. It’s only right I get to use that to put a bit of fear into him since I can’t just go out and meet him myself to have the shovel talk. Merlin! I wish I could leave this house!”

Harry narrowed his gaze at the man. There had to be a way to teach his godfather the Unspeakable’s glamour spell and it not be really weird that he knew it or clue him in that Harry was currently wearing it. Considering the spell hadn’t been invented yet, it wouldn’t be in a book somewhere...he resolved to give it some thought. Sirius needed to be able to leave the house, and while he did have plans to kill off Pettigrew, that might take a few months to figure out since he didn’t want to clue Voldemort in that he was coming after him until all the horcruxes (barring Nagini) were destroyed.

Regardless, now he just had to focus on the trial and not punching Dumbledore when he saw him. “Good, yeah, I haven’t been to the ministry before, so I’d love to get there early and maybe get a bit of a tour of where you work, Mr. Weasley,” he said with a wide grin at the man. He always liked Arthur, especially when they were all struggling so much after the war,

he'd really stepped up to hold the family together. Even when there just weren't that many Weasleys left, Arthur Weasley always held a Christmas and Boxing Day event for everyone to come to, even learning to make Molly's Christmas pudding when she wasn't there to make it herself.

"Wonderful!" Arthur smiled back at him. "Well...finish your porridge there and we'll head on out just as soon as possible."

Harry was certain they'd left earlier than when he did this the first time around. The twins and Ginny were still asleep when they'd left and Ron had only been awake because Hermione had woken him up, anxious to get the books on mind-magic from Harry. If nothing else, Harry was excited to see Percy again. Yes, he'd seen him the day before, but he also didn't know when he'd get to see his partner again before Hogwarts. Honestly, it would be easier for him to sneak out of Hogwarts than Grimmauld where people were actively keeping an eye on them, though even then, he knew Kreacher would cover for him.

So, it was with much more ease that Harry walked into the ministry, not really concerned about his trial, and not currently wanted for anything actually criminal. Normally, in his time, he just avoided the ministry at all costs, but he was also very good at covering his tracks for the more criminal activities he was engaged in, so he might be suspected of quite a few things, but he also wasn't currently being investigated...according to Neville anyway who should know.

"Wand please," the witch at the front desk asked with her hand out to Harry.

With an internal smirk, Harry passed over his old holly wand, his new ebony one strapped to his leg but also easily accessible if needed. Percy had done the same with his new aspen wood wand with banshee hair for the core. The wand shop in Knockturn really was more imaginative in their components than Ollivanders. Harry hadn't tried to cast anything with his old wand yet because of the trace, but it also just didn't feel comfortable in his hand anymore, so he wasn't hopeful that it'd work well for him. He did hope he could still use it for class at the very least though.

“Now for a tour,” Arthur Weasley smiled broadly at him, excited to show someone around where he spent most of his days. “I think we should end with my office. Anywhere strike your fancy that you want to see first? Maybe the Department of Magical Games and Sports? We have plenty of time before your hearing.”

“Actually...” Harry took his old wand back and turned towards the lifts. “Could we maybe see the room the hearing will take place in? I’d like to get an idea of the space...you know, nerves and all...It might help calm me down some.”

Arthur gave him an understanding look before turning to look for someone. “Of course, let’s just find someone from that department, and we’ll make sure of the location. Sometimes these things get moved around. Ah, there’s Percy...” he trailed off with a concerned frown appearing on his face.

Harry had already turned and tried to squelch the smile tugging at his lips. Percy’s glamour was not as extensive as Harry’s since he hadn’t changed overly much since he was nineteen. He’d filled out a little more, his face had developed a few lines, and he’d grown out his hair, but overall, he was still recognizable as Percy, unlike Harry. Because of this, Harry could tell that Percy hadn’t even covered everything, probably to begin to pull back his glamour over time as people got used to it. Harry couldn’t exactly remember what his partner looked like at nineteen, but he was fairly certain that Percy had made his nineteen-year-old hair a little longer and was slightly more built instead of rail thin. He’d also completely ditched his glasses, not even going to attempt keeping up that ruse.

Put together, the changes weren’t overly dramatic, but Arthur Weasley still seemed to notice that there was a difference in his son. “Dad...hi,” Percy breathed out as he stepped up to them.

Harry couldn’t remember when exactly Percy and his family had started to be on bad terms, but it was definitely during his fifth year at some point, and he was guessing it had already happened by the stern look on Mr. Weasley’s face at his son’s approach. “Percy...you’ve grown out your hair a little...” he said, a frown still tugging at his lips. “And your glasses...did you get your vision fixed? That’s very expensive.”

“Er, yeah,” Percy remarked awkwardly, stopping his hand from reaching up to tug on the invisible end of his even longer hair. “I’ve been saving up a long time for the vision thing. I never really liked my glasses.”

Arthur nodded slowly, seeming confused about why they were even having this conversation. “Is there something you need from me, Percy?”

Harry did step behind Arthur to dramatically roll his eyes at his partner and give him a significant look. He was being weird and needed to get it together. Clearly, this was not normal behavior for the father and son at this point in time.

“No,” Percy ignored him and focused on his father. “I just heard that the location and time of Harry’s hearing has been moved. It’s in courtroom ten, and you should probably head that way now to make it. I’ll walk with you if you want.”

Arthur frowned and looked at his battered watch in disbelief. “But this is hours early...and why a courtroom...?”

“I don’t know. I’m only there to take the minutes as Minister Fudge’s assistant,” Percy shrugged very convincingly in Harry’s opinion.

“Well...I guess we should head that way then, Harry,” Arthur finally just shook his head and headed towards the lifts. “Erm...thanks for telling us, Percy,” he added on with an almost hopeful look in his eyes that definitely broke both Harry and Percy’s hearts.

“Just doing my job,” Percy responded, not able to meet his eyes.

Harry felt a slip of paper slide into his hand when Percy walked by him to enter the lift to head down to the courtroom. He stifled a grin and put the paper into his pocket to read at a less conspicuous time. He avoided looking at Percy who was fiddling with his briefcase, then his black leather armband that covered his Unspeakable mark, then had to stop himself from touching his hair again...Harry was certain his partner was nervous about more than just seeing his father again in the past, but he wasn’t sure what it was that was bothering him and definitely couldn’t ask.

The silence of the lift was so palpable that Harry actually let out a sigh of relief then the doors opened to the Department of Mysteries. Percy did as well, but Harry knew it was for very different reasons. This was Percy's safe haven, it was where he was most comfortable, even if he was pretending to not be an Unspeakable in this time. "Just this way..." Percy cleared his throat and motioned them down the black, marble hallway to courtroom ten.

Just as it had happened before, Arthur Weasley was not allowed in the courtroom with him, and Harry was facing the entire Wizengamut for something that should have just been a committee meeting instead of a full trial. He stood there though for a moment in confusion... something was different. "Mr. Potter...right on time," Minister Fudge grumbled, really hoping Harry would have missed the trial entirely.

"I'm glad you received the change of location and time promptly," Amelia Bones remarked in an offhand way that Harry interpreted as her belief that he had actually been notified. "I am Madam Bones, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement."

Harry nodded absently, still trying to figure out what was different this time. It was itching right at the back of his brain. "We are just waiting on Undersecretary Umbridge to begin," Fudge remarked with an impatient glare towards the door.

That was it! The pink toad wasn't there! Harry's eyes immediately cut to his nervous partner who suddenly didn't look nervous at all. He was calm, poised, and so confident he was almost bored. Yep, that was definitely Percy trying to get away with something. He was terrible at controlling his feelings and expressions until he absolutely had to, then he was brilliantly perfect. It surprised and amazed Harry every time he'd seen his partner do it.

"I don't believe Undersecretary Umbridge showed up for work this morning," Percy dryly remarked in a nonchalant tone that Harry never could have perfected unless his life did actually depend on it. "She must not be feeling well."

Harry was extremely proud of himself that he showed no emotion at that statement at all. Frankly, he was very thankful for his years of Occlumency study to shut down the smirk and maniacal giggle that wanted to erupt from him. He was certain there was something they could cross off their to-do list now...Merlin, his partner had been busy without him!

Fudge looked confused and worried over the information, but Madam Bones just gave a business-like nod and shuffled her papers. “Well, let’s get this going then,” she addressed the room. “We all have other places we are meant to be.”

The rest of Harry’s trial happened exactly as he remembered it from the first time, except for the little “hem hem” interruptions from Umbridge that were thankfully missing. This time Harry didn’t even try to make eye contact with Dumbledore. While, yes, he was angry at the man for basically raising him to die at the right time, he did still have a deep-seated need for the man to approve of him, which definitely made him angrier than even telling him he had to die had. He wasn’t sure if he was angrier at himself or Dumbledore for those feelings though.

Regardless, Dumbledore didn’t try to look at him or address him and Harry thought that was perfectly fine with him, definitely preferable. Yes, he was a master Occlumens who didn’t have a horcrux in his brain anymore, but he still didn’t want to meet those twinkling eyes that seemed to bore right through you. When Dumbledore rushed out at the end of the trial, Harry spared one more look up to Percy who gave him a little smile before he left to meet up with Arthur Weasley once more and go home.

“You made it back,” Ron breathed out when Harry entered his room where Ron and Hermione were both now looking through the mind magic books he’d given them. “I have to admit, I was certain you’d be figured out, mate, and whisked off to be studied by the Unspeakables.”

Harry just laughed and fell back onto his bed. “I’m not entirely useless. You have to take into account you both know what’s going on, so you notice my oddness more. If you didn’t know, you’d just think I was a bit traumatized from what happened at the end of last year or something.”

“So, you actually passed as a fifteen-year-old?” Hermione raised an eyebrow in disbelief.

“I looked quite a bit scared, confused, and very concerned about getting kicked out of school,” he assured them as he opened the letter from Percy that had been figuratively burning a hole in his pocket since he’d gotten it.

H.

When are you going to Diagon to pick up your supplies for the school year? Do you think you could get away to stop by my flat for a couple minutes? I've been working on something for your birthday.

P.

He frowned, seeming to remember Order members picking up their supplies for them that year. Well, that just wouldn't do. Whatever this birthday present was, he wanted it! Maybe it was Umbridge gift wrapped for him!

Absently, he answered the questions Hermione peppered him with about what they were reading while he found some parchment and wrote an answer to the letter.

P.

It'll take some work on my end, but I'll make sure we're in Diagon on the Saturday before term begins. Of course, I'll be able to slip away; who do you think I am? By the way, I've looped in R. and H. about me, not you yet, but they are on our side. I'm sure R. can cover for me for a while. You do realize it was November when we left, so nowhere near my birthday, not that I don't want the present, mind you. Might it happen to be pink and toad-like?

H.

"Hey, Ron, can I borrow Pig?" He asked after sealing the letter with a spell so that only Percy could read it.

"Where's Hedwig?" Hermione asked while Ron tried to grab the tiny owl that had been zooming around the room in excitement ever since he saw someone grab parchment and a

quill.

"I left her with the boyfriend," Harry shrugged and tied the letter to the vibrating owl's leg. "She'll get to stretch her wings more there than here."

"Now...I'm going to need to delegate some plans I have coming up," he decided as the owl flew out the window with a happy loop into the air.

Ron's grin grew wider. "Our first job as servants of the Dark Lord?!"

"Ew, don't even say that," Harry grimaced violently. "You are no one's servants! Let's not get started on that!"

"What are we then?" Hermione rolled her eyes at them and flipped the page.

"I don't know...my friends," he huffed. "Anyway, no, this is actually just a personal wanting to meet up with my boyfriend thing, so do you think you can get the 'adults' to let us go to Diagon to get our own school supplies?"

"Why wouldn't we be getting our own supplies?" Hermione actually looked up from the book to ask with a frown. "We always go to get our supplies before the term starts."

"I don't think they want us to go this year for safety," Harry removed his outer robe to get more comfortable. "At least, that's what I remember..."

"Will we finally get to meet this mysterious person?" Ron took the excuse to put down the book and stop studying for a while.

Harry shrugged. "Probably not...I'll need you to also cover for me, but it shouldn't take long."

“Well...there *are* some things that picking out for oneself is important,” Hermione remarked with a thoughtful nod. “I think we can come up with something. What are you going to be doing since you’re delegating this to us?”

“Oh Dark Overlord...” Ron added on with a mischievous grin.

Harry rolled his eyes but ignored him. “Well...I had a bit of a chat with Kreacher last night...” He said as they both grimaced at having to deal with the elf. “Anyway, it went very well, so unclench from all that prejudice you have against him.”

“You have to admit, he’s pretty bad. Even Hermione doesn’t like him,” Ron huffed while Hermione actually nodded in agreement at that.

“I think it’s how he’s been treated though. Ron just thinks that’s how he is,” she clarified.

Harry did actually agree with that. Kreacher never developed a happy, upbeat personality in the slightest. “Probably some of both actually...anyway, I did learn that elves can see through my glamour, so we have a bit of an elf problem that I’m going to have to solve.”

“I don’t understand,” Ron said in confusion.

“What does that mean?” Hermione added on with a concerned and very suspicious look at him.

“The Hogwarts house elves can see that I’m not a student,” he more specifically told them. “And, stop worrying Hermione. I’m just going to talk to Dobby and see if he can smooth things over with them. They tend to mind their own business and not report things anyway, but I want to make sure none of them will run off to Dumbledore. Merlin! I told you I’m not a murdering psychopath!”

“Just making sure,” she continued with her suspicious look but picked up the book she’d been reading again.

Harry huffed in exasperation. “I fully agree with you about freeing the house elves, Hermione, and it is actually a part of my long-term plan. If they had been free, then they wouldn’t have been in any danger from the ministry when they were finally targeted. However, you can’t go about it with SPEW. Forcefully freeing them when they don’t want to be free is cruel and not helpful. It’s a long-term plan, because you have to start with more rights, access to education, and understanding them more and what they want. If they eventually decide they want to be free, then let’s do it in a heartbeat, but until then, we can’t just make decisions for them unilaterally and force them into it. That’s not helping, that’s hurting. We all saw what happened to Winky. They are autonomous individuals that should be treated as such and not as children for us to just make decisions for.”

Hermione’s mouth had fallen open in surprise, the same as Ron. “Oh…” was all she was able to say as it sank in what she’d been doing by trying to trick them into being free.

Harry shrugged and pulled his firewhiskey out from under the bed. “Anyway, I’ll ask Kreacher to go find Dobby at the school and get that handled. Maybe check in on Winky while I’m at it. What do you think is for dinner? I’m loving having your mum’s cooking again!”

Ron shook his head still in surprise. “Er…not sure. I think we’re supposed to start cleaning the house again tomorrow though, so whatever you need to do, maybe do it tonight while everyone is sleeping.”

“Sirius is going to start missing his whiskey,” Hermione warned him, but Harry just smirked at her, not concerned. There were too many people in the house for Sirius pin it on him. Moody would most certainly be blamed before he was.

The return letter from Percy showed up with Pig just before dinner while Harry was quickly trying to finish off all the homework that young Harry hadn’t bothered to even start. He made sure to add in some mistakes and all, but he was sure it was still going to be better than his

usual slapped together summer work. It hurt his pride at this point to do as badly as young Harry probably would have.

“Awesome!” He grinned in excitement as he grabbed the little owl out of the air from where he was zooming around the sitting room he and the younger Weasleys were all in while the Order meeting was being held.

“Your owl is a bloody menace Ron,” George grumbled at the bird that had almost flown smack into his head.

“He’s just enthusiastic, George!” Ginny protested and took the owl from Harry to coo over his tiny, fluffy head.

Harry chuckled but opened the letter distractedly:

H.

Good to hear about R. and H. Wait to fill them in on me until I can be there. I should be able to talk with them in person soon. As for your present, this is more of an addition I’m adding to your school supplies than an actual birthday present. I’ve been working on a project that I believe will be finished by the Saturday before term. About your guess, I have no idea what you might mean by a pink toad. I don’t believe even magical toads come in that color.

Good job today. I was very impressed by your acting.

P.

Harry could feel the amusement from Percy’s writing and was really looking forward to seeing him in just about a week. He had absolutely no clue what the man planned to give him, but he was already hoping he could get away from the group long enough to properly thank him for whatever it was.

“Good news?” Hermione asked from where Ron was squarely beating her in wizard’s chess.

“Mainly just flirting,” he grinned at her. “Not that he’ll ever admit it, mind you.”

At that, the door opened to the sitting room. “Dinner,” Mrs. Weasley stuck her head in to call them all.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: A nice birthday present...

Adding to the Inner Circle

Chapter Notes

Happy Valentines!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Kreacher just doesn’t understand why the Dark Master needs this *other* elf though,” Kreacher was grumbling during what was becoming a common meeting he and Harry had in the Black library late at night when everyone else was asleep. “Kreacher can serve his great Dark Lord without this Dobby person.”

“I know that, Kreacher,” Harry assured him vehemently, feeling a headache coming on from having to explain this once again to the elf and from his lack of sleep due to nightmares the past few nights. “I know you are perfectly capable, but house elves can see through my glamour. Dobby works at Hogwarts and can talk to the elves there to keep them from going to the headmaster about me.”

“Kreacher can just threaten this Dobby...”

“Please Kreacher, Dobby is a friend,” Harry tried another tactic after a large swig out of a new bottle of whiskey he’d recently swiped from Sirius’s stash. “I lost him in the future like I lost you, and I’ve gotten to see you and spend time with you, but I’d like to see Dobby too.”

“Wizards are not friends with house elveses,” Kreacher now looked at him suspiciously, seeming to think Harry was lying to him or joking or something.

“You’re my friend, Kreacher, or you will be a least,” he sighed. “This whole time-travel thing is confusing, but you became a good friend to me, and Dobby does too...”

“Kreacher will get this Dobby, but Master will not invite him to stay in our home,” the elf almost commanded before popping away with a loud crack.

Harry picked up the book he'd taken off a shelf when he came in. He had started reading it in his own time and hadn't finished before they came back, so he figured he'd get a few pages farther along before school when he probably shouldn't be smuggling an ancient text on blood magic's use in human transfiguration into his solely Light magic boarding school. It only took two pages before a loud crack sounded again and Kreacher reappeared with a tight grip on Dobby's arm. Dobby who looked just as eccentrically dressed as Harry remembered in his green knit hat, orange toga, and four pairs of socks.

Harry took another large swig of whiskey and forcefully pushed the tears threatening to well up in his eyes down at the sight of the friend he'd lost and who had saved his life. "Hey Dobby."

For his part, Dobby looked extremely confused about being summoned by a random wizard away from the school to a dark magic library in an old manor home. "Master Wizard knows Dobby?" The elf turned and studied Harry intently instead of his surroundings.

"The great Dark Master wishes to see Dobby elf, yous will be respectful," Kreacher warned the newcomer with a dark glare from his large, yellow eyes.

"Hey, Kreacher, could you maybe go get a plate of biscuits for me, you, and Dobby?" Harry turned to his elf to ask. "This might take a while, and as it's late at night, some biscuits might be just what we need to keep going."

Kreacher spared one more glare at the elf before he popped away to get them some biscuits and probably tea as well since he'd made it very clear he didn't approve of Harry's drinking. "Master Wizard is offering Dobby biscuits?!" Dobby's eyes went really wide and looked shocked at that. "Harry Potter is the only one who ever comes to the kitchens to eat biscuits with Dobby. Wizards don't eat with house elves, but Master Wizard isn't Harry Potter...he does looks some similar..."

Sometimes Harry regretted just how much he'd changed in his looks, even the famous lightning bolt scar had faded to almost invisible after the horcrux was gone. Those times were very slim and fleeting though. This happened to be one. He took one more drink of the whiskey and capped the bottle to put under the table beside him.

“Dobby, I don’t know how to convince you of this, so you’ll have to tell me what you want to know, but I actually *am* Harry Potter,” he began, holding up a hand to stop the protests Dobby was about to make. “I’ve come back in time to fix some things that went terribly wrong. We lost a lot of people in this war, and after, our world got worse. I can’t let that happen again. How can I convince you that I’m just an older version of your Harry?”

At that Dobby stepped forward some and stared at the wizard in front of him. “Harry Potter is not a dark wizard, and you are. Harry Potter is a good, light wizard...”

Harry nodded, knowing this was going to be a problem. “Yes, I’m a dark wizard,” he put his elbows on his knees and hunched over some to get closer to Dobby’s height. “That doesn’t mean I’m evil though. I died during the last battle but came back to life because of some ancient magic. That changed my core dark, and I’ve learned how to use dark magic in good, helpful ways since. Just because the Malfoys use dark magic to hurt and harm, doesn’t mean that it’s inherently evil. From what I remember, Narcissa wasn’t evil and treated her elves well...”

Dobby’s eyes widened more at the knowledge Harry had of his past living situation. “What spell did Dobby use and what did he use it on in Harry Potter’s house to get him expelled before his second year at school?” Dobby asked, his eyes narrowing in consideration.

Harry nodded with a large smile. “Finally! Someone asks a good question that no one else knows. The hover charm was fairly well known since I got in trouble for it with the ministry, but the fact that you floated a pudding during my aunt and uncle’s dinner party I think was only known to Ron and Hermione besides the two of us.”

Dobby came all the way up to him then and studied his face intently. “Yes...Dobby sees his Harry Potter in you...Dobby’s Harry Potter has had a hard life, he can see,” the elf patted him softly on the hand. “But where is young Harry Potter? Is he here?”

“I’m sorry, Dobby,” he sighed tiredly. It kept hitting him over and over again just what he and Percy had done to both young Harry and young Percy. “The spell I used to come back here... I didn’t take into account what it would do to the younger me. He wasn’t here when I appeared, so I think I took his place.”

Dobby frowned but didn't pull his hand away from where it was now resting lightly on top of Harry's scarred and calloused hand. "Are you going to go to Hogwarts then? What will Harry Potter do to fix what happened? What can Dobby do to help?"

Harry almost breathed out a sigh of relief, especially as Kreacher entered then with a plate of ginger biscuits and a pot of tea. "Well, let's eat up; come on both of you," he said, conjuring a couple more teacups since Kreacher had only brought one. "We have a lot to discuss, so you need to help me with all this tea and biscuits...or I could just finish my whiskey," Harry added on with a smirk at Kreacher who just grumbled and rolled his eyes but also took the teacup handed to him.

"Right, so Dobby...I *am* going to Hogwarts, but you house elves are so brilliant you can see the 27-year-old me through my glamour...now, what can we do about that?" He asked and settled back in his armchair while Dobby and Kreacher glared at each other while awkwardly perching on the very edge of the couch across from him.

"Dobby can talk to the head elf, but we's generally not get involved in what goes on in the school anyway," Dobby said, completely missing Harry's smirk at just how false that was where Dobby himself was concerned.

"What about Winky? How is she?" Harry asked since Hermione would want to know.

"Better...still not happy," Dobby shrugged as if to say there really wasn't anything he could do about it at this point.

"Do you think she'd want to serve a Dark Lord?" Harry asked with a raise of his eyebrow over the rim of his teacup.

"Kreacher doesn't needs any help!" The elf vehemently protested once more.

Dobby's hand stopped halfway to his mouth with the biscuit, and he frowned in confusion. "Dark Lord You-Know-Who is looking for an elf? Why would any elveses want to serve him?" He shuddered at even the thought.

“Oh Dobby, *this* is going to be good,” Harry grinned broadly at him, having an idea that he knew Percy would be rolling his eyes at. “I’m looking for an inner circle, and I know three elves that would be perfect to join. Right now, it’s just Ron, Hermione, and my boyfriend, but if I’m going to do this right, I need more people than that, and house elves seem the best group to have on your side if you are staging a rebellion.”

“The Dark Master is Magic’s true Dark Lord,” Kreacher confirmed what Dobby already seemed to have guessed by his shocked expression. “Though why he wants house elves to advise instead of serve seems foolish to Kreacher.”

“Think about it...” Harry told them both adamantly. “I think you’ll start to see that this really is something you can use to your advantage. What do the elves want? We can make that happen. You can have a say in our society, and keep me from doing anything stupid, which I’m likely to do.”

Dobby snorted in agreement at Harry’s remark before taking a large bit of the biscuit and musing as he crunched. “Dobby does not wants much, but that doesn’t mean things is perfect.”

Kreacher frowned and finally took a sip of his tea. “Kreacher may want some things...”

“That’s the ticket! Welcome to the inner circle! Invite your friends!” Harry beamed at them and poured himself a cup of tea to really get down to business.

“Right, so I need a couple new bras, and Harry needs new shoes,” Hermione promptly told them as she plopped onto Harry’s bed after dinner one night and grabbed the mind magic book she was actually almost finished with.

“Er, I just got new shoes,” Harry, still glamourised from the day, bunched up some for her from where he was trying to get through his blood magic book and ignore Ron’s grumbling about having to read more than what was necessary for school.

Ron looked up and his ears got a little pink at the mention of bras. Harry and Hermione both rolled their eyes at him. "It's why the Order has to let us go to Diagon," Hermione explained in more detail. "Those are things you have to try on for yourself and a random person can't just buy it for you. Plus, I don't think Professor Lupin or Moody really wanted to go bra shopping for me, though I'd probably pay to see it if they did."

"I most definitely would!" Ron chuckled and continued to slowly make his way through the other mind magic book. "Ergh! It's the clearing your head part that's so frustrating!" He grumbled for the hundredth time. "What does that even mean?!"

"Imagine yourself flying on your broom. It's just you in the sky, the wind in your hair, and the rustling sound of the leaves on the trees. Nothing else for as far as you can see," Harry told him, not even taking his eyes from his book. "It's how I started, and it worked well while I got used to it."

That seemed to really hit Ron in a place he could understand. "Thanks mate, yeah, I think I can try that," he determinedly went back to the book. "I'll get this down. I want to keep what's in my head secret, and I wouldn't be opposed to learning some new spells you studied in your mastery."

"I'm working on organizing my thoughts before building my shield," Hermione added in to neither of their surprise.

"I knew you'd get this quickly, Hermione. And, Ron," Harry looked up at his friend with a fond smile. "It took me much longer than it's taking you. I had a bit of a hindrance when I first started, but even later when it was gone this type of magic in particular didn't come naturally to me. You're doing really well, I promise."

Ron turned bright red and that and also looked proud. "Thanks, Harry...that, well, that means a lot."

The door flew open to their room before Fred and George both shoved their heads in. "Sirius and Professor Lupin have started a prank war," Fred began.

“Get off your arses and join in!” George threw the door open wider to gesture then outside.
"We want Harry on our side!"

“Night’s too nice for reading!” Sirius called out from behind them as he ran past the room being chased by what appeared to be paper airplanes.

“I could take a break,” Harry looked over to Ron mischievously.

“Merlin, thank you!” He threw the book down and jumped up.

“Hermione?” Harry held out a hand for their friend.

“Fine,” she grumbled but still put the book down to stand. “Someone needs to remind you to use fourth year spells,” she whispered warningly to him as they left the room.

She wasn’t wrong, Harry decided. But...also, no one would really know if he was the one to charm something or if it had been Sirius or Remus or the twins. Oh well, a few seventh year spells and some obscure ones that Sirius probably grew up learning from his cousins wouldn’t be too remarkable. He didn’t remember this prank war from his first time in Grimmauld, so he wasn’t sure what he had changed to cause it, but he sure as hell was going to enjoy it! He hadn't had actual fun without something terrible hanging over his head in so very long!

It was laughably easy to get away from the Order once they were all in Diagon Alley. Harry just had to say he needed to stop by the bank and then the bookstore. The Order members couldn’t really go to his vault with him since he definitely wasn't going to give permission, and they could at least trust he would be passably safe in the bookstore afterwards. Ron and Hermione were going to make sure that it took them as long as possible at Madam Malkins and getting their potions supplies. It didn’t buy Harry an exceptional amount of time, but he figured he could disappear for a good hour before anyone would get highly concerned.

He ducked into a small alley and dropped his glamour. Breathing in the relief of being in his own skin and having anonymity once more, he stretched his muscles and walked forward confidently. He really didn't miss the stares he always got when he was a teenager and before he left the public eye. Percy lived down a side-street from Diagon and only a few blocks away, so Harry happily wandered towards the flat he'd only been to once before.

He was only a dozen or so meters from Percy's flat when Harry paused as he saw a very familiar figure stalk determinedly into a shop just at the corner of the building in front of him. The shop didn't have a name above the door, only the common mortar and pestle that marked an apothecary. If Snape used this apothecary, then Harry assumed it must be exceptional, and he was definitely in the market for a new apothecary. Slug and Jiggers in Diagon tended to not have any of the darker or more dangerous ingredients he regularly used in potions, so Harry had been patronizing Madam Teague's apothecary in Knockturn Alley in the future. However, Madam Teague's prices were exorbitant since she really didn't have any competition in Diagon or Knockturn Alleys for what she offered. Harry, however, was given a hefty discount since he brewed quite a few of her darker, ready-made potions. Now he didn't have that partnership to fall back on though, and he wouldn't have access to his larger family vault for another couple years. He wasn't actually hurting for money, but funding a rebellion was probably going to end up being pretty expensive, so he was trying to take price into account more than he usually would.

He frowned in thought. If he followed, then that was taking away from his time with Percy, but Harry's curiosity finally won out as it usually did in the past and in the future both. Any apothecary that Snape thought was good, was one he just had to check out. Plus, there were some things he really did need to stock up on for his own personal brewing. It also didn't hurt that he got quite a bit of sick glee in maybe running into the acerbic man in a form he decidedly would not recognize. So, Harry strode forward and into the dimly lit and haphazardly cluttered store.

It was the smells that hit him first. He'd come to love potions as he brewed for hours during his mastery with someone who actually loved to teach and would explain things patiently, so the earthy smells of the potion ingredients tugged a little smile onto his lips. He knew he would never be the genius that Snape was, but he also guessed that Snape probably couldn't hold his own with Harry's knowledge of the Dark Arts at this point either. In Harry's mind that put them on equal footing, even if Snape didn't know that.

Harry did actually smile when he saw the collection of vials of vampire blood just sitting on a shelf with a ward around it that repelled any who had a solely light magical core from being able to see that it held. Harry hoped it was strong enough to keep aurors from raiding the

place because he was already falling in love with the shop that clearly did not have a problem with dark ingredients. Merlin, he'd missed vampire Ron, well he missed Ron like a missing limb, but *vampire* Ron was mainly missed for the steady supply of blood for some quite inventive potions that became increasingly useful. Hey, if Ron got to snack on him, then he was more than allowed to take a little blood for potions ingredients!

Harry picked up a couple of the vials and grinned even broader at the price. Yes, it was very expensive, but not exorbitantly so like Madam Teague's. His eyes fell on some powered griffin's claw and tincture of hellebore that was just perfect and seemed extremely pure unlike what he was used to having to distill before he could even use it. Now, if he could just find some black dahlia petals that were preserved in stasis instead of dried...

"You are making a magical signature blocking potion," a silky voice drawled behind Harry. "That is quite a complex brew."

He wasn't sure why he still jumped at Snape's remark when he knew very well that he'd followed the man into the store, but he'd been happily filling a basket and had still been surprised by the silent approach of the spy. "I'm not sure what you mean," Harry stifled all emotion and turned to give his professor a very fake-innocent smirk at guessing the illegal potion he was most definitely going to brew.

Snape for his part just snorted in what Harry assumed might be amusement even though he'd never seen Snape amused at any point in his life before. "You have vampire blood in your basket; you have already crossed into doing something illegal," he informed Harry with a raise of his eyebrow. "Master Cretian does not judge those who frequent his store and provides only the best ingredients."

"Absolutely!" Harry exclaimed, letting his façade of nonchalance go for his excitement at the find. "I usually use Madam Teague's but just happened to stumble on this place. I'm never going back!" He added as he found the black dahlia petals and added them to the basket.

"Planning a crime?" Snape picked up some dahlia petals for himself and some freeze-dried tarantulas.

"Maybe," Harry smirked at the man, thinking this was the most civil conversation they'd ever had in his life. "You never know when you might need to rob a bank."

“You would need much more than just a magical signature blocker to even attempt that,” Snape raised an amused eyebrow.

Harry shrugged. He’d done it with just Polyjuice potion and a dragon before, but he wanted to maybe not make the goblins quite so mad at him this time around. Actually, Polyjuice might be a good idea to brew though. He began to glance around for the ingredients.

Curious, he looked over and into the basket Snape was holding and gave the man a chuckle. “Well, if you keep my potions secret, I’ll keep yours,” he said teasingly, having seen that Snape was clearly brewing veritaserum, which was decidedly illegal if you weren’t working directly for the ministry.

Snape leaned against the counter behind him, studying the strange man he’d definitely never seen before but who also looked oddly familiar for some reason. “I only spoke to make sure you know the blood must be added on the new moon or the hellebore will not be neutralized...I’d hate for a fellow potions enthusiast to poison themselves.”

Harry’s hand paused over the boomslang skin he was sorting through with the idea that he might make some Polyjuice potion for Sirius. Was Snape *flirting*?! Definitely not; he was decidedly imagining things! He had to be. That was absolutely not possible in any time or universe. Harry turned around, brushing his braid over his shoulder, accidentally exposing the cluster of vampire bites and the inked line of tattooed runes going up his neck.

Nope, he didn’t imagine it. Snape’s dark eyes flicked to the runes and up to his lips then eyes. Harry was not sure what was going on, but this was not acceptable...whatever it was! Deciding to ignore it, Harry held out a calloused hand to the man, “Hadrian Black,” he offered in his most polite tone.

It really was his name, or at least part of his legal name. His full legal name was Hadrian James Potter-Black, but he never used his full name on anything. In his day-to-day life, it was just Harry. In his shadier dealings, it was always Hadrian Black. Surprisingly, no one ever seemed to realize that his full name couldn’t possibly be Harry, so it was a good pseudonym that if he were ever called on would still be legal and no one could say he was trying to pretend to be someone else or falsify an identity.

“Severus Snape,” his professor shook his hand with a firm grip and held on just a bit too long before letting go.

“I’ve heard of you. You’re a genius when it comes to potions,” Harry commented and continued to fill his basket with everything he needed for Polyjuice. “I’ll never be your caliber. I just don’t have the imagination for it, but I had to learn quite a bit during my mastery. I definitely know vampire blood works best in potions during a new moon if nothing else.”

“I can see you’ve had some experience,” Snape gestured to the bites on his neck, his hand coming just a bit too close. Yep, Harry was going to shut this down now. What the hell was happening?!

“I have not heard of you before, and I know most brewers in this country who could competently make a potion as complex as what you are attempting. Are you a member of the ancient Black family here in England? And just what *is* that mastery in if not Potions?” Snape continued to trail behind him with that light smirk that was almost a smile.

“Hmm,” Harry placed his basket on the counter and took out his Gringotts bag to pay, sparing a bright smile and thanks for the elderly owner who seemed to only speak French. “Yes, I am a member of House Black; however, I’m from a minor line and have been doing quite a lot of traveling. We don’t get discussed often here in England, probably for the best with the general family history and all. As for my mastery, let’s just say I studied in Amsterdam and my degree did not transfer over to Britain,” he added with a raise of his silver studded eyebrow to convey just why it might not have transferred.

“Ah,” Snape nodded and paid for his own ingredients next, a wider smirk that was almost definitely a smile forming on his mouth. Harry thought he might be having a stroke at the shock he was in. Weren’t you supposed to smell burnt toast or something if you were having a stroke though?

They exited the store and Harry was awkwardly wondering how to escape to Percy’s flat without being rude. “Hadrian,” Snape turned his intense gaze on the other man, almost purring the name. “Would you care to stop by Diagon Alley and get a drink with me? I would love to continue our discussion about the effects of the moon on potion ingredients.”

Right, well, time to go. Harry shrunk down his bag and put it in a pocket. "I'm sorry, Severus," he said, almost choking on the name. It was taking every ounce of his Occlumency training to keep from either dying laughing or just taking off at a run to not have to deal with this situation. "Erm, I'm actually in a relationship," he told the man firmly. "I'm heading to see my partner now. I'm sorry to disappoint."

Snape's look fell infinitesimally before he gave a short nod. "Another time then...maybe with your partner, as friends? There are not many whom I believe share similar interests here in Britain where potions and *certain* forms of magic are concerned."

At least who aren't murderous terrorists, Harry thought to himself and just barely stopped his mouth from adding. What he really couldn't stop his mouth from saying was the: "I'd really like that. I'm sure my partner would as well. He has some similar views even if his experiences might be different and more specialized."

What was he thinking?! Was he actually agreeing to get dinner or drinks with Snape sometime to talk about the dark arts?! Did he just volunteer Percy to join as well? Merlin, his partner was going to kill him!

"Owl me when you are free, and we can meet in either Diagon Alley or Hogsmeade. I teach at Hogwarts during the year but will be happy to leave the school for an intellectual dinner," Snape remarked before he gave Harry a short nod and that expression that was bordering on a smile and left back towards Diagon Alley.

Yep, he was probably having a stroke or a mental break. He knew it would happen eventually with his insane life. It was an inconvenient time though, he mused as he dazedly continued his walk to Percy's flat. Once he started laughing, he just really couldn't stop. It started as a chuckle and turning into a hysterical, side-splitting laugh just as he knocked on the door to Percy's small but very comfortable home.

"Should I even ask?" Percy, thankfully looking like Harry was used to seeing him without his glamour, looked at him in amusement while Harry continued laughing into his flat and crashed on the couch.

"I don't even know!" Harry shook his head and really did try to stop the giggles. "I think I just got hit on by someone!"

Closing the door, Percy made his way over to sit beside his partner, pushing a basket a little farther from them. "Ok...I don't see how that's amusing, but erm...congratulations? I hope you told them you're taken."

"What? Yes, of course!" Harry finally did stop laughing to turn to his partner conspiratorially. "It was *Snape*! Can you believe that?!"

Percy just looked at him incredulously. "Are you sure you interpreted the situation correctly? You're not really that good at reading the signals well or at all...frankly, I'm not sure how we even got together."

"Because I just told you I liked you one night and asked if you wanted to shag," Harry rolled his eyes but couldn't disagree with his partner. "Yeah, I'm not good at these things, but I'm fairly certain in this instance. Regardless, he does know about you, and we might be committed to having to get dinner with him as friends at some point. I used the Hadrian Black name as usual."

"Well, you did want to convince him to join us. This might be a good opportunity, or the best we'll get anyway," Percy nodded instead of being upset like Harry had really dreaded.

"Oh good," he sighed in relief. "I hate committing you to things without asking first, but my mouth was talking, and I couldn't get it to shut up."

"That does tend to happen with you," Percy smirked at him fondly. "At least it usually leads to good ends. Do you want your present now? How much time do you have before you'll be missed?"

"Not long," Harry winced. "I followed Snape into this amazing apothecary you have just down the street. Have you ever gone in? They have excellent dark ingredients!"

"Really?" Percy leaned forward in interest at that. "How are the prices? Madam Teague's is robbery without your discount."

“Very reasonable,” he nodded happily and kissed Percy firmly on the lips. “I do want my present now though. Please!”

“Great, well, my project didn’t quite go as planned,” Percy explained as he pulled the basket around and then stood to pick up what looked like a pet carrier from behind the couch. “It was successful...but maybe more like 80-85% successful. Regardless, I hope you like it.”

“Erm...Percy, love...what is it?” Harry frowned into the carrier at the naked, wrinkled thing that strongly reminded him of the baby Voldemort horcrux he’d seen in the afterlife, and it didn’t help that he could feel dark waves of soul magic coming from the thing.

Harry’s eyebrows shot up when the thing in the carrier gave a tiny: “meow.”

“Wait...is that some kind of cat?!” He asked incredulously with wide surprised eyes.

Percy chuckled and opened the crate door for the (maybe?) cat to come out. The thing immediately began to snuggle up around Harry’s legs. He couldn’t tell if it was very loving or just cold, but it was still kind of nice in a bony, wrinkled skin way. “It’s a kitten actually, or rather half cat/half kneazle,” Percy explained while Harry bent down to get a better look at the creature.

“Why is it naked?” He softly scratched the odd textured skin behind the kitten’s overly large ears and the tiny thing just melted into jelly on top of his left shoe.

“Er...well, that’s what I meant by 80-85% success,” Percy shifted awkwardly and cleared his throat. “Erm, it started out with hair but something with the magic interacted, and it was an odd side-effect, I guess. I’m not sure just yet what the interaction was. I’m still studying the data. Hairless cats or rather Sphinx cats are a thing though, so it’s not too odd.”

“Right, so its hair all fell out when you did some kind of magic on it?” Harry now picked up the little wrinkled thing that was starting to worm its way into his heart. Honestly, it was just so ugly it was cute!

Percy huffed and crashed down onto the couch where Harry joined him again with the cat. “Well...I was working on my research, and I had the thought that having a familiar around might help keep you out of your head while at school. Hedwig is wonderful, and I’ve loved having her around here, but she lives in the owlery when you’re at Hogwarts. The professors tend to be more lenient with familiars like cats following you to class. And, well, this one will definitely need you. It wasn’t intentional, but you know, it’ll need regular baths since it doesn’t have hair, and sunscreen for when it goes outside, and little jumpers for when it’s cold...you hate it don’t you?” Percy stopped his ramblings with a deep frown. “This was a terrible idea, wasn’t it? If you don’t like it, then I’ll just keep it myself or undo the magic...”

“Don’t you dare, Percy Weasley!” Harry held the cuddly ball of wrinkled skin closer to his chest. There was a little mistiness in the back of his eyes that Harry had to blink away at the thoughtfulness of what his partner had done for him. He’d been thinking of him and made something with his own magic to make Harry’s life better. It really was the best gift he’d ever been given.

“You got me an emotional support inferius! It’s by far the absolute nicest thing anyone has ever done for me, and I love her already!!”

Percy’s face broke into a huge smile. “Really? Even if it’s a bit high maintenance?”

Harry just chuckled and patted the little kitten on the butt, which seemed to make it extremely happy. “Of course! I’ll have Hermione teach me how to knit it little hats and jumpers. She’ll be the best emotional support inferius ever!”

“Wait,” Harry lifted the cat to look under it excitedly. “Yep, she, definitely a girl. I’ll need to get her a name...Er...what does she eat by the way? Cat food, or does she have more of an inferius taste for raw meat?”

“Cats will eat raw meat too,” Percy chuckled. “She’s been eating cat food just fine for me though. I’d maybe give her some raw meat occasionally to balance out her diet some.”

“Anything else odd about her since she’s an inferi? Any side effects besides the hair?” Harry was running through good names that might fit his new friend.

“Well...I haven’t been finished with her long, so there might be some things that show up later,” Percy winced some at the unknown, he didn't like the unknown. “There is one though,” he waved his wand and room went completely dark.

Harry looked down at the two glowing red orbs of light in his lap. “I’m not sure why her eyes glow red in the dark,” Percy tensely remarked. “I’ll definitely need to fix that for future human subjects if I ever get that far.”

“Aren’t you just the creepiest cutie ever!” Harry cooed over the cat, causing Percy to laugh as he spelled the lights on again.

“I don’t know why I was even concerned you might not like it,” he chuckled.

“Her, not it,” Harry corrected firmly. “I think I’ll call her Persephone like the queen of the underworld since she’s an inferius.”

“You’re not allowed to call your cat Percy,” Percy told Harry with a glare, knowing just how his partner was going to shorten that name.

Harry pouted but didn’t seem put out. “I’ll call her Sephie then. Spoil sport.”

“The basket has all her toys and treats and things in it,” Percy pushed it over to him. “Can you stay for tea or a drink?”

Harry looked at his watch and sighed. “No, I really should be getting back. They’re going to wonder if I got lost or kidnapped in the bookstore very soon. By the way...how is Umbridge feeling? Still under the weather?” He asked with a smirk while he coaxed Sephie back into her carrier.

Percy rolled his eyes in exasperation at that woman and all she'd done. "I don't think you'll have to worry about that monster this year," he remarked off-handedly. "The ministry is scrambling to figure out what happened to her as well as fill the vacancy at Hogwarts."

"They aren't going to trace anything back to you, right?" Harry asked him intensely. "I can go cover it if you aren't 100% sure. You know I have your back."

"I'm sure," Percy stood and kissed him firmly in thanks for his support. "I spent quite a lot of time at the lake where Voldemort left all the inferi for my research, so I have it on very good authority that twelve years from now, it still hasn't been touched by anyone. No one is going to notice one more inferi in the lake with the dozens that are already there."

"You really are brilliant and quite scary," Harry told him with a wide grin and a kiss of thanks. "I really don't think my hand or my sanity could take another round of Umbridge anyway," he waved his still very scarred hand that clearly read 'I must not tell lies.'

"I'll try to make sure you get someone competent this year," Percy promised him as he opened the door and shrunk down the basket to put in Harry's pocket.

"Need to arm the students against those Dark Lords, you know," Harry winked at him teasingly. "I'll sneak out just as soon as we get back to Hogwarts, and we'll really start in on our plans. I got the ingredients to brew the magical signature blocker, so we'll have that for the cup in the bank, but I want to grab the ring and diadem first. I have the locket in my trunk."

"I know you know to avoid touching it," Percy kissed him once more for good measure. "I'll wait on you for the ring. I know it's a bit tricky."

"Good, yeah...please," he gave a significant look at that. They both knew it was what really killed Dumbledore.

"I'll try to see you before then...I still have some plans to keep close to you," Percy gave him insinuating look before giving him a little shove out the door.

“Keep your secrets then,” Harry huffed but smiled all the way back to where he had to replace his glamour to re-enter Diagon Alley and find his keepers.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Sirius wonders what's been happening to all his firewhiskey...

The Talk

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Merlin! Don’t do that to a person!!” Hermione clutched her chest when Harry popped up seemingly out of nowhere right in front of where she and Ron were pretending to look for him in the bookstore.

“Found you,” Ron dryly chuckled. “Moody and Tonks have been growing that ‘oh shit, we lost Harry’ look on their faces for the past fifteen minutes. I was giving Moody about five more before he called in an entire contingent of aurors to look for you.”

Harry, chaos monster that he was, turned and sweetly waved to Tonks across the store like he’d been there the whole time. The woman glared at him, but just turned to the grizzled former-auror beside her to tell him to stand down. “Aw, they care,” he fake-sighed.

“Don’t ask for me to cover for you again,” Hermione grumbled. “You were supposed to be back fifteen minutes ago.”

“Aw, don’t be mad,” he pouted at her. “I found this amazing apothecary a couple streets over on the way to my person’s flat that I’ll show you whenever we can escape our babysitters. I followed Snape in, so you know it has to be excellent.”

“Of course, you followed Snape in,” Ron rolled his eyes, but Hermione was already nodding along like he was forgiven.

“I’ve been hoping there was a better place to get ingredients than Slug and Jiggers,” she grinned happily. “There are a couple potions I want to try that have some more...exotic ingredients.”

“Did Snape see you, mate?” Ron asked as they handed Harry his textbooks they’d grabbed for him and headed to the checkout. “Please at least say you didn’t look like this.” He motioned up and down to Harry’s glamoured look. He was starting to get the idea that Harry

was about just as unstable as Sirius, and it was obvious his and Hermione's new job was reigning him in.

Harry chuckled but was definitely *not* going to tell Ron and Hermione anything about that interaction. He didn't particularly want Snape to try to kill him later for telling them once he learned who Hadrian Black was. "Yes, we talked, and no I wasn't wearing the glamour. He thinks my name is Hadrian Black by the way, in case it comes up again. It is...sort of, well, it's part of my name anyway. I'm legally Hadrian James Potter-Black."

"I never even considered that 'Harry' was short for something," Hermione frowned as both she and Ron looked a bit taken aback that neither had even thought of it. "Why didn't we even consider that?"

A soft "meow" sounded from the carrier Harry had set down behind them. "Er...your bag is meowing," Ron frowned at the carrier before bending down to look inside of it, knowing Harry hadn't had that particular bag when they had left for Diagon that morning. "What the bloody hell is that?!" He stood up again quickly with a disgusted look on his face.

"Where were you, Brat! You were supposed to stay in the bookstore!" Moody had finally pushed through the crowds to reach them with Tonks trailing behind.

"Well, I was here, but I had to go pick up Persephone, but then I came right back," he gave the man the most false-innocent look ever used. Moody's face hardened more in suspicion at him.

"Oh...this cutie must be Persephone! Well, hi, little one," Hermione had bent down to see what had shocked Ron and was currently trying to pet the kitten through the bars on the carrier.

"What *is* it?!" Ron asked again, looking like he wanted to pull Hermione back as quickly as possible from the beast.

"It's a Sphinx cat, Ron," Hermione stood and gave him a glare for not respecting the kitten.

Harry just nodded at them all with a smile. "I'm going to call her 'Sephie.' Isn't she just the best?! She's really nice and cuddly and everything."

"And those blue eyes, and the big ears!" Hermione cooed at the tiny, wrinkled thing.

Moody was almost growling down at the cat. "It feels evil," he frowned even deeper.

"Sephie is no more evil than I am!" Harry protested and moved the carrier farther away from Moody. He assumed the man must be feeling some of the soul magic around her, but honestly, Harry himself was about as dark as an inferius these days, so even if he wasn't evil, the sentiment did stand on multiple levels. Moody was thankfully an auror and not an unspeakable trained to feel magic or Harry would already have been carted off to a holding cell somewhere in the bowels of the ministry.

"And she's going to be best friends with Crookshanks," Hermione cooed again.

Harry wasn't so sure about that. Crookshanks, as part kneazle, would probably be very suspicious of the inferius cat, but he'd try to introduce them slowly if possible until they got used to each other. "We'll introduce them later," he nodded at her. "Oh, and I need to learn how to knit her some little jumpers before it gets cold. Can you teach me?"

Hermione solemnly stepped forward and put a hand on his shoulder. She nodded very seriously at her friend. "All is forgiven and my earlier words in anger are retracted. You are currently my favorite."

"Merlin, I'm glad you're gay," Ron grumbled before getting a playful punch to the shoulder from Harry.

"Can I see the cat?" Tonks was trying to look around Moody, but he was thoroughly blocking the aisle. "Oooo, where did you get her?" She finally shoved by the man and poked a finger through the bars, her hair turning bubblegum pink in excitement.

“I just stopped in at the Menagerie,” Harry lied. “I was looking for a familiar. I love Hedwig, but she doesn’t live in the dorms with us. Sephie is just so interesting and sweet.”

“Buy the books and let’s go!” Moody ordered them all with an extra glare towards the cat. “This day has already been a fiasco, let’s get you back to the house and in the wards.”

“Love you too, Moody,” Harry grinned at him as he walked by to pay for his supplies, getting a swat to the back of his head for the effort.

A tall figure shuffled into the room causing Harry to look up from where he was reading his blood magic book (glamoured as a quidditch highlights book) and cuddling with a sleeping Sephie in the sitting room. Everyone had been really good about her joining the house, except Crookshanks who refused to be in the same room, but he planned to wear the large, orange cat down. Molly Weasley thought the kitten was disturbing, but still gave her some scraps from cooking occasionally when she was in the kitchen. Ginny and the twins were both set on the thinking she was either adorable or interesting respectfully.

Regardless of their feelings, Harry still hadn’t told Ron and Hermione exactly what she was yet. He wanted them to get used to her a little more, then he’d fill them in. They were still more than a little freaked out whenever they saw him without his glamour, a pet inferius was asking a bit much of them at the moment. Overall, she was a fairly normal cat thanks to Percy’s exceptional skills with soul magic. Harry was hiding what she was fairly easily, aided by a small glamour he cast on her each night to hide her glowing red eyes that he still thought was just the coolest thing ever.

“Hey Siri...?” He asked the man standing just inside the room and who looked truly awkward and embarrassed while he shifted weight from side to side in front of him. “Can I help you?”

“Here!” Sirius tossed a thick pamphlet onto the couch beside Harry before he plopped into the armchair in a dramatic topple. Harry glanced around, but they were alone in the room, so this must be something the man had sought him out for.

Shaking his head at his godfather in bemusement, Harry put down his book and picked up the pamphlet to look through without disturbing the inferius. “Er...I don’t think this is what Remus meant by giving me a sex talk...I don’t think you’re supposed to outsource it to a pamphlet...where did you even get this? It might even be a little *too* informative.”

Harry chuckled as he flipped through the extremely detailed pamphlet that was almost clinical in its explanations...the moving pictures were just a little too much in Harry’s opinion though. Really, that might have traumatized him a bit as an actual fifteen-year-old. He had to admit, he was a little sad if Sirius wasn’t going to attempt an actual talk. The amusement alone was so worth it.

“I get the feeling you’re already fairly informed about all this...I’m sure your friend Hermione made you read up on it, or Madam Pomfrey did a talk, or something based on how not embarrassed you are about everything,” Sirius gave an exasperated wave of his hand at the pamphlet. “I had Dora pick that up at St. Mungo’s just in case though. I’m happy to chat about it and answer questions, but I doubt we need to do the full talk.”

“Hmm...” Harry hummed as he flipped though. “This is all wizards. What if I wanted to sleep with a muggle?” He asked, not giving up yet on getting his godfatherly talk.

Sirius huffed and rolled his eyes. “Don’t use magic and wear a condom. You might not be able to catch any muggle diseases, but you don’t want to be a jerk about them being concerned you might have something. Besides that, everything is the same.”

“I’m actually pretty happy with my person anyway. I’m not looking to trade. I did get hit on when we went to Diagon the other day though. It was quite amusing,” Harry chuckled and put down the pamphlet to focus in on the other man.

Sirius ran a hand down his face and sighed. “Merlin, you’re 15, I thought it would be a long time from now before I had to have these talks with you,” he grumbled. “You’re too young for people to be hitting on. If a man is hitting on you, then assume he’s a creeper or someone dangerous since you’re only 15. Hex him and run if at all possible.”

Harry did chuckle slightly at Snape being considered a creeper until what his godfather said really registered with him. “Talks?” Harry raised an interested eyebrow now. “As in more than one? Is there something else you’d like to discuss? I don’t think there’s anything pressing I need to know about life right now...”

“Look, Pup,” Sirius leaned forward with his arms on his knees, trying to look as serious as possible, which was a little disconcerting coming from this man in particular. “I know we don’t know each other very well yet, but you seem to have changed from when I saw you last. You have this darker cloud about you...more serious and like you’re holding the weight of the world.”

“I did just see Voldemort resurrected from my own blood and a friend murdered in front of me,” Harry bluntly reminded him. Even the first time around everyone had seemed to think he should be perfectly fine after that and go about his business as usual. It might not be why he was acting strangely now, but he thought they should have expected some personality changes and issues from trauma that no one ever seemed to think he needed regardless of what he’d recently gone through. Everyone just expected him to be fine and bounce back from whatever terrible event he had recently been subjected to, and he was bloody tired of it.

“Yeah, Pup...I get that. I really do. You have a right to feel however you feel, and it’s ok to not be ok,” Sirius paled some but nodded in understanding. “It’s why I’ve been trying to get you kids to have a little fun with the prank war and getting together some poker games...I swear I don’t expect you to be doing great and perfect and fully adjusted after what happened, but I do want you...I *need* you to take care of yourself and find some healthy coping mechanisms. For instance, alcohol is not the answer to making things better...it’s a temporary plaster that really doesn’t fix anything at all...”

“Excuse me?” Harry raised a surprised eyebrow at his godfather. Yeah, he *had* been the one stealing all the whiskey, but it was very surprising that Sirius had traced it back to him. There hadn’t been any wards or anything around the cupboard; Harry had definitely checked. To Harry, Sirius had never seemed to be the most observant type, but it had been about twelve years since he’d interacted with the man, so maybe he was remembering him wrong.

“What makes you think I’m drinking?” He added on more out of interest in how he’d been found out than really caring if Sirius learned it was him or not.

Sirius pointed to the cupboard in question. “I keep my firewhiskey there, as I’m sure you’ve figured out...and Remus has set me a very strict limit on how much I can drink for the same reasons why I’m worried about you right now. Bottles have been going missing since you came to stay here but none went missing before. I swear to you that I’m not mad, and I’m not even judging you at all, but there has to be a healthier way to deal with everything.”

Harry really wanted to laugh at how very serious his godfather was being. It was *almost* a bit parental, something he’d never seen from Sirius whom he’d always tried to take care of more than the other way around. He also hadn’t known that Sirius was being looked after that well. It really made him like Remus even more than he had before, and he was glad someone was there for his godfather when he went back to school.

“What makes you think it wasn’t Moody?” He asked, stifling his chuckle. He really didn’t care if Sirius knew, but now he just had to mess with him. “Everyone knows the man has a drinking problem. It’s why fake-Moody got away with carrying a flask all year.”

Sirius crossed his arms and seemed to catch on that Harry was messing with him instead of angry judging by the smirk on his face. “Moody has been sober for a year, ever since he had to dry out when he was kidnapped and kept in a trunk. He realized he had a problem when he had so very much time for introspection...anyone else you want to throw under the bus there?”

Harry shrugged. “I’m sure Dumbledore loves a good drink now and then.”

The older man snorted in amusement. “Snape would have been a better scapegoat than Dumbledore. I don’t think I’ve ever seen the headmaster have even a glass of wine, though I’m sure he probably does have a glass or two of scotch with Minerva occasionally.”

“Mrs. Weasley?” Harry tried next with a wide grin.

Sirius out-right laughed at that one. “Harry, I might not be quite right mentally anymore, but I used to be an auror...I can put together missing bottles of whiskey and the one new person in the house who can’t go out and buy their own.”

Technically Harry could go out and buy his own, but it wasn't worth the hassle of trying to sneak past all the Order members during the day, and he didn't think the 24-hour liquor store down the street had even opened yet in this time for him to sneak out late at night. Sephie yawned and Harry scratched her behind her ears. He wasn't sure what to do, or really how much to tell him. It's not like he wanted to lie to Sirius...honestly, he really wanted to tell the man the whole truth, but he wasn't sure he could handle it.

"I took your whiskey," Harry said slowly, still debating just how much he should let on.

"I appreciate your honesty," Sirius nodded, clearly already knowing this, and keeping his promise that he wasn't angry, just concerned. "We need to talk about better ways to deal with what you are going through though, and I know I might not be the best person for that."

"Merlin, Sirius," Harry laughed and shook his head. "I don't have a drinking problem. I'm sure I could very well cross into that category, but I'm on the right side of the line at this moment. I clearly know I need a mind-healer as well, everyone from Hermione to my boyfriend have told me that, but that really isn't an option for me right now...maybe ever."

"Then talk to me about what you're feeling at least then, or Remus if you feel more comfortable with him," Sirius frowned deeply, not knowing how to solve this but really wanting to.

Harry cracked his neck and tossed out a mental *fuck it*. He wanted his godfather, and he wanted him to know what was going on. He was quite good at obliviate these days, and no one who had studied even a little mind magic would dare to try to get into a former Azkaban prisoner's mind, especially one that had been there for over a decade. That wouldn't be helpful to the legilimens at all and would probably just send them off with the worst migraine of their life and tossing the contents of their stomach. Azkaban did a number on a person's mental processes that got worse with longer exposure. So, if Sirius took it well, then the information was safe, and if he didn't, then Harry would just obliviate him of the entire conversation.

"If I'm going to talk to someone, it's going to be you...well, besides Ron and Hermione who already know," he assured the man.

"Or the boyfriend maybe?" Sirius tried for some levity with a small smile.

“I’m not counting him since he’s part of the secret,” Harry just added, taking a steady breath for what he was about to do. “Look, Siri, if you want in, I’ll tell you. I really do want you to know, and I want you on my side. I need you to be sure you can handle some pretty heavy information though. I need to know that you care about *me* not some cause or a side in this war or even an idea of who and what you want me to be. Am I asking too much? If so, just tell me, I won’t respect you any less, and I’ll swear to never take your whiskey again and we can move forward.”

To his credit, Sirius did actually take a moment to think about it before responding. “Pup...I know I’m not the best godfather...” he held up his hand to stop Harry before he could protest.

“No, it’s true. I can’t leave this house and take you places, I’m all over the place mentally, and Remy says I’m way more impulsive than I was even as a teenager. So, I understand that you might not fully trust me, but I want to assure you, more than anything else in this world, that I’m trying to be better for *you*. I want to be there for *you*. Even if I sometimes look at you and see James, I do still know you’re Harry, and that means more to me than this ridiculous war, the people in this house, my own freedom. You say the word and you and me will run off never to be heard from again. I’m serious. Whatever you need, whatever you want to tell me, I’m here for *you*.”

“Well, you must really mean it since you didn’t make the joke about your name,” Harry grinned at him.

“I did think it though,” Sirius returned his smile slightly. “I didn’t put you first before when I escaped...I put my revenge first. I know I wasn’t in my right mind then, but I want to do right by you now. I want to be someone you can come to and trust with things.”

“Ok, but I’m warning you, if you freak out, I’m going to obliviate you,” Harry told him, not as a threat but as a very sincere promise. He wasn’t worried about Sirius telling anyone because, one, he really didn’t think he would, and two, no one would believe him anyway.

Sirius scoffed. “It might have been a while since I was there, but I’m certain Hogwarts doesn’t teach mind magic to anyone, let alone underage students. At most I might get a nosebleed if you tried.”

“Well, for starters I’m not fifteen,” Harry crossed his arms and leaned back on the couch, trying to take this slowly and not just throw everything at the man all at once. “I act different, I am different, because I came back in time this summer. I’m not the person you knew at the beginning of the summer. I’ve lived all this before, and Siri...it didn’t turn out well at all. My partner and I, we came back to fix things, or fuck it up at the very least.”

Sirius frowned, a look of disbelief and confusion in his eyes. “Time travel does not exist past hours...if you were to go back any significant time, then you put your own existence, your own soul, at risk. My knowledge of dark magic is highly limited, but even I know two of a person cannot exist on the same plane for any significant length of time before the soul tries to right itself.”

Harry winced at that. “Yeah...I really should have realized that ahead of time. I would have if I’d sat down and really thought it through. But, in my defense, future Hermione was the one who found the ritual, and I was more concerned with getting the ridiculous thing right than thinking through all the magical theory. In hindsight, it should have been obvious though. I’m not saying I wouldn’t have done it, I definitely still would, but I might have at least warned my partner first.”

“Obvious? What exactly are you claiming to have done?” Sirius raised an eyebrow, still seeming to not quite believe him and getting more and more concerned.

“Yeah, well, we over-wrote our younger selves...basically, fifteen-year-old me was killed in the process of me coming back, or written out of existence at least,” Harry grimaced at that. “We didn’t mean to, but well, we’re still here, just older and all. It was how the ritual solved the two people on one plane issue.”

“You look fifteen...” Sirius frowned darkly at the person setting in front of him. He didn’t know what was going on, but he was very concerned about Harry. If he wasn’t absolutely certain this person was Harry, which he was after all their interactions over the past week, then he would probably be calling in the rest of the house at the moment.

Harry sighed and moved Sephie off his lap to pull his new wand out of the holster on his leg. Sephie stretched really big before wandering over to Sirius to paw at his pants leg. “Go ahead, pick her up,” Harry waved at the cat. “Maybe holding her will calm you down when I do what I’m about to do.”

“You’re scaring me, Harry,” Sirius didn’t pick up the cat who shook herself and just plopped down on the rug in a bit of a huff.

Harry cast a few auror-grade wards at the door to the sitting room, followed by a ward he really shouldn’t (legally) know but which Percy had taught him. “Merlin...you aren’t fifteen, are you?” Sirius gasped in shock, his eyes wide and his breaths coming short. He looked very close to losing it.

“I just cast a few wards. I haven’t even removed my glamour yet. Are you going to be ok with all this? Remember, obliviate is still an option. We can just go back to how things were half an hour ago,” he offered, his wand pausing before he removed the glamour.

Sirius held up a hand to stop him and visibly seemed to force himself to calm down. “You’re wearing some kind of glamour. That’s why you don’t look fifteen? How do you even know a glamour that strong? I didn’t know one existed! Merlin, Moody has been around you for a week now!”

“Let’s take a minute,” Harry put his wand down on his lap and mimed deep breaths for the man. “Just breathe, Siri. Everything’s fine. I’m only a bit older than you think. As for the glamour, my partner was an unspeakable before we came back in time. One of his coworkers in the future developed it, so no, it doesn’t exist yet.”

Sirius nodded and was clearly still trying to calm himself and take some deep breaths. “How old are you? I just want to prepare myself before seeing it, you know.”

Harry did actually understand. Hearing about it and seeing it were very different things. “I’m twenty-seven, so still younger than you. I should warn you that I do look very different than now though, and it’s more than just my age. I’ve gotten into a bit of body modification over the years...nothing super drastic, but well...you’ll see.”

Sirius shook his head and closed his eyes. He seemed to be spiraling into a dark place. “My pup is twenty-seven...he’s all grown up and I missed it...was I at least a better godfather to you in the future? Was I ever able to be there for you?”

Harry frowned and wrinkled his nose in thought. "I really don't want to tell you a whole lot about the future all at once. I think it'll be best to just slowly slip things in. Like now, just get used to me being back in time and being a little older, then we can slowly add events and other revelations."

The animagus opened his eyes and gave a short bark of a laugh. "Right, so I'm definitely dead," he chuckled wryly. "Great...I hope I at least died epically in a blaze of glory. You wouldn't dance around something as simple as how I disapproved of you dyeing your hair or took you to get your first tattoo or something like that if I were still alive when you decided to come back in time and...what did you call it? Fuck up the timeline? Merlin, if I were alive, I'd have come with you. That was a very marauder move at the very least."

Harry was extremely impressed. Sirius was smarter than he'd given the man credit for over the years since he'd last seen him. "Well, er...yeah, it was actually a pretty epic death overall. You saved my life, so I'd call it a blaze of glory at least."

Sirius nodded in agreement. "It was a good death then. The way I'd want to go...ok...I think I'm calm enough now. Take off the glamour and give me a minute to freak out again."

Harry slowly picked up his wand again and waved it over himself, removing his glamour. Sirius took a sharp breath in and looked very close to passing out. "Er...what do you think? Too many piercings?" Harry tried to joke as he nervously fiddled with the end of his braid, something he couldn't do when he had his glamour on.

Sirius didn't seem to be able to process anything at the moment. He just stared until he slowly started to nod absently. "Right, so...I can still see you, around the eyes...it's still you...it's still you..." he tried to reassure himself.

"Yeah, Siri, it's still me," Harry assured him with a little smile. "I'm just a bit older."

"And got into runes at some point," Sirius raised an eyebrow at the lines of different magic runes up Harry's neck and around his arms.

Harry shrugged. "They have purposes. Mostly, they help with my focus, some chronic pain from things that have happened to me over the years, some are to help with memory, and various other things. I have one for you too," he pulled up his shirt to show the grim, stag, and wolf on his ribcage.

Sirius did actually smile at that and Harry let out a breath of relief. "That's really well done, Pup. The stag looks almost exactly like Prongs."

Harry fixed his shirt and waved his wand again to reapply the glamour. "How about we call it there, Siri? I don't want to overload you. You should take some time to get used to all this."

"Wait, do you and your boyfr...wait, you've been calling him your partner, this is more serious than just a new relationship isn't it?" Sirius frowned at that new revelation.

"Er...well, we haven't really felt the need to define anything," he shrugged. "But yeah, we're really serious. He's it for me. I wouldn't be as arguably sane as I am without him. I love him."

"Wow...well, I've got to meet this person now," he sighed, accepting one more thing he'd missed in his pup's life. "Right, so do you and your partner have a plan in all this? Can I help with something?"

Harry shook his head. "No, I don't need any help right now. Mainly, Voldemort is in my way currently. I hadn't originally planned to come quite this far back in time, so I need to get rid of him before we can actually start implementing any major plans to change the future."

"He wasn't the problem?" Sirius asked in complete disbelief. "You can't just say you're taking care of the Dark Lord like he's a minor inconvenience to your plans! What the hell happened if Voldemort was not what you came back to change?!"

Harry shrugged in unconcern at the Voldy-Situation as he was thinking of it. "He kind-of is an inconvenience at the moment. I got rid of him two years from now in my past when I was only seventeen. Now that I know how I did it, I think we can take him out of play by

Christmas or Easter at the latest. The problem is larger than him. It's...well, it's complicated. Sit with this a few days and we'll talk again, ok?"

Sirius shook his head firmly. "No, you're going back to Hogwarts in a few days. I won't see you until Christmas. You can't just leave me with no information. I need to know you and why you're here and what I can do to help and what all's happened to you..."

Harry just scoffed at that and stood to remove his wards. "Please, even without the Marauder's Map I could sneak out of school blindfolded. I'm only going to school to maintain my cover at the moment. I'll stop by the house to visit. Plus, I've already tested it out that if I walk around without my glamour, no one even suspects I'm Harry. I'll be here as often as I can sneak by the Order. Plus, now that you know, I can tell you that I bought the ingredients to make you some Polyjuice potion, and I can also teach you the glamour, but I'm not sure how effective it will be to change your appearance to another person instead of just a younger version of yourself though."

Sirius's jaw was hanging open in surprise. "I can leave the house...?"

Harry removed the last ward and turned with a raise of his eyebrow. "If someone could pretend to be Moody for a year, I don't see why you couldn't get away with Polyjuice. I'll even give you some of my hair as long as you promise not to hit on anyone or get me into any trouble. Remus might be a better option for you though, just whatever you feel most comfortable with."

"I can leave the house..." Sirius just stated again in surprised disbelief.

"Well, technically it takes a month to brew Polyjuice, but I can probably speed it up a bit. There are a few spells that can move things along faster, but I might need some help from Snape for that. I know potions now, but they aren't my specialty. He's next on my list to get on board with all this at least," he sighed tiredly. He really did have a lot on his plate. It was nice for Sirius to know...Harry was still about halfway certain he'd end up having to obliviate the man in the next few days though.

The older man scoffed at that. "Snivellus? Why? I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him. You should just leave him out of whatever plans you have."

Harry knew this was going to be a problem going into his revelations, but it was something he wasn't going to budge on. His plans needed Snape and his skills, so Sirius was going to have to get over his prejudices. "Sirius, I want to be very clear...Snape is non-negotiable. I honestly know him better than you do at this moment, and I need him. Also, I am *absolutely* certain he's on my side. I can't tell you how I know this, but chalk it up to future knowledge."

"Really, Harry..." Sirius scoffed.

"Obliviate is still an option..." Harry raised an eyebrow at him. "I would rather you just try to be civil to him and have an actual conversation though. Maybe you two can get past all the horrible things from your past, which from where I'm standing, it seems was more you and my dad's fault overall anyway."

Sirius frowned deeply. "What do you know of our past? Snape was not innocent in everything..."

Harry held a hand up to stop him. "Sirius, I don't really care. I don't give a shit what you all did to each other before now. I only care that you can eventually figure out how to work together. I'm going to leave at that...think about it." Harry put his wand back in his leg holster and picked up his book and then Sephie to take her with him upstairs.

"Does the weird cat-thing have anything to do with your plans?" Sirius asked with a grimace at the hairless cat that was glaring at him from Harry's arms.

"She's just a cat, Siri," Harry laughed at them. "My partner got her as a gift for me. It was very sweet."

"Sweet my arse," Sirius was grumbling from the room while Harry escaped to check in on Ron and Hermione and fill them in on what was probably his latest mistake.

I told Sirius. I know, I know...not a good idea. Overall, he seems to be taking it fairly well. I only told him my age though. It's not like he knows any real plans we have. I swear I'll obliviate him at the first sign of trouble. Please don't be mad. I miss you! Sephie is doing really well and eating good and playing. I might even tell Ron and Hermione what she is soon. I caught Ron petting her yesterday before he tried to act like he wasn't doing anything. Has anything been decided yet about the new DADA professor? Just a few more days and I can more easily sneak out to see you. Merlin, I miss you!

H.

X

X

X

H.

I knew you would eventually tell Sirius. I'd hoped you would wait a little longer, but he's your godfather, and I know how much you have missed him over the years. I'm not mad at all, but please be careful and keep a close eye on him while you can.

I'm glad Persephone is doing well. Keep me updated about anything out of the ordinary she might do. If she starts to chew on people, tell me immediately. I'm serious, H., that's not something you keep quiet because you like her.

As for the DADA professor, Fudge has narrowed it down to just a few now that he's having to work around Umbridge's disappearance. I'm trying to subtly influence him in the direction I want him to go, and I'm liking my chances. It helps that he can't even imagine his teenaged assistant, Weatherby, might actually be smarter and more politically savvy than him. Regardless, it looks like it will be a last-minute thing. Hopefully, whoever it is will make it to the welcome feast.

I miss you too! I'm keeping busy, especially know that I have that amazing apothecary you found. I find that I really don't like not living with you anymore though. Even your weird habit of jabbing me in the side when you want to get my attention I've started to miss instead of finding annoying. We need to spend some significant time together soon.

P.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Back to Hogwarts...

The Black Family Tree

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry tapped his wand on his arm and circled the man, looking him up and down in a minute study. “Well...it’s not the perfect solution, but I think it’ll work...”

“Really?!!” Sirius Black almost danced in joy with an excited clap of his hands.

“Don’t get too excited. If you run into anyone who actually knew you at this age and they get a close look, I bet they could figure it out,” Harry tried to squelch his glee some. “It’s safe for the muggle world and general wixen from a distance, but maybe not Diagon or Hogsmeade, or at least wear a hat or hooded cloak if you do need to go there.”

The glamour spell Percy had taught Harry really was just for making a person look like a younger version of themselves. With the spell on Sirius, he looked in his early twenties, which was a far cry from his current weathered and gaunt self, but there were a lot of people who knew him at that age still around. They had been able to tweak it slightly though so that his hair was now a sandy brown and his eyes were more a standard blue than the odd Black family grey-blue they were before.

“Even so pup, just going out to Tesco or for a pint with Moony is so much more than I have currently,” Sirius’s grin didn’t fall in the slightest.

“Well, I’m still going to work on the Polyjuice for instances where you might need to be around people who knew you at this age,” he decided. “What *do* you plan to tell Remus anyway? I’m not so sure we should pull him in just yet. I think joining us will be an easy sell if he’ll actually hear me out and watch a couple memories I have, but I was thinking that it might be better to take care of the Voldy problem first before then. I don’t want Dumbledore to know just yet, and I think he might think it necessary to tell him.”

Sirius scoffed and removed the glamour before plopping into an armchair. “I’ll tell Moony I found the spell in a dusty old book. I don’t understand keeping Dumbledore in the dark though, but I also realize I know absolutely nothing about your plans or history at this point anyway. If you give him a good enough reason, I’m sure Remus will support you though,” he

then pouted at Harry with large puppy dog eyes. “Why does Moony get to see memories and I don’t? I’m your godfather.”

Harry winced and sat on the couch beside where Sephie was napping. “Believe me, Siri, you don’t want to see the memories. Remus is sold on this whole two sides of the war thing and Dumbledore’s way is the right way. Don’t get me wrong, he has good reason to support the man who gave him opportunities when no one else would, so I’m not judging him,” Harry explained while Sirius frowned, trying to absorb his reasoning.

“So, my point is, I know that it’s going to take those memories to convince him to break away from all that. I have absolutely no doubt he will, I have the ace in the hole on this one, but...those memories are not ones I’d wish on anyone...you really don’t want to know.”

Sirius’s frown deepened even more at that. “Harry...are you really alright? I mean...I clearly don’t know anything about what you’ve gone through, but I’m getting the idea that maybe I should be more concerned than I have been.”

Harry gave him a sad smile and a shrug. “I was doing better before I came back here,” he said, knowing it was true, even if he had been a mess then too. “I think I’ll be able to get past the worst of it once I get used to all the dead people walking around alive though.”

Sirius closed his eyes and took in a deep breath before standing and moving over to sit beside Harry and Sephie on the couch. “I’m going to need you to check in to tell me how you are doing,” he instructed very seriously. “You said that you can sneak out, can you come by here like once a week just so I can see you? I don’t know how to get you past the Order, but I’ll find a way if you can get here.”

Harry chuckled as an idea came to him. It would be nice to drop by and see Sirius regularly, and he *had* already established a cover to do that unintentionally. “Just tell them your cousin is in town and he’s amenable to helping out the Order and won’t turn in his favorite older cousin to the aurors,” he said with a mischievous grin.

“With your hair long, you do look like you could be a part of the family,” Sirius gave it some thought and an equally mischievous grin. “Mother and Grandfather both were brutal when it came to cutting people out of the family, so it wouldn’t be too shocking for there to be a cousin people hadn’t heard much about.”

“I generally use the name Hadrian Black in the future for my business dealings anyway,” Harry informed him, already now planning his double life outside of school. Percy was going to hate this. “I’ve used it here in Diagon and wasn’t questioned on it, even the goblins wouldn’t question it since it actually is part of my legal name.”

At that Sirius looked extremely confused but not upset. “Erm...I get Hadrian...I vaguely remember Lily wanting to name you after a Roman emperor for some reason, but how did you end up with my last name? I’m clearly fine and even happy about it, but just *how*?”

“Huh...” Harry raised an eyebrow and laughed. “Well, I guess you haven’t made your will yet. In the future/my past, you made me your heir. Left me everything, even your name so that the family could live on.”

Sirius chuckled at that. “Well, guess I got my head out of my arse and did something smart eventually then. I think I’ll go ahead and put together that will...I might also see about formally adopting you into the family since we can’t take away a name you already have. That just wouldn’t do. Plus, I’m planning on not dying very soon anyway.”

“It’s a simple ritual,” Harry told him, now extremely excited to more completely be accepted into the family. As the only one left with the name, it hadn’t ever been a problem that he wasn’t a Black by blood, but it had always been a small regret of his. Although...he was technically more accepted by the family magic than Sirius was now, so...

“Er...I should probably mention that I own the house,” he said sheepishly. “Clearly, that changes nothing about you living here or even the Order, but yeah...you should know. The wards switched over to me as soon as I stepped over the threshold.”

“Even the house likes you better than me,” Sirius fake pouted, clearly not too broken up over that. “I can’t believe I didn’t notice...Well, seems this ritual is more a formality then...let’s go get a Hadrian Black added to the ugly family tapestry!

Sirius jumped up and motioned for Harry to follow him, presumably to the sitting room that contained the tapestry. “What do we need? Probably some blood? Maybe a potion?”

“I’ll grab the book from the library, but I think I remember it’s just some blood, a chant, and possibly burning some drawn runes...” he stood, trying to remember the ritual he’d studied and even had to perform once for a family as part of his mastery. It had been a while, but he was still pretty sure he remembered it, but it was always best to check instead of accidentally cursing themselves or something though.

“So...you said you used the name in your business dealings...what exactly *is* or *was* your business, pup?” Sirius slung an arm over his shoulder and steered him towards the door with a questioning raise of his eyebrow.

“Er...just this and that...erm, let’s just focus on the ritual for now. Why don’t you go find a silver dagger, and I’ll go find the book in the family library,” Harry tried to deflect, clearly not fooling Sirius any at all.

“*Fine!*” The man gave a fake huff and eyeroll at his secretiveness. “Wait...we have a family library?”

A couple sliced palms, some ancient Latin, and a small but controlled fire later and one Hadrian Black appeared on the family tapestry in an odd branch off to the side, not really attached to anyone in particular. “It looks like I just showed up out of nowhere, like a stork actually did drop me off on your doorstep,” Harry chuckled at the positioning of his name.

“A stork?” Sirius looked at him in utter confusion.

“Er, muggle story, sorry,” Harry said in explanation. “Although...I was actually dropped off on the Dursley's doorstep...huh...not sure how I feel about that right now.”

“Well, I’m glad you are here with me now. Regardless, families graft people in all the time,” Sirius lovingly ran a finger over the name, the only part of the tapestry he liked. “Our family just wasn’t one to add, more subtract.”

Harry walked over and wrapped his arms around his new cousin, or uncle, or father, or whatever the ritual had made Sirius to him. With his glamour off, they were much closer to the same size. Even if Harry was still a little shorter, he was stockier and more muscular. It was odd, but nice. "Thank you...then and now for wanting me in your family."

"Always, pup," Sirius just hugged Harry back like he was the only thing keeping him tethered to the world.

"Besides, I can't have anyone questioning my favorite cousin," he said with a grin. "You really going to stop by and join in on Order things and such?"

"I will definitely stop by as often as possible," Harry assured him. "As for the Order, I can help out, but not join. While our goals currently do align, I'm clearly a dark wizard, Siri... you have figured that out, right? I mean...tattooing runes on yourself is runic blood magic... are you ok with me if I'm not completely sold on everything the Order stands for? I know you said you were with me, but I'm not a light wizard..."

"I did actually figure that one out, thank you very much," Sirius rolled his eyes and gave a little nervous chuckle. "Yes, the runes, but also the wards switching to you, that this ritual was clearly dark magic and you expertly cast it with no problem, and the fact you even knew we had a family library that I'm assuming is completely Dark Arts. Harry, pup, my prejudice against dark magic is because I've seen the harm it can do from my family, but after the war...well, I've seen the harm light magic can do now as well. I've seen the harm *I* can do with light magic. I might not understand, but I'm willing to listen...for you, I'm willing to try."

"That's all I ask, Siri," Harry assured him vehemently. "I'm not asking you to be involved in anything you don't want to. I just want you in my life."

"Well, we're stuck together now!" Sirius smiled and pointed at the new name on the tapestry. "Welcome to the madhouse of my family. I'm sure you fit in better than I do. I think we might both have a touch of the stereotypical Black madness anyway."

Harry laughed and gave him one more hug before reapplying his glamour. "Well, I have packing to do for school, and you have an Order meeting to get to. Try not to start any fights with Snape."

Sirius shrugged. "I make no promises...no stealing my whiskey to take to school!" He called out as Harry removed the ward on the door and made to leave.

"Just one?" Harry asked with a pout and really terrible puppy dog eyes. "Kreacher refuses to buy any for me, apparently house elves can refuse an order if they think it's for your own good...I swear he only ever followed about a third of my orders in the future anyway, and he's heading that direction quite quickly already."

"I don't even want to know how you got my elf to serve you...actually, you own the house, I guess that makes perfect sense," he shrugged, not caring at all. He gave in with a sad sigh. "Alright...just one bottle, and you aren't to give any to the actual fifteen-year-olds."

"Oh please, like I'd share with them anyway," Harry scoffed with a laugh to run off and grab the bottle before his godfather changed his mind.

"Merlin, he's worse than me," Sirius grumbled, more concerned than anything else. With one last glance back to the newest member of his family on the wall, he made his way downstairs to try not to fall asleep during the latest Order meeting fiasco.

"I still don't know how I got prefect and you didn't, mate. I know you don't want it, but still," Ron remarked as his mum fussed over everyone while loading the table with food as soon as the Order meeting finished.

Everyone was still in the kitchen when the 'kids' were allowed to enter, even Dumbledore was still hanging around, though he refused to look anywhere near Harry's direction. Harry clutched his hands tightly and did his best to just ignore the man. A thought then occurred to Harry, something he'd completely forgotten.

"Wait...didn't I get quidditch captain this year?" He asked in a whisper to Ron. He hadn't really looked over his school list, but he remembered the badge that he'd just brushed off. "Merlin...that's going to be a bit inconvenient..."

“What do you mean by that?!” Ron indignantly sputtered, making everyone look up in their direction.

“Cool it, Ron...we’ll talk later,” Harry rolled his eyes and huffed at his friend before plopping down at the table between George and Hermione. Ron was still muttering under his breath when he sat down on the other side of Hermione, shooting his friend dangerous glares.

“Are you all packed? Anything in the laundry?” Mrs. Weasley checked with them all as she continued to putter around and try to force the Order members without families to stay for dinner as well.

Sirius cleared his throat loudly, causing most of the people to look his direction. “Erm, would it be ok if my cousin stopped by for dinner sometimes? Not for Order things and all, but he’s very reliable and can keep a secret.” Harry hid a smile when he saw Snape’s head shoot up from where he’d been trying to exit while avoiding Mrs. Weasley.

“You have a cousin...that you actually like?!” Remus asked incredulously, the question echoed in literally everyone’s expressions.

“Well, yeah,” Sirius nodded awkwardly. “My favorite little cousin Hadrian owled me when he heard I’d escaped, a really impressive bit of owl magic that was to find me, but he’d never believed I was guilty. He’s been out of the country traveling and studying, but he just recently moved back to Britain. I promise, he is not in league with Voldemort and won’t turn me in to the aurors.”

“Why haven’t we heard about him?” Remus asked again, still seeming to be stunned at not knowing something about Sirius’s life.

“He was out of the country,” Sirius just shrugged. “He was too young to take part in the last war anyway.” Harry frowned and did some quick math. If he was 27 and the war was 14 years before, then he’d have been 13 in this timeline...it tracked, but in reality he’d already been integrally involved in the war by the time he was actually 13. Harry kept Snape in the corner of his eye where he noticed the man’s expression slightly take on a confused look, then concern, then clear completely once more.

“Now, my boy, we can’t just have random people coming to headquarters,” Dumbledore began with a deep frown.

Fred coughed on the other side of George in a way that sounded very suspiciously like “Mundungus!” Harry couldn’t help the laugh and smile over at Fred for that one.

“Hadrian isn’t just a random person, he’s my cousin,” Sirius protested. Harry was starting to get concerned. Sirius lived here, Order headquarters or not, they were absolutely not going to keep him from his godfather.

“Sirius is right, Albus,” Molly Weasley said to everyone’s surprise. “This is his home, and this person is his family. Can’t you just have him take a secrecy oath or something. You can’t keep family away from each other...it’s just not right-,” she said a little sadly at the end. Harry had a feeling she was thinking about Percy, and he was so glad that their estrangement was not going to be anywhere near as long this time around since his partner was completely on board with making up with his family as soon as he could do it and it not cause too many questions.

“Wait...who are his parents?” Remus asked, still trying to figure why he knew absolutely nothing about this person.

“Disowned, of course,” Sirius huffed in exasperation that this was becoming such a big deal. “Go look at the family tree if you don’t believe me. His whole side was cut off, but he was too young at the time to get caught in that particular purge...I believe it was my grandfather who knocked off that branch of the tree.”

Remus still looked like he was having some kind of complete mental meltdown in trying to believe the fact that Sirius might actually have a cousin he liked. “How old is this cousin? Did he attend Hogwarts?”

Internally, Harry was dying laughing, but just loaded his plate with chicken and mashed potatoes to cover his amusement. “He’s 27,” Sirius answered him with a questioning look at why he was taking this so hard. “And no...he had private tutors because of all the travel his family did.”

Harry knew he looked a little older than 27 due to the silver that had worked its way into his hair because of trauma, chronic pain, and some of the magic he used to keep functional, so he saw Snape seem to slightly let out a breath of relief that it didn't turn out he'd been hitting on someone significantly younger at least.

"Just trying to place him at school..." Remus grumbled before he shrugged, seeming to finally let it go. "Maybe having some family around would do you good."

Dumbledore sighed and tiredly ran a hand over his face. "Do you believe this cousin of yours would consent to meeting with me and taking a secrecy oath? We can't have what we are doing get out to the wrong people." Harry wondered what Sirius would say. Honestly, he didn't know how he felt about those conditions himself. Sirius, for his part, frowned and did his absolute best not to look over at Harry questioningly.

"I will not commit my cousin to an oath. That's up to him, and I'm sure he would want a say in the wording," Sirius eventually said after a lot of thought. "As for a meeting..." He trailed off with a frown at the implications of putting an older, darker Harry in a room with Dumbledore who would most definitely try (and fail) to use legilimency on him.

"I know Black's cousin," Snape cut in surprising literally everyone in the room, even Harry who was privy to the story about how they'd met. "We met briefly; he is not marked, nor have I ever seen him at a meeting."

Harry raised an eyebrow, he hadn't known that Snape had been clocking if he had a Dark Mark or not, but it made sense he would have looked. It also made sense that he would also realize the danger of putting a dark wizard in the room with Dumbledore who seemed ready to interrogate this new person. "If you want, I could meet with him and ask about the oath. We were going to meet up to discuss a potion he was working on anyway," Snape offered, causing Sirius to turn pale and look like he was trying to figure out a way to get Harry out of this.

Harry tried to catch his eye to tell Sirius to stand down, that this was the best outcome they could hope for. Eventually, Sirius did look over at him, and Harry gave him an imperceptible nod and smile. Sirius let out a breath and seemed to let his protests go, but Ron leaned around Hermione with a surprised look.

“You were going to meet up with Snape?” He asked in an incredulous whisper. They knew he’d talked to Snape in Diagon, but they didn’t know they’d planned to meet up again later. Harry sent him a glare, but only stuffed more potatoes in his mouth, clearly not going to talk about this with everyone in the room.

Dumbledore just slowly nodded though, seeming to weigh just how much he trusted Snape’s judgement. Clearly, he didn’t trust Sirius’s. “Of course, Severus. If you were going to meet anyway...I trust you can come up with a binding secrecy oath.”

Sirius apparently couldn’t help the snort of agreement at that statement, but thankfully he kept his mouth shut...it was a little progress at least. Harry for his part planned to write that oath himself. He wasn’t going to agree to anything that didn’t have hippogriff sized loopholes that he could use for his own benefit.

The potion master just nodded sternly. “I’ll owl him to meet next week.” At that, he turned on a heel and strode from the room. Harry wondered how well-known Snape’s owl was or this might get a bit awkward in a couple hours...

He shoveled the last of his food in his mouth quickly and was barely able to swallow it. After a cough to clear his throat, he looked up at Mrs. Weasley. “May I be excused? I still have a little packing to do,” he asked the woman with as kind of a smile as he could force onto his face to cover his anxiety.

“Of course, dear...you sure you don’t want more?” Mrs. Weasley asked, patting his hand before he gave his godfather a little smile and rushed off to his room to await the promised owl.

“Seriously, Padfoot...how didn’t I know about this cousin...?” Remus was asking yet again behind Harry as he sped out of the room.

Hadrian,

I know that I initially left it to you to owl; however, it has come to my attention that you and your cousin are in communication. Your cousin asked this evening if you were allowed to come to dinner sometime, and I assume you know at least some of his circumstances if not all. There is some concern about safety and security. I have been tasked to meet with you to address these concerns.

Would you, and your partner if you would like, be free to meet in Hogsmeade next week at the Three Broomsticks for dinner? I am free any evening except for Friday when I have night patrol duty. Owl back at your first convenience.

Severus Snape

Potion Master

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Harry had just set Snape's letter on fire when Ron and Hermione made it back up to the room, having stayed behind to finish dinner and see the fallout from Sirius's question. "Must you do that with all your correspondence?" Hermione asked with a long-suffering look at him.

"If you knew some of the things I had to deal with in the future, you'd agree with me," he grumbled. He clearly remembered finding a reporter digging through his rubbish bin looking for correspondence to publish during the height of his fame after the war. That wasn't even taking into account the times people had tried to track his location through letters...yeah, bad memories there. Even if it hadn't been sensitive information from Percy or Snape, he still burned literally all his letters and warded all those he sent others.

"Why were you going to meet up with Snape anyway?" Ron asked yet again now that they were alone.

"I told you, I need him on my side," Harry reminded them with a sigh. "Honestly, I'm closer to his age than yours at this point, and as much as I love you both, I can also relate a little

more to him and all the things he's been through...I'm not saying we're going to be best friends, but I need his skills, his information, and it would be nice to talk to someone outside of my partner about potions and things."

Ron looked extremely conflicted at that reminder of just how old Harry was, but Hermione was already nodding. "It makes sense. It'll take us a while to get used to you not really being *our* Harry anymore though," she reminded them all. Sometimes it was easy to forget when he was wearing the glamour. "Do you really think it's a good idea to come here to the house as Hadrian Black though? I know Sirius is tentatively in on the secret, but that sounds like it's stretching you a bit thin to be Harry at school and now have the separate identity of Hadrian outside."

"It might actually keep me saner," he chuckled wryly. "Pretending to be fifteen is more difficult than I originally thought it would be. Plus, it's not like I really need to study or learn anything at school. I already know the fifth-year information and could even sit my mastery again tomorrow if needed. Anyway, I don't really think OWLs are required as part of the Dark Lord job description."

"Well, get ready to be thoroughly interrogated by Professor Lupin as this mystery cousin, mate," Ron chuckled and flopped onto his bed. "He seems very flustered that Sirius never mentioned you."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Technically, I would have been thirteen when Siri went to jail in this timeline. What does Remus expect? It's not like I could have reasonably been a big part of Sirius's life even if I'd actually existed as his cousin back then."

"Just a warning," Ron shrugged while Harry began to pin a reply to Snape.

Severus,

I was just thinking about writing you. I would love to get dinner with you in Hogsmeade next week. I will have to check with my partner to see if he is free, but I can at least commit to dinner. I believe Thursday would work best with my schedule. Would 8pm be acceptable?

I understand my cousin's circumstances and obligations, and I am not seeking to cause any problems. I also know he doesn't have any family he is in touch with besides me though, and I would like to see him some. I know a very little about your past history, mainly only that you do not get along. I hope my relationship with my cousin does not need to affect our friendship moving forward.

Hadrian Black

Harry sat in an empty compartment on the Hogwarts Express with Sephie purring in his lap and wearing a soft, pink jumper he'd asked Hermione to knit for her for the occasion. He did not tell Hermione the color was in honor of their late-almost-professor that would most assuredly *not* be teaching DADA this year though. He got a whole lot of sick joy out of the pink jumper in honor and memory of Umbridge though...may she burn in hell...or a lake of inferi.

The door slid open and a familiar face smiled in. "Hey, Harry...how was your summer? Mind if I join?" Neville asked, awkwardly waiting for Harry to invite him in.

Harry gave his friend a smile. He didn't know how he would have gotten through the years without Neville. This teen had grown into his rock, a calm point in the middle of any storm. Also, thankfully, he happened to be a head auror that was perfectly fine covering over some little crimes and keeping Harry updated on where possible raids might take place. He was much shorter, less muscular, and a lot more timid than Harry was used to seeing him, but it was still Neville, and he still loved him.

"Come on in, Nev...I missed you over the summer. Mine was a little eventful with the whole dementor trying to suck out me and my cousin's souls thing...then the trial for underage magic, but whatever...at least I got Sephie here out of it all," he motioned to the cat in his lap. "How was your summer?"

At some point during Harry's rant Neville had sat down and started staring at him while turning a bit sickly pale. "Erm...did you say dementor attack?" He finally asked with a terrified look in his eyes.

Oh dear...Harry forgot Neville wasn't quite up to his level of crazy just yet. When had Neville decided he was a badass that would cast fiendfyre at a dementor to get its ashes for Harry? Well, he'd get there...maybe with a little less torture along the way though, Harry decided firmly. Neville would grow into the amazing person he was going to become without all the trauma, and if he was just a little less badass and fiendfyre wielding, well, Harry would still love him anyway.

"Right...let's start from the beginning...or maybe the end," Harry smiled at him. "This is Persephone, but I call her Sephie," he introduced his friend to the inferius cat in his lap.

"I can't believe I haven't thought to ask this, but with all the insanity going on...who is our DADA professor this year, Harry?" Hermione asked him.

"And will they try to kill you?" Ron asked when the carriage they'd claimed just the three of them began to slowly climb up to the castle, the thestral trotting along happily in the stream of the other carriages.

Harry gave them a huge smile. "I honestly don't know. I'm looking forward to finding out though. Hopefully if they try to kill me it's imaginative and not already been done a million times. Some of the attempts are just getting old."

"What do you mean you don't know?" Hermione frowned in concern. "You've lived this year before. Who was the professor?"

"And you better be kidding about the murder attempts," Ron frowned, not seeming to be able to tell if Harry was joking or not...he wasn't.

Harry just grinned at them even more. "My partner has been a bit busy while I've been lazing around Grimmauld with you lot...this year's DADA professor was frankly the worst of all my years, and he knew I'd probably kill her...well, most definitely would kill her, if she showed. So, he took care of it for me. The ministry will appoint someone to replace her since

they want a presence in the school this year. I have no clue who though. It'll be interesting to see if this one wants me dead too."

"How could they be worse than Quirrelmort?!" Ron asked incredulously.

"What do you mean by 'took care of it?'" Hermione asked at the same time with a concerned frown.

Harry looked out the window at the castle in the distance, trying to shove down the ghosts of his past that was trying to force their way to his attention. It felt like he was missing something on this trip to the castle. There was something or someone that was supposed to be there his fifth year...he had avoided Malfoy's normal taunting by warding his compartment after Ron and Hermione joined him and Neville, so maybe that was it...something still felt like it was missing. Oh well...nothing he could do about it at the moment until he remembered.

"Right, so DADA professors...I actually rank them from worst to best as: This fifth-year one, then Lockhart, then Quirrelmort, then Snape, then Fake-Moody, then Lupin...Remus was definitely the best."

"Snape taught one year?" Ron asked in surprise.

"That was only six," Hermione counted. "And you still didn't answer my question about what taking care of them meant."

"I didn't attend my seventh year," Harry turned back to them with a sad smile. "It is a very long, sad story that thankfully ends with Voldy's death. I did attend for a few weeks of an odd eighth year option we had going until future Hermione made me drop out and self-study for my own mental health. I didn't spend enough time with that DADA professor to rank them."

"Merlin...this is not going to go well," Ron sighed, taking in the fact that Harry hadn't been able to stay the last time he'd been at the school.

“As for taking care of the situation...don’t ask questions you don’t want the answer to, Hermione, because I *will* answer you,” he warned her with a dark smirk. “Just trust that this was entirely necessary, and you would have been one of the first in support if you’d have lived through this year. This was not something you wanted to experience for this year or for the lasting impact it had on our society.”

“Considering you ranked a Death Eater as our second-best DADA professor and the one with Voldy in the back of his head wasn’t the worst...and I don’t disagree with you...I think I’ll believe you if you say this one was one we didn’t want to experience for ourselves,” Ron winced at the implications.

“Merlin...we’ve had some messed-up professors, haven’t we?” Hermione sighed, not letting it go, but willing to push it aside temporarily.

Harry was holding Sephie in his arms, needing the comfort as he walked into the entrance hall of the school. Even so, everything disappeared around him three steps in and he was standing in the middle of the battlefield the school had become. There was smoke, spellfire, and crying all around him. He could smell the blood and hear an echo of Bellatrix’s laugh in the distance.

“Ow!” Harry jumped and shifted Sephie in his arms to rub at his side. “There has to be a better way to get my attention.” He frowned at Ron who had viciously pinched his side when he’d blacked out in the middle of the hall. “I definitely have bruises!”

“What does your boyfriend usually do?” Hermione asked him as she put a hand on his arm and tried to offer some comfort as they followed everyone into the Great Hall.

Harry hummed with a small, nervous smile as he tried to stay in the moment. “I don’t think you or Ron would want to try that.”

“Ew, too much information,” Ron grimaced while Hermione just laughed.

“I’m joking,” Harry gave Ron’s arm a little bump with his shoulder. “He usually just rubs circles on my back or talks to me until I come back.”

“Bloody hell! The other professor you got rid of *had* to be better!” Ron dramatically groaned after a look up at the head table. “You should have left it alone. This year is going to be terrible! Let’s just quit now!”

Harry frowned, coming back to himself more in confusion as he tried to see who the DADA professor was that Ron was so adamantly against. He absolutely could not help the smile that broke onto his face even with all the Occlumency training he’d had over the years. He pushed down his glee and excitement as much as possible when he briefly caught the eye of Percy Weasley. Percy’s face softened just slightly before he turned back to where he was talking with McGonagall at the head table.

Hermione was also talking about something when Harry sat down with them at the Gryffindor table and started listening in to them again. “But he isn’t even qualified. I’m sure he did well on his NEWTs, but how does that equal being able to teach DADA?” She was ranting quietly from beside Ron who was nodding away vehemently.

Harry held his tongue. Oh, if they only knew...Percy might not have a mastery in DADA, but as an Unspeakable, he was more than qualified to teach their class. Harry wondered just how persuasive his partner was with Fudge or if he needed to check the minister over for memory charms the next time he saw the man. He gave a mental shrug; he really didn’t care. He *did* care that *his* Percy was going to be at the school that year though!

“Erm, Harry...?” Hermione asked with worry in her tone and a scared look on her face. “Why do you think Professor Flitwick would be staring at you like he is extremely, possibly murderously concerned...Like maybe he sees a tattooed 27 year-old sitting where Harry Potter should be sitting at the Gryffindor table?”

Harry looked over from where he’d been looking at Percy, and yes, Flitwick was staring at him like the next goblin uprising was about to start any second...then Flitwick’s eyes cut over to Percy, a similar but more confused look crossing it then. “Bloody hell...it’s not just house elves,” he groaned wondering how long Flitwick would give him before demonstrating why he was world-renowned dueling champion. “This is why experimental spells are experimental!”

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Professor Flitwick has so many questions...

Tea With a Professor

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Hermione, give me some parchment,” Harry put Sephie on the table and held out a hand to his friend.

“What makes you think I just carry around parchment on me,” she rolled her eyes and scooped up the pink clad cat who was wondering around the plates looking for something to knock off the table.

“My nerds have failed me,” he sighed and pulled out his new wand to conjure some parchment and a quill, not having tried his old wand yet and not trusting it in a pinch.

Ron was looking at Flitwick with a frown of concern. “Harry, mate, *I’d* classify you are a nerd at this point, so you might want to start putting that brain to use to come up with some way out of this. Flitwick looks like he’s just trying to figure out the best way to attack to limit collateral damage.”

“What’s going on?” Neville leaned around Ron to ask as Harry frantically scribbled a note on the paper.

With a quick wordless and wandless spell, the parchment folded itself into an origami bird and fluttered lowly towards the head table just as McGonagall led the new first years into the hall and towards where the sorting hat was sitting. “Nothing, Nev,” Harry told him with what he hoped was a reassuring smile. “I forgot that I needed to tell Professor Flitwick something about my schedule this term. I had asked for some extra tutoring in Charms later on in last year.”

Neville nodded but still shot a look up to where the half-goblin professor grabbed the note from the air with a hard look on his face. “I don’t know...he looks a bit upset. Maybe he lost his last tournament,” Neville remarked just before the sorting hat began its song for the new year.

Harry kept an eye on the man who read the note and didn't look any less suspicious at all. He did look slightly less murderous though, which Harry would count as a win currently. Flitwick returned his look and slowly, and very deliberately, pulled his wand from his sleeve and sat it on the table beside him. Yeah...that clearly wasn't a threat...

With a flick of his wrist, Flitwick disintegrated the note in his hand and banished the ashes beside his plate. "I'm not so sure that helped, whatever you wrote," Hermione whispered from where she was scratching Sephie behind the ears.

"I just said that I'd meet him in his office after the feast and explain everything," Harry sighed and reached out for the cat. He needed his emotional support inferius since he just caught sight of Colin Creevey out of the corner of his eye down the table, and he was decidedly repressing the emotions that brought up in him.

Hermione passed the cat back and looked up at the head table with another huff. "If he gets on board with your ridiculous plan, maybe he would give us some extra tutoring in DADA. It looks like another year of sub-par teaching. At least this professor won't try to kill you."

"I wouldn't put it past Percy," Ron added on with a glare towards his brother who was clearly trying to not look at the Gryffindor table. "He's been a right arse since...well, forever, but even more since what happened at the end of last term."

Harry opened his mouth but closed it again. He wanted to defend Percy who really had been going through a lot when he was actually nineteen, and who had grown up quite competent, capable, and just wonderful in Harry's opinion. He definitely didn't want to spoil the surprise they were going to get later on though.

"Er...maybe we give him the space of a lesson or two. He might have come around," he lamely attempted instead. Hermione and Ron just both looked at him like when he'd said Kreacher was a friend again though.

The rest of the welcoming feast was uneventful if you discounted the death glare Harry got from Flitwick the entire time. There were no interruptions from Umbridge, Hagrid was still missing like he had been the first time, and Snape still glared in Harry's direction occasionally. As traumatic as it was, Harry felt like he was home again, and it felt like he

could finally work past some of what had been weighing him down over the years as well. He just had to survive their dueling-champion, Charms professor first.

Flitwick leaned over and said something to Percy, getting a frown and a nod in response before they left the hall together. Harry sighed, at having to go deal with this issue on top of the stressors of the day. At least he got to do it with his partner, and at least he still had a bottle of whiskey waiting for him in a *very* secret compartment he'd spelled into his trunk to evade the Hogwarts security check.

"Hermione, please take Sephie and get her settled in the dorm," Harry passed the cat over to Hermione. "Don't let her get too near Crookshanks though, they still don't like each other."

"You did check that she isn't an animagus, right?" Ron frowned at the cat in suspicion once more. "We did learn our lesson third year."

"Yes, Ron," Harry rolled his eyes and gave the inferius a parting scratch behind her ears.

"You sure you don't want us to come too?" Hermione checked, even though neither of them seemed to actually want to deal with this.

Harry shrugged. "I know our standard go-to is to not trust the adults to handle anything, but I guess I'm the adult now, weirdly enough. Let me handle this and you all just get settled, and maybe hex Seamus for me if you get a chance, Ron."

Ron frowned and paused as they had turned to leave. "Er...why hex Seamus? What did he do? I thought we liked him."

"He's going to be a prat this year," Harry smirked at his friend. "I'm just getting a head start on not dealing with his crap. Plus, it's less icky if another fifteen-year-old hexes him instead of me."

Hermione poked him in the chest. “No taking out future actions on people before they did them. That’s not fair, and if you’re changing things anyway, then they may never do whatever it is they did.”

Harry rolled his eyes but didn’t disagree with her. “Seamus is just a nuisance and a child, so I’m not going to do anything major to him besides make it known that I disapprove of him hating me. He got over it by the end of this year anyway. If I were going to go after someone for future actions, it would be Justin Finch-Fletchley, and if you noticed, I haven’t even looked his direction. See...I’m being good.”

“The Hufflepuff prat?” Ron frowned, craning his neck to find the boy. “What did he do?”

“I’m being good...!” Harry called with a smirk and a wave as he strode away towards where he thought Flitwick’s office might be. He’d never actually had detention with the man, and it had been years since he was in the school, so it was an educated guess as to where he was even going.

“Is this about the start of the term? I do have some preliminary lesson plans for the first couple weeks that I would love to talk with a seasoned professor about...” Percy was saying as Harry finally came to an open door that must be Flitwick’s office.

“Merlin,” he chuckled when he looked into the office that seemed to be overflowing with books and whose furniture was slightly shorter than the norm but still looked comfortable. “You’re a bit hard to find. I don’t think you ever actually gave me detention when I was in school...thanks for that, by the way.”

“Harry?” Percy turned to his boyfriend with a questioning look and surprised frown.

“Who are you both?” Flitwick gave his wand a twitch causing the office door to slam shut and what Harry recognized as a questionably legal ward fall over it. “You look like Mr. Weasley but different, and who are you?” He glared first at Percy then Harry.

“Er...” Percy turned wide, concerned eyes to Harry when he realized why they’d been trapped in the office.

“He can see through the glamour,” Harry answered him with a shrug. Yeah, he was concerned, but he fully believed Flitwick was a good bloke and definitely remembered him fighting against Voldemort in the Battle of Hogwarts. “You didn’t catch the dagger glares he was shooting me all through the feast. Apparently, it’s house elves and goblins at this point that the spell doesn’t work for.”

“Explain or you’ll learn that I have some *actual* daggers as well,” Flitwick growled, his hand straying to his hip, and Harry was extremely impressed. He actually did want to see what the man could do with some daggers and was interested as hell even if he didn’t want them used on himself.

“I’m Harry Potter, sir, and this actually is Percy Weasley. We’re just older than we should be. We made a little trip back in time, and unfortunately that lead to our younger selves not being here when we took over,” Harry explained as succinctly and quickly as possible before the man started to curse them.

“Time travel...that would explain Mr. Weasley,” the man frowned and studied them through the glamours to try to ascertain the truth of the story. He nodded at Percy, but his gaze settled on Harry with an even deeper study. “Yes...you are Harry Potter; I see that...son, do you not have a girlfriend or someone in the future to tell you that shoving pieces of metal through your face is unattractive?”

Harry laughed and Percy seemed to let out a breath of relief, his hand moving from where his wand was clearly strapped to his forearm. “Percy is actually my partner of a couple years now, and he hasn’t complained yet. Any issues with my face, love?” He grinned at Percy who rolled his eyes but gave him a fond smirk.

“So, I’m your partner now? Not boyfriend or something like that?” He asked instead of answering the question with an interested raise of his eyebrow.

Harry shrugged, not really wanting to have this discussion in front of Flitwick even if the man seemed to have calmed down some and was instead now filling a kettle for tea, clearly

expecting them to stay and explain before he released them into the castle where there were students. “I think we’re past that now at this point. I mean...you’re my person...”

Percy gave him a smile that definitely bordered on the sappy. “Well, good...and no problems with the face at all. I kind of like it a lot...”

Flitwick cleared his throat and shoved teacups in both their hands. “Now that’s settled, just why did you two break all the laws of magic and invade our little slice of 1995? Does this have something to do with our Dark Lord problem?”

“Yes and no,” Percy answered him as they walked over and sat on the low couch across from the professor’s smaller armchair. “Voldemort is more a contributing factor than the entire problem. It’s a bit of a domino effect. The fear and tactics that he takes leads to some very unethical and prejudicial legislation after his overthrow that basically destroys our community.”

“Anyone with magical creature blood is taken from society, anyone with any connection to dark arts as well, and anyone who speaks against the ministry or the law,” Harry continued to explain to a shocked but also not completely surprised Flitwick. “We could never determine exactly what was happening to those taken, but we have enough information to guess that they were probably being killed instead of any kind of relocation as we were told.”

Flitwick pointed to Harry’s runes. “It seems you have *some* connection to the dark arts yourself.”

“He’s a master of Dark Arts,” Percy said, not able to keep some of the pride out of his voice. “He’s also good at disguising himself when he’s out in public, so he hasn’t...or hadn’t been targeted just yet.”

Harry was a bit embarrassed and gave Percy a little smile. “Er...yeah, I started questioning everything I’d believed over the years when I was kicked out of the aurors because my core was completely dark. So, I did some self-study, then found a master in Amsterdam, and when everything started getting really bad in our society, I turned to using what I had learned to try to help others.”

“I have no prejudice against any type of magic or core,” Flitwick took a sip of his tea and nodded. “My family is much more open-minded than your purely wixen society. If those of creature blood were targeted though, what of my people? Were the goblins and our nation addressed in all this legislation at all?”

Harry and Percy shared a look before Percy motioned for Harry to explain since he had more information and background knowledge. “Well...the goblin nation thankfully had some solid treaties and a standing army, so you were safe for a long time.”

“This doesn’t sound promising,” Flitwick sighed and poured some more tea to fortify himself for the news.

“Nothing outright or violent happened,” Harry assured him quickly. “But the ministry set up their own financial institution and started requiring more and more of our world to use that bank. Gringotts Britain eventually closed its doors and the nation focused on its international branches, so there are very few goblins left in Britain anymore. I’m not sure what you in particular ended up doing. You retired from Hogwarts when the first wave of those with creature blood began to be taken, but I don’t think you were part of those. I think you left the country, but I’m not absolutely certain about that.”

“The ministry now controls all the money, the legal system, and most of the jobs in the world,” Percy explained with a dark look at those implications.

Flitwick stood and opened a cabinet, taking out a bottle of what looked to be scotch. With a questioning gesture, he ended up pouring some in all their teacups. “I feel like I should be more surprised at all this you’re telling me, but the goblin seers have been warning of a time similar to what you are speaking of for years now. The ministry has gotten so corrupt, more so in my lifetime.”

“It swiftly gets much worse after the final battle when everything is rebuilt,” Percy agreed with him.

Flitwick sighed and looked at them both sadly. “Who did you lose? I’m assuming for something as drastic as what you did in coming here, it wasn’t just a threat but a reality of just how bad things had gotten.”

Percy and Harry both winced. “Everyone,” Percy answered with a meaningful look at the man before downing his scotch.

“My godson,” Harry began, a hollow and haunted look in his eyes. “Ron, Hermione, Draco, Kreacher, and they were all directly connected to ministry action. There were many others before then that we hope to stop like Severus, Colin Creevy, Fred Weasley, Lavender Brown...the list just keeps going...”

“Dear Hecate,” Flitwick closed his eyes in dread before downing his scotch and pouring them all another.

“We’re going to take out Voldemort much earlier this time,” Percy nodded and put an arm around Harry’s shoulders supportively. “Stop the fear and what he did before it gets bad once more.”

“You’re going to need to do more than that,” the Charms professor put down his cup and crossed his arms, studying them. “What is your plan?”

“It’s more of an idea than plan...” Harry started with a grimace.

Flitwick’s eyes cut to Percy with a raised and disbelieving eyebrow. Percy huffed and rolled his eyes. “I literally learned about the time travel plan minutes before we were performing the ritual. Of course, Harry jumped right in without anything solid to work from.”

“Hey! I had a plan but then *you* insisted on coming,” Harry gave him a fake glare. “I was only going back in time six years; you took us back twelve. That’s a big difference to a plan!”

“Your plan was to just cause chaos...that’s not a plan, love,” Percy gave him a long-suffering look.

“It sounds like you’re going to need help,” Flitwick cut in before they could start bickering. It really was like watching an old married couple. “I realize the first step will have to be taking out the Dark Lord...I assume you know how to do that?”

Harry crossed his arms and smirked at that. “Been there, done that, can do it much faster this time,” he assured the man. “Plus, I already got us some help.”

“If you mean my brother and Hermione, please remember they are only 15 in this time,” Percy reminded him with a significant look that clearly stated no teenagers would be involved in as much dangerous activities as they had been the first time around.

“Yeah, well I have Sirius and the house elves on board as well, plus Flitwick if he wants,” Harry gave the man a hopeful smile.

“Sirius Black?” Flitwick instead asked disbelievingly. “I heard a rumor he might be innocent, are you claiming that is true?”

“Definitely!” Harry nodded firmly. “Killing Peter Pettigrew is also on my list just as a warning if that’s a deal-breaker for you.”

“What do you mean by having the house elves?” Percy cut in to ask before Flitwick even seemed to get over his shock. “Don’t you just mean Dobby and Kreacher?”

Harry nodded and helped himself to a bit more scotch. “Well, yeah, Dobby and Kreacher are the only ones really sold on the whole me taking over as a Dark Lord bit, but Winky is tentatively a yes. She wants to see a better plan first before committing to anything. Apparently, the Hogwarts Head Elf is sort of a leader in their community, and she’s reaching out to all the head elves of private families to put together a list of demands before the community as a whole signs on. They haven’t said no yet though.”

Both men looked over to Flitwick to see his reaction to Harry’s nonchalant slide-in of their main plan of taking over the Dark Lord position. Flitwick poured another splash of scotch in his teacup and nodded, downing it in one. “You do seem to fit the criteria,” he remarked and leaned back in the chair with his eyes closed. “So that’s the plan, isn’t it?”

“Yeah...that’s the core anyway,” Harry agreed as they waited on his response.

“Albus will be a problem,” the half-goblin remarked, his eyes still closed as he seemed to be processing. “What do you plan to do there?”

“Whatever it takes...whatever is necessary,” was Percy’s answer, not surprising Harry, but clearly surprising Flitwick whose eyes shot open in shock.

“And what may I ask have you been getting up to all these years, Mr. Weasley?” Flitwick seemed to decide that question was remarkably necessary now. “I doubt you taught DADA the first time you lived through 1995, so what are *your* qualifications, and how may I ask did this position conveniently land in your lap this time around?”

“I’m an Unspeakable,” Percy pulled off the leather band around his left wrist and held out the mark for Flitwick to see. “I’m sure I can keep up with Hogwarts students enough to teach DADA.”

Harry snorted, “At least. Professor, he’s so much better than who we had before.”

“Yes...and what may I ask happened to the person we were originally assigned?” He nodded at the mark before pinning them with a dark look.

Instead of answering, Percy took Harry’s hand and held it out for Flitwick to see the still deep and clear scarring that read: *I must not tell lies*.

“Delores Umbridge was originally assigned to my position. She tortured Harry with a blood quill this entire year, she was the one that sent dementors after him this past summer, she dosed students with Veritaserum, threatened the cruciatus curse on students, and was the eventual author of most of the legislation we are hoping to stop being implemented in the coming years,” he said so that the man had the full picture. Harry pulled his hand back and clenched his fists while Flitwick turned a concerning shade of red.

“I hope you murdered her,” he finally looked at both of them, fury lining his face at what had been allowed to go on in his school. “No one tortures students under my care! There is absolutely nothing lower than harming a child!”

Harry just nodded, impressed. “Right...so, can I put you down as on our side?”

Flitwick sighed and began to clean up the tea things. “I will not turn you in or stop you at this time, but I’m also not going to make a decision before I have all the facts. I will not condone the murder of innocents...”

“We aren’t planning...” Harry began in protest.

“I don’t believe Albus counts as evil,” Flitwick cut him off with a glare. Percy looked off, not wanting to say he disagreed with the man, but clearly disagreeing. Harry just shrugged. His feelings towards the headmaster were so complicated that he wasn’t sure he was capable of making a logical decision where the man was concerned.

“It isn’t the plan to kill the headmaster,” Harry finally said. “First, I’m going to try to get Snape on our side. He should be able to distract Dumbledore long enough for us to get so far into our plans that he can’t do much against us...hopefully.”

“What makes you think Severus will be on your side?” Flitwick looked at him in abject disbelief about that assumption.

“Future knowledge that is about his personal life and that I probably shouldn’t spread around,” Harry said. “So...the plan really isn’t to kill innocents at all...however you define that.”

“I will consider your proposal,” Flitwick said, raising a hand to stop their continued explanations. “I need time to process this, and with your permission, discuss what you have told me with some of my goblin relatives and our seers.”

“The goblins don’t hate me yet, so sure,” Harry shrugged and smirked at the man.

“Harry stole their dragon...for a good cause,” Percy rolled his eyes and explained to the man who looked shocked once more. “It’s a long story.”

“Right...” Flitwick lowered the ward over his door with a flick of his wand. “I expect you both back here in my office after dinner at the end of the week,” he informed them. “I will think over what you have told me, and I expect to have an answer for you by then, or at least more questions.”

“Thank you, sir,” Percy stood and pulled Harry up behind him since he knew his partner had some lasting issues with his right knee from a nasty bone shattering spell he’d taken in the past and the couch was a bit low to stand up from.

“My eye will be on you, boys,” Flitwick warned them with a twirl of his wand. “You put any of my students in danger, and Voldemort will be the least of your worries.”

Harry gave a sharp nod of approval. “Noted, and I wouldn’t expect otherwise.”

They walked into the hallway, and both let out a breath. “Well...that went better than I expected,” Harry chuckled at his partner who just shook his head in wonder at what they’d just done and the fact they weren’t being turned in to the headmaster, aurors, or unspeakables.

“I was fully planning on having to try to obliviate him, but I also didn’t like my chances on being faster than a master dueler.”

“You’re fast, but I’m pretty sure you’d lose,” Percy wisely nodded as they wandered in the same direction of Gryffindor tower and the DADA rooms. “Come see my new chambers? Stay the night?”

Harry pouted deeply. "I'd love to, but Ron and Hermione will probably think Flitwick killed me, and Neville would probably come looking for me if I don't show. I'll sneak out tomorrow night though once everyone's asleep...maybe I'll even come up with some story about dating a Ravenclaw or something."

"Ergh! As long as it isn't Chang," Percy grimaced at him and gave the invisible end of Harry's braid a little tug.

Harry stopped and frowned as he remembered what he'd wanted to ask Percy again. "Hey... you *did* break up with Penelope Clearwater, didn't you? I mean...I'm not a big fan of sharing in relationships anyway..."

Percy frowned and actually really had to think about that to his sudden fear. "I forgot I'd been dating her..."

"You haven't heard from her since we got here?" Harry asked in disbelief. Surely, she would have sent an owl or showed up at his flat or something.

Percy finally remembered and let out a breath of relief. "Wait, no, she dumped me earlier in the summer. I remember we'd broken up, just not when in the summer, but yeah, it was definitely before we took over from our younger selves."

"Good," Harry nodded firmly. "Like I said...I don't want to share."

"Since I'm your *partner* now," Percy teased with a wide smirk. "Mr. Who Cares About Labels Anyway?"

Harry rolled his eyes and bumped Percy's shoulder with his own. "Prat...you know, I realized that I never actually had to introduce you to people back in our time, so we didn't really need labels. You were just Percy and people knew we showed up to things together and lived together. Here, I actually have to refer to you as something, so yeah, maybe labels really do matter sometimes."

“Well, I like it,” Percy smiled at him and looked around. There weren’t any portraits where they were currently standing in the corridor, so he pulled Harry over to him and kissed him enough to make the man’s toes curl.

“Hmm...remember that you like me because we have dinner with Snape on Thursday,” Harry sheepishly informed him. “You don’t have to go if you don’t want to, but we might need to decide what Hadrian Black’s partner looks like. I don’t have time to brew you Polyjuice, but I know some of my former black-market contacts that should already be in business in this time and they would have some to sell.”

Percy shrugged and nodded. “How about I just go as Percy? I don’t see the problem.”

Harry wrinkled his nose. “Then I look like the cradle-robber.”

“Yes, but I’m actually an adult and of-age at nineteen. Fifteen-year-old Harry is the problem,” Percy just informed him, not really caring in the slightest what Snape thought of them. “You can be the older one in this relationship for once...just not the wiser one.”

“Of course, never,” Harry chuckled and kissed Percy once more before turning to head towards the tower.

“Keep Persephone with you, and no cursing anyone,” his partner reminded him as he walked away. “I’m serious, Harry!” Harry leaned around the corner to flip him off, then blow him a kiss, then laugh as he kept walking.

“He’s so going to curse someone,” Percy shook his head and chuckled, turning to go and figure out how he wanted to arrange the furniture in his new rooms.

Harry made it through two days with no major mishaps. His old wand was sluggish and didn’t like him as much, but it did work, so everything was fine there. Transfiguration, Charms, and Divination were all very boring and easy for Harry since Flitwick was decidedly

ignoring both him and Percy (while watching them) as he decided what he wanted to do. Potions was easy as well, but he had to remember to keep his head down and not engage with Snape and not brew a perfect potion either.

DADA had been really good. Percy had started them out on a solid lesson in shielding charms that was informative, appropriate, and which they all really needed to know. Not even Ron or Hermione had anything bad to say after the class, and they still didn't know Percy's relationship with Harry yet. Ron was still grumbling about Percy, but Hermione tentatively decided to wait and see what the older Weasley was going to do with his lessons.

Harry was confused what Ron's issue with Draco Malfoy was though. Well, he knew they had issues, but Ron seemed to be staring at the blond more and looking between the two of them often. Harry had been avoiding the future Death Eater as much as possible since he remembered him being quite a bit of a prat in their fifth year. They had eventually put everything behind them and become sort-of friends before Draco mysteriously disappeared with most of the other former Death Eaters, but at 15, well, Harry was perfectly fine just avoiding him until he killed off Voldy and needed to convince the heir to join his movement. What Ron was thinking was beyond Harry's understanding though, and Ron just brushed him off whenever he asked.

It was two days into the term when Harry remembered what it was he forgot though...or rather what he'd been steadfastly repressing in his brain. It had been bugging him since the train that there was something he should have remembered or realized, but his brain had buried it deep, so he hadn't figured it out yet. Sephie had been napping when they left the tower for breakfast on Wednesday morning, so he'd left her behind to collect later. He, Ron, and Hermione were just about to walk into the Great Hall when a flash of gold caught his eye and the world stopped.

"Harry!" Ron pinched his friend's side multiple times but got absolutely no response.

"Nothing's wrong, don't worry," Hermione motioned Neville on with a fake smile. "Harry's just messing with Ron."

Ron cast a stinging hex at Harry next but still didn't get a response. "Funny, mate, you really make a terrible statue though," he fake laughed as the rest of the people around them made their way into the hall, shooting the strange trio looks.

"What happened? What did he see?" Hermione hissed at Ron who had just slapped Harry across the face. She winced in sympathetic pain at that.

"I don't know...what did he say his boyfriend did? Rubbed his back?" Ron asked her in concern before he started to try to rub his friend's back to get him to come around. "I don't see how this will help over a stinging hex!"

"Maybe we should call Dobby or something?" Hermione suggested next while wringing her hands, knowing that Harry had talked with the elf over the summer.

"Merlin, shit!" Percy swore as he rushed over from where he'd just stepped out of the Great Hall when he'd heard whispers that the Golden Trio were being strange again in the entrance hall.

"Leave it Percy, we're fine," Ron growled at his brother, stepping in front of Harry to hopefully hide him a bit.

"Yeah...erm, Harry's just messing with Ron," Hermione jumped in with the excuse again.

Percy sighed and looked at them tiredly. "What did he see?" He asked before stepping around Ron and throwing up an unspeakable-level notice-me-not charm around their entire group.

Hermione's eyes widened as she met Ron's surprised gaze as well. "Erm...we don't know. We were just walking towards the Great Hall and he stopped right in the middle of a sentence...er...Percy?..."

"Who was also walking into the hall? Like what other houses?" Percy ignored their questioning looks as he put his arms around Harry, cupping the back of his neck with one

hand and tracing circles on his back with the other. “Hey, love...it’s ok...you’re fine...”

Ron seemed to have lost all ability to speak as he turned white as a sheet. Hermione gasped but slowly nodded her head. “I don’t know...We were with a group of Gryffindors, but I think there were some Ravenclaws that were entering in front of us. He hasn’t mentioned anything about a Ravenclaw...”

“Merlin,” Percy breathed out and pressed his forehead to Harry’s unseeing one. “Was Luna Lovegood in the group of Ravenclaws?”

“Loony?” Ron found air enough to ask before Hermione elbowed him in the ribs. “Ow, yeah...I think Luna was there...what’s wrong with Luna? I don’t think she and Harry have ever even talked. What are you...?”

“I knew I shouldn’t believe him when he said he’d gotten past it,” Percy sighed and kissed Harry’s neck. “Hey, love, you gotta stop repressing things and telling me everything is ok. I can’t help you when you lie to yourself.”

“You’re the boyfriend...” Ron finally breathed out in disbelief even with the evidence in front of him.

“Did Luna do something to him?” Hermione asked with a frown. She’d always thought the Ravenclaw was a bit odd, but harmless overall.

“Luna didn’t do anything to him,” Percy shook his head. “They were best friends...it was what was done *to* them. It was years ago, but Harry has a tendency to completely bury things that he doesn’t want to think about then they slam into him like this when he least expects it. He’s probably run into more things these past few days than he has in years though. At the very least this trip is making him face everything he’s been trying to just ignore.”

“Bloody hell,” Ron sighed, still processing that Percy and Harry were together. “Wait, weren’t you dating a girl...Penelope or something?”

“Ron, you don’t have to have everything figured out as a teenager,” Hermione explained with an eyeroll at her sort-of boyfriend.

“She’s right, I’m bisexual by the way though,” Percy told his brother before turning away to focus on Harry, not caring about his brother’s reaction at the moment. “Right...sometimes this works...sorry, Ron,” he remarked before diving right in and snogging Harry like it was the end of the world.

“Ew!” Ron closed his eyes and grimaced. When Ron opened his eyes once more, he wished he hadn’t because his best mate was wrapped around his older brother like a koala with tears streaming from his eyes.

“While this ward is wonderful,” Hermione cut into the drama around them. “I think we should move before people start noticing that something is up in this hallway.”

“She’s right, love...plus, you’re a bit heavy for this,” Percy untangled a nodding Harry who blinked around at them all before lifting a side of his shirt and pressing the tip of his wand to a line of runes that flared blood red at the touch.

“Sorry about that,” Harry took in a deep breath and steadied himself all of a sudden. “I have about half an hour before the backlash of that spell hits me,” he told them all, specifically Percy who knew what he’d just done and very much didn’t approve of any spell that purposefully repressed emotions even if necessary in the moment.

“I wish you wouldn’t do that,” he grumbled but took down the ward around them. “My office everyone since I’m sure you’re going to want some explanations and Harry will probably breakdown again in about half an hour.”

Percy led the way with Harry quickly hurrying behind with. Ron turned to Hermione and let out a sigh. “I think Malfoy would have been better,” he breathed out in resignation.

Hermione just threw an arm around his shoulders and led him after the other two. “At least you know Percy is on our side now,” she tried to make him feel better. Ron grumbled and she just laughed at him. “Maybe DADA is going to be a better class than I thought.”

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Dinner with Snape...

A New Friend

Chapter Notes

Sorry I disappeared for a bit there. I'm back!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Harry walked straight to the back of Percy's office where he had set up Sirius's Polyjuice to start brewing the night before and took it out of stasis, banishing the notice-me-not ward around it. He pulled over the next ingredients and started to chop them for the next step in the potion. "I can't, Percy," he mumbled, not looking up at any of the others in the room.

Percy just sighed and gave him a sad but understanding smile. "I know..." He turned to where Ron and Hermione had just walked into his office and cast several wards on his door to keep anyone from listening in to what they were saying.

Without comment, Percy turned around with an intense expression on his face and strode right up to his brother, pulling him into a tight hug. "Percy?" Ron questioned in shock, looking with wide eyes over to Hermione who just shrugged.

"I missed you so much," Percy mumbled into where his face was buried in Ron's red hair. "I'm so, so sorry."

Ron awkwardly patted his older brother on the back, still stunned at this turn of events. "You know I haven't lived through whatever it was yet, right? And...Harry said we'd stop it, so no big deal..."

Percy finally pulled back some and breathed in to steady his emotions, motioning to where Harry was trying to lose himself in brewing. "Clearly it's a big deal to us, even if it hasn't happened yet, and will never happen," he told his brother with a sad look.

Ron tried to give him an encouraging smile through the whirring of his brain trying to process everything. "Well...erm, I'm just glad you might not be a prat anymore. How'd you

end up with Harry anyway? I never would have pegged the two of you being together.”

Percy sighed and ran a hand over his face before sitting on the edge of his still mostly empty desk. “You have to realize, we lost a *lot* of people. Our family...well, you wouldn’t recognize it anymore. We all changed so much; you and I got pretty close right before you were taken. You hold onto those you have left, you know? Hermione and I were close too before the end,” he gave the girl who was now looking at Harry’s potion set-up a sad smile.

“Are you brewing Polyjuice?” Hermione asked Harry, acknowledging Percy with a matching smile. Harry gave a little nod without looking up from what he was doing.

“It’s for Sirius,” Percy answered for his partner who was doing his best just to hold himself together. “Look...Harry doesn’t talk about what happened. Based on how he seemed to not even see this coming, I expect he’s buried everything behind so many Occlumency shields that it’s a vault in his mind.”

“Something happened to you and Luna?” Hermione prodded a little more at her unresponsive friend. “When? What was it?”

“I can’t, Hermione,” Harry mumbled. “The runes only hold it all at bay for so long, and I just can’t go there...”

Percy nodded while Hermione and Ron just looked confused at them both. “He has some runes to muffle emotions. I hate when he uses them since he’s not processing, but it’s only a temporary fix anyway. Look, I’ll tell you what I know, but it’s not much. I only know what future Ron told me after it happened.”

Ron moved over and sat in one of Percy’s chairs before nodding for him to continue. “Tell us what you know, and Hermione and I will figure out how to keep him together.”

“You might be putting too much faith in our abilities,” Hermione warned him before sitting down herself. Harry gave a little snort of agreement from where he was still slicing ingredients.

“Right,” Percy nodded and leaned over to light the fire under the cauldron for Harry. “So, this all happened not long after the war ended. It was before Harry developed his well-deserved and hard-won ridiculous level of paranoia.”

“It’s only paranoia if people aren’t actually out to get you all the time,” Harry gave him a glare before picking up a jar of beetles.

Percy nodded and walked over to kiss his neck before giving the potion a stir since it was starting to boil. “*That’s* never not going to be super weird and disturbing,” Ron grumbled to where only Hermione could hear, getting a smirk from his sort-of girlfriend.

“Anyway, from what I remember at the time, Harry had just started his mastery in Amsterdam,” Percy continued, going back over to sit on his desk in front of the two teenagers. “He would take a portkey back to England twice a week. One day, he would visit with his godson and you two. The second portkey was for a standing lunch in Diagon Alley with Luna, and sometimes Ginny would join them when she didn’t have practice...she ended up playing quidditch professionally.”

“This was before I realized that having a set, predictable schedule was just communicating to my enemies where I would be at any given time and give them the opportunity to plan accordingly,” Harry grimaced at his own past bad decisions.

“You didn’t know,” Percy assured him sadly, hating that he was still in so much pain. “What happened was that Harry and Luna were kidnapped by some rogue Death Eaters when they were leaving the café they had lunch at. We couldn’t find them for three days...”

Harry hissed as the knife slipped and he cut a gash in his hand. “Merlin!” Hermione jumped up.

Harry just rolled his eyes at her and tapped his hand with his ebony wand, healing the cut, and then tossing the beetles he’d just been slicing into the rubbish bin since they were ruined. “It’s nothing, Hermione,” he gave her a dry look. “The Death Eaters...they...well, they thought I could help them raise Voldemort back to life. Somehow, they had gotten some actually good information that I had something that would allow me to do that, but they didn’t know that I no longer had this capability anymore after the war,” Harry said through gritted teeth, dumping out another pile of beetles angrily onto the cutting board.

“If I still had the ability, there was a point in there, I would have done it...” He added quietly on at the end before shaking his head and focusing back on the potion. How they had learned about the horcrux in him, he still had never figured out. It’s not like he could ask them after everything was said and done anyway.

Percy stepped back over to him just to put his hand comfortingly on Harry’s back. “Harry said he’s having you work on Occlumency?” He asked, knowing they couldn’t tell the teens anything about the horcruxes until they had working shields.

“I’ve started constructing some shields,” Hermione said before turning a proud look to Ron. “Ron’s almost there. A few more days, and he’ll probably catch up to me.”

Ron turned pink and shrugged at the compliment. “Er...I don’t want people in my mind...I’m motivated is all...”

“Right, well, we’ll tell you more once you have those shields,” Percy turned his own proud look on his brother, surprised and impressed at how he’d stuck to it.

“From what future Ron told me, Luna did something...” he looked to Harry, but Harry didn’t seem able to add anything into the conversation anymore. “She did something to help Harry get at least slightly free...somehow they escaped, and we just know Harry showed up in the lobby at St. Mungo’s looking like a poorly revived inferius and screaming as he held Luna. The healers rushed to them, but Luna didn’t make it. She was too far gone when they got there.”

“Oh, Harry...” Hermione looked at her friend with horror in her eyes while Ron just looked completely sick.

“You two and Neville had been going crazy looking for them,” Percy continued, still rubbing circles on Harry’s back. “Ron and Neville were junior aurors at the time and were able to get enough information from Harry before he was placed in a medically induced coma to find where they had been kept.”

“Good...so we arrested the bastards,” Ron growled, impressed that Neville ended up in the aurors but sick at the thought of what his friend must have gone through.

Percy shrugged but with a dark look. “No one was alive to go to trial,” he remarked with no feeling or judgement. “This is pure conjecture on my part, but while the official word was that Harry killed them all in his escape, in self-defense clearly...I have a feeling there might have been a few that weren’t quite dead when you two arrived based on how future Ron insisted I not ask questions and what I know from recent experience about what Longbottom was willing to do for Harry.” The last comment got a tiny little tug up of Harry’s lips in almost a smirk.

“Good,” Hermione growled lowly, surprising Ron but not Percy or Harry who knew exactly what *she* would be willing to do very well at this point.

“Ron also told me to not ask Harry about what happened during those three days,” Percy told them, his hold on Harry tightening some. “Normally, I wouldn’t approve of avoiding something like that, but Harry left for Amsterdam immediately when he got out of hospital and didn’t return to England for a year. Teddy, Andy, and you two would go visit him, but he didn’t return until after he finished his mastery. When he did finally return, he’d just go blank and disassociate if anyone ever brought up Luna. By that time, he never left the house without glamours to change his appearance, never went to any location on a regular schedule, burned all correspondence, and had started in on his collection of tattooed runes. It seemed like good advice at the time to give him as much space as he needed...”

“Until we came back in time, and I had to face it,” Harry sighed, rejoining the conversation, and putting down his knife. “Look...I promise I’m going to be ok. It’s just the backlash of my Occlumency walls failing makes everything crash in here,” he pointed at his head with sad eyes.

“So, do we keep you away from Luna or should we try to reach out to her?” Hermione asked with a frown, not knowing what would be best. She resolved to look for some psychology books in the library or even owl her parents to send her some muggle ones if there weren’t any.

Percy shook his head firmly at that, Harry mirroring him. “Merlin, no! That would be terrible!” Harry emphatically said with wide eyes.

“You have to keep them apart for a while at least,” Percy said just as emphatically. “Have you ever noticed that Luna is a little special?”

Ron snorted while Hermione shot him a glare. “Luna is...different,” Hermione eventually said in agreement.

“She’s an empath,” Harry explained, putting the potion back into stasis with his wand and replacing the notice-me-not ward. “Luna feels what those in close contact with her feel. It’s why she always seems to know more than she should. The creatures she’s always talking about are code-words her parents used with her as a child so she could tell them about what she was feeling while out in public. Empaths are highly sought after by both sides of the war and the ministry. They wanted her to be able to decide what she wanted to do with her life instead of it being decided for her.”

“If Luna is too close to Harry, well, you all have an idea of how terrible that would be for an empath to experience without being prepared first,” Percy said and threw an arm over Harry’s shoulders now that he wasn’t brewing anymore.

Harry snorted in agreement. “I’ve been constructing Occlumency shields for years, and I’ve gotten better since I first started during my mastery. I can construct some better shields around that trauma since the original are now gone...shields that are more mentally healthy,” he added firmly at Percy’s disapproving look.

“I know how to not completely bury memories now and can just distance them. I didn’t know how to do that nine years ago when I was trying to function and just wanted to rip out the memories...I think we can all agree that it’s good that at least I didn’t obliviate myself, which I did consider for a second. I’m slightly healthier than that. Give me some time though, and I’ll keep away from Luna until I won’t hurt her by being close.”

Ron sighed and rubbed his temples. “So, we keep Harry and Luna away from each other while trying to convince everyone he isn’t insane since the Prophet is already painting him that way while also trying to keep him from doing anything stupid...”

“It’s a busy year,” Hermione just smiled with a chuckle.

“What?” She raised an eyebrow when everyone looked at her. “It’s still better than last year.”

Harry nodded slowly, remembering his fourth year. “Still better than my original fifth year probably too.”

“Wait!” Ron held a hand up, a shocked look on his face as he remembered what Harry had said about his partner. “Harry said *you* killed our original DADA professor!” He stared open-mouthed at his brother who was a complete wimp and would never do absolutely anything considered illegal.

Percy just looked at his partner and raised a questioning eyebrow. Harry huffed and rolled his eyes. “I told them no such thing. I heavily implied some things, and they may have gone from there.”

Percy shrugged, not really caring. “I have no regrets,” he said darkly before squeezing Harry’s hand and going to his desk to find his lesson plans for his first class. “I did what had to be done. You may not agree with my methods, but I did what was right, and you don’t have to trust me on that, but I ask that you remember that we’re at war. The rules you live by no longer apply.”

Harry put a hand on Percy’s desk and bent over with a gasp. “My runes as deactivating,” he said in almost a sob. “I only have a couple minutes...erm, my first class is Charms, so at least Flitwick knows I don’t actually need his class. DADA is next...Percy, can I take your office for a couple periods? I think I can fix my shields by Transfiguration.”

“What do we tell Flitwick?” Hermione asked with wide eyes at how the emotions were trying to flood her friend once more.

Tears were running from Harry’s eyes, and he sat on the floor and curled up in a ball. Percy sighed and bent over to kiss his head before taking the wards off his door. “Come on, leave him be. We have class anyway,” he herded the two teens towards the door so Harry could work on dealing with his emotions in peace. He looked back at his partner with a wince. He was going to be so sore when he finally got up off the stone floor.

“Flitwick?” Hermione reminded Percy as they stepped out of the office and Percy warded the door behind him for Harry’s privacy.

Percy stood there thinking and tapped his wand against his leg. Ron was just looking at him speculatively. “What do you look like under there?” He mused, trying to look through Percy’s glamour.

His older brother just smirked at him. “Not as out there as Harry. I’m not a big fan of needles,” he chuckled.

“Tell Flitwick that Harry isn’t feeling well...tell him that a past illness hit him again. If you say it significantly enough, he’ll realize what you’re trying to tell him. If he doesn’t, just tell him to talk to me, and I’ll clear it up later. See you in DADA!” He gave them a little wave and a wistful look at Ron again before turning on his heel and striding off to his first year Hufflepuff/Slytherin class.

“Merlin, this is all so strange,” Ron grumbled as he and Hermione began walking to their Charms class. “I can’t believe Harry’s dating my brother!”

“I wonder what your brother did for a living in the future,” Hermione mused. “I didn’t get a chance to ask.”

“*That’s* what you’re wondering?” Ron asked with a disbelieving look at her. “What about what happened to my nerdy, prat of an older brother to turn him into *that*? Or, what actually happened to Harry and Lovegood? Or what that thing is that they’re not telling us until we can protect our minds?!”

Hermione rolled her eyes but gave him a fond look before throwing an arm around his shoulders and steering him towards the classroom so they wouldn’t be late. “We’ll learn that last bit soon enough...I don’t think we actually *want* to know what happened to Harry and Luna...it was clearly torture, and I personally don’t want to know the depths of depravity wizards can sink to. If Luna didn’t survive and Harry had to be placed in a medically induced coma for a while, then it was extremely bad.”

“And, as for your brother, he was always very committed to what he viewed as right. He followed the rules and laws to the letter, to an extreme that made you call him a prat,” she explained as Ron nodded in agreement. “He seems to be doing the same thing now, but his rules and laws are just significantly different. He’s following some code he has...Harry’s the chaotic one, but Percy is calculating and always has been. I’d be willing to wager the sorting hat considered Slytherin for him at the very least.”

Ron grumbled but nodded. “We have to keep an eye on those two. I’m not saying I don’t trust them in general, but I definitely don’t trust them to not do something that will get them sent to Azkaban...case in point, DADA.”

Hermione nodded. She was definitely getting the full explanation of just what that former DADA professor did and soon. “We will...plus there is Sirius in on it, Flitwick now, and probably Snape soon.”

“Right on time,” Professor Flitwick remarked when they walked into the classroom just as he was about to close the door. “Aren’t you missing a member?” He raised an eyebrow and pointedly looked behind them.

“Er...Harry’s not feeling well,” Ron awkwardly said, scoping out a few empty seats.

Hermione nodded. “A *past* illness cropped up, and he needed some time. Professor Weasley is looking after him,” she said, as significantly as possible without winking twice at the man.

Flitwick, for his part, gave the girl an eyeroll for her troubles. This was why teenagers should not be involved in plans for a revolution. “Thank you, Ms. Granger. Go ahead and take a seat you two so we can get started.”

The tiny professor strode to the front of the classroom, and everyone quieted as he sternly looked at them all. “I realize this isn’t DADA,” he said, giving them all a very serious look. “This is Charms. However, we will begin this year working on dueling. Charms are not just for household use; they can also save your life and can be used offensively. I will not have you go out into the world and think that Charms can only be used to cook and clean with.”

Ron looked at Hermione who raised an eyebrow and pulled out some parchment in interest. They were certain Flitwick didn't start with this lesson in the first version of their fifth year. "Now," he continued. "Before we begin with dueling, I want you to turn to your neighbor and come up with a list of five ways Wingardium Leviosa can be used to get you out of a situation where you are being attacked."

Ron turned to Hermione and smirked. "Troll club..." he grinned at her. Hermione wrote it down with a chuckle.

"Brain check?" Percy dryly asked with a look over at his partner...something he'd asked multiple times that day whenever he got a moment.

Harry rolled his eyes but did look gratefully at his partner for checking on him. "I'm fine, Perce...shields are up again, nothing is buried, but it's also been nine years. I have some time and perspective from what happened. The problem was that I only knew how to bury the memories before, so they hit me like it had just happened yesterday."

"I'm sorry, Harry," Percy refrained from putting an arm around the man who looked fifteen since they were still in view of the castle as they pretended to be on a walk and not going down to Hogsmeade, where they were headed to meet with Snape. It had been very difficult to pry Harry loose from Ron and Hermione after what had happened earlier, but neither wanted to deal with Snape, so they eventually and begrudgingly allowed Harry to leave the castle.

"At least it shouldn't be hard to avoid Luna. You never actually interacted before this year, right?"

"Right...but I've seen her twice off in the distance after what happened this morning," Harry sighed and scrubbed his temples, still having a bit of a headache from all the mind magic he'd used that morning. "Apparently, she was always *there* just not part of my circle of friends until this year. I really want to talk with her, but I know I should give it a week at least and let my new shields settle. I'm confident *I* will be fine, but keeping an empath from being

flooded with the crazy in my brain is not something I'm willing to try until I'm completely certain."

They turned a corner around a grouping of trees. "This seems a safe distance," Percy remarked since they were now out of sight of the castle.

With a relieved breath out, Harry removed his glamour. "Merlin, it feels good to not have most of my skin invisible to everyone else," he said before leaning over and snogging Percy soundly. "I also missed doing that," he mumbled.

"Me too," his partner kissed him back and wrapped his arms around the man he missed living with and waking up beside.

"Hmm," Harry hummed before pulling back. "I think once we take care of Voldy and Hadrian Black takes over, maybe Harry Potter should just quietly drop out of school and move or be homeschooled in some undisclosed location."

"Oh, thank Morgana," Percy breathed out and kissed Harry one more time for good measure before taking his hand and continuing their walk through the gates. "I don't think I can do two more years of this before slipping up and getting in some major trouble for my underage boyfriend."

Harry just raised an eyebrow at the seemingly 19-year-old man beside him. "I don't particularly like being the older one in this relationship either, but at least you can gradually start removing your glamour and maybe people won't notice too much. I'm not saying you're not cute at this age, but you definitely look Ministry Secretary and not Badass Necromancer like this."

Percy chuckled but had to pause as they got to the outskirts of Hogsmeade. It took him a minute for his brain to catch up with the differences between the present and the future. Hogsmeade itself hadn't really changed that much after the war, but it had changed significantly over the year it was held by Death Eaters and during the battle. It wasn't super overt, but older paint and structures, slightly different colors, and a couple stores that had no longer been in existence caused some dissonance in his brain.

“It’s always strange seeing these places, isn’t it?” Harry remarked, seeing what his partner was as well. “I feel like there should have been a time travel manual that Hermione left for us. Granted, I could have planned a little better, but I *wasn’t* planning on Neville assassinating a dementor so quickly and had to move everything up.”

Percy shuddered. “Remind me please that fiendfyre is not an appropriate spell to teach fifth years if I ever forget. I don’t want to see Longbottom overthrowing you as the next Dark Lord.”

As they neared the Three Broomsticks, Harry patted down his braid, checked that he didn’t have any stains on his black, Weird Sisters t-shirt he’d recently purchased, and basically fidgeted awkwardly. “You look fine,” Percy rolled his eyes. Personally, he looked a little more out-of-character since Snape actually knew him. It wasn’t overly noticeable though. He’d just traded his cardigans and khakis for a black button-down shirt and some dark wash jeans. Wearing his Unspeakable robes everyday had Percy dressing now for comfort more than anything else since no one really ever saw his clothes anyway.

“It’s just important that he approves me, or us, to visit Siri. Besides, we’re going to completely scandalize him,” Harry gleefully chuckled. “Er...have you come out to your family? I didn’t think to ask. He’ll probably tell them you know.”

“Nope,” Percy looked at him with a smirk, not really caring if Snape told them or not. At this point, he only mildly cared about their reactions, and it might be best it came from Snape with him not in the room anyway so that they could process without him there.

“Actually, I don’t think I ever did even in the future. Dad never questioned our living arrangement, and George just asked once if we were shagging, and when I said yes, he said cool and poured himself another cup of tea. I don’t think Ginny really paid any attention to us at all, she was so caught up in trying to keep herself busy that she didn’t have time to really question us always showing up to things together.”

Harry nodded. “That’s what I thought. It’s amazing how just not important some things become when your entire world falls apart around you.”

“Well, clearly Snape is bi if not gay,” Percy agreed with a nod. “So, I don’t think we’re going to scandalize him quite as much as we did Ron.

Harry full out laughed before they could walk into the pub at that. “Merlin, I *have* to see that pensieve memory at some point. I was too out of it to pay attention to his face. It had to be beautifully shocked...probably turned bright red too!”

“Got it in one,” Percy laughed with him and pushed open the door. “Hermione just blinked a couple times and seemed to accept it, but Ron looked like he just saw me...I don’t know...kiss the giant squid or something.”

“Please don’t compare me to the giant squid,” Harry gave him a disgusted glare before making a beeline towards an empty booth since they seemed to have beaten Snape there. “Get us a round, and two bottles of whiskey to go?” Harry gave his partner his best puppy dog eyes that never seemed to fail to work on the man.

Percy just smirked at him and gave him a quick kiss on the lips. “The whiskey stays in my chambers. Fred and George will be able to tell there is whiskey in the tower by some sort-of Divination that they can do to find mischief.”

“You’ll drink it,” Harry accused him with a pout. He did believe it about Fred and George though. Merlin, he’d missed Fred, and George with Fred.

“Fine, I’ll get three bottles then,” he chuckled and walked to the bar.

Harry smiled and gave a little wave to the man who had just walked into the bar looking much less stern without his teaching robes and only black slacks and a black knit jumper. Frankly, the man looked good. “Black,” Snape acknowledged him before sliding into the booth opposite. “Was your partner not able to make it?”

“Hadrian, please,” Harry corrected him with a smile. “And he’s at the bar getting us a round. How was the start of the new term?”

Snape grimaced. “How up to date are you on the events happening in Britain right now?”

Harry nodded knowing that Voldemort was probably being a right arse to his Death Eaters and Snape in particular since none of them besides weak Pettigrew had sought him out when he was wraith to raise him back to life.

“Very,” Harry commented, purposely turning his left arm just so Snape could be abundantly sure he didn’t have a Dark Mark even if he’d clocked his bare arm before. He cast a quick ward around their booth so no one could listen into their conversation, something that had Snape nodding at him in appreciation.

“As a Master of Dark Arts, I did my research into the state of the country and ministry politics so I would know how welcome I was here. I have to say, your dark practitioners have absolutely not been helping our people’s case in promoting magic equality,” he said with a sneer that showed just what he thought of that.

Snape nodded, and tapped his left arm significantly over the covered Dark Mark. “What has your cousin mentioned about me and my association with him specifically?”

Harry smiled at the man and leaned back, seeing Percy returning out of the corner of his eye. “Schoolyard rivals, he says you were a git, but frankly he sounds like a bully. I imagine things were worse than he made them out to be, but I also know that he’s a different person now. He also spent way more time in prison than whatever he did would have warranted if he actually did something illegal, which knowing Siri, he probably did.”

Snape sneered but nodded. “I *was* an anti-social git, but your cousin was most definitely a bully. That isn’t what I was asking though.”

Percy walked through the ward and put three whiskeys on the table before promptly sitting down beside Harry. “I have your bottles shrunk in my pocket, and no shrinking them absolutely doesn’t change the taste, don’t even go there,” he told his partner with a glare before turning to a baffled Snape across from them. “Professor...good to see you outside the castle. I was surprised you and Hadrian had met before.”

“It definitely changes the taste,” Harry rolled his eyes but looked between the two with a smirk and waited. “Thank you though, Perce. I’ll get the next round.”

“Percival Weasley,” Snape said in as much a tone of disbelief as his very expressionless self could muster.

“Ergh! Please call me Percy,” the man shuddered. “Only Aunt Muriel ever called me that. You’re giving me bad flashbacks of mothballs and crushing disapproval.”

“How did...?” Snape didn’t seem to be able to finish the sentence as he looked between them, seeming to add up the age, geographical locations, and magical belief differences between them.

“Ministry trip to Amsterdam last year before the Tournament really got going,” Percy shrugged in explanation. Harry pushed Snape’s whiskey closer to the man with one finger and a smirk.

Snape gave him a twisted smirk back before taking a sip of the drink. “You do realize he’d a light wizard, right?” Snape put down the glass and asked Harry with a dry glare over at the redhead.

“Actually, no...” Harry frowned. “I would have said you were grey, but you’re definitely dark now, love, aren’t you?”

Percy put an arm over Harry’s shoulders and leaned back. “Dark enough,” he shrugged. As a necromancer, he was as dark as they come...well, except for Harry who definitely beat him out as (probably) the Master of Death or something along those lines. “You have to admit, my family would most definitely assume I’d joined Voldemort if I told them though. I doubt they understand the difference between Dark Arts as a balance to Light and what the Death Eaters are twisting the practice into.”

Snape slowly shook his head before taking another sip of his drink. “Percy Weasley,” he said yet again with a shake of his head. “I don’t know who I was expecting to see with Hadrian, but it wasn’t you...”

Percy just smirked. “If you look at my lesson plans, I’m actually teaching Defense against all types of magic, not just the Dark Arts,” he added.

“That...that is actually a very good idea,” Snape nodded slowly before looking back over at Harry. “Before, what I was asking you about what your cousin has told you...”

“That you’re a spy?” Harry raised an eyebrow and smirked at the man who glanced over to Percy with worry in his eyes. “Don’t worry. Percy and I are fully supportive of you, of the Order taking down Voldemort, and I would help, but I doubt I’m Order material,” Harry motioned to the runes visible on his neck and arms.

“It’s in court records from the first war,” Percy reminded the man. “Frankly, I’m very impressed you were able to sell Voldemort on you being *his* double agent instead of Dumbledore’s when everyone knows you were a spy for *someone*.”

“Please call him the Dark Lord or something besides that,” Snape winced yet again at their continued use of the name.

Harry’s eyes flicked to where Percy’s Unspeakable mark was covered and wondered if the spell had been tweaked to cause Death Eaters pain when someone said the name around them. “Does it actually cause you pain, or do you just not like it?” He asked to clarify. “Because, he is most assuredly not Magic’s Dark Lord, so I refuse adamantly to call him that. I can, however, call him Voldy or Tom or something like that if I’m actually causing you pain.”

“Well...you *are* very well informed,” Snape looked at him, impressed that he actually knew the Dark Lord’s real name, something he thought only himself, Dumbledore, and probably Potter knew at this point. “And yes, it feels like we’re being burned whenever it is said.”

“I’m sorry then. I will avoid that name in particular going forward,” Harry nodded at him firmly. “Now, this is supposed to be some kind of security interview or something, isn’t it? What do you want to know?”

Snape actually chuckled. “You are dating a Weasley. I think we can call you safe. Even Dumbledore would probably agree with that,” he remarked motioning for the waitress to bring them another round.

Percy rolled his eyes and Harry laughed. He was still laughing when their drinks were delivered and only marginally pulled himself together. “Merlin...the Order had really better be more secure than that!” He knew it really wasn’t from his experiences in the past and future.

“I’m kind-of on the outs with the family right now,” Percy winced. “I’m trying to make it up to them though and plan to apologize for being a prat about some things as soon as I’m able.”

Snape shrugged, not caring at all. “So, I clearly know what Mr. Weasley does for a living. What have you found to do since you moved to Britain?” He asked in actual interest.

Harry huffed and took a sip. “Not a lot. I’m an artifact dealer and serve as a competent brewer for anything not overly complex...please don’t ask about the types of artifacts or potions I have though,” he added at the end with a smirk.

“I wouldn’t dream of it,” Snape smirked right back, remembering what both of them had been buying the day they met.

“Actually, on that note, I’m brewing some Polyjuice for Sirius...aren’t there a few spells to speed along the process so it doesn’t take a full month?” He asked in interest.

Percy now sat back and enjoyed watching the two geek out since Potions were at the very bottom of his interests. Harry held out a hand and Percy passed him some parchment and a quill with an eyeroll while Snape went into some kind of lecture into magical theory that had Harry scribbling excitedly while Percy planned his next experiment on Persephone. He supposed that everyone had their interests, Morgana knew he was the more academic of the two of them, but Potions was just not his thing.

“Sorry, Percy,” Harry looked up at him sheepishly while he folded the parchment that supposedly would help him speed along Sirius’s potion by over a week. “I know you’d rather talk Charms or Transfiguration or anything besides Potions.”

He shrugged, just happy that Harry was so happy and that Snape seemed to be actually getting along with them. “I love to see you when you get all nerdy...”

“Am not! Take that back Percy Weasley!” Harry protested with a wrinkle of his nose while Snape stifled a snort of laughter in his drink.

Percy turned to Snape, ignoring the ridiculous man. “Do you happen to know of a spot on campus or in the Forbidden Forest where a spike of dark magic wouldn’t be noticed?” He asked. Harry needed to get rid of the horcrux he’d already collected as well as the diadem once they grabbed it. Plus, he couldn’t exactly test out the spells on Persephone in the castle, and he still needed to solve the glowing red eyes problem.

Snape slowly shook his head as he ran through everything he knew about the wards. “Not with Albus’s wards...”

“What about the Chamber of Secrets?” Harry asked with a frown when the idea came to him. “I’ve heard of its existence from *Hogwarts: A History*. Isn’t it a chamber within the castle where Salazar Slytherin himself practiced dark magic?”

“It’s *secret*, Hadrian. It’s in the name,” Percy reminded him, clearly knowing that *Harry* knew where it was, but Snape wouldn’t and would definitely not expect either of them to know.

“Both of you make good points,” Snape nodded at them before draining his glass once he realized he really should get back up to the castle if he wanted to finish his marking before bed.

“Yes, I am sure whatever you are wanting to practice could theoretically be done there, but no one knows where it is except for Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore. I would suggest not asking either of them, Mr. Weasley. I get the impression neither will trust you if you are indeed on the outs with your family currently. I would assume especially Albus would want to know what you were planning to do there.” Clearly Snape was avoiding the question but really wanted to know as well.

Percy just smiled at him and drained his own glass, having plenty of practice in just not answering questions after his years as an Unspeakable. “I will pursue off-campus opportunities then.”

Harry chuckled, knowing they would be going into the chamber soon now that they'd thought of it. "I have some, possibly expired, but very rare, potions ingredients that I don't know what to do with," he thought of the basilisk and wasn't sure what to do with the carcass. If they were going to use the space, then he refused to have the dead thing there as well. Honestly, knowing Percy, he'd probably start experimenting on it if it was there, and that would probably be bad for humanity as a whole.

"Er...would you want to check them out to see if they are viable? If they are, I'm sure we could work out some kind of mutually beneficial deal," he ended while Percy looked a little confused, not having put together the large, dead snake bit yet.

"Personally, I could use the funds," he ended honestly. He needed to buy some kind of base of operations and probably shell out quite a lot of bribe money, and his inheritance vault just wasn't going to cut it.

"With pleasure," Snape gave them both a nod. "Just owl them to me, or bring them by when visit your cousin next. I will inform Albus we can trust you, but that we were not able to come to terms on a secrecy oath."

"Merlin, was that proposed?!" Harry gasped, clearly knowing it was, but acting shocked at the information.

"I don't think I'm quite up to trying to get past those, not having had any legal training myself," Snape motioned to the bracelet of runes around Harry's wrist that he had been glancing at since he sat down and trying to put together what they combined to do.

"I'm surprised you figured out what they do," Harry laughed and scrubbed at the tattoo with his thumb fondly.

Snape's breath caught and he just barely stopped himself from noticeably gasping when he saw the line of scars on the top of Hadrian's opposite hand. He'd been so preoccupied with trying to figure out what the runes did that he hadn't looked at the man's other hand. While Hadrian clearly had many scars visible that Snape could see, those were the only ones that were so obviously clear what caused them. Blood quills were highly illegal and forcing

someone to carve *I must not tell lies* into their hand was beyond dehumanizing and torture of a terrible kind.

Harry hadn't noticed the man's distraction and had continued explaining his runes that kept him from being contracted into anything against his very clearly stated will. Even then, it kept the oath or contract from taking his magic if broken. It would be very painful and unpleasant, but he'd keep his magic and life at least. It had been necessary multiple times for ill-conceived marriage contracts people had tried to force him into. Frankly, they were the first runes he'd inked onto himself that then led to the others.

Snape was still staring at the scars though. He knew Hadrian was from the Black family, and they were never known to be good or pleasant people. He knew that Regulus and his brother had not had good home lives growing up, even if he was less sympathetic to Sirius. Even if Hadrian's family had been struck off the family tree, that still didn't mean they were good people or that he hadn't grown up in a terrible home.

Percy reached over and put his hand on top of Harry's, having noticed where their professor's eyes had fallen. Snape looked up at him, and Percy gave a little shake of his head. The message of 'don't ask' was received, and Snape gave him a little nod in return.

"...and I can give you that oath, but it probably won't be as powerful as your leader is looking for because of them," Harry concluded, having not paid attention to the silent conversation going on around him. "So...you want me to mock one up really quick?"

"No," Snape shook his head firmly and stood to leave. "I *will* ask for lunch though, next Hogsmeade weekend? I assume you will be visiting Mr. Weasley anyway."

Harry's eyes widened some, surprised that maybe he'd possibly made a friend out of the man. Merlin, he didn't think he'd ever see the day he would be friends with Severus Snape. He had admired the man since he died in the war, saving them all. But he didn't actually think Snape would want to be friends with him. "Er, sure, yeah..."

Snape gave a sharp nod. "Expect my owl about visiting with your cousin and the decision reached concerning it," he said before giving them both a tiny smile and heading out of the pub, back to the school.

“Harry...” Percy looked over at his partner with a deep frown. “Just how much do you think your handwriting has changed over the years?”

Harry frowned back at the man in concern. “Er...you mean owling Snape? I cast a spell on all my correspondence that makes my handwriting change every time you look at it. It’s to keep anyone from being able to forge something from me.”

"Of course you do," that didn't surprise him at all. Percy tapped a finger to the back of Harry’s hand though, and Harry sucked his breath in. “Do you think he noticed?” He asked with wide eyes. Young Harry had never disguised his handwriting for anything, especially his essays.

“That it is there, yes, that it’s Harry Potter’s handwriting...I don’t think so,” Percy decided after really thinking through the man’s minute expressions. “I think you should work on changing your handwriting on your essays some though just in case he sees your hand again and it sticks in his memory. Most people don’t pay that close attention to handwriting, but he’s both a professor looking for plagiarism and a spy...he would probably notice before most anyone else.”

Harry grumbled and drank the last of Percy’s whiskey who just huffed at him in exasperation. “Fine...now, I think I can stay out for another hour before anyone gets very anxious. I remarked to the general populous that I had just recently started seeing a very unspecified person in Ravenclaw while in the dorm yesterday to excuse random disappearances. How fast do you think we could get back to the castle and to your rooms?”

Percy smirked and canceled Harry’s ward with his wand. “I’ll take that challenge!” He pulled Harry up and out the door, planning to even beat Snape back to the castle.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: An interesting Order meeting...

Taking Small Steps Forward

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“That ingrate of a son of mine moped around for a few days after you left, but he’s been going out in the evenings with that werewolf under a glamour the past couple days and seems to be less of a poison to those around him since,” Walburga Black’s pocket portrait seethed throughout her ordered report to Harry who was sitting in the kitchens without his glamour but with a pot of tea and a large plate of biscuits while the house elves bustled around him and Sephie slept in his lap. The elves were still deciding on their terms, but they were tentatively on his side in what was coming to their world and would warn him if anyone was approaching so he could reapply the glamour.

“Good,” he nodded and sipped his tea, wishing Dobby would let him put some firewhiskey in it, but apparently Kreacher had gotten to the other elf, and he was on the Harry can’t have alcohol train now as well. “I want a full update on the Order meeting tonight as it is happening and a summary after it with as little editorializing as you can manage without causing yourself an aneurysm.”

Walburga glared at the heavily scarred Dark Lord as venomously as possible, but also not able to contradict him on her inability to keep from adding in her own comments to the reports. There was so little joy to be gotten out of being a portrait, so she was going to take what there was where she could get it.

“Why are you in a Merlin forsaken kitchen?” She asked instead with a disgusted grimace, recognizing the activity happening around the young man.

Harry just smiled kindly at Winky who stole his plate of biscuits and sat a plate of carrot sticks on the table instead with an ordering point of a long finger at them. Apparently, Harry looked like he didn’t eat enough vegetables or something like that, and she had taken to following behind Dobby to replace his biscuits with raw broccoli or carrot sticks every time he stopped by the kitchens.

“Those had better be half gone before you leave,” she ordered before huffing and heading off to help the other elves with making bread for the next day.

“Thanks Winky!” Harry called to her with a chuckle as he picked up a carrot with a disappointed wrinkle of his nose at it. “To answer your question,” he looked back at the scandalized portrait. “I’ve invited the house elves to join our cause. Even as Light creatures they have basically no legal rights, and they honestly have more reason to revolt against any and everyone than any of the rest of us. They’re still working on their list of demands from me and our side since they don’t have a formal governing body, but they are a sentient race that has been systematically oppressed for centuries, and we will be blessed by Magic herself to have them stand beside us.”

Harry saw one of the elves...Pipsy he thought, pause in his work at Harry’s words out of the corner of his eye before going back to washing dishes. He hoped they were starting to see just how valuable and deserving they were as people and individuals, but it was still a long road ahead for all of them.

Walburga scoffed at his choice of followers but was cut off from responding when a very familiar crash was heard from the other side of her larger portrait. The stern, black-clad woman rolled her eyes. “My disgrace of a great-niece apparently has arrived,” she remarked at the regular knocking over of the umbrella stand. “I assume your meeting is about to start.”

“I’ll be here,” Harry toasted her with his teacup as she turned to leave. “Oh, tell me if you can tell if Tonks sits beside Remus or not,” he added with a grin at the end, just getting yet another scoff from the woman before she left to spy on the Order meeting happening behind her portrait.

Dobby hurried back over to where Harry was seated with another plate of biscuits to replace the one Winky had stolen with a wink at Harry. “Here Masters Dark Lord, Harry Potter...”

“You are an angel, Dobby,” Harry replaced his carrot stick with a chocolate biscuit and settled in to wait on Walburga’s next report. “Hey, tell the Head Elf that we’re going to have an ‘inner circle’ meeting in a couple weeks in the Room of Requirement. No worries if you don’t have your demands put together by then, but you’re all invited...however many of the elves want to come. I’m sure the room can accommodate everyone comfortably. We’re just doing some updates and figuring out what everyone’s goals are.”

Dobby almost vibrated in excitement but calmed himself to give Harry a little glare. “Now, Dark Lord Harry Potter knows that not everyone can be in his ‘inner circle’ you need an

‘outer circle’ too...Dobby will get Kreacher to helps, and we’ll help narrow down how many elves are allowed to come. You knows they will all be there if you don’t say no.”

Harry shrugged, not really caring. He didn’t give a kneazle’s arse how his little organization was set up as long as they didn’t serve either Dumbledore or Voldemort and were working towards tolerance and equality for all creatures and magic alignments.

“Thanks Dobby...I’m sure I wouldn’t survive without you and Kreacher...don’t tell Winky,” he added on conspiratorially at the end.

“I heard that, Harry Potter! Eat your carrots!” Winky remarkably heard and yelled across from where she was kneading the bread dough in the corner of the room, getting a wince from both Harry and Dobby at being caught.

Severus Snape stopped and took in a deep breath of the crisp night air from outside Grimmauld Place. He absolutely did *not* want to be attending an Order meeting, especially since he’d been forced to attend a painful and humiliating Death Eater meeting the night before, and added to all that, he was behind in his marking.

He *was* intrigued by his new friend though, and beyond curious about the man’s relationship with his escaped convict of a cousin who he seemed absolutely nothing like. Even a dunderhead like Sirius couldn’t have missed that his cousin was a dark wizard though, and he didn’t seem to care...that did *not* align with the Sirius Black Snape knew as a student at Hogwarts. Something was definitely going on with that relationship, but whether Black was finally growing up after his stint in Azkaban, or if Hadrian was just that good at worming his way into the prejudiced man’s life, was still up for debate.

However, as an argument for the latter possibility, somehow Hadrian had convinced a member of the Weasley family, historically one of the lightest families in their society, to date him, and it seemed to be serious by how they interacted with each other and how Hadrian and talked about his ‘partner’...surprising, since Percival...no, *Percy*...was so much younger than the dark wizard. And Percy did imply he might actually be a dark wizard himself, which, in Snape’s mind, completely changed the whole binary the war had taken on in the past couple decades.

Snape was willing, as a dark wizard himself, to sign onto the Light side because of the Dark Lord's actions against the Potters, Lily in particular, and the insane man's general willingness to kill, torture, and risk exposure of the wixen society. The Dark Lord's mission and goal of taking over the wixen and muggle societies was unreasonable and unattainable with the sheer number of muggles in existence and how small their society was, proving the megalomaniac really had lost his mind at some point. However, if there were other dark wixen who would stand against the Dark Lord while also standing their ground on their magical alignment, well, that changed everything. He was no longer alone if that were the case. Not allowing himself to hope though at this early juncture, he pushed it all down and focused on his mission: Get Hadrian Black accepted into the Black family ancestral home so that he would no longer be the only dark wizard there and to have a solid buffer against Sirius Black's continual ridiculousness.

Steeling himself for the inane conversation and frequent digs at his character from all parties awaiting him on the other side of the door, Snape turned the handle and stepped into the entryway. Walburga Black's eyes followed him as he walked past the portrait and into the kitchen, surprisingly not making any sound at his intrusion into her space. He frowned as he stepped into the already full room. Did anyone think to put a ward around the portrait? After a second, he shrugged off the thought. It was not like Walburga had any other portraits she could communicate with anyway. Linking portraits took a lot of highly specialized magic, and he was certain the Black family did not have any other properties that Walburga would have had access to and the desire to leave a portrait at anyway.

"Severus, welcome, I believe you are last to arrive," Albus turned his twinkling eyes on his spy before standing to call the meeting to order.

With a grimace, Snape took the only empty seat left that just so happened to be beside Sirius Black. He almost considered asking Tonks to trade seats with him, but that would put him sitting beside Lupin, and after a quick assessment, Black was probably the lesser of those two evils. "Albus..." He acknowledged his employer and spared a sneer for the smiling man beside him.

"All right, Snape?" Black asked in a more cordial tone than Snape ever remembered him using in his presence before. He raised an eyebrow, questioning the man's sanity, before just glaring at him, refusing to answer when he didn't know what the mutt's angle was. He must want something, and Snape didn't know what it could be.

“Let’s get the non-Order business taken care of first before we go into reports,” Dumbledore sighed as if it were all extremely taxing and crossed his arms, leaning against the countertop. “Severus, you met with Sirius’s cousin. Were you able to ascertain his loyalties and obtain a secrecy oath?”

Sirius turned large, hopeful eyes on Snape, and he really just wanted to kick the man to get him to turn his attention to anyone else in the room. With a glare at the animagus for good measure, he turned to the rest of the Order, catching the eyes of Molly and Arthur Weasley over where they were sitting by Moody. Steeling himself he met the elderly man’s twinkling eyes with his own unimpressed ones.

“Hadrian Black is not a Death Eater, nor will he ever wish to serve the Dark Lord. He has very strong convictions that will not be swayed to the Dark Lord’s ideology. I was unable to attain a secrecy oath; however, I do not believe it is necessary since the house is protected under the Fidelus Charm anyway. He has a highly vested interest in keeping Death Eaters away from many here in attendance, so he would not seek to betray us willingly,” Severus concluded firmly and tried to ignore the huge smile that was frankly freaking him out from the animagus beside him.

Dumbledore just frowned at that recommendation though and Moody scoffed. “Really, my boy, you are more at risk than anyone here. I would think you would agree that this person must be bound under some kind of oath to protect our secrets,” Dumbledore concluded.

“Only Sirius knows this man,” Moody added in. “He has no reason to protect any of us. How do we know he isn’t taking advantage of Sirius’s mental state to report our location or plans to the Dark anyway?”

“Hey!” Sirius protested Moody’s dig at his mental state, but Snape rolled his eyes. Honestly, Sirius had never been that stable as even an auror in his early twenties, and twelve years in Azkaban was definitely not going to help that. The man was clearly not quite sane on his best day, so it was a good point whether Snape personally believed Hadrian to be using him or not.

Snape sighed and wished they could just move on to the boring reports of the evening so that the attention would be off him. “He isn’t going to be joining Order meetings to learn any secrets, and clearly Sirius is not the only one who knows him since he is practically married to a Weasley. I doubt he would sell out his partner’s family. Arthur, Molly…you must agree,”

he turned to the Weasley parents with a questioning look for them to hopefully back him up on this so they could move on.

Surely, the Weasley parents would support their son's partner even if they weren't on the best of terms with Percy currently. Percy had said he and Hadrian had been together for almost a year, and it was only just recently that the Weasleys had split, so they must know Hadrian at least passingly...though, now that he thought of it, they hadn't reacted to the name when Sirius brought him up the first time, nor did Hadrian mention having met them...

With a bad feeling, he noted both the Weasley parents' surprise as well as Sirius's beside him. Surely, Hadrian had at least mentioned his relationship to his cousin! Merlin, what had he walked into?

"Excuse me?" Molly Weasley asked in a sputter as her husband frowned, seeming to try to figure out what Snape was talking about.

To Snape's utter bafflement, Sirius Black chuckled and shook his head beside Snape, seeming to find the entire situation amusing while everyone else looked completely shocked. With a grimace, Snape realized he might be about to out Percy Weasley to his family, and he was not looking forward to the fallout. Percy and Hadrian both were going to get an earful from him for putting him in this situation when they could have at least given him a warning.

"I'm taking it you didn't know..." he breathed out, hoping he was wrong about the situation.

"Sirius's younger cousin is romantically involved with someone in our family? Who?" Arthur frowned in confusion. "I think my cousin Hannah is single...? She moved to Belgium though..." He looked over to his wife questioningly.

"Your son," Severus sighed tiredly and rolled his eyes at his life. "Hadrian Black is dating your son, and it seems fairly serious from what I witnessed."

"Which one?" Arthur asked again, sharing a surprised look with his baffled wife.

Snape huffed while Sirius seemed to be almost dying in his attempt to hold in his laughter. “I don’t know what to tell you, Arthur, you have three grown sons who are out of school, which one is gay or at least bisexual, and that’s the one he’s with.” He was absolutely *not* going to out a person to their family if he could possibly avoid it.

Molly and Arthur didn’t seem to have any clue which of the three it might be though from their expressions while Sirius seemed to finally not be able to hold it in any longer and burst out laughing. “Oh, Merlin, I hope it’s Bill!” He laughed loudly. “He’s quite fit! You all *have* to admit that.”

“Sirius,” Lupin shook his head at his friend fondly but was chuckling himself.

“Bill is dating Fleur Delacour,” Tonks spoke with a shrug when everyone looked at her. “What? We talk sometimes. We were friends at school even if I was Charlie’s age and he was older. We both think curses are interesting.”

“Bill is dating the Beauxbatons champion?” Arthur raised an appreciative eyebrow for his son’s choice, getting a sneer from Snape, who was really not comfortable with this whole conversation.

“Erm, dear...would you know,” Molly awkwardly turned to the purple haired auror with a frown. “Is Charlie perhaps gay?”

“Bloody Salazar’s ghost!” Snape hissed out in frustration, causing everyone in the room’s eyes to snap to him. “He’s dating Percy! Percy Weasley, your son...the one who is currently teaching DADA at Hogwarts! I’m going to curse the both of them for not telling me that you didn’t know!”

Sirius gave another little surprised laugh but seemed less surprised than the rest of the room. Snape supposed the escaped convict had never actually met the third Weasley son, so he probably was less shocked. “Well...I’m not sure what that one looks like, but you all have pretty good genes by the sons I’ve seen,” Sirius shrugged and commented to the boy in question’s parents. “I suppose I’ll probably approve.”

“Percy?...Are you sure?” Arthur asked with a questioning look to his wife who just gave him a shrug as if to say she hadn’t guessed it either.

“We all got drinks in Hogsmeade two nights ago,” Snape tried to hold back the sneer he wanted to turn on the entire Order for putting him in this awkward position to be talking about romantic relationships of all things in the middle of a war. “They have apparently been together almost a year.”

Sirius gave a surprised snort of amusement at that and shook his head. The man clearly knew something he wasn’t planning on telling the rest of the Order and Snape just huffed in frustration at the dunderhead of a man. Black really could help; this *was* his cousin they were talking about.

“A year? But...Percy doesn’t believe You-Know-Who has returned,” Molly added in, looking at Snape with hopeful eyes that her son might return to the family. “Surely, Sirius’s cousin doesn’t believe that as well. How did we not know Percy was dating a man for almost a year?”

Snape honestly had no clue what had caused the rift in Percy’s relationship with his family, and the war didn’t seem like it could possibly be the reason with how Hadrian had talked about the Dark Lord as if it were obvious he had returned. “I don’t know what to tell you, Molly,” he sighed, feeling like he’d probably spoken more directly to the Weasley parents in this meeting than he ever had before in his life.

“In our conversation, your son seemed certain the Dark Lord had returned and that he stood adamantly against him. It is possible either he had to take the contrary stance because of his position as Fudge’s assistant, or maybe Hadrian has recently convinced him of the truth of the matter...I do not know. We did not discuss that in particular.”

“What *did* you discuss, my boy, if I may be so bold to ask?” Albus looked at him with that patronizing stare again that seemed to say he was only trusted as far as he was useful... something that Snape knew was the case extremely well.

“Potions,” he answered his employer, sometimes master when they were being honest with each other, simply. “Hadrian and I first met in my regular apothecary, and we share an interest in the art. He is currently brewing his cousin a batch of Polyjuice Potion to help him

leave the house more often...He wanted advice on ways to speed the process so it would take less than a month to finish.”

“That’s nice of him...and you, Snape,” Sirius said turning his blue/grey eyes on Severus with a thankful look once more and making Snape even more suspicious that the man had some kind of angle he was playing at.

“Well...I for one want to meet my son’s boyfriend!” Molly Weasley turned demanding eyes on both Dumbledore and her husband. “If Percy does actually believe You-Know-Who is back and is on our side, then there is no reason for all this bad blood. I want to meet my son’s partner and get my baby back with the family where he belongs.” She gave both men a glare that ordered them to make it happen, whatever that took.

Well...Snape didn’t actually say Percy was on their side. He and Hadrian seemed to be in some kind of middle-ground or maybe even a third side if one existed. He was clearly not going to say that in front of Percy’s family or the leader of the Light though. “The house is under a Fidelus, and they can be banned from the building during Order meetings. I don’t see the issue here,” he said once more to the group. “Can we possibly move this along?”

“Yeah, come on Dumbledore,” Sirius spoke up, agreeing with him to the spy’s continued surprise. “Snape has papers to mark, and Moony and I have a chess game to get back to. Just say Hadrian can come to dinner and let’s take care of all those recruitment reports and call it a night.”

“I agree,” Arthur spoke up with his wife to no one’s surprise.

Dumbledore closed his eyes and breathed out a sigh before turning those twinkling eyes once more on the group. “Fine, but no one will tell them any Order business, even your son,” he said to Arthur and Molly who quickly nodded in agreement.

The Order meeting finally continued on with Moody starting into his extremely long-winded report on possible precautionary measures they should take. Snape turned to Sirius, pinning the man with a venomous glare. “What do you want?” He asked quietly so only the animagus would hear. “We do not like each other, and here you are playing nice. You want something, out with it.”

Sirius's face darkened slightly before he seemed to push off whatever thought he had and frowned before he slowly shook his head. "Only to see my cousin," he finally replied to Snape's surprise. "Hadrian likes you for some reason and made it infinitely clear that he's planning to keep you in his life. I figured...well, it's been over a decade...maybe we aren't the same people we were back at Hogwarts? I mean...I'm not the same person. Maybe you aren't either? It only makes sense to try to start over, at least on a probationary basis anyway."

"Probationary basis?" Snape tried to process what the man was saying, but it just seemed ludicrous.

"Well...yeah," Sirius shrugged and lowered his voice even more so no one would hear them. "You've seen Hadrian...you know, well...what he is. I love him. He's my family, and the absolute most important person to me in this world besides Harry. That's enough for me to reevaluate some old beliefs...right? Can we maybe just try to start over? I know I was going through a lot and really terrible sometimes to you as a teenager, but you know, you were too...and probably going through just as much. Could we maybe not be Black and Snape and just be Sirius and Severus for a bit until we figure who each other actually is as an adult?"

Snape really was beyond shocked and didn't trust Black for a second. However, he *was* Hadrian's cousin, and Hadrian was the first dark wizard he had met in a very long time that believed things similarly to himself. Honestly, he was the first *person* in a really long time that actually seemed to want to be his friend and spend time with him. If keeping Hadrian as a friend meant spending slightly more time with Black, then maybe it was worth a temporary truce...a truce without trust though. He still didn't trust Black even if he was willing to put things behind them temporarily.

"That is quite possibly the most mature thing you have ever said in your life," Snape told the man beside him with a slight nod of agreement to his proposal.

"Don't I know it, Snape," Sirius gave him a little chuckle before turning back to at least look like he was listening to Moody drone on and on.

Percy calculated how long it would take to apparate back to the school and walk from the gates while he waited outside of Snape's office for the man to return. Harry had sent him a charmed, paper airplane message when Walburga Black's portrait had reported that both Hadrian Black and Percy were approved to visit Sirius and that the Order meeting was over with, and Percy wanted to hear from Snape himself how the meeting had gone. He also needed to ask the man for some potions that he knew Harry would be too proud to ask for himself until he was in significant pain, and Percy didn't want it to get that far. Sometimes... most of the time, Harry was way too stubborn for his own good.

Snape strode almost angrily around the corner, only slightly pausing his stride in his surprise at finding the DADA professor waiting for him. "Percy," he acknowledged his colleague before opening the door to his office and motioning the younger man in.

"Professor," Percy nodded at him and entered, sitting in the student chair as he had done several times when he was a student and had a question about a potion.

"We are equals now, Percy," Snape gave him what could only be described as a little smirk before he sat at his desk. "You should call me Severus."

Percy chuckled at the hypocrisy. "I've heard you call Professor McGonagall '*Professor*' several times myself...it's a hard habit to break. I will attempt an occasional Severus though."

Snape seemed to slightly relax as he leaned back in his desk chair and let out a small breath of a chuckle. "I appreciate the attempt. Is there something you need this evening, Percy? I really am behind on my marking and lesson planning."

"You know, if you invite Hadrian over for tea, he'll help with marking the younger year's essays at least," Percy offered, knowing that Harry would suggest it himself if he thought of it. It was laughably easy for him to do the fifth-year homework, and they hadn't put any of their main plans into motion yet, so Harry was a little bored at the moment, and a bored Harry was a dangerous Harry...something Percy knew all too well.

"Really, you think?" Snape looked way more surprised than Percy thought he should be at the suggestion.

“Er...yeah, he’s a little bored right now since he hasn’t found a full time job yet. I’m sure he’ll probably be too busy eventually, but use the boredom while you can,” he offered with a shrug. “Actually, I was going to ask if you wouldn’t mind brewing him a mild pain potion. It would normally be an easy buy at an apothecary, but he’s become immune to any potion with belladonna in it, and most standard pain potions use that as a vasodilator,” he explained.

Snape frowned in concern. Becoming immune to an ingredient like that took quite a lot of exposure. That much exposure to pain potions, even mild ones, was concerning. “I take it he’s taken potions for pain quite often?”

Percy slowly nodded, not sure how much to tell the man without giving away who he was talking about. It was quidditch he was worried about as they got closer to the season. Harry almost never played anymore because of his knee that had basically been shattered when he was cursed several years back, and the ligaments just couldn’t be regrown like the bones could. He had to play though if he was going to pass as 15-year-old Harry, and the season was about to start. Of course, Harry hadn’t said anything about it, but Percy knew he was going to be in significant pain, and he was going to hide it from everyone until he just couldn’t move anymore.

“I’m sure you’ve noticed that Hadrian has had a hard life,” he explained as circumspectly as possible. “He tends to be a bit of a danger magnate and has some lingering issues...one of which being a knee with ligament damage.”

“There are a few pain potions I can brew which do not have belladonna as an ingredient,” Snape nodded at him. “I suppose some marking for my first years’ essays would be a good trade as well. It might help for me to get a look at his knee sometime as well. There may be some options he hasn’t considered for the ligaments.”

“Great! I would really appreciate it! Hadrian is a stubborn arse most of the time, but he’ll appreciate it too once I talk him around,” Percy grinned broadly at him.

“Now...how did my parents take me dating a bloke? Did Mum bemoan me not giving her grandkids or anything?” He asked unrepentantly, knowing exactly the position he’d put Snape into.

Snape glared at him dangerously. “That was absolutely not fair of you both at all. You could have warned me.”

“I’ll convince Hadrian to gift you some of those rare potion ingredients he was asking you about,” Percy shrugged and just smiled at him more. “Now...Mum? Was she scandalized or did she want to meet Hadrian?”

Snape’s eyes narrowed at the redheaded man across from him. “Sometimes I forget that you are the twins and Ronald’s brother...”

“They forget it too,” he wryly commented with a sad smile. “I *am* the dark wizard of the family though, so that will probably take over as my descriptor from being the bisexual one once they learn that. This was probably just the first shock of many to come.”

Snape nodded, agreeing with the man, and knowing it was very true. “They asked to meet Hadrian. Your parents seemed accepting from what I saw. I do not know how they will take your magical alignment though. I would wait and see their reactions to Hadrian first. His alignment will be difficult to hide if he does not cover his runes.”

Percy nodded with a shrug. They had taken it well when Harry had originally left the country to get his mastery in the Dark Arts, but that was also when they were distracted by their grief and had Ron and Hermione both there explaining the *why* to them almost incessantly. It wasn’t going to be the same with him, but at least he knew his parents had eventually accepted one ‘son’ with a dark alignment in the future. Besides, he couldn’t exactly change now. He’d cast way too much soul magic to change his core back to Light. That would take years as it had taken years to change his core Dark. Besides, he actually really *liked* being a necromancer, and Persephone was remarkably holding together extremely well and hadn’t tried to eat a person yet at all.

“Well, I’ll pass on the message that he’s approved to visit to Hadrian. I assume he’ll need to go with you the first time?” Percy stood to leave the man to his marking.

Snape sighed, but knew it was necessary because of the Fidelus. “Yes, I guess I’ll have to put up with another night of Hadrian’s cousin, but I will persevere.”

Percy laughed. He'd never met Sirius Black before, but by all Harry's stories, he was certain those two were going to curse each other before too long if they kept being forced together. "Well, we have the first Hogsmeade weekend next week. Why don't you two set up when to go together then. I think Hadrian is working on those potions ingredients to send to you before. If you want help with marking, just reach out. I'm serious when I say he's bored, and that's dangerous for all of us."

"I may take you up on that," Snape gave him a smirk before picking up his quill to start in on the extremely large pile in front of him.

"You know how I always ask you before committing you to things?" Harry glared at his partner as they made their way to the second-floor girls' bathroom.

Percy nodded, not able to keep the little smile off his lips as he petted Persephone who was cuddled up in his arms and wearing a little red and gold jumper that day that was frankly atrocious...it was Harry's first attempt at knitting.

"Well, that ends now. I did not need half of Snape's marking owed to me, thank you very much!" He glared at the slightly taller man while he held a mild notice-me-not charm around them with his wand as they walked.

"You were bored," Percy shrugged and held open the bathroom door with the hand not holding the cat-inferius. "You were bored, and you know full well that Snape is extremely over-worked and frankly dealing with a lot of pain since Voldy is curse-happy."

"Fine! But I wasn't bored if you must know. I've been negotiating with the house elves and keep getting letters from the goblins with questions about my future policy plans that I haven't even come up with yet. Maybe I'm not quite as busy as I usually am, but we've only been back in this time a few weeks now. I needed a bit of a break anyway." Harry grimaced before looking at the sink and realizing they had a problem. "It takes Parseltongue to open it. I honestly forgot I can't speak it anymore..."

Percy sighed and shifted the cat in his arms a little. "You no longer have the horcrux...any ideas for learning a language you can't understand in the next few seconds?"

Harry looked at the sink, deep in thought for a minute before nodding and pointing his wand at his head. After a second of deep concentration, he pulled a memory from his mind flicked it into the air with a murmured mind-magic spell. A projection floated in front of them, and Percy noted a much younger version of his little brother standing with his wand pointed at Gilderoy Lockhart beside the sink they were standing in front of.

“Nice,” he commented in appreciation at Harry’s solution to the problem.

Harry in the memory hissed out loudly in the room, causing both the memory sink and the reality sink to begin to open. “There’s got to be an easier way to do that if we go down here often,” Harry remarked as he dispelled the memory with another flick of his wand.

“And I am *not* going down that slide. I just bought these robes,” Percy looked down into the grimy hole with a disgusted grimace on his face. “Persephone agrees with me.” The cat even gave a little meow in what could possibly pass for agreement.

With a swish and a flick, Harry had Percy and Sephie floating into the air with a little laugh at their surprise. “I’ll float you down, but you’re better with the scourgify charms, so you’ll have to clean me off at the bottom then.”

“Deal...you better not drop us though, Harry Potter,” Percy gave him look that promised swift retribution if he did while he just held the cat closer to his chest.

“Wouldn’t dream of it, love,” the younger man angled the floating pair into the hole and down without touching the slimy stones around them. “We need to hurry before Myrtle shows up. I am *not* dealing with her if at all possible.” Percy’s laugh echoed from where he had almost disappeared to touch down on the stone floor at the end of the slide.

When he was sure they were safe, Harry jumped into the hole with a whoop and heard the sink closing behind him as his hair whipped out behind him and he raced towards the ground. “Ow!” He grumbled and laughed when he tumbled off into the pile of rat bones. “That was a lot more fun when certain death isn’t looming over you.”

Percy was already casting cleaning charms at him with a disgusted look. "I'm not kissing you until you take a shower. I don't care how many cleaning charms I hit you with."

Taking a step, Harry had to stop and put a hand against the wall, keeping his knee from completely buckling. "Mordred's balls," he winced.

With a sigh, Percy waited for him to recover. "I asked Snape to brew you some more pain potions in exchange for your help with that marking...you know quidditch is going to aggravate it too."

"I'm fine," Harry grimaced once more before pushing off the wall and testing out the knee. He was slightly limping as they walked forward, but it seemed to be holding his weight at least. "Of everything I've been hit with over the years, it's annoying that it's my knee that gives me the most grief."

Percy began casting various charms to move the stones and repair the cave-in Lockhart's spell had caused back in Harry's second year. "You think we have time to stop by St. Mungo's and murder Lockhart in all those plans of yours?" He finally grumbled after the last stone settled back into place. "I can't believe what he tried to do to you and Ron!"

Harry shrugged. "It's not like he can hurt anyone as he is now anyway. I vote we leave him unless he ever gets his memory back, then I'll definitely put him on the list."

With another pull of a memory, Harry had the door to the main Chamber of Secrets open and they stepped into the large, dark room. Percy put the cat down and Sephie took off to explore the room, her eyes glowing red in the dim light, while both men just stared at the carcass of the giant, mythical snake taking up most of the floor of the chamber. "I think I actually remembered it as smaller surprisingly," Harry wryly commented wondering how in Merlin's name he had survived the massive thing as a twelve-year-old.

Percy just reached over and pulled Harry to him, kissing his neck and holding him uncomfortably tight. "I thought I needed a shower first," Harry gasped out as he held onto the other man just as tightly.

“Don’t you *ever* go up against something like that again without me,” Percy turned haunted eyes onto the monster in front of them. “Merlin...you were so tiny as a second year too! And Ginny was down here!”

There must have been some sort of preservation charms on the chamber, or maybe it was just part of the basilisk’s magic itself, but the snake was much less decomposed than it should have been for being over two years dead, though it still definitely stunk. Harry just looked at it calculatingly, seeming to be taking it apart with his eyes. “You think if I give half of it to the goblins they’d stop bugging me and just join in already? I think they’re even annoying Flitwick at this point with all the questions they want him to relay to me.”

“Half might be a little much...” They trailed off as they heard a loud yowl and hiss.

The two men spun around to see Sephie take down a rat that was remarkably larger than herself. Harry clutched his chest dramatically with a fake sniff. “Aww, my baby is such a good girl! You’re such a precious little vicious inferius! Did you see that, Perce?! It wasn’t even a struggle!”

Percy grimaced at the carnage but was impressed with the skill. “I think you’re going to have to burn that jumper.”

Harry just shrugged. “It turned out a bit lop-sided anyway. Have fun Sephie!” He called over to where the cat was already hunting for another rat. “She’s due a bath tonight anyway.”

“Right...well, horcruxes...where do we start?” Percy raised an eyebrow and turned to his partner questioningly.

"I don't know...you're the necromancer..." Harry pulled the locket and diadem from the satchel hanging at his side and placed them on the floor with a wave of his hand for Percy to proceed. "Have fun. I expect to be impressed with your badass skills my dear."

Percy gave his partner a smirk before looking at the items in front of them...maybe there were some things he could try...it could be fun...

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Hadrian meets the family...

Percy's New Research Project

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Percy vaguely registered that his partner had dispelled his glamour before pulling dragon hide gloves, a collection of different types of preservation vials, and a long-ass knife from his satchel before almost gleefully pouncing on the snake carcass. His attention was decidedly elsewhere though. He'd never gotten to study a horcrux before, and it was just fascinating... terrible, but fascinating. He cast a strong containment ward around the two horcruxes before casting diagnostic after diagnostic.

After each spell showed its results, he frowned more and more deeply. Something just wasn't adding up. Percy hated not knowing something, and he had more questions than answers at the moment. He finally looked up to where Harry was extracting each fang from the basilisk's mouth and putting them into separate crystal vials.

"And you said that the horcrux remnant in you was definitely with you when you crossed into the train station limbo or purgatory or whatever?" He asked, continuing his thought like he'd been talking to Harry the entire time.

For his part, Harry looked up from his intense concentration to wipe some snake guts from his cheek and frowned while his brain tried to catch up with Percy. "Er...yeah...it was weird, wasn't it? The bit was almost corporeal...but how could that have happened if it was just a small fragment...also, what does the horcrux do to the soul to negate its desire to right itself? I mean...that's why the ritual made our younger selves no longer exist in this time...how did the horcruxes get around that?"

Percy's eyebrow rose in appreciation that his partner had picked up on the exact same inconsistencies he had been wandering about when he started casting diagnostics. "I've been trying to ascertain just that...but I don't know...the diagnostics show no magical reason for why a soul released from a horcrux would not try to fix itself just like any normal soul. The container definitely keeps it separate from the main piece, but the soul shouldn't move on when the container is destroyed...by what I'm seeing, it should try to meld with the main soul."

Harry put the fang he was holding into a vial and scrunched up his face as he thought it over. “So, when a horcrux is destroyed, the pieces of soul *should* try to reattach themselves...and there really *isn't* anything you can find on it to make the soul piece move on?”

Percy slowly shook his head while he looked at the two horcruxes on the stone floor in frustration. A terrible but also very interesting thought crossed his mind, making his eyes widen in surprise. “Erm...Harry...just how many of the horcruxes were destroyed while you were actually *in* the room with them?”

“Just the diary, the locket, and the cup,” he answered, not liking where this was going at all but seeing what Percy was getting at. “I was in the castle though when the diadem was destroyed and closer to it than Voldemort at the time. Nagini was killed after the horcrux in me was gone.”

“If you’re saying that each part of Voldemort’s soul was attaching to the horcrux in me, making it larger, that would explain everything except for the ring, what happened with Nagini, and why the piece in me didn’t return to Voldemort when he hit me with the killing curse...although...now that I think about it, he was knocked out temporarily when I was hit...could that mean something?” Harry actually sat on the ground as he tried to process this new possibility.

Percy slowly nodded. “It would make sense...by the time Dumbledore destroyed the ring, you probably had more of the soul in you than Voldemort did just with the diary and the one in you since the diary piece would have been the largest. It’s also possible you happened to be closer to it wherever you were at the time than Voldemort as well.”

“Ok...then that explains why the ugly, baby soul piece in the train station was corporeal if it was almost the entire soul, but how did it even end up there? And what happened when Neville chopped off Nagini’s head?” He leaned up against the snake carcass with his eyes large and haunted, not even caring it was smelly and dead at the moment.

“The piece in Nagini would have gone back to Voldemort,” Percy finally concluded after a moment of weighing what he was going to say next. “As for why the piece went with you when you died...you wanted the piece to die with you...”

“Yeah, and?” Harry prompted, realizing the man was holding something back he didn’t want to say.

Percy scooped up Sephie as she darted by him and walked over to sit by Harry, a squirming and grumpy cat dumped into his lap. “I’m very worried if you are ending Sephie’s fun for whatever you need to say next,” Harry raised an eyebrow and kissed the top of the cat’s head before releasing her to go back to stalking rats since she definitely did not want to be sitting with him.

Percy just sat down next to him and sighed. “Harry...how did you find the tiny, black resurrection stone for the time-travel ritual buried under years of undergrowth in the middle of the Forbidden Forest?”

Harry frowned but leaned his head against Percy’s shoulder to wait out whatever bad news the man needed to tell him next. “Well...I looked for several days before I figured that the elder wand could probably summon it. So, I did my bit of grave-robbing before returning to the forest and accio’d the stone. I was actually surprised it worked, but the elder wand is the most powerful and they are connected, so it tracked...”

“Did you try to summon it before using the elder wand?” Percy kissed the silver-streaked hair of his love with a sigh that seemed to say his suspicions were confirmed.

“Er...no,” Harry leaned back to look up in confusion. “It was the *resurrection stone*, why would it be able to be summoned by a normal wand? That’s not how magic works.”

“I wasn’t implying it could be summoned by your wand; I was implying it could be summoned by *you*,” Percy said with meaning. “Harry, dear, I know you don’t like to talk about this, but do you think...might you actually *be* the Master of Death?”

Harry grimaced and stood to pick up his knife and go back to the snake. “What even does that *mean*?! Of course, I don’t have any say over life and death or whatever, and I’m definitely not immortal. I’ve clearly aged over the years!” He motioned to the strands of silver in his hair before he began to hack away again at the snake’s hide.

With a steeling breath, Percy stood and crossed his arms. “No, you are clearly not immortal. However, we both know that you really should have died a few times over the years and just chalked up your survival to your abnormal luck. Isn’t it more probable though that you are like the third brother from the story...the one that also happens to be your ancestor. Death couldn’t find him, he only crossed over when he was ready, and he met Death as an old friend.”

Harry snorted and wildly gestured his hand holding the knife. “So, you’re saying that I could just get hit with another killing curse and walk away if I don’t want to die because some embodiment of Death can’t *find* me?! That sounds ludicrous!”

“Harry...can you really tell me that you should be alive today after what you went through with Luna, after that ambush in Knockturn Alley, after that banshee stabbed you, after...”

“Just stop,” Harry cut him off with a raise of his hand and a grimace, pausing in his frantic hacking of the snake carcass. “If what you’re saying is true...and that’s a big *if*...that would mean that I just forcefully took Voldy’s soul into the afterlife with me when I went and left it there when I returned. That also means that if we stab or destroy the horcruxes, the pieces of soul would just go back into Voldy since I no longer have the piece in me, right?”

“Right...unless you can figure out a way to *make* them move on,” Percy said with a little smirk at what Harry’s powers might actually be.

Harry rolled his eyes at how much Percy loved to study things, even if that were him, but honestly, he really should be dead. Frankly, he had been pretty certain he’d been hit by a killing curse in that ambush in Knockturn Alley where he’d been caught in between the aurors and some very dangerous artifact dealers. Clearly, he just assumed he’d been mistaken, but now...maybe he hadn’t been mistaken.

“How about we just contain them for now,” he suggested and turned back to his task. “If Voldemort were to get his entire soul back, do you think that would make him less insane? I mean, ripping your soul apart has to have some awful effects on you, right?”

Percy began to cast more permanent containment wards around the horcruxes to store them more long-term. “Well, that would be unfortunate since we’d still have to kill him off and that might even make him more dangerous,” he grumbled with a sneer at the monster. “You’re

taking over, and he has stepped well past any redemption arch in my opinion. You can't think he'd actually agree with you or not still be a murdering psychopath even if he had his soul back, do you?"

"All signs point to him being fairly murderous even before he split his soul, but we're a bit there ourselves, aren't we?" Harry shrugged. "Practically speaking, you are right. He has to go. We can't have two dark lords around when trying to take over. That might just confuse the minions."

Percy chuckled and stepped over to help with the snake disassembling. "Our brand of crazy is different from his at the very least, but yeah...so, we collect all the horcruxes and either destroy them all at once right before we go after Voldemort, or we find a way for you to use your death-mojo and push them into the afterlife."

Harry looked up with a disbelieving scrunch of his nose. "Please don't call it death-mojo, and I'm still not sure I believe you, but I'll give it a try if you can come up with some safe experiments to give it a go."

"I think I can do that," Percy smiled broadly, clearly looking forward to it. "And...I think it important to note that if it's true that you can only move on into the afterlife when you are ready and not before, then you are not allowed to be ready before I die myself...understood? I'm going first, and that's not up for negotiation."

Harry grumbled and threw a snake scale at the redhead but smiled at him nonetheless. "Fine, but I expect you to find a way to raise yourself from the dead if you go any time soon. You're a necromancer, you can figure out some way to turn yourself into an inferius like Sephie or something."

Percy rolled his eyes at Harry's very limited understanding of Necromancy. "Human souls are much different than animal ones. I haven't figured out how to pull an actual human soul into a body yet. Plus, there is the problem with decay of the body. If the inferius isn't raised immediately after death, like Persephone, then you risk it stinking like this bloody snake."

"I know air-freshening spells," Harry smirked as he cast one to prove his point, making the room smell much better. "Besides, if I can banish a soul, maybe I can kidnap one from the afterlife as well."

Percy actually stopped in his activities to think over that, the possibilities stretching out before him. “Now *that* would actually be very interesting...”

“Sephie!” Harry abruptly called out at the cat. “Don’t eat that!” He put down his knife and ran after the cat who had decided to try to eat something green and slimy and definitely not edible.

Harry grinned manically at his friends as he walked behind them towards Hogsmeade. “Stop looking at us like that,” Hermione grumbled with a glare back at him. “I can feel your eyes on my back. We’re just getting lunch and walking around a bit.”

“But it’s a *date*,” he ended in a sing-song tone. “It’s your *first* official date. This is a momentous occasion, especially since it’s probably a good two or three years early and all my doing. I expect to be named godfather to any future kids. I’m an excellent godfather, just ask Teddy once I ensure his parents get together and make sweet wolfy love at just the exact right time that I’ve already tracked down to a two-week window through multiple Arithmancy calculations and star-charts.”

“You’re seriously disturbed, mate,” Ron grimaced back at the annoying third wheel following them down to the town.

“I’m not sure biology works that way,” Hermione frowned wondering what all went into tracking someone’s actual conception date and what the factors were with time-travel involved. “And how are you going to make sure they have sex, then? That sounds fairly...er, intrusive? Icky?”

“How long are you going to be following us around anyway?” Ron asked, turning to walk backwards and pin Harry with a look saying the answer had better be ‘not long at all.’

Harry rolled his eyes at them and laughed. “First of all, by that time, I plan for Remus to already be on our side and know things, then I’ll just tell him and Tonks about Teddy and get

them a nice vacation hotel on a beach somewhere or something. If that doesn't work, I'm sure Snape knows how to brew some nice aphrodisiac potions or something."

Ron gagged while Hermione turned pink at that suggestion. Harry just ignored them. "Also, I'm leaving you right now since we're out of sight of the castle, and I can just pop into the Shrieking Shack to change clothes and remove the glamour," he peeled off from them some to start walking towards the abandoned structure.

"Wait," Hermione stopped him to look him up and down. "You're meeting the parents tonight, and we all know they love Harry, but they don't know Hadrian at all. Please say you have a turtleneck shirt in that bag or something to cover up your runes."

Harry frowned at them both in concern. "No, I just have a Stubby Boardman and The Hobgoblins band t-shirt. Why should I hide who I am though? They'll find out eventually anyway."

"Not even a nice button-down!" Hermione sighed in frustration at her sartorially challenged friend who it seemed hadn't gained an appreciation for fashion in the next twelve-years either.

"I'm supposedly hanging out with Sirius and not officially meeting Mr. and Mrs. Weasley anyway," Harry scratched the back of his neck, self-consciously wondering if maybe he should have been more worried. He'd always been *Harry* around the Weasley parents, so he'd never thought that maybe they wouldn't approve of him...well, yeah, he figured they might not approve of him as the next Dark Lord, but dating their son, that he hadn't really been worried about until that moment.

"Mate, if my parents know you are in the house, you *will* be officially meeting them tonight," Ron corrected his assumption. "They already know you're a bloke, but a dark wizard is adding a bit more onto that..."

Harry sighed, but he was also not willing to cover up and pretend to be someone he wasn't. He had disguised himself somehow every day when he left his house in the future for various different reasons, and he was absolutely *not* going back to that, especially when he was pretending to be fifteen every day already anyway.

“Well...at least it will take the heat off of them learning Percy is a dark wizard too,” he finally concluded. “If they get used to me, that won’t be as large of a blow as their own son.”

“Wait...my brother is a dark wizard?!” Ron hissed in surprise at the news, his blue eyes going large.

“You didn’t know that already?” Harry just frowned at them both while Hermione shook her head and Ron looked completely dazed. “Er...I was a little out of it when we all talked in his office the other day. I didn’t realize it hadn’t come up. Oh well...er, surprise! Your brother is also a dark wizard, but no one else in your family is that I know of anyway...er, well, you *were* a vampire for a while, so you kind of count...”

“Nope, I’m going on my date, and you’re meeting up with my brother and the dungeon bat before heading off to terrorize my parents,” Ron shook his head firmly and threw an arm around Hermione’s shoulders. “Get lost. I’m done with all the surprises for the day. I do expect a report on how much you scandalized my parents though tonight when you get back. I’ll just insinuate you’re off snogging that unnamed Ravenclaw if anyone asks where you are...er, is it a boy or a girl we’re pretending you’re dating again?”

“He’s only used gender-neutral pronouns so far,” Hermione answered for him with a twinkle in her eye. “I suppose if anyone gets really nosey, we should probably say it’s a boy though.”

Harry huffed and rolled his eyes at them. “Just tell me whatever lie I’m supposed to be sticking to so I don’t get caught out later.”

“Have fun!” He called back to his friends who were definitely now whispering together about what ridiculous lie they could get him committed to sticking to going forward.

“Mister Longbottom,” Severus Snape drawled causing the Gryffindor to pale where he was clearly standing on the lookout for the Weasley twins who were off in the alleyway doing Merlin knows what with a firecracker and a teapot.

“Er, hello Professor Snape!” Longbottom said loudly, causing the older man to almost roll his eyes at how teenagers thought they were getting away with things when they were really just outstandingly obvious.

A loud bang and shuffle emanated from the alley before it got quiet again. “I’m sure you would really hate for this to be your last Hogsmeade trip for the term,” he raised an eyebrow threateningly at the teen.

“Aw, let him have some fun, Severus! You aren’t even on chaperone duty,” one Hadrian Black laughed as he threw an arm around Snape’s shoulders and leaned around him to grin at the cowering teen. Snape had almost jumped out of his skin, not having heard the wizard walk up behind him, which was remarkable in itself.

“Hey, are you Neville Longbottom?” Hadrian kept his arm around Snape’s shoulders as he turned his huge smile on the student while Snape just sighed at his new erratic friend.

“Er...y-yeah?” Longbottom stammered out, his eyes huge and a pink tinge to his ears.

“I’ve heard good things about you from my partner. I’m Hadrian Black,” Hadrian reached out his free hand to shake the teen’s. Snape tracked the Longbottom heir’s eyes as he took in the hand and the arm that had clearly visible dark runes on it as well as the piercings and other visible tattoos.

To Snape’s surprise, Longbottom cleared his throat but stood a little taller as he reached out and shook the proffered hand. “Erm, thank you,” he said in something between a question and a statement. The teen’s eyes flicked between them, and Snape almost rolled his eyes at the assumption. He could not let it pass that Longbottom of all people might think he would say good things about him.

“I am most certainly *not* his partner,” Snape drawled with a glare to the man still invading his space. “This dunderhead is dating your Professor Weasley.”

Longbottom almost looked relieved at that surprisingly. “Oh, yeah, good to know. Erm, yeah, good to meet you,” he stammered out again, turning slightly like he was really wanting to escape the situation.

Hadrian laughed and turned his bright green eyes on Snape, eyes that looked less like the Black family’s common blue/grey and more like...well, he was going to say Potter’s, but Hadrian’s eyes were much more haunted and seemed to be a darker shade of green, more emerald than Potter’s carefree light green...though, it wasn’t like he spent any time at all looking at Potter if he could avoid it.

“Fine,” he grumbled and gave a dismissive wave of his hand to the teen and, by association, the twins poorly hiding in the alley behind him. “Just don’t do anything illegal or anything that will get back to me on my day off. This is Minerva’s problem anyway.”

“Such a softie,” Hadrian teased and tugged him towards the Three Broomsticks. “Bye Nev and Weasley twins/future possible in-laws!”

“You are ridiculous, and I should have just kept walking when I saw you in that apothecary,” Snape grumbled as the frantic whisperings of the twins questioning what Hadrian had said and that their brother could be dating a bloke and one that’s probably a dark wizard wafted towards them from the alley.

“Hey, they forgot about whatever chaos they were causing,” Hadrian shrugged and grinned at him. “Besides, you *had* to talk to me in the apothecary. I might have blown myself up without your timely intervening about what potion ingredients interacted with others.”

“Which you already knew...”

“Eh,” he just shrugged again infuriatingly with a smirk, nonverbally communicating he knew *exactly* why Snape had talked to him in the apothecary. “Percy got us a table already. Is it too early to start drinking?”

“Yes,” Snape told him firmly with a narrow of his eyes. “I’ll not be taking you to see your cousin and the Weasley parents drunk.”

“He doesn’t really get drunk,” Percy Weasley corrected him when they reached the table he’d chased a group of students away from to claim it for themselves. He’d chosen the table mainly because he could just catch a glimpse of where his brother and Hermione Granger were sitting cuddled together in the corner from his seat, something which Harry caught onto quickly if his smirk was anything to go by.

“Hmm, I did once upon a time, but I think my tolerance is just really high or my magic decided it needs to negate it or something,” Hadrian said in a nonchalant way that was just as concerning as the words coming out of his mouth. “Now, it just dulls everything a little bit.”

Snape sighed and determined his new friend was going to be quite high maintenance, something he regretted less when the man threw a pile of papers onto the table from his leather satchel... a pile of papers that turned out to be all the completed marking Snape had sent him for his first-year classes. “I’m not bored,” Hadrian protested with a glare towards his partner who turned an exasperated look to Snape that contradicted those words.

With a shake of his head, Snape accepted the completed marking and shrunk it to put in his pocket to sort out later that evening. “Thank you,” he just breathed out. “This term has been almost unbearable. I was overworked before with all the Potion classes, having most of the night rounds since a lot of the faculty do not live in the castle full-time, and being head of Slytherin. Now, with...*everything* added outside of my job...I just don’t have time to do it all.”

“I can take more night rounds,” Percy Weasley offered before placing his order with the waiter who stopped by, only turning a mild look of judgement on his partner who definitely ordered firewhiskey.

“And I really don’t mind the marking. Things will probably get busier for me in a few months, but I don’t mind the first-years and even the second-years if you want to send them along for now,” Hadrian offered with a kind smile once they were all alone again and waiting on their food.

“I will not ask that of either of you,” he sighed. He was not one that needed or asked for help, and he refused to pull these two into his problems anyway. “Percy suggested this round of

essays in exchange for some pain potions you will need that lack belladonna as a base ingredient.”

Hadrian’s eyes narrowed as he turned on the younger man beside him. “I’m fine, and I do not need more pain potions,” he glared at the man. "You know I don't like how they make my head fuzzy!"

“You will most definitely need them, but you’ll wait until you’re in too much pain to move to ask for them,” Percy glared right back, raising the young man in Snape’s esteem as he stood his ground.

“I prefer to have you mobile for when I can steal you away for the night, and you’re much less fun when you’re trying to pretend your knee isn’t killing you,” Percy continued causing both Snape and Hadrian to flush pink in embarrassment for different reasons.

Hadrian grumbled until the waiter returned with their food and drinks, which he downed immediately. “Fine, he’s probably right,” he admitted begrudgingly. “My knee gives me trouble a lot. Normally, I can just ride it out with a lot of strengthening exercises I do regularly for it, but flying really aggravates it, and I’m going to need to do a bit of that coming up for a temporary job I have going on.”

“I would like to do some diagnostics on the knee to help with potion strength and type,” Snape nodded, knowing that any length of flying time had one resting quite a bit of weight on their knees to change direction and balance.

“Sure, we can do that tonight at my cousin’s place if you have time,” Hadrian smiled at him thankfully. “And that means I do still owe you some marking, so take me up on it and don’t be a drama queen about it.”

Snape sputtered into his glass of water in indignation. “Excuse me?!”

“Oh, Perce...will you also put those potion ingredients we got for him in his office while we’re gone?” Hadrian ignored him to ask his partner. "You can look over them and tell me if they're useful at all whenever you get the time."

“Mr. Weasley is not going with us?” Snape asked, his indignation giving way to confusion.

“Percy, and no,” the man corrected him. “I haven’t quite mended things with my parents yet, and I’m also massively behind on lesson planning since I haven’t done this before. It seems that I always either over-plan or under-plan for classes, and I haven’t quite figured out yet just how much we can get through in one class period based on age and class size yet. Besides, Hadrian will be fine on his own. He can be charming when he wants to be.”

“I also gave him a new project he’s been geeking out on recently, which takes up a lot of his time as well,” Hadrian smiled at his partner unrepentantly before taking a large bite of his sandwich.

“I have a feeling I should not ask about this project in the middle of the Three Broomsticks,” Snape remarked getting matching smug looks from the two across from him that clearly answered his question. He’d wager his best cauldron that it also tied into why they had asked if he knew a place where some dark magic would go undetected.

“Eat fast, the twins finished their project and are heading our way,” Hadrian shoved the remaining portion of his sandwich in his mouth and washed it down with a drink of Snape’s water, getting a disgusted grimace from the man. Snape would definitely admit that he wanted to be gone before the twins made their way to them through the press of students crowded around the bar though.

“What did you do?” Percy sighed, clearly knowing his partner well, something that Snape was very quickly starting to learn as well.

“Nothing, but they may possibly didn’t know we were dating until a few minutes ago,” Hadrian stood. “Oh, look at the time, I think Sirius is waiting on us. Severus, you ready?”

“Indeed,” he stood quickly, agreeing wholeheartedly that Percy could handle this on his own since he already had to handle the man’s parents himself during the Order meeting.

Percy's hand shot out and wrapped around Black's wrist in almost desperation. "You can't leave me here alone with Fred," he hissed out lowly, eyes looking almost pleading at the other man. Snape's eyebrow rose in shock as he looked at the conversation that seemed to be happening nonverbally between the two. Why just Fred Weasley? What had happened between them? He could understand both twins, clearly, but just one of them...? They were never apart from each other.

"George is there too," Hadrian finally waved towards the two that had been held up by Lee Jordan. "Do you really need me here or do you just want to hide behind me and not deal with it?" He asked, a concerned and knowing look on his face.

"If you need me, I'll stay as long as you want, forever, but if you're trying to hide from it, then let me be your cautionary tale...you know what happened to me just a few days ago. We can't keep hiding from things. You keep pushing me out of myself when I do this, I don't know if I should do the same for you or not?" Hadrian sighed and ran his free hand down his face, scrubbing at the piercing in his eyebrow as he went as some sort-of nervous tick. "What do you need Percy? Merlin, I'm bad at this! I'm sorry!"

Though he hadn't actually fixed anything, Percy's face melted into one of appreciation for the man whose wrist he was still holding. With a small squeeze, he let his partner go. "I need you to leave and let me deal with this on my own," he said with a determined but scared look over to where the twins were just disentangling themselves from their friend. "You're right, we can't keep hiding."

Hadrian quickly leaned down and kissed the man soundly. Snape just caught the whisper as he pulled away. "Send a patronus if you change your mind. I'll ditch Snape in a heartbeat."

Honestly, it didn't upset Severus for a second. It actually made him a little jealous...ok, he could admit it was more than a little. Having someone who tried, even if he really was bad at it, someone who wanted to be what you needed, that was something Snape had never had. Not even Lily had stood up for him when that was what he needed or even asked how to help. He had asked her when she had lost her father to cancer in their third year...and that thought didn't help the twisting feeling in his gut at all.

"Well, hello, our brother and professor..." Fred started with a smirk at them all.

“We hear there is some news we’re behind on,” George put his hands on his hips with a stern glare.

“Right! I’m off to meet your parents!” Hadrian clapped a hand on George’s shoulder before grabbing Snape’s sleeve with his other and giving it a tug. “Nice to meet you an all...”

“Blimey he’s a bit fit and not at all your type,” Fred was remarking to Percy while Harry chuckled and pulled the Potions professor towards the door.

“You can unhand me,” Snape protested, but honestly didn’t mind that much. He tended to have a general, unapproachable air which was about half and half intentional and not, so no one ever touched him. Having someone who felt comfortable just grabbing onto his sleeve or his arm was both highly disconcerting and kind of a nice novelty...sometimes, no, he'd never admit it, but sometimes...it would be nice to be touched.

“Ah, Hadrian, good to see you out and about,” Filius Flitwick stopped them from where he was sitting at a table beside the door. The Charms professor looked between them with a large smile tugging at his lips before he took a sip of his butterbeer.

“Er, P-Filius,” Harry caught himself since Hadrian would have no reason to call the man ‘professor.’ “It’s good to see you too. Having a nice trip to Hogsmeade?”

“I am, though I have chaperone duty unlike Severus here,” Filius raised a questioning eyebrow at the man who absolutely never socialized with anyone but who looked quite comfortable with an older version of Harry Potter of all people.

“Oh, Filius,” Harry remembered the meeting of his ‘inner circle’ he was supposed to tell the man about. “I’m going to send you an owl this evening. I’m putting together a little project and wanted your opinion on dealing with Gringotts. Anyway, talk later?”

“Of course,” Filius raised his glass in a little toast.

Snape was just stunned, staring at the interaction. He had absolutely no clue the two knew each other or even *why* they would know each other. "Filius," he finally nodded his head at the man in acknowledgement.

"Oh, Severus," Filius began, catching them once more before they left. "Take care..." he trailed off ominously, causing the Potion professor to frown in surprise and concern.

"I'm not *that* bad of an influence," Hadrian rolled his eyes and pulled the man's sleeve once more, leaving the small man laughing in their wake.

"What happened between Percy and his younger brother, how the hell do you know Filius, what is the project you are working on, and just...what the hell in general?!" Snape spat out in a stream of frustration when they had finally left the pub and had headed to a place they could apparate from.

Harry paused and raised an amused eyebrow at the irritated man. "None of your business, also none of your business, and I'll eventually tell you..." he grinned at the man widely. "I don't even know how to answer that last one. Maybe just that I like being a mystery. It keeps you from getting tired of my company."

"You are purposefully frustrating," he grumbled again before holding out an arm to apparate them both.

"Of course, I am," Hadrian smirked back and linked his arm firmly around Snape's. "It's all part of my charm."

"Oh wow," Harry deadpanned, once again pretending poorly to be surprised when Grimmauld Place supposedly appeared after reading the piece of paper from Dumbledore.

"Last chance...it may be best to hide those runes with a conjured scarf or something," Snape offered, actually hoping Hadrian wouldn't and they would have an unashamedly dark wizard

walking into Order headquarters. Knowing the man, it was just the type of chaos he would love causing anyway.

“Percy accepts me, my cousin accepts me, you accept me...that’s all that really matters,” Hadrian turned those green eyes on him with a sad little smile. "I hope it goes well with my partner’s parents, but they need to know who I really am eventually anyway. Might as well let it be from the start so they don’t think I’m purposefully hiding anything.”

Surprised that he somehow made the list, Snape nodded slowly in bemusement at where his life had changed so much in so little time. “Well, ground rules...You are not to leave me alone with your cousin at any point in time, you will not be alone with his friend Lupin, and avoid the house elf, he is quite unpleasant.”

Hadrian snorted a laugh. “You can take care of yourself, I already know Lupin is a werewolf and can take care of myself, and I’m a member of the Black family. I think a house elf will be the least of my problems on the other side of that door.”

“You were warned,” Snape gave him a one-shoulder shrug and smirk before opening the door and stepping inside.

“HADRIAN!!!” A blur of animagus sped past Snape and almost crashed directly into Harry, causing Walburga Black’s portrait to tut in disapproval and making Harry brace himself against the doorframe.

“Hey, Siri, I missed you too,” he patted his godfather’s back and smiled at the absolute novelty of having someone he loved from his past alive and happy to see him.

“He has a bum knee, mutt, I’ll not have you exasperating it!” Snape pulled Black forcefully off of Hadrian by the collar of his t-shirt.

“It’s fine!” Hadrian protested once more while Sirius just looked concerned. “Stop being a mother hen.”

“You ok, cousin?” Sirius looked him up and down, but he looked the same as the last he saw him, highly scarred but nothing that looked recent.

“Percy asked Severus to brew me a pain potion and now they’re both hovering,” Hadrian rolled his eyes at the Potion master who just sneered at him.

Molly Weasley chose that moment to walk into the entryway from the kitchen, drying her hands on a towel. “Oh, hello, I thought I heard you enter...I’m Molly Weasley,” the woman held out her hand and blinked a couple times in surprise when Hadrian stepped around Sirius and she actually got a good look at him. By the look in her eyes, she almost took back her offered hand, something that Harry felt hit him right in his gut.

She ended up keeping it out though and Hadrian gave her a smile before shaking her hand. “Hello, Mrs. Weasley, I’ve heard so many good things about you from Percy. I feel like I’ve known you for years.”

“How is my son doing?” She asked, the lines tight around her eyes as she catalogued his runes, tattoos, and piercings.

“Oh, he misses you,” Harry couldn’t help having to run his finger over the piercing in his eyebrow. He felt like his own mother was looking at him in disapproval. “He had to stay back to work on his class today, but he really wants to get together and apologize for what all went down at the beginning of the summer. He’s missed seeing all of you.”

Snape really hoped that eyebrow piercing was old, or it was going to get infected with the amount that Hadrian seemed to touch it. He didn’t know why it was a nervous tick, but it seemed to be something he did when he was overwhelmed. “We left Percy with the twins in Hogsmeade,” he added in, hoping to take some of the disapproving glare Hadrian was getting off of him.

“Those twins are just brilliant!” Sirius tried to help next, tugging Hadrian’s arm more into the house with a look between excited and concerned at the whole situation. “Come on, Hadrian. You need to meet Moony as he’s been working up to a full on interrogation since he learned you existed.”

“Did Percy’s young man arrive?” Arthur Weasley walked into the entry hall next from the sitting room, not letting them escape just yet. “Oh...” he trailed off at the look of the dark wizard who had clearly had a very rough life based on the liberal amount of scars and curse marks visible on his arms.

“Er...hello...um, you must be Mr. Weasley,” Harry held out a hand and waited. Molly had crossed her arms in the doorway and seemed to be weighing his worth with her eyes.

“You are a dark wizard,” Arthur Weasley stated the obvious, still looking at the young man and not moving to take his hand.

Harry pulled his hand back in and cleared his throat awkwardly. “Erm, yes...I got my mastery in the Dark Arts while living in Amsterdam. I’m currently between jobs right now since I moved back to Britain to be closer to Percy. I have some ideas though...”

“Merlin, Arthur and Molly!” Sirius grumbled in frustration. “Yes, Hadrian is a dark wizard, but he’s not a Death Eater. Besides, Snape is a dark wizard, and Moody might as well be with all he knows about it. Remus is a bloody dark creature too!”

“I doubt I’m the best example to ease their minds,” Snape warned lowly from behind Sirius so only the animagus could hear him.

“Maybe we should all sit down to tea...” Sirius offered next, not giving up on breaking the tension in the hallway.

If the five people already crowded into the entryway weren’t enough, that was when Remus Lupin decided to come down the stairs to see what was holding everyone up. “Well, don’t make him stand in the hallway, Padfoot...” Lupin stopped at the foot of the stairs with a frown on his face while he took in the man at the center of all the tension.

Lupin didn’t look shocked at Hadrian’s runes though; Lupin looked like he was confused. He clearly sniffed the air and frowned once more. Hadrian’s eyes narrowed. There was no bloody way the man’s sense of smell was that good to be able to tell he was Harry...unless... he did some quick math in his head and almost groaned in dismay. It was the day before the

full moon, when a werewolf's senses were at their strongest in human form. He still didn't think the man could tell his specific scent, but he clearly smelled *something* and was now giving him a suspicious look.

“Well...” He smiled in more of a grimace and gave everyone a little nod of acknowledgement and clap of his hands. “Kreacher!” He called and the elf popped into the entryway with a bow that almost reached the ground.

“Master Black,” the elf croaked, surprising everyone except for Sirius in attendance.

“And I’m once again chopped liver,” Sirius wryly chuckled to Snape behind him. “That elf really does hate me and will claim absolutely anyone else connected to the family.”

“I can only take one interrogation at a time,” Hadrian announced to the assembled suspicious looks he was getting. “Please set up tea with Mr. and Mrs. Weasley in the kitchen and a tumbler of whiskey for Sirius and Lupin in the sitting room,” he added an extra glare at the end so Kreacher would know that he really did mean whiskey and not to try trading it out on him. Kreacher gave him a narrowed look at the glare but popped out to handle it anyway.

“Right, so who wants to go first?” He then turned to the group with a self-conscious smile and grimace.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Harry (read Dobby and Kreacher) decide on who makes it into the inner circle...

Residents of Grimmauld Place

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The Weasley parents went first for Hadrian's interrogation while Snape escaped to his potions lab in the attic. As much as Snape liked Hadrian, nothing was going to induce him to sit through a meeting with the Weasley parents, especially if it was about something as inane as relationships. Sirius and Remus had to wait their turn...well, they sat in the corner of the kitchen staring at the tense group having tea, but at least they waited-ish. Harry gave them both a glare to wait their turn as he poured a cup of the tea that Kreacher delivered to the table.

"How do you know Sirius's house elf if you've never been here before?" Molly Weasley asked with a frown as Harry poured her a cup of tea as well, causing both Mr. Weasley and Remus's eyes to flash to Harry questioningly and Sirius to glare in a silent order at Kreacher to go along with whatever, causing Kreacher to sneer right back at the animagus.

Harry frowned at the assumption she was making but kept his irritation in check. "Sirius and I have used Kreacher to communicate some over the past year, so we are previously acquainted...However, I never said I hadn't been here before. I visited a few times back when Sirius and Regulus were here for the summer holidays. I *have* actually met Sirius before you know." He really didn't want anyone questioning his familiarity with the house, and he definitely would have been old enough before Sirius went to prison that he should have visited his older cousins at some point.

"Oh...I suppose we just assumed..." Molly Weasley trailed off as an awkward silence ensued at that loaded statement.

"How did you and our son meet?" Arthur Weasley finally broke the silence with a clear of his throat. Harry was just sipping his tea, perfectly fine with sitting with his former-surrogate family and feeling much less awkward than them at the moment.

Harry gave him a kind smile and stole a biscuit from the plate Kreacher had just sat down with a grateful smile to the elf. "I was finishing my mastery in Amsterdam when Percy was there on a short trip for his job at the British ministry. I was excited and surprised to run into a fellow Brit-wizard in a café I frequented, so we got to talking. Mainly we got to arguing

over our differing views of government, magic, and society as a whole,” Harry chuckled at the imagined conversation he definitely would have had with a younger Percy in that situation.

“Anyway, we had a great time debating and kept in touch and travelled to see each other some. The relationship grew from there,” he summed up quickly before taking another sip of his tea. He was feeling quite a bit out of his depth, never having had to have this conversation with the Weasley parents before since he was always just a part of their family whether it was Ginny he was dating or Percy.

Sirius cleared his throat, not able to keep out of it as much as he tried. “Hadrian *is* a Black. Him being a dark wizard is less of a surprise than me being a light wizard...you had to have considered that...” Sirius trailed off as the looks from Arthur and Molly clearly communicated that no they hadn’t thought of that, trusting in the fact that *their* children would only ever consider being in a relationship with those that followed Light magic.

Harry sighed and swallowed the bit of cookie he had in his mouth and dusted off his hands. “Listen...I know that things are done differently here in Britain. I grew up here, so I know. However, Dark magic isn’t treated elsewhere as it is here. It doesn’t need to cause harm, be evil, or immoral. Dark wizards have given the practice a bad name here while following that pretender of a Dark Lord you have. A true Dark Lord brings balance and works *with* the Light. One practice should not try to wipe out or even denigrate the other. Our world needs both types of magic to support each other and balance the order of nature.”

“I hadn’t really looked at it that way before...” Arthur frowned in consideration with a look to his wife who gave him a little smile.

“In my defense mastery, we learned how Dark magic can help and heal as well as the harm Light magic can do when used with malice,” Lupin said next, getting a grateful look from Harry and an elbow from Sirius for butting in, even if it was relevant.

“Regardless,” Harry sighed and gave the bar through his eyebrow a rub; he was just tired... so, so tired. “I’m not going to apologize for who I am or my relationship with your son. Percy is the best thing that has ever happened to me, and your opinion of me will never change my feelings towards him. I know you don’t have the best relationship with each other right now, but he wants to reach out and fix things. Please, don’t give him a reason not to. He’d regret it forever.”

“Well said!” Sirius slammed a hand down on the countertop behind him, this time getting an elbow and glare from Lupin.

Molly Weasley reached across the table and, to Harry’s surprise, gave his hand a little pat. “We’re sorry, dear...it was just a surprise to see you. It’s not that we think you’re evil or anything, it’s just the war...Frankly, we tend to think the worst of people these days with everything going on.”

Arthur nodded and finally relaxed enough to take a biscuit. “Yes, I would like to hear your opinion on the balance of magic. I haven’t heard it explained in a way I could actually understand before. My aunt tried once, but it was too technical for me.”

Now *this was*, a conversation he’d had with the Weasley parents in his past, and Harry smiled at them both broadly, finally knowing how to handle the situation. “Of course, sir...I won’t claim to be as good of a teacher as Percy, but I’ll give it a shot.”

The next half hour consisted of Harry basically running through what he’d learned in his first few days working on his mastery. He broke it down, answered questions, gave examples, and Remus even started taking notes at some point in the whole spiel. Harry ended by talking his partner’s parents through some of the more visible runes he had placed on himself, careful not to show the wolf, grim, and stag on his ribs.

“This one is to keep from being bound against my will,” he pointed to the rune sequence on his arm that Snape had deciphered the other day. “And this is for concentration, this grouping is for pain management...I have some lingering curse damage from the last war when I got caught in some things I really shouldn’t have as a kid...” he grimaced at the half-truth more than the memories. It *was* true, if you looked at it the right way.

The Weasley parents turned white at the thought that any child could be caught up in a war... then remembered their children already were at the moment, not helping their thoughts on that at all. Remus’s head shot up from his notes though.

“Those runes...exactly what kind of pain do they help with?” He asked with a hopeful look on his face.

Harry's eyebrows rose in consideration at the question. Remus hadn't been alive when he'd studied runic blood magic before, so he hadn't thought about it, but it probably *would* help a werewolf with their transformations some anyway. It wasn't super effective in relation to potions, hence why Snape was still having to brew him potions for when quidditch started, but it would keep one mobile and able to push past the pain and was much safer long-term than potions were.

"You know..." he said slowly, weighing the practicality since he didn't want to get Remus's hopes up. "I'd need to do some research first, but yeah...I think it would help with your transformations. I could definitely teach them to you. Dark magic shouldn't have a negative effect on a dark creature...it might even work better for you."

Remus's eyes flashed amber and turned to Sirius before he dug his elbow into his side once more. "Oi! I mentioned you were a dark creature out in the hallway!" Sirius protested with a glare and a rub to his ribs. "I may have said something before, but it's not like it's a secret now anyway!"

"Woah!" Harry held his hands up as his eyes went big, forgetting he probably shouldn't have known Lupin was a werewolf. "Sorry! I didn't think it was a secret. Percy was the one that told me actually! I think even Snape mentioned it."

"Of course, Sniv..." Sirius stopped himself and seemed to forcibly push the words back down his throat and they tasted sour. "Regardless...it wasn't me," he finally finished to his friend glaring at him.

Remus actually looked impressed at his friend though for stopping himself. "Well, I suppose that's fine then. I'd love to help you with your research if you want to suggest some books..." He added with a little smile over to Harry.

Harry shrugged though. "You won't be able to buy them in Britain. I'll see what I can do to get one or two to you." He'd have to take it from the library upstairs, but as long as Lupin didn't remove them from Grimmauld, Kreacher probably wouldn't kill them. With the look the elf turned on him from where he was doing dishes, that was most likely not true.

“Anyway,” he rolled his eyes and turned back to the Weasleys. “I’ve given you a lot to think about. How about I head off to my second interrogation of the day, and you all talk it over? I’ll tell Percy to write and meet up with you at some point soon, yeah? Maybe we could all get dinner or something?”

“We’d love that,” Molly smiled at him thankfully, happy to have her son come back into the fold. “Why don’t I wrap you up a little basket of food? You’re just all skin and bones and look like you could use a good homecooked meal,” she said, causing Harry to grin widely at her very missed mothering.

He almost teared up and had to stand to hide his emotion, though Molly Weasley definitely caught it and resolved to add even more food to the basket. “Thank you. I actually could use a homecooked meal...I’ll share with Percy if you want to send him anything.”

Molly was already shooing a grumbling Kreacher away from the stove when Harry strode across the hall to the sitting room and poured himself a generous glass of the, *thankfully*, whiskey that Kreacher had provided. “Right, your turn now,” he vaguely motioned to Remus who had walked in, followed by Sirius right after him. Harry downed the glass of whiskey and dropped into a threadbare armchair.

Sirius stole the tumbler from his hand with a glare. “Not you too!” Harry whined at his godfather with a pout. “I promise it isn’t a problem...not yet anyway!”

“And we’re not going to let it get there either,” Sirius glared right back at him before filling the glass for himself and taking the other armchair with a smirk at Harry’s glare.

Remus just raised an eyebrow at their interaction before sitting on the edge of the couch. “Who are you?” He finally asked Harry after a long study of the man draped over the armchair in front of him.

Harry frowned, not knowing where this was going. He had figured Remus knew he was Harry from his scent, or at least that was his best guess at the look he’d gotten earlier, but that didn’t seem to be the case. So, why was the man looking at him like he was a new, slimy dark creature to put in a tank in his office?

“Er...Hadrian Black?” He said as more of a question than a statement while shooting a look to Sirius who just shrugged at him, not having any guesses himself at what was going on.

Remus was slowly shaking his head though. “That doesn’t make any sense,” he seemed to be having some sort of personal crisis. “You are pack...my wolf is telling me that you’re pack, but I’ve never met you before. How could Moony know you?” He finally explained with an exasperated look over at the young man across from him, his eyes flashing amber briefly.

“That’s simply impossible,” he concluded with a deep wrinkle in his brow while still studying Harry intensely enough to make him uncomfortable.

“Oh...” Harry sat up with an academically interested look at the man, not having seen this twist coming. Remus had never referred to him that way before when he was young Harry. That didn’t mean Remus, or rather his wolf, didn’t think of Harry that way, but he’d never actually said it out loud. That would explain Remus making Harry his son’s godfather though, even though they hadn’t had a very consistent relationship before.

“Well, he’s my cousin, so Moony must be picking up on the family connection,” Sirius suggested, seeming confused at this turn as well. His eyes flashed to Harry, questioning how much they were going to tell the werewolf.

Lupin slowly shook his head. “No...I never saw Regulus that way...it can’t just be family.”

“But we were kids then,” Sirius interrupted, worried at where this was going.

Harry laughed and shrugged before he leaned back against the chair. “You know, you’re not really my type,” he winked at the man who rolled his eyes and huffed.

“Not what I meant at all,” he sighed. “I swear, it must be genetic. You two are clearly related,” he motioned between Harry and Sirius.

Both members of the Black family couldn't help a laugh at that remark. "Merlin, sorry. I couldn't help the joke," Harry gave a last chuckle before trying to be serious again and thinking over any other explanation besides him being Harry Potter. "Right, well...it's possible it's some connection to Sirius since he technically blood adopted me..."

"What does that mean?" Remus frowned and looked at them both suspiciously. "Why would he need to do that? You're his cousin."

"I lied. He was actually cut off the family tree, and I added him back on," Sirius took a drink of the whiskey in his hand to hopefully cover the new lie from his friend, and not very well at that.

Remus clearly didn't seem to believe him, causing Harry to sigh and reach across to steal the glass of whiskey from his godfather's hand. "Oi! You brat!" Sirius protested, but it was already gone.

"Yeah...Padfoot, you used to be a better liar than that," Remus crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow at his long-time friend. "You lost your touch in Azkaban."

"Well, it was a pretty good excuse as they come," Harry nodded over at his godfather thankful for the attempt anyway after the glass was empty. "I appreciate the effort, but your best friend is going to know when you're telling the truth or not. You should have just let me explain, Siri."

"I was doing fine until you started mucking about," Sirius glared at him, causing Remus even more confusion.

Harry just pulled his ebony wand out and flicked it at the bookshelves in the corner, causing a hidden cabinet to open and wide bowl to float out towards them. "Merlin's balls!" Sirius jumped in shock before rushing over to look into the now empty cabinet. "Has that always been there?!! Why didn't I know about it?!"

Harry spared him yet another glare as he directed the pensieve down onto the coffee table between them. "You hate the house and don't like Kreacher, that's why you didn't know. I

like and respect the house and love Kreacher, even if he's a bossy git." Harry had to look over his shoulder surreptitiously just to check that Kreacher wasn't somehow behind him. It had happened a lot in both timelines at this point and made him paranoid to say anything about the elf.

Sirius grumbled but plopped back into his armchair. "It would have been helpful to know I owned a pensieve," he pouted while Remus was checking over the ancient magical artifact on the table in awe.

"It's beautiful," he breathed out at the etched runes and ornately carved stone. When the Blacks purchased things back in the day, they got quality.

Harry nodded in agreement. He had actually never run across a better pensieve, besides the one that Dumbledore had in his office which probably dated back from the time of Merlin since it was technically owned by Hogwarts instead of the headmaster. This was saying a lot too since Harry was an artifact dealer himself and had traded in a few pensieves over the years when he ran across them.

Harry pointed his wand at his temple and very carefully and specifically pulled away five short memories to give Remus enough initial information to believe him without traumatizing the man or giving away his current plans. He didn't think Remus was quite ready for that yet.

"Can I see these too? Please," Sirius begged in excitement as the silvery memories swirled around the bowl in front of them.

"These, yes," Harry told him with a little smile and nod. "This is just a little explanation since it's almost impossible to tamper with a memory and it not be very noticeable. I think Remus might be slightly more difficult to convince than you were, Siri."

"Brilliant!" Sirius held his hand out for Remus, almost vibrating in his excitement to see some of his godson's memories.

"Anyone want to give me a heads up what I'm getting into before I get sucked into someone's past?" He looked at them both in exasperation.

“What would be the fun in that?” Harry chuckled, causing Remus to roll his eyes again.

“I swear, you two are clearly related,” he grumbled but took his friend’s hand and breathed in a deep breath before they both disappeared into the pensieve.

Harry took the moment alone to pour himself another glass of whiskey before he frowned at the glass and placed it onto the table before stepping back. “Merlin, they’ve even got *me* questioning myself now,” he grumbled in frustration before plopping back into the armchair and closing his eyes.

The memories weren’t anything overly important, so nothing with Teddy in them, but they did give a timeline for who he was in relation to young Harry. He had started with him and Remus in his third year during patronus lessons, then he’d put in the memory of Christmas at Grimmauld Place in his fifth year, that hadn’t happened yet, when he’d spent time with both Sirius and Remus. The third memory was of Remus sitting across from Harry at his seventeenth birthday party at the Burrow before everything fell apart. He was smiling and telling Harry how proud he was of how Harry had grown over the years.

For the fourth and fifth memories, Harry jumped ahead to after Remus was no longer there. The fourth was a simple but profound memory for Harry back when he still looked like his younger self, just more weathered. He was sitting in front of a mirror, scarred chest bared, as he inked himself with his first runes...the ones for suppression of emotions as he tried to hold himself together in the aftermath of what had happened with Luna.

The last memory was very recent. He could remember it word for word as a smile tugged at his lips. It was when he knew Percy loved him just as much as he loved Percy:

Harry was trying to keep himself from falling apart at the thought of losing Percy for good. He couldn’t even look up into his partner’s eyes and he held onto him, just breathing in the last moments they had. Percy wrapped Harry’s hand in his larger one.

“So, since we’re going together, that means we can go back twelve years then,” Percy said as if it were the most simple logic ever.

Harry couldn't let him do it, even as he wanted desperately for Percy to be there with him. To never let him go. "No..."

"No, you listen to me, Harry Potter," Percy held onto Harry's hand, painfully tight in his desperate grip, his eyes blazing into Harry's. "There is no way I'm letting you leave me here alone...if it's dimensional travel, then I'll be here without you and never see you again. If it's time-travel, then we'll still never be together. You know I wouldn't have just moved in and made myself a part of your life without everything that happened...plus, who is going to stop you getting stuck in your head if I'm not there, huh? You will not be leaving me!"

"It's too dangerous..." Harry weakly protested, wishing his tone didn't sound so hopeful when he should be firm to save Percy. "It's time-travel, not dimensional, which will bring even more risk...I also don't know if I'll end up in my younger body or if there will suddenly be two Harrys which causes even more problems and risk."

"Like I fucking care if I live through this if I don't have you!" Percy growled, wrapping his arms tightly around Harry like he was all he had left...which was true for both of them.

"If one person can go back six years, then double the magic and let's go back twelve! You'll be fifteen and I'll be nineteen, and it'll be before we lost them all. Whatever your...or Hermione's plan was going to be, it has to be even more effective if we get there earlier...more time has to be better than less. Plus, I was working for Fudge at nineteen...that would put me at the heart of the ministry. I can be useful."

Harry smiled. Percy was always smarter than him, and right *almost* all the time. Bloody inconvenient when one was trying to win an argument, but nice when he got to travel back in time with someone instead of alone. It may have only been a few weeks so far, but he was certain he would have broken down without Percy there within just a few days.

"What the bloody hell?!!" Remus stumbled pale-faced onto the couch suddenly as he and Sirius were spat out of the memories.

Sirius strode over and took the abandoned glass of whiskey. "Ta," he gave Harry a little cheers before taking a sip. "I have to say, I was right in my guess. I may never have met him, but your Weasley is quite fit. Good job there."

"What the hell was that ritual you were setting up?!!" Remus stood and strode over to where Harry was sitting. "Are you telling me that you're...you're...*Harry*?" He stopped in his angry rant and his face fell, the truth of the revelation sinking into his bones.

“What did older Percy mean when he said, ‘before you lost them all?’” Remus’s eyes widened at the implications of what his cub had done and why he might have felt he needed to.

“My name is actually Hadrian Black,” Harry stood up and cracked his back, not planning on staying for any intense explanations. He just didn’t have it in him after his day already. “It’s just Hadrian James Potter-Black more officially.”

“Oh...” Remus frowned in consideration at that.

“Yes, Percy and I are back in time, yes, I’m Harry, and no I’m not going to go into more depth than saying that things get really fucking bad,” he said with feeling to the werewolf. “You haven’t seen anything yet...”

“And I wouldn’t see it anyway,” Sirius gave a humorless chuckle. “Apparently, I die sometime fairly soon-ish.”

“Died...past tense, not this timeline, not while I’m here,” Harry glared at him. Sirius wasn’t going anywhere near the Department of Mysteries if it was the last thing Harry did before killing the man himself.

Remus sank into the couch, not able to remain standing any longer. “What all happened to you?” He motioned to the broken and scarred man in front of him.

Harry shrugged though and turned tired eyes on the man he’d lost too soon. “I could write a book, Remus, about everything done to me. It’d probably be banned for being too gruesome though. So, let’s just leave it there, shall we?”

“How are you making it back at Hogwarts?” Sirius asked, clearly concerned for his godson’s mental health.

Harry chuckled. “Glad I have Percy. That prat holds me together whenever he isn’t driving me crazy with some new research project he has. Anyway, I’m going. Remus...I’ll tell you more later, and Sirius can fill you in on what he knows, but I skipped out on a Hogsmeade weekend to come here, and I can’t have it noticed that Harry Potter has disappeared.”

Sirius strode over and wrapped his arms around the man almost his height when he wasn’t glamoured. “It was good to see you. Don’t do anything rash without me.”

“Course not!” Harry smirked at him. “Tell Snape I said ‘bye’ when he emerges from the potion fumes, right?” Sirius rolled his eyes but nodded.

With a couple flicks of his wand, Harry had his memories back in his mind and the pensieve safely back into the cabinet in the wall. He smirked at Sirius’s wistful look at it, knowing full well the man wouldn’t be able to get into the cabinet no matter how hard he tried since he didn’t hold the house’s wards anymore. “Sorry for springing all this on you,” Harry clapped a hand on the still dazed werewolf’s shoulder before striding out of the room and out the house to hurry back to school.

“Padfoot...?” Remus turned questioning eyes up at his friend, still not able to process what had happened to the fifteen-year-old that he knew, or had known just weeks before. “When did *Harry Potter* become a dark wizard?! I get that something terrible happened...I get the time travel, I even get dating a Weasley, but what? How?”

Sirius joined the man on the couch and passed over the remains of the whiskey. “Right, so...I honestly don’t know much. We all die, he finds the Black library upstairs, which apparently exists even though I can’t find it without him taking me; this house is very biased about who it likes,” he gave a glare to the walls. “And then more people die, he dates the third Weasley boy, they get some hair-brained idea from Hermione I guess, which makes complete sense now that I know her, and BOOM! They end up taking over their younger bodies here in the past.”

Remus drank the whiskey and grimaced. “That’s a *really* good glamour...Merlin! He taught it to you!! That’s where you learned the glamour!” Sirius laughed and knew Remus would eventually be ok. Well...he still didn’t know all of Harry’s plans, and they seemed a bit ominous, but he knew Harry, and whatever it was, they were all going to be ok.

Harry made it one step outside of Grimmauld Place with his large basket of food from Mrs. Weasley before Kreacher popped right in front of him, almost giving him a heart attack. “Godric’s ghost, Kreacher! Don’t do that!” He gasped and dramatically held onto Kreacher’s arm like he was going to pass out.

Kreacher huffed at the dramatics and rolled his eyes before passing over a piece of parchment to Harry that was filled with beautiful calligraphy. “Dark Lord Master should be more serious and upstanding with his inferiors,” he admonished. “How’s you going to gets your followers to do what you want them to when you’s not serious?”

“One, you are never inferior to anyone, and don’t listen to anyone who says that to you. And two, maybe my followers will do things because they understand why I want them to do it and they agree?” Harry chuckled and looked at the list of names. “What’s this? And did you write it? Is this really your handwriting? It’s beautiful!”

The elf stood taller and looked very proud. “Kreacher is an elf of the most ancient and noble Black family. Kreacher knows how to writes for official correspondence, and Dark Lord Master will gives that lists to Dobby elf.”

Harry shook his head in good humor at being used as a post owl between the two elves. “Why is it a list of people we know though? And why are some in red and some in black?”

Kreacher crossed his arms and sternly glared at the man in front of him. “Dobby elf says Dark Lord Master was just going to lets everyone into his inner circle and Dobby elf and Kreacher cannot allow that. This is the list Kreacher believes is the bests of the people. Red peoples are outer circle and black peoples are inner circle.”

Harry nodded as he looked at the well-thought-out list. It had Order members, goblins, centaurs, a few people that Harry knew from his business in Knockturn Alley and not as young Harry, and some of the more prominent house elves. “You have you and Dobby in the outer circle though, that’s not acceptable. Ron and Hermione are going to have to be inner circle too even if they’re teenagers. I know how you feel, and we’ll protect them, but they’re too involved already. I agree that Snape and Flitwick need to be inner circle once we loop in Snape, but I don’t know how much I trust McGonagall. I think she’s out for now, and outer circle whenever we do loop her in.”

Kreacher grumbled about ridiculous masters as he opened the door to re-enter the house. “You’s just gives that to Dobby elf and bring back his list next you come here.”

“You know you can pop back and forth between Hogwarts and here. You don’t have to just stay in the house all the time,” Harry chuckled and looked at the elf in amusement.

“And leave those Flaming Flamingo people in Kreacher’s house unsupervised!!” Kreacher glared at him before slamming the door and setting off Walburga Black who still loved a good scream in the entrance hall.

Sirius Black stepping into the attic and immediately knew it was not a good time for him to say anything on pain of a long and bloody death. He sat on the stool in the corner and waited while Severus Snape seemed to be completely absorbed in dropping individual tiny grains of something into a bubbling cauldron that hissed every time one broke the surface. He’d never actually watched Snape work before. The man looked almost happy, or at least relaxed, as he lived in his own world of order and precision.

Sirius found he was almost enthralled watching the potion master’s movements, there was no wasted effort or motion, everything he did was calculated and almost like a dance. He blinked at the shocking turn his thoughts had taken when a lock of Snape’s hair fell out of the loose ponytail he’d pulled it into and into his face. The animagus gave his head a shake and tried to mentally scrub the wholly unwelcome and slightly erotic thoughts that had somehow been born out of probably his oncoming insanity.

For his part, Snape must have gotten to a stopping point because he was just staring at Sirius like he was looking at something that just didn’t fit, was probably a hallucination, and should really just not be there. “Black?” He eventually asked like he was certain he was mistaken and that his childhood nemesis wasn’t really sitting quietly in the corner of the room and watching him brew.

Sirius had to clear his throat and tugged at his sleeves in awkwardness, shockingly still trying to push these new and entirely inappropriate thoughts far out of his head. “Erm, yeah, er, what are you brewing?”

Snape just blinked at him a couple times before his eyes narrowed in suspicion. “What do you want, Black?”

At something between a sigh and a grunt, Sirius raised his hands in surrender. “We agreed, Snape, we were starting over. I’m not here to start anything with you. Hadrian just wanted me to tell you he said goodbye and needed to get back to his place. When I came in, it looked like a bad time to break your concentration.”

Snape flicked his wand, sending the potion into stasis before he leaned against the countertop and studied the man in front of him, trying to figure out his angle in all this. “You were correct,” he finally admitted. “I’m brewing Hadrian’s pain potion he requested, and it’s a complex brew since he cannot have belladonna in it which stabilizes the brew more. He was supposed to remain for me to do some scans of his knee for diagnosis...did you or the wolf do something to offend him?”

Sirius frowned at Harry needing a pain potion, but also found it didn’t surprise him in the slightest. “No, I think it was just a long day for him. He basically gave a lecture on magical balance to the Weasleys and had to talk about some personal things about his family with Remus and me. I think he was just ready to call it a day.”

Snape slowly nodded and studied the man, wondering if he should ask the question that had concerned him for a while. He figured if anyone would know, it would be Sirius, so he opened his mouth. “Black...we both know your family wasn’t the most pleasant of people...”

Sirius snorted, but it was in agreement and amusement at the understatement. “Sorry, go on...”

“Your cousin...I believe he grew up in an abusive home. I know some of his injuries seem too recent for that, but some seem very old as if from childhood, especially that writing on his hand that clearly came from being made to use a blood quill for a horrifically extensive amount of time,” he explained before taking a breath and daring to meet Sirius’s blue/grey and concerned eyes. “Do you know what has happened to his parents? Are they still in his life? Is he in danger?”

Sirius opened his mouth to protest Snape's assumptions and conclusions before he closed it again with a concerned frown. Harry had been well-cared for, right? They'd just picked him up a few weeks before from his relatives. What had Harry said about them? Had Harry *ever* talked about them? Surely someone would have noticed if one of the most famous people in their society were being abused, right? Except...he hadn't been in their society before he went to Hogwarts.

"Hadrian's parents are dead," Sirius finally said dryly, the emotion in his voice for once not there for James and Lily but the child they'd left behind. "If he is in any danger currently, it's because he's thrown himself into it."

Snape nodded and let out a huffed chuckle of agreement at Black's assessment of the man. "I may have only seen him a few times and not for very long, but even I can tell he thrives in chaos."

Sirius nodded, but not really thinking about Hadrian anymore...well, he was, but also not. "Erm, Snape...if you'd just met a teenager, like a young one, not a seventeen-year-old, and you asked if they wanted to move in with you...would you think it was concerning if they agreed immediately after only having known you for less than an hour. I mean...that's not normal, right?"

Snape crossed his arms and narrowed his eyes at the man. "Black...you haven't been asking children to move in with you, have you? When have you even been around children?!"

"Godric man!!" Sirius's eyes widened at where Snape's thoughts were going in horror. "I meant Harry! I asked Harry if he wanted to live with me back when he was 13 and before I had to go on the run! He said yes, but he thought I was trying to kill him up until just minutes before that!"

"Harry Potter is a pampered brat," Snape grumbled and began to clean up the potion supplies, no longer concerned. "He is the most famous wizard in Britain, and he knows it. We know the signs of abuse, you and I, and Harry Potter is..."

Snape put the vial he was holding down as Sirius Black's question finally sunk in. He shook his head and turned around. "No, Potter is treated like a little prince."

“Snape...” Black slowly shook his head, now seeing it for himself. “We both know Petunia, she could be nice to those she wanted to, but she could also be extremely vicious, and that brute she married...”

Snape couldn't tear his eyes from Black's. “And you said he just agreed? Didn't ask about your house or chores or vacations, just agreed to live with you wherever?” Snape's frown deepened and a shadow passed over his face, not wanting to believe what Sirius was telling him.

“I think I mentioned my house was pretty bad off actually,” Sirius rubbed the back of his neck as everything sank in. “He's a bit small for his age too, right? Or are Ron and the twins just large? And he never talks about his family. I'm pretty sure I've seen him flinch at sudden movements too,” and that was even before older Harry had taken over.

Snape was shaking his head, seeing the truth in what Sirius was saying and knowing Potter had been even smaller and thinner as a first year. That defiant streak and the inability to ask for help, that could be from an ingrained belief that no one was going to help or cared as well. “Potter is fine,” he said again, more to make himself believe it than that he actually did believe it.

Sirius nodded, letting it go. He was certain now that Harry had a terrible homelife growing up, but he was 27 now and there was nothing he could do about it. Besides, there was no way he was going to let Harry go back to Surrey for the summer anyway. Knowing Harry now, or rather Hadrian, the muggles wouldn't survive it, not that he particularly thought that was a bad idea at this point.

“Well, thank you for hearing me out,” he stood and turned to the door. “And thank you for the potions for my cousin.”

Snape stared after the man, feeling his world shift on its axis. What was true anymore? Was he right about anything? Had he failed his best friend? Surely, Potter was a spoiled brat that loved to torture him...surely? But...he did know Petunia...

Up Next: Snape finds those potion ingredients left on his desk...

Result: Neville's Pillow Gets Peed On

Chapter Summary

I can't believe we're 14 chapters in, and it's still not October yet in fifth year. So, yeah, this is going to be a longer fic than I first thought. Hope you're up for the ride! I'm excited about it! We will start moving through time faster soon.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Snape watched his shining doe patronus gallop off with its snarky admonitions at Hadrian for leaving him at the house with his cousin and not remaining for their agreed upon diagnostics of his knee. He knew he could send an owl, but it just didn't convey the same ire and sarcasm without his voice. Snape was normally a little embarrassed by his patronus form since it was so very not-imposing or dangerous for a man of his background and standing, but somehow he had a feeling that Hadrian would be the last person to judge him for it. Why he had this gut feeling, he had absolutely no clue. Frankly, he was a little curious about Hadrian's form, or if he could produce a patronus, though he seemed powerful enough to be able to. He would decidedly gag if it was something as insipid as a weasel for Percy though.

With a grimace at that thought, Snape crossed into the wards of the castle and made his way towards his rooms. He ended his day nicely by catching two students out after curfew and assigning detentions before he opened the door to his office and began to unbutton all the many buttons on his outer robes to get comfortable for the night. Honestly, even his short conversation with Sirius hadn't been antagonistic surprisingly; however, what Black had insinuated about Potter...

Snape did not believe it; he didn't want to believe it. He was resolved to watch Potter much more closely and prove to himself and Black both that he was wrong though, and Potter really was just a spoiled little prince that thought he could get away with anything and was invincible. He paused just before opening the door in the back of his office to his private rooms...something was on his desk that he hadn't left there.

It took him a minute to remember that Percy Weasley was supposed to drop off the rare and possibly expired potion ingredients that Hadrian had wanted him to check out and see if they were still viable and useful for anything. With a grumble about his day not being over yet, he

tossed his now unbuttoned robe on the back of his chair before sitting down and opening the small wooden chest containing a collection of sample vials.

With a frown, he withdrew what looked to be different parts of something reptilian, probably a snake or lizard. There were a couple vials of skin, a few of what looked to be bone, and a crystal vial that had a clear liquid in it with a crudely drawn image of a red skull and crossbones taped to its side. Snape chuckled at what could have only been Hadrian's handiwork for a poisonous warning.

One of the vials of skin looked to be shed skin while the other had to have been taken from the dead animal itself. Both would be viable as well as the bone and venom since they would not have lost potency over time, until they completely decomposed anyway. So, they hadn't expired, but as for the usefulness, that he would need to determine just what kind of snake this actually came from to know.

He held the skin up to the magical torch on his wall and frowned at it. It was a brown/green and had very little sheen to the scales. That didn't give him much to go on but did cross several of the more exotic and magical varieties of snake off his list since it was lacking the brilliant colors common for them. If this turned out to be some common garden snake, he was going to send howlers to both Percy and Hadrian for the trouble they had him going to.

He carefully uncorked the crystal vial of venom and placed the cork on his desk to cast some diagnostics at the clear liquid. He raised his wand and gasped as the place on his desk where the cork rested began to lightly smoke. Immediately, he levitated the cork off his desk and tested it to see that Hadrian or Percy one had put some significant preservation and protection wards around it to his surprise. Keeping it floating beside him, he then cast several diagnostics at the venom...and even more after that as his shock grew.

Now, completely forgetting how tired he was and that he had even been planning to head into his chambers moments before, he grabbed a piece of parchment and a quill to start excitedly writing down his findings and narrow in on what creature this came from. It was the most dangerous snake venom he had ever come across. The crudely drawn skull and crossbones now seemed less of an over-protectiveness of his friend and more of an understatement and definitely not nearly enough of a warning on the part of Hadrian.

With a check at the other components, the snakeskin was much stronger than a normal snake's, as well as the bones even being slightly toxic themselves. What the hell was this

creature Hadrian had found?!! And why didn't he think to at least leave a note with the creature's identity on the box...though of course, Hadrian would get a kick out of not telling him. He had probably been snickering the entire time he was drawing the little skull thinking about Snape having to figure out what it was. He settled in, honestly, appreciating the mystery even if he'd never admit it. It was going to be a long night, but he was going to both figure out what this creature was and a few uses for its parts if it was the last thing he did!

With a hiss of pain and a sigh, he put down the quill and floated the stopper carefully back into the vial of venom before grabbing onto his left forearm, cursing his fate and luck both. It seemed his new project was going to have to wait, and his night was going to get much longer. He stood and quickly opened the door to his chambers to grab his hated robe and white mask to head to the meeting he was unexpectedly being called to. At least Hadrian had finished some of his marking for him. Snape swore to send the infuriating man another stack of essays for adding to his workload with the snake parts...even if he was secretly very excited about them.

He sent off another doe patronus to Dumbledore this time before frowning when he remembered it was his second of the night...he'd never gotten a patronus back from Hadrian. It seemed the man either couldn't cast one or maybe he just didn't care to send one back. One option raised a whole slew of questions in Snape's mind and the other made him feel very empty inside...neither option was pleasant at the moment. He cleared his mind and raised his Occlumency shields as he strode towards the gates as quickly as possible to head to whatever torture his night would bring.

Harry was having a very pleasant evening in his dorm with just Neville for company as they both quietly tried to get through their respective work. Ron and Hermione were still off doing couple things in the common room (apparently their date had gone well, though Harry hadn't been concerned) and Seamus was still angrily avoiding Harry even though Harry had been very good and hadn't cursed him once, as much as he had wanted to. Dean was probably off with Seamus or playing exploding snap with some poor second year who hadn't learned he was as good as Ron was at wizard's chess and ten times more brutal in his victories.

Neville was a great bloke for a quiet night in, only occasionally asking questions when he came across something in their homework he didn't understand. Harry was sure he thought they were both doing schoolwork, and he didn't mind helping one bit when Nev asked him something. He hadn't figured out how to help Neville along in his confidence or show him just how much he valued and loved him yet, but he was working on it.

For his part, Harry was actually putting together a flowchart with everything he remembered from his original fifth year and a timeline of things he knew they needed to do to end the Voldemort problem before fully committing to their next step of taking on the ministry. He was stuck on the prophecy at the moment. In order to keep Arthur Weasley safe, he needed to get the prophecy before December in some way that the Order would know it was gone. Either that, or he would have to stalk his partner's father for a few days since he couldn't remember the exact date the man was attacked and wouldn't get the vision of it happening this time around. He could pinpoint it to within a few days of when it must have happened, based on the winter break, but he also thought they had left a little early for break because of the attack...he wasn't certain about this though. It had just been so long since then!

Voldy also had to be taken care of before he broke his followers out of Azkaban, which he thought was right after they got back from winter break. He was absolutely NOT dealing with Bellatrix again. He would gladly break into Azkaban himself to kill her if he could figure out how to deal with a dementor when he couldn't cast a patronus. Maybe Percy's whole 'Master of Death' thing would give him some ideas there if it actually came to something. It would make sense that he had some connection to death or the soul since the core of his wand was dementor skin though now...best not to think about that too much, he decided.

He was tapping his quill against the parchment, leaving little splotches of ink as he thought about who was currently out of prison that might need to be dealt with when a brilliant and silvery doe pranced into the dorm like it owned the place, and Harry cursed his luck and choice in friends when Neville's head shot up in surprise at the invading patronus. He had no clue how he was going to get out of this one...

The doe looked at him and what was unmistakably Snape's sarcastic drawl emanated from it. "You *left* me with your cousin! Rule number one was to absolutely not leave me with that infuriating man. Retribution will be swift and painful Hadrian, and clearly in the form of another stack of first- and second-year essays delivered first thing tomorrow! Please be less kind and supportive in your comments this time around. The children will think I am going soft. Also, you forgot your diagnostic for your knee. I swear, you try to do something nice for an idiot and you get cursed with your sorry hide. We do need to meet for this before I can finish your pain potion. Since you cannot come into the castle without the headmaster's permission, can I meet with you at your place or at your cousin's next week sometime? I await your reply with bated breath," Snape drawled in a tone dripping in sarcasm at the end.

Harry couldn't help the little smile, even as he was cursing the man's timing. At this point, after knowing the man for about seven years and going through hating each other, having a bit of a weird crush on the man through his old textbook, murderously hating him again, then

admiring him, Harry knew how to speak Snape. The translation was that Snape was a little disappointed he hadn't stayed to say goodbye back at the manor, he was worried about Harry's knee and that he might have been overwhelmed with all the questions earlier, and that he was looking forward to meeting up with him again soon.

Harry looked over to Neville who'd paused with his hand in the process of petting Sephie's back since she had migrated over to sleeping in the teenager's bed at some point in the last hour. Harry already had his wand in his hand and absently spun it through his fingers. He could obliviate Neville. It would be extremely easy...the teen wouldn't even see it coming...

Neville's eyes cut to his wand on his end table, not in easy reaching distance, something Harry was sure he did unconsciously. He didn't particularly want to obliviate Neville, so Harry waited. He didn't know how Neville would process what he'd just heard and decided to give him a second to see how this was going to all fall out before making his decision.

Neville frowned deeply and absently ran a hand down the sleeping inferius's back. "Harry..." the teen finally said, his look surprisingly more disappointed than shocked or confused. "You know how I feel about Snape, I don't like him, and he frankly scares me, but...it's not right to make the man think you're his friend to make fun of him. That's not funny, it's cruel. You're better than that."

Harry's eyes widened in shock. He couldn't follow what conclusion Neville's brain had jumped to, but it didn't seem to be that Harry was from the future. "Er...what?" was all he could get out in his confusion.

Neville's face took on a hard look that said Harry needed to listen to him. "It's only a prank when both parties are laughing. It's mean to mess with someone's emotions, and I'd thought better of you than to do something like that to a person," he explained, crossing his arms and giving Harry a look he hadn't seen on anyone besides Hermione before, and he felt about as tall as a bowtruckle at it.

"Look, I don't know if it was Polyjuice you used when I saw you earlier today or some kind of glamour or whatever, but you have to tell Snape...and how is Professor Weasley involved in all this anyway?" Now Neville looked a little confused as that piece of the puzzle didn't fit with what he had assumed with the rest of the situation.

Harry's hand relaxed on his wand some as he thought about what Neville was saying. He really wanted to be Snape's friend and wasn't trying to trick him, especially since he was actually being who he really was. However, that might also be the way Snape would see it too, and that was not acceptable at all. He didn't know how he would eventually bring Snape into his confidence, but he was certain he'd have to figure out some way so the man knew that he absolutely meant everything and really did want to be his friend.

"That's not what's going on here, Nev," Harry sighed. It wasn't even quite October yet and already Ron, Hermione, Sirius, Flitwick, Dobby, Kreacher, and Remus had all figured out his secret. He didn't particularly think it was a good idea to bring in a fifteen-year-old Neville, but he also didn't want to obliviate his friend. Maybe there was a kind of middle ground?

Neville didn't look convinced at all though. "What's going on then? You, Ron, and Hermione are always getting into things you shouldn't. What's the play here? Do you think Snape is working for You-Know-Who or something?"

Harry didn't know how to answer that because...well, yeah, but also definitely not. "Erm, no...and I really do want to be Snape's friend, and I'm really in a relationship with Percy Weasley," he began, seeing Neville's eyes harden in concern at that last admission at he was dating a professor.

"I also wasn't wearing a glamour or anything earlier...*this* is the glamour," he motioned to himself and waited to see how Neville was taking everything before he continued.

Neville's eyes widened and looked very consciously at his wand this time. Then he moved, he honestly surprised Harry, which was very difficult to do. Now, Harry did see it coming enough that when Neville picked up Sephie and tossed her at Harry that he reached out and caught the startled and yowling cat, getting some long scratches on his arm for his efforts. It gave Neville enough time to get to his wand and narrowly missed hitting Harry with a petrificus totalis who rolled off his bed with the cat and crouched on the other side.

"What the hell, Neville?! I'm not going to hurt you!" He yelled right after casting a silencing ward at their door, which he was thankfully closer to, so that no one would come to investigate what was happening.

“Who are you, and what did you do with Harry?!!” Neville yelled from the other side of his bed before throwing a jelly-legs hex towards Harry.

With a grumble, Harry promised himself that he was going to teach his friend some much more effective curses, and better aim as well. “I *am* Harry if you’ll chill for two seconds for me to explain!”

A heavy book soared right over his head from where Neville had banished it across the room and towards him. That actually was pretty impressive, Harry nodded at it on the floor in appreciation. Sephie hissed at the book and her eyes flashed red before she plopped down under the bed this time. “Sephie is definitely going to piss on your bed tonight, fair warning...” Harry called over his shoulder towards where Neville seemed to be trying to remember expelliarmus but got the word wrong several times and instead caused a few mini-explosions of Harry’s pillows.

Harry figured he’d given Neville enough time to feel like he was giving it a good go, and he was getting tired of hearing the disarming spell butchered, so he rolled his eyes and put down his old holly wand to aim his new wand just over the top of the bed. “Osteo immobilus!” He cast quietly.

There was a yelp followed by some whimpers two beds over where Neville had been crouching. Harry stood and winced, realizing he’d landed on his bum knee when he’d rolled off the bed and limped slightly over to where Neville was stuck. “You’re fine, calm down,” he huffed and slid down the side of the bed to sit beside the teen and stretch his leg out.

“That was only a bone freezing spell,” he explained to the frozen teen. Neville’s eyes were moving everywhere, looking for a way out and he was breathing shallowly in fright. It was only his bones that couldn’t move, so he was awake, aware, and could easily breathe and see, even if his jaw didn’t move so he could talk. It was dark magic, but only slightly, it was almost grey really...depending on how you looked at it.

“Anyway, I’ll free you in just a minute once you hear out my explanation and stop trying to make my nose bleed since you were never going to get the disarming spell right at that rate,” he glared at Neville playfully. “I *will* be teaching you how to do that, by the way, as well as shield and some nice curses that will stop a Death Eater in their tracks, bloodily, if needed. I swear, that was the most pathetic duel I’ve been involved in since our piss-poor excuse of a dueling class in second year,” he grumbled with a little chuckle to Neville at the end.

Neville was glaring at him in fear and anger currently, so Harry figured he was at least attentive. “Right, so, I came back in time...Percy too, by the way,” he said flippantly, tired of having to do this same explanation multiple times. “Actually, future you helped send us back, quite impressively too, but I’ll hold off on explaining how or you might not believe me and all.”

“Episkey,” Harry broke off to try to heal the cat scratches on his arm. They slightly closed but were still bleeding, causing Harry to swear in a couple languages when he remembered his cat was actually an inferius. “Well, that’s inconvenient,” he remarked dryly before conjuring some bandages and starting to wrap it.

Neville’s eyes seemed slightly less fearful, and his breaths were a bit deeper when Harry finished wrapping his arm. He really hoped that was a good sign but wasn’t sure. “Right, so I’m 27, and the world went to shit between now and then, so I’m back in time to fix it with my annoyingly brilliant partner to keep me from screwing it up worse.”

Harry looked at the teen and crossed his arms. “I don’t know what to tell you to convince you I am who I say I am. I know a lot about you actually, but we didn’t get close until after this year, so none of that is stuff that will help me convince you right now.”

He grimaced and leaned up against the bed, realizing that this was probably the most difficult of these conversations he’d had yet since there wasn’t really anything from their past that only Harry would know and not most of Gryffindor Tower as well. At least Remus had Moony to help him believe the information as well as Sirius there, but Neville... “Maybe I should just obliviate you,” he sighed with a sad look at the teen whose eyes widened in fear again.

“Neville, I really like you...you’re one of my best friends,” he began, at least wanting his friend to understand *why* before he was obliviated, even if he wouldn’t remember it. “Those adventures you referenced with Ron and Hermione, well, you went with us at the end of this year in my original timeline. It made us a lot closer. Then, we learn later that there was a prophesy that said a boy born at the end of July, 1991 was fated to face Voldemort, and it could have been either you or me, until Voldy made it me. That actually bonded us a lot more.”

“Neville, you are one of the bravest men I know,” he said seriously to his friend whose eyes looked more confused than anything else currently.

“I know you don’t believe it yet, but it’s true. When R-...” he took in a deep, steadying breath. “When Ron was taken and after Hermione was killed, Percy was there to pick me up, but you were the one that got me moving forward once more. You always looked out for me, even when you were the Head Auror, and I was a black-market dark artifacts dealer,” he chuckled wryly.

“Yeah, our lives got a little complicated,” he bumped Neville’s arm with his shoulder in a friendly bump. “I’m going to fix it though. I’m going to kill Voldemort well before I did last time, I won’t let him break his followers out of Azkaban this time around, and I’m going to step up and make our world better, safer, and more accepting. I know you don’t believe me, but I want you to know before...well, I’ll only take the last like fifteen minutes from your memory...”

Neville gave a grunt and a whine through his immobile jaw, clearly wanting to talk. Harry huffed a laugh and reached over to pluck the teen’s wand from his hand, knowing that he would be fine even if he had let him keep it after what he’d seen earlier. Neville was nowhere near his badass head auror skills yet. “I’ll remove the spell, but I’m only giving you a minute before the obliviate. I’m sorry, but yell at me all you want. I can take it.”

Harry flicked his wand and nonverbally removed the spell, causing Neville to slump down as his bones once more moved with his muscles. “Bloody hell!” He gasped out. “That’s worse than a petrificus totalis!”

“Yeah, but you wouldn’t be able to hear me out with that spell,” he explained, waiting for the screaming and probably renewed attacks to commence.

“Harry...please don’t obliviate me,” Neville said slowly instead of attacking. “I don’t know what you can do to persuade me what you are saying is true either, but...”

Harry’s face brightened up and he laughed. “Actually, I might be able to!!” He clapped his hands still holding the wands, causing Neville to jump in surprise at the change of emotions. “Dobby!” He called out.

A loud pop sounded in the room before Dobby, wearing a black toga with a neon yellow belt, one pink and one green sock, and a purple knit hat appeared. "I like the look this time, Dobby," Harry nodded in appreciation at the almost eye bleeding collection of colors.

Dobby preened and smoothed down his tunic. "Dobby wants to look professional for Master Harry Potter, sir! Kreacher says Dobby is ridiculous, but Master Harry Potter, sir, always says Dobby looks good."

"Right smart actually," Harry assured him, loving that Dobby liked the look even if Harry wouldn't wear it himself.

The elf looked at the teen on the floor beside Harry and raised one eyebrow. "What can Dobby do for Little Lord Longbottom and Master Harry Potter, sir?"

Harry crossed his arms and leaned against the bed again, bending his knee and stretching it again to keep it from seizing up. "I happen to have it on good authority that Professor Snape has some freshly brewed Veritaserum on hand. Would you mind popping down to his storeroom and stealing me a vial? I promise I'll pay him back and/or replace what we use later."

"Of course, Master Harry Potter, sir," Dobby scoffed as if it was almost an insult that Harry thought he might mind. With a pop, the elf was immediately gone once more.

Neville actually leaned up against the bed too, still looking at Harry out of the corner of his eye suspiciously though. "Snape's going to kill you."

Harry shrugged. "I can brew him some more, and one dose is really small anyway. I actually got pretty good at potions...²⁷ remember? Start thinking of some questions you want to ask me."

Neville nodded, seeming to know he couldn't overpower or escape judging by how his eyes flicked over the room before he seemed to decide that Harry probably would have done something to him if he planned to when he was immobilized. "So...Ron and Hermione died...who else did we lose?" He asked, seeming to decide to go with it all for the moment.

“I suppose a lot if we worked to send you back in time. And Percy Weasley...how did *that* happen?”

Harry closed his eyes, even though he still had every sense tuned to what Neville was doing beside him. “My godfather, Professor Lupin, Auror Tonks, Dumbledore, Professor Moody, Professor Burbage, Madam Bones, Snape, Lavender, Colin Creevey, Fred Weasley, my godson, Draco...”

“Stop!” Neville cut him off with a hand on his head, his eyes also closed as it sank in. “Merlin, we should have sent you back sooner...”

Harry snorted a laugh and looked at the teen he’d fairly traumatized beside him. “I wonder what’s taking Dobby...”

A pop sounded before the elf was once more in their midst. “Speak of the little demon...” Harry grinned at him, causing Dobby to smile back.

“Three drops is the dose,” Dobby reminded Harry when he handed the small vial over. “It was easy to find, but Dobby is concerned that it looks like Professor Potion Master is out for a *meeting*,” he ended with a significant look at Harry.

“I’m taking it you snooped a bit and noticed his *meeting* robes missing?” Harry smirked at the elf who turned a bit red at having snooped but nodded.

“I don’t know what we’re talking about, but can we just get this over with?” Neville asked in tired exasperation. “I’d like to be assured my dormmate isn’t trying to kill me or anyone else.”

Harry shared a look with Dobby that clearly that last bit wasn’t going to bring any assurances since he did actually plan to kill a few people. He quickly dropped three drops on his tongue though before capping the bottle again and handing it back to Dobby. “Dobby, please put this back where you found it, and would you drop by and see if Percy will check in on Snape in an hour or two when he might be back in?”

“Yes, sir, Master Harry Potter, sir!” Dobby gave a quick salute before popping out again.

Harry turned to Neville and grinned mischievously. “I’m going to warn you that I will have to answer your questions for the next fifteen minutes or so and cannot lie, so be careful what you ask since you might not want to know about my sex life.”

Neville turned pink but nodded in understanding. “What is your name?”

“Hadrian James Potter-Black officially, but I go by Harry Potter most of the time,” Harry answered without even being able to think about his answer before his mouth was speaking. He absolutely *hated* Veritaserum, but he was happy he’d thought of some way to keep from having to obliviate Neville.

“How old are you?” Neville asked next, his eyebrow having gone up in surprise at Harry’s name.

“I am twenty-seven, but I also don’t know when my birthday will be this year technically since I left the future in the fall and it was summer when we arrived here,” he said, the potion making him answer as specifically as possible.

“Do you mean harm to me or anyone in this castle?” Neville asked next with a hard look, causing Harry to frown before the potion made him answer next.

“I don’t *want* to harm any student in the castle. I’m concerned I may end up having to harm Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle if they continue on the path they did before and become Death Eaters. I’d really *like* to curse Justin Finch-Fletchley for things he does in the future, but I’m hoping to make it to where he can’t this time around,” Harry said as the potion prompted him to keep talking as much as he would really rather stop right there.

“I would very much like to murder Dumbledore...maybe...I’m not sure. I’m still very angry with him and think he will get in my way for my plans. I blame him for a lot of what

happened in my original timeline, but I don't know *why* he did what he did. I'd really like to kill him honestly, but I also realize I may not have the full story...I'm conflicted..."

Neville's mouth had dropped open in surprise at the last part. "But...why? What did Dumbledore do?" He asked in complete shock. "Harry always looked up to the headmaster... *you*, you always looked up to him."

Again, something Harry would really rather not answer. "Dumbledore left me as a baby with my magic-hating relatives that he was fully aware did not want me and who would most definitely treat me poorly if not abuse me...which they did. He then kept vital information from me that directly impacted my life, leading me to make poor decision based on not having enough information. He gave me just enough information to keep me going and keep me desperate enough to be willing to die when it was time. He raised me to die when the time was right, which I did as the faithful little soldier I was. Thankfully, I was able to return, but that's a story for another time," Apparently, the potion didn't think Harry was done though as his mouth opened on its own when he stopped to take in a breath.

"What makes me the angriest though is when I learned that he covered up an attempted murder when my parents were in school, blatantly overlooked the abuse of many children including myself, my godfather, Professor Snape, and you..."

Harry's eyes widened as Neville had turned completely white at his name making the list. "Shit, sorry...I warned you about asking things," he said quickly before his friend could freak out. "I know about your uncle, you've mentioned him before when talking about him trying to get you to do magic as a kid, and you tell me more about what all happened in the future. I promise, I'm not going to tell anyone if you don't want me to, but I'd also like to make sure you're safer before you go home this summer if you'll let me."

Neville seemed to let out a breath of air in shock or relief one. Neville's uncle had stopped his abuse aimed at getting Neville to toughen up and use more magic after the battle at the ministry their fifth year, claiming that Neville had finally grown up. Since he didn't plan on that battle happening this time around, Harry really didn't plan on Neville's Uncle Algie to still be alive come summer. He wasn't going to say any of that unless Nev asked him directly though.

"What are your plans to fix things?" Neville asked next after giving it some thought.

The Veritaserum was starting to wear off, but not quite soon enough. Harry was able to get out a sigh before his mouth opened once more. "I'm going to kill Voldemort before the war can start again," he began. "Voldemort isn't the problem though. The problem is the fear and hatred that was here before him and intensified in his wake. The ministry is corrupt, our laws are racist and prejudiced, and they only get worse. Our society needs balance and understanding. I'm going to take my rightful place as Magic's Dark Lord and restore balance to work *with* the Light to make a society where everyone is free, where magic isn't discriminated against if it does no harm, and where all creatures can live safely and without fear in our society."

"Bloody hell," Neville breathed out and leaned back up against his bed, stunned completely.

"Er, yeah...how to get there, I'm still working on though," Harry added sheepishly at the end. He felt the hold of the Veritaserum disappear and he let out a breath of relief. "I can still obliviate you if you want," he offered with a little smile and bump of his shoulder against Neville's.

Neville snorted but opened his eyes to look into Harry's. "No," he said firmly. "Unless you finally learned to open a book in the future, you're going to need someone who understands the ancient and noble houses and how they work," he said with a decided and thoughtful frown.

"I'd like to help. I grew up with Pansy and Draco and Susan Bones and that lot. I know it's surprising now, but our society is small, the peerage even smaller. We all get thrown together as small children at ministry events before we're taught to be prejudiced. Draco Malfoy has always been a prat, but his mother, she was very nice and always treated me kindly. I remember being confused when I was told she was the 'wrong sort' to look up to as a dark witch...she was so much nicer to me than my own Gran and Uncle Algie and really everyone..."

Harry gave a surprised snort of agreement. "Draco did actually get much better over the next couple years actually. I grew to really like Narcissa though too...she helped out a lot with my godson. I did finally learn about all the hierarchical nonsense though, and I have my godfather, who is Sirius Black and innocent, by the way."

"Bloody hell," Neville breathed out again and sighed. "So, you don't need me..."

“You’re sounding more and more like Ron,” Harry chuckled. “And I’ll always need you, mate. You’re my rock, Nev. Regardless of who you may or may not become in the future, even in our past, you’ve been the rock of our friend group. You stood up for Snape when you thought I might be pranking him just now, you tried to stop us in first year from doing what really should have killed us, you stood by me when everyone thought I was evil in second year, you were there for me when Ron and Hermione were fighting third year, and you were the one I could count on to talk me down last year when I thought everything was falling apart around me. I need *you* for you as Neville Longbottom, my friend. I want to be there for you too.”

“Really?” Neville asked, tears shining in his blue eyes.

“Yeah,” Harry threw an arm around his shoulders and leaned against the boy beside him comfortingly. He made a mental note that maybe Algie should disappear before winter break instead of summer if Neville decided to go home. “I hope your scourgify is better than your expelliarmus because Sephie will most definitely pee on your pillow tonight.”

Neville winced but nodded as if he had it coming. “Is she ok? I knew you’d catch her, and I needed my wand...”

Harry laughed. “It really was a good move to distract me, and yeah, she’s fine, just pissed off.” He looked over the bed to where Sephie was in fact glaring at them from where she was now perched on top of Harry’s dresser, clearly plotting her revenge.

Severus Snape kept up a steady stream of swear words in every language he knew as he slowly and painfully made his way back up to the castle. Apparently, the Dark Lord had been trying to send images of the prophesy the Order was protecting in the Department of Mysteries to Harry Potter to entice him to go and collect it. For some unfathomable reason, the Dark Lord had been unable to access some link that had supposedly been previously available to him with the boy, which was frankly very concerning. The evil man was murderously angry and ordered Snape break into the boy’s mind and figure out what had changed and reopen whatever connection they had before.

Of course, he hadn't offered any suggestions for how to do this without blowing his cover. Even as the Order spy he couldn't just walk up and legitimize the teen without harming Potter, and there wasn't a legitimate excuse for him to try it. He hoped Dumbledore had some way around this and maybe had an idea about what connection this was that the Dark Lord was talking about.

He stopped at the foot of the stairs and groaned. He just wanted to be in his bed with several pain potions and to sleep right through the next day. "Need a hand?" a voice asked from his side, causing Snape to almost jump out of his skin. No one snuck up on Severus Snape! Somehow, Percival Weasley had succeeded where even seasoned Death Eaters had not though.

"Bloody Salazar's ghost!" Snape huffed out in surprise. "Where did you come from?"

"I was waiting on you," Percy ignored the man's question and his pride and just physically threw Snape's arm over his shoulders, and he put his own arm around the man's waist to help almost physically lift him up the stairs.

Snape was more shocked at the fact that Percy Weasley of all people actually seemed just as tall as he was at this point and possibly stronger than the fact that he was being manhandled up the stairs he'd found so daunting seconds before. "Why were you waiting on me?" He asked instead, too tired and in pain to protest the help at this point even though he knew he'd hate himself for taking it the next day.

"The house elves know we're friends and one asked me to check in on you," he said as if that were something not complete shocking. As far as Snape knew from his 24 some odd years at Hogwarts, the elves never got involved in anything the wizards did beyond just doing their own jobs. Frankly, he could count on one hand how many elves he had seen outside the kitchens in that entire time.

"The location of the kitchens is something passed down from brother to brother since the Bill told Charlie who told me and so on before we each started Hogwarts," Percy explained to Snape's shocked silence as they stumbled into the castle. "I think the twins might have skipped Ron and told Ginny instead," he shrugged at the end though. "They always liked to mess with him."

“I can make it from here,” Snape put a hand on a stone wall to take a breath inside the castle and rest before tackling the stairs down to the dungeons.

Percy snorted and grabbed onto Snape once more over his protests. “Hadrian will have my hide if I leave you to fall down the stairs to the dungeon,” he protested. “I’m getting you to your couch or bed and drugged up before I head back upstairs to mail off more of your marking to my very bored partner to do.”

Snape snorted but they moved in silence once more, the help down the stairs very welcome even as embarrassing as it was. “Percy...does Hadrian know how to cast a patronus?” He asked, breaking the silence and still feeling a little insecure at his message not being answered earlier.

“He knows, but he can’t cast it anymore,” Percy quietly remarked, pain in his eyes. The young man’s look had Snape hold his tongue from asking why. It had to have been something very traumatic to make him *unable* to cast the spell. Even as a dark wizard, being able to cast a light spell he already knew should not have easily changed.

“My marking is on the right side of my desk beside all those mysterious ingredients you sent,” he remarked instead as they neared his office. “Tell your idiot to stop being nice and just call them dunderheads when they show they are. I heard a first year the other day tell a second year that they thought I was actually ‘quite helpful in my comments,’” he sneered, causing Percy to laugh as he pushed open the office door.

“Merlin forbid!” He kept laughing.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Harry is actually bored, which is scary, and Percy has to sit through a meeting...

Suspicious Abound

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I just don’t understand why we can’t tell Dumbledore. It’s the most logical response to all this,” Remus Lupin grumbled from where he was wrapped up in a blanket on the couch with tea and chocolate, still recovering from the last full moon.

“Because Harry doesn’t want us to, and that should be enough for both of us,” Sirius sneered at his friend over the top of his teacup from where he was sulking in the armchair across from him. It was an argument they’d had too many times in the few days since Harry had filled Remus in. He didn’t understand why Remus couldn’t just trust Harry and move on.

“He has future knowledge that Dumbledore could use to make better decisions for the war though,” Remus tried once more with an exasperated motion of the half-eaten piece of chocolate he had in his hand.

Sirius sighed and sat down his tea on the end table. “Moony...Harry must have his reasons. Why can’t you just trust our Prongslet? He came back to save us.”

With a huff, Remus put down his teacup as well. “Siri, the thirteen-year-old Harry I knew was much more concerned about quidditch and hanging with his friends than strategy or learning. I realize he picked up some Dark Arts knowledge over the years...”

“A mastery,” Sirius interrupted with a glare. “Moony...you’re talking about a thirteen-year-old child and forgetting it’s a twenty-seven-year-old that asked us to trust him. Even the fifteen-year-old went through shit to get where he was...”

“Before older Harry killed him,” Remus gave his friend a dark look. “Unintentionally, but that just goes to show that he doesn’t think things through all the time.”

Sirius grimaced but shook his head. “No, we need to at least know *why* Harry doesn’t trust Dumbledore before we go against his wishes. I won’t let him down again...Moony, I think

Harry had a harder life than we believed, and I mean his childhood not his shit-poor older years with the war.”

Remus frowned deeply at that and sat up, pulling his blanket more tightly around him. “What do you mean, Padfoot?”

As Sirius opened his mouth to answer, the man in question pushed open the door to the sitting room, and strode in. With a grin and a flick of his wand to cast a privacy ward at the door, Hadrian Black flopped into the armchair beside Sirius and almost lit up the room with his bright smile. “Hullo, dogfathers! How’re things? Dumbledore freaking out yet that a dark wizard is in the house?”

“No, there’s not an Order meeting for a few more days, so he hasn’t been by for anyone to tell him,” Sirius answered as Remus raised a questioning eyebrow.

“Aren’t you supposed to be in school? It’s a weekday,” The werewolf chided him.

Harry just shrugged unconcernedly. “Everyone thinks I’m dating some unnamed Ravenclaw, so I’m supposedly off snogging them in a broom cupboard somewhere. Severus has been bugging me non-stop about my knee though, and there are only so many misdirect spells I can cast on his owl before it finally finds me at breakfast. So far, the grumpy featherbrain can only find me in the tower, but the owl is as smart and as persistent as his owner, so I figured it was best to give in to the summons, especially since there wasn’t anything major going on this evening at school. Plus, I had to deliver a letter from Dobby to Kreacher. I really need to buy one of them an owl.”

“It’s Severus now, is it?” Remus asked with a concerned frown at the friendship he didn’t understand.

“Snape is coming here?” Sirius sat up straighter with a look on his face that Harry really couldn’t interpret the meaning of and didn’t care enough to try.

“He’s my friend, and you be good,” Harry jabbed a finger in Sirius’s direction with a glare. “Quidditch starts up next week, and I’m going to be a right stropky terror if I don’t get some

kind of pain potion for my knee.”

“I’ve been *very* good, Harry!” Sirius protested vehemently. “So good that he’s suspicious that I want something, the paranoid git! I don’t know what else I can do to play nice if he always things I want something.”

“And *do* you want something from him, Padfoot?” Remus asked knowingly, seeming to interpret Sirius’s look and take something from it where Harry really couldn’t.

“What?! No!!” He protested even more vehemently but with a touch of pink creeping onto his ears. Harry just huffed and shrugged, figuring it was none of his business and not caring to pry into the drama anyway. Snape could take care of himself, and Sirius really was getting better now that he could leave the house and had a purpose in helping Harry. It looked like he’d even taken the time to brush his hair and put on some nicer, cleaner clothes than last time Harry had seen him.

“Well, make sure to thank him for helping me with this for you. We were able to shave off a good week of the brewing time,” Harry pulled a large flask of Polyjuice potion that he enlarged from his jeans pocket and handed it over. “I’ve decided I don’t trust you with one of my hairs when you’re acting all weird like this, sorry. Maybe Remus will help you.”

“Nope,” Remus popped the ‘p’ and smirked at his friend who had put on a dramatic, fake hurt look on his face.

“Fine, I’ll just summon a hair from a random muggle,” he rolled his eyes at the two. “This means I can go to Diagon though! Merlin, I miss that little pub over at the intersection with Knockturn! The one with the spicy mead.”

“Ooo, I know that place,” Harry sat up with an excited smile. “They have great fish and chips! We should all go and take Percy and Severus too!”

“I do need to meet this Percy fellow...” Sirius nodded happily and clapped his hands.

“Can we please talk about the dark wizard in the room from the future that doesn’t want us to tell Dumbledore about himself instead of pubs?” Remus interrupted impatiently with a look between the two. “Harry... You know I love you, but I don’t think you can handle this on your own... we need to tell Dumbledore...”

“First of all,” Harry cut him off, leaning forward with a hard look in his eyes that suddenly made Remus a bit afraid and Moony almost whimper from within him. “I don’t actually know you love me. How would I know that? I didn’t meet you until my third year, and we hardly ever talked outside of class then. After that, you were always off doing Order things. You may have said you see me as pack, but you never even mentioned that to me in my first timeline at all. Frankly, I really don’t know you as a person.”

“Harry...” Remus frowned deeply as Sirius looked between them, confused.

“No,” Harry shook his head firmly. “I do trust you, Remus. I’m just saying that you’re assuming a relationship that doesn’t exist for me. Right now, you are a means to an end for me. I’m sorry, but it’s the truth. I need something from you which I promise to tell you about one of these days. I’d also *like* you to be a large part of some of the plans I have, but that’s only if you want to be. I want us to be closer and to have a relationship, but frankly, you died before we got there in my original timeline and didn’t try very hard before that either.”

“I didn’t realize... I’m sorry,” Remus frowned even deeper and seemed to be crumpling in on himself. Moony was almost wailing inside of him in guilt. “What do you need from me?”

Harry gave him a grin that was the epitome of James Potter when he had a plan he was excited about. “Nothing right now. It’ll be about two years before I need you to do something... just er, get to know Tonks a bit, right? She’s a really cool person, and I think you’d get along.”

“Of course, Dora is awesome, but what does that have to do with anything?!” Sirius huffed, not liking being confused. He’d assumed Harry and Remus had a great relationship after living in the same castle for a year when he was outside of it stalking Pettigrew.

“Nothing yet, and don’t worry about it for now,” Harry leaned back again and propped his feet up on the coffee table, glancing over his shoulder, paranoid that Kreacher was about to pop in and yell at him.

“Now, to answer the second part of your accusation, I don’t plan to do this on my own. I brought back my brilliant genius of a partner with me, remember. Plus, I have you two, the house elves, Flitwick, the goblins-ish, I’m still working on them, a whole slew of teenagers I don’t know what to do with but need to keep safe, and hopefully Snape at some point.”

Remus sighed tiredly. “But Dumbledore...”

“Left me to do everything on my own anyway,” Harry crossed his arms and glared again. “He died at the end of my sixth year and only left extremely vague instructions for me to follow, one of which was to make sure I died at the end of it all, and I’m not planning to do that again. Percy would raise me back to life just to kill me himself, bloody necromancers...”

Remus sputtered in shock while Sirius had to stand to pace in his agitation. “Right, I have to unpack all that,” Harry’s godfather was now frantically running his hands through his hair. “What do you mean that you *died*?!! How did Dumbledore die, and why wasn’t the Order taking care of things instead of you? Did you just insinuate that Percival Weasley of the Light Weasleys might be a *necromancer*?!! And what do you *mean* that you *died*?!!!!”

“Er...yeah,” Harry said slowly, realizing he’d just dumped a lot on the men, but not realizing it would be quite as much of a shock as they seemed to be taking it. They did know about the prophesy they were guarding, right? “Dumbledore really hasn’t told you *anything*, has he?”

Now both men looked taken aback and suspicious, but this time not at Harry. “What do you mean, pup?” Sirius finally asked after they shared a look. “What are we not being told?”

“That prophesy you’re guarding at the ministry is much more trouble than it’s worth, and frankly both Dumbledore and Voldemort put way too much faith in it, and it’s what got Siri killed the first time,” he explained with a sigh.

“Look, Dumbledore thinks I’m the only one that can take out Voldemort, and well, he’s right, but that doesn’t mean I wouldn’t have appreciated more support and information, especially as a seventeen-year-old. I guess it doesn’t help that he needs me just suicidal enough that I’ll throw everything away when it’s time though,” he rolled his eyes at that last bit, remembering how he’d walked to his death without really even a second thought that first time.

“But *why*?” Sirius almost whined in exasperation. “How are you still here if you died?”

“The answer to both is because I used to be a horcrux. It’s why I needed to die and how I survived that last round of a killing curse in the war,” he said with a shrug and pulled the neckline of his shirt to the side to show the second lightning bolt scar on his body.

This got him thinking though...maybe the horcrux wasn’t really why he survived if Percy was right and he was the Master of Death or some such rot. But, where did he possibly get hit with a killing curse in that Knockturn Alley raid a couple years ago then? Wouldn’t there be a scar like the others? He had quite the collection of scars, so it was entirely possible it had melded into another one or was in a place he couldn’t easily see...might be fun to have Percy check him over for it...

Harry shook his head to chase away the inappropriate images he was definitely going to try to make happen in the future before focusing back in on the two men in the room. “Do you know what a horcrux is at least?”

Both men looked at each other questioningly before shaking their heads. “No...does it have something to do with Percy being a necromancer?” Sirius prodded once again at that unanswered question.

“Er, no, definitely not. It’s vile magic, and Percy is the best person I know...well, besides Luna who is just an angel,” Harry nodded firmly, both happy and sad he could remember Luna again. “Percy is an Unspeakable, and they assigned him to soul magic, but that’s a story for another day.”

“Really? Mr. Weasley joined the Unspeakables?” Remus’s eyes went wide in appreciation. “I figured he would stick to politics.”

“Not currently important,” Sirius gave Remus’s hair a tug from where he was still pacing in the room.

“I’ll send you a book,” Harry ended up huffing out in exasperation while realizing he would need to pry it out of Kreacher’s hands if it meant taking it from the library. “It only explains what a horcrux is and not the process or anything, but Severus should be in here any moment now since I just felt him cross the wards, and it’s best we aren’t talking about this in particular. He *would* know what it is if my guess is correct. Between Azkaban and being a werewolf, your minds are safe with this knowledge from legilimens, but avoid talking about it where anyone could hear.”

“We’ll talk later,” Remus leaned forward with an almost pleading look in his amber eyes. “I won’t tell Dumbledore anything, for now, until I know more. Just don’t do anything rash without getting help first, please...I really do care about you. I’m sorry if I made you feel like that wasn’t the case in the past...”

“Of course, you are all in here together,” Snape drawled when he opened the door and crossed the privacy ward. “That was a nice ward...I assume Hadrian cast it,” he nodded, looking back in appreciation at the strong ward he’d crossed when entering the room.

“Most definitely, the paranoid prat,” Sirius huffed a laugh and took one step closer to Snape. “Thank you for checking out my cousin and for helping with the Polyjuice potion.”

Snape’s eyes narrowed, clearly expecting there to be some snide comment added in at the end. Finding none, he turned to Hadrian. “Your cousin is being weird, come up to my lab and I’ll cast the diagnostics on your knee.”

Harry gave Sirius a little laugh and a shove when he walked by him, clapping a hand on Snape’s shoulder while chatting amicably as they left the room. “He’s the weird one,” Sirius grumbled under his breath when he finally flopped back down into his armchair.

Remus refilled his teacup and raised an eyebrow warningly at his erratic friend. “I saw that look...it’s a very, very bad idea. Maybe your worst yet, and that includes daring James to swim in the black lake naked in January.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Sirius steadfastly looked off. “There was no look.”

“Uh huh...” Remus was not fooled in the slightest. “Well...that was...what *do* you think a horcrux might be?” He changed the subject and cast his own privacy ward at the door since Harry’s had fallen when he’d left.

Sirius shrugged. “I’m guessing something really bad. I for one am now going to be watching Dumbledore a lot more closely though. Do you think he knew that Harry was being abused at home? If he needed him slightly suicidal, then...I don’t want to think about it, but do you think it could have been *intentional*?!”

“Wait? What?!” Remus spilled his tea as he sat up abruptly. “Is *that* what you meant earlier about Harry’s childhood?!! You think his family was abusing him?!”

Sirius threw his hands in the air in frustration. “Yes, maybe...I haven’t asked him directly, but yeah, it seems highly likely. I don’t know the extent though.”

“Merlin,” Remus breathed out before turning flashing eyes on Sirius that were more wolf than man. “Harry was right that I never saw him before his third year and kept my distance then. Dumbledore wouldn’t let me visit Harry ever. I asked every year, sometimes multiples times a year, but he always said Harry was happy, safe, and that I would only bring more danger into his life, so I should keep away to keep him safe. I’ll kill him if he knew...!”

Sirius was just slowly nodding as the new information hit him like a physical blow to the gut. “You’ll have to tell Moony to wait in line. Me, and I have a feeling Percy Weasley, will be in line ahead of you if that’s the case. I might not know him, but I’m betting on the Unspeakable Necromancer succeeding over either of us.”

“It’s possible Dumbledore doesn’t know...” Remus added in as they shared a look that said neither believed that, especially since Remus had been assured every year that Harry was fine.

They sat in silence, each in their own confused thoughts. “What do you think he needs from you in a couple years that you wouldn’t have now?” Sirius broke the silence to ask.

“Maybe I inherit something from someone?” Remus shrugged, not really caring at the moment with all the new revelations shaking him to his core. He couldn’t believe he’d never taken the initiative to just ignore Dumbledore to check on Harry when he was a baby, that

he'd never told Harry what he meant to him in the first timeline, and that Harry didn't even see them as family when he most definitely saw Harry that way. He'd screwed up their relationship so much by trying to not be a bother that he didn't know how to move forward.

"I don't see how that involves Dora though..." Sirius trailed off, still trying to put together the pieces.

Percy Weasley perched on the stool in the corner of Severus Snape's office and watched him work. He had invaded the space early that morning with coffee for the man and insisted on staying when he really should be marking papers and lesson planning. Quidditch tryouts were currently happening at that very moment, and he was hoping to have a potion to hand off to Harry as soon as he was finished. Harry had sent him a letter the night before saying that he thought he could escape the dorms that evening now that Neville also knew what was going on, so Percy wanted to make bloody sure he wasn't in pain since he'd really very much missed his partner in his bed...and for other much more fun activities.

"Was it better or worse than you thought it would be?" He asked when Snape had finished slowly adding in an ingredient. He was really trying not to be annoying, but he did really want to know how the diagnostics went.

The older man looked up with a frown on his face at the question. "Worse," he said firmly a hard line to his jaw.

Snape wouldn't admit it to anyone, especially Hadrian or Percy, but he'd cast his spell wider than Hadrian's knee and could now definitely tell Sirius Black that his cousin had in fact been abused and starved as a child. Also, the only explanation for the sheer amount of spell damage to the man's body was that he'd been tortured many times over his short life, as horrible as that thought was. Honestly, he realized just how very little he knew about his new friend, and it had taken everything he had to hide his shock at the diagnostic results. If he wasn't absolutely certain Hadrian was an Occlumens, he would have at least tried to gain some information from him about his past.

Snape's best guess that he was becoming increasingly certain of as he thought it over was that Hadrian had been, or maybe still was, a hit wizard. He wasn't sure if it was for Britain or

elsewhere though. The elite law enforcement office in the ministry cared much less about magical alignment than the aurors did, and Hadrian's very British accent spoke to him spending more time in the country than he let on. What that meant for Hadrian's cousin, Snape didn't know. If Hadrian were going to arrest Sirius, he didn't know why he hadn't already. Either Hadrian was no longer a hit wizard, which would align with Percy's insistence that he was bored, or he truly just didn't care that his cousin was a fugitive. Or...it was possible that Hadrian was there to spy on him or the Order, to see just what side Snape really was working for or the Order's plans...it wasn't a thought he welcomed, but it seemed reasonable for the circumstances.

Percy was still looking at him questioningly, so Snape figured he should continue his remarks on the knee though. "It seems that Hadrian's knee had been shattered by what must have been an auror-grade bone-breaking spell...and they say light curses are more humane than dark ones," he snorted in disgust at the hypocrisy.

"Really?" Percy raised an eyebrow. It had been a former Death Eater that hit Harry with the spell, so it was surprising it was a light spell. "The healers at St. Mungo's refused to help him when he was brought in and the glamour over his runes was removed. We ended up finding a private healer, but it had been a while, so the healer didn't recognize what spell it had been at that point. I'm surprised you did especially after all this time." It was one of the times when it wasn't to Harry's advantage that he was no longer recognizable as Harry Potter when the healers didn't recognize who he was and just turned the dark wizard away after stripping the glamour from him.

Snape frowned and raised a suspicious eyebrow at the DADA professor. "This injury is older than a year...I would say three or four at least. I thought you two had only been together for less than a year?"

Percy rolled his eyes at his own slip and shrugged. "I was reciting the story I've heard so many times that it felt like I was there. Hadrian absolutely hates St. Mungo's and tells the story any time it's mentioned. I must have misspoken."

Snape didn't look convinced but also had no reason to outwardly doubt Percy, so he went back to the brew he was working on. It didn't align, even if Hadrian were a hit wizard, that the two would be together for longer than a year. Percy was only 19, and they couldn't have even met before he started to work for the ministry at the earliest.

“I probably have more training and experiences with curses, both light and dark, than any private healer,” he snorted wryly and with no amusement. That experience had been hard won, especially as he also served as a healer for the Death Eaters and the Order when in a pinch as well. “I believe I can reverse some of the damage to the knee though. It’s too old to completely cure, but there are some potions that will help heal some of the ligament damage.”

Percy nodded thankfully and watched in amazement. Even if he didn’t like potions, that didn’t mean he couldn’t recognize a master at work. When Harry brewed, there was always a lot more chaos and swearing involved it seemed. He was good at it, but it wasn’t effortless like the way Snape approached it. “Watching Hadrian brew, you’d think that swear words were necessary to the process. You make this all look much easier,” he chuckled.

With a deep frown and an almost silent curse at the ministry, Percy put a hand over the wide, leather band on his left wrist. “Something wrong?” Snape’s head shot up and his bored drawl belied the shock at his associations with anyone suddenly grabbing their left arm.

“Huh? Oh nothing, just a meeting I forgot I was supposed to attend this evening,” he breathed out. Apparently, someone had decided to call a full department meeting of the Department of Mysteries, and he’d been right, he was still listed as an Unspeakable no matter what time period he was currently in.

He quickly ran through his timetable for the day to make sure he could carve out time. All department meetings took place at the end of the workday, so 5pm for their office, even if it was a weekend since there was always someone working in the department no matter the day of the week. Thankfully, meetings weren’t called very often, and their identities were always hidden; however, if Supervisor Davids was already working there...Percy was concerned, very concerned.

Snape maintained his study of his former student out of the corner of his eyes while he finished the brew. Percy hadn’t grabbed his wrist in pain, it was more surprise than anything else. It also wasn’t in the right spot for a Dark Mark. However, he always had his wrist covered since he’d started teaching about a month before. Snape had assumed it was some kind of fashion statement, but now he wasn’t so certain. Unspeakables had marks in that location that did something with the magic of the Department of Mysteries to grant them access to the location. He had never heard anything about them being used for communication though. Also, he’d never heard of someone as young as Percy being admitted into the secretive department either. Something was going on and he absolutely did not like it!

“Have you figured out what the ingredients we sent you are yet?” Percy spoke up again with a smirk, pulling Snape’s mind back to the present.

Snape looked up and caught a tightness to the man’s eyes that hadn’t been there before. Percy was worried about something, and that something had to be whatever had happened with his wrist. “I’ve narrowed it down to a snake and an old one at that. I’m guessing it was almost a thousand years old when it died. Care to give me any hints?”

Percy raised a surprised eyebrow at him. “I’m shocked you haven’t figured it out from that information,” he remarked contemplatively. With a frown, he realized that *Harry* had been the one that told him about the Chamber of Secrets and what happened. Ron and Ginny had told him their parts as well, but he hadn’t heard the story from literally anyone else, even his parents. Was it possible that Dumbledore hadn’t told the staff at the school what had happened? What did they think was petrifying students three years before then if not a basilisk?!

“Regardless, I have a few solid guesses that I’m only waiting on some free time to test,” he continued with a hint of frustration at the mystery, oblivious to Percy’s shock at the massive cover-up Dumbledore must have somehow carried off under their noses.

“I’m sure you’ll figure it out much sooner than I would in your situation,” Percy said, now surprised that the man had even figured out that much if he hadn’t known there was a basilisk in Britain since they were supposedly extinct.

“I plan to spend the rest of my day solving mysteries then,” Snape said, just a hint of warning in the tone as he bottled the finished potion and held it out for Percy. He’d handed over as much marking as he could to Hadrian when they had met up at Grimmauld Place, so it was the first opportunity he had to focus on the ingredients and testing them, see if he could figure out what was going on with Percy now, and maybe see if he could ascertain anything about Harry Potter’s homelife as well to pass along to Sirius.

“Standard dose?” Percy asked with a little smile at the potion in his hand.

“Indeed, but only up to three in a day, no more or he’ll have another problem to attend to along with his drinking,” Snape warned him. “I’ll send along what I’m working on for healing the ligaments once I’ve determined the best brew for it.”

“You are brilliant Severus, and we owe you,” Percy said with feeling, pocketing the potion. “Seriously, whatever you need!”

Snape waved him off. “I passed along my marking. That takes a great deal of work off my desk.”

Percy gave him a little wave and smile before escaping the office, presumably to owl the potion to his partner. Snape just frowned after him. He hadn’t had friends in so long, but he was sure one was not supposed to be this suspicious of those they called friends. Maybe it was that he didn’t know how to be a friend at this point. Regardless, there was definitely something not right with those two, and whatever it was, he was going to figure it out. If Hadrian *were* a hit wizard spying on him...well, Merlin help him because he was not sure how he would handle that.

Harry was limping behind an excited Ron who had just gotten the Keeper spot on the team and who was enthusiastically relaying his thoughts at each and every quaffle that came his way. Honestly, Harry would rather just give his position over to Ginny at this point, but that would raise way too many questions since they thankfully didn’t have Umbridge around to ban him from the sport. He did still like quidditch, but the love of the sport had dissipated with everything else pushing into his life, the trauma, and his bloody knee that was currently killing him.

“Hey, Harry,” Neville Longbottom jogged up to Ron, Harry, and Hermione as they were making their way back up to the castle. Neville was a little out of breath and seemed to have something weighing on his mind.

“Hey, Nev, how’s it going?” Harry smiled at his friend and tried to walk more normally before remembering that Neville already knew about him, so he gave up to just continue limping his way forward.

“Er...hey guys...” he looked at the two flanking Harry questioningly.

“They know,” Harry told him, catching onto the question in his look. “Er, Nev figured it out guys.”

“What?!” Hermione crossed her arms and stopped in surprise. “What did you do? Were you being weird? I *told* you to act more like a well-adjusted fifteen-year-old.”

“I wasn’t well-adjusted *as* a fifteen-year-old,” Harry grumbled back with an eyeroll spared for Neville.

“Yeah, how did you figure it out?!” Ron’s exuberant look dropped in surprise that they might have failed in their jobs to keep Harry looking not-suspicious.

“Wasn’t my fault this time. Severus sent a patronus to Hadrian while I was in the dorm with Nev,” He rolled his eyes before giving a pointed look around them. “We really shouldn’t be talking about this outside though. Even if no one is around, it’s still not safe.”

“You *were* acting a bit weird this term though too even before I knew why,” Neville smirked before handing a vial of potion over to Harry. “Professor Weasley asked me to pass this along to you. He said to tell you to take the standard dose.”

Harry gladly and expertly took a sip that should equal the amount he was supposed to take for his knee. “Thank Merlin and Snape,” he sighed. “You too, Nev, but why didn’t Percy just bring this to me?”

Neville straightened up, looking proud to discharge the job he was given. “Professor Weasley said to tell you that he got called to a department meeting. He said he should be back at around 8pm this evening at the latest.”

Ron and Hermione frowned in confusion while Harry just looked worried. “What’s that mean? We don’t have departments at Hogwarts.”

“Did he mean with Fudge at the ministry?” Hermione asked next as they all looked at Harry questioningly.

Harry just cleared his throat and tried to look unconcerned. “Ministry, yeah...” he trailed off, not wanting to lie more than as just an omission.

“Ergh! Does that mean I still have to cover for you tonight when you go do things with my brother that I never want to hear or think about?” Ron turned green at the question while Hermione just laughed at him and linked her arm through his.

“Yeah, but now I have more free time before then,” Harry grumbled as they made their way towards the castle again. “Besides, you and Nev know now, and I was just going to spell my bed curtains closed anyway. Seamus still hates me, and Dean and I are friends, but we were never the hang out on each others’ beds and chat at midnight type friends. That’s not really a lot of covering.”

“He *does* have you there,” Neville nodded in agreement. “It probably would have been me trying to ask him a question that caught him before now.”

“Now that you have some more of your evening free, you can help me with my Runes homework!” Hermione looped her other arm through Harry’s and gave him a hopeful grin.

Harry sighed. He had Snape’s marking, a list of objectives and goals he was supposed to be writing up for the goblins, and Bipsy (the Hogwarts Head Elf) had finally delivered the list of house elf demands to him that morning that he needed to look over. So, he had plenty of things to do to keep him occupied, but he was also just *bored*. He was used to making deals in back alleys, secreting people away from under the ministry’s nose, and fighting for his life regularly, a night in with paperwork suddenly seemed torturous now that he’d added being anxious for Percy’s trip to the Department of Mysteries to the list.

He stopped and let out a huff of air, causing his friends to look at him in concern. Percy had gotten to have all the fun so far with killing Umbridge, playing with inferi, and all the subterfuge he’d gone to in order to get the DADA position. Harry was feeling a bit useless since he was stuck in the castle with the paperwork. Yeah, he’d gone to see Sirius some, but that wasn’t really *useful*.

“I just can’t do it. Nope, not another night,” he shook his head firmly and shifted his Firebolt to his other shoulder determinedly. Percy wasn’t in the castle to stop him, and honestly, probably wouldn’t anyway. He *would* insist on coming along though if he were there. Plus, Harry’s knee felt better than it had in years after Snape’s potion, and there was no way he was going to waste that feeling sitting by the fire in Gryffindor Tower.

“Do what, mate?” Ron asked, now sharing a very suspicious and concerned look with the other two. They’d seen Harry get like this before, and it usually ended in some very dangerous and unplanned catastrophe. It was like his skin or his brain or something got an itch, and he just couldn’t sit still and had to *do* something about it.

“Right, so can you cover for me at dinner? Say I’m not feeling well or behind on homework or something?” Harry asked them, almost vibrating in excitement now that he’d decided to do something in his evening before getting to thoroughly congratulate his boyfriend on a successful infiltration of a Department of Mysteries meeting later (because Percy *would* be successful, and Harry didn’t doubt that for a second).

“Harry,” Hermione put her hands on her hips and looked at him sternly. “What are you planning to do? Do we need to grab Flitwick or Dobby or someone to talk you out of whatever this new insanity is?”

“What?! No! I’m being perfectly sane and reasonable,” he protested vehemently before shoving his broom into Neville’s hands. “Don’t wait up though! I won’t be back until morning and will be in a *much* better mood!”

He smirked at his friends who were calling after him in indignation as he cut through several secret passages to get to the tower before them and quickly change into something less Gryffindor and more Hadrian Black, Dark Arts Master. Honestly, he didn’t even know what he planned on doing yet, just that he was going to do *something*. There were quite a few things on his list that needed taking care of sooner rather than later.

The prophecy was the most pressing, but Percy was currently at the Department of Mysteries, so he would clearly be in the best position to see what was possible where that was concerned. Harry needed to smooth things over with the goblins before bringing up the cup in Bellatrix’s vault. The ring was a touchy subject, and Harry knew Percy would be angry if he

went by himself both for the danger and that Percy wanted to see how the resurrection stone interacted with his magic. Harry could always kill Pettigrew if he found him somewhere away from licking Voldemort's shoes, but that might tip his hand too early as well.

Harry skidded into his dorm and looked at the lunar calendar on the wall. It was well past the last full moon when he'd been by Grimmauld and seen Sirius and Remus who was recovering. Clearly, right after a full moon would be better for his plans, but that also wasn't really sporting now, was it? Harry was nothing if not a believer in giving your enemy a chance...to an extent.

Percy was so going to kill him, bring him back to life, and kill him again. Harry was smiling broadly as he petted Sephie on the head before throwing open his trunk. Now...he knew he'd bought some nice silver knives last time he was in Diagon Alley...where did he put them in the trunk? Maybe he could try out some kind of Master of Death mojo magic just to prove or disprove Percy's theory while he was at it. It felt so nice to be productive again!

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Harry tries some Master of Death mojo magic to odd results...Percy might kill him...

The Wand

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Percy kept his head down and tried to be as unnoticeable as possible. He passed his old wand over for registration to the witch at the welcome desk when he entered the ministry, keeping his new wand solidly hidden, and then headed quickly towards the lifts. It was an in-reverse flashback to when he'd tried to escape the ministry after stealing the time-dust just weeks before, even if it felt like years ago. Honestly, he was really just trying to avoid Fudge at the very least since he didn't particularly want to have to cast yet another Imperious Curse at the man. He'd already done enough things to get himself the dementor's kiss in this timeline, and casting a second Unforgivable at the Minister of Magic from within the ministry was probably pushing his luck.

"Percy!" A familiar voice called out, stilling the redhead mid-step.

He nervously checked that his leather wristband was secure and that his glamour was in-place before slowly turning around. He clasped his hands together to keep them from running through his glamoured hair in his anxiety. "Dad?" He said as neutrally as possible to keep the stress out of his tone.

"Hey..." Arthur Weasley strode towards his son from where he must have been leaving work for the day. "How are you? We met your young man the other day..." Arthur trailed off, seeming almost as awkward as his son in this interaction.

Percy nodded and kept himself from checking his wristwatch. He knew he had plenty of time, and he really did need to talk to his dad. "Yeah...Hadrian said you had a lot of questions for him...erm, I'm sorry I haven't mentioned him before. I mean, we got together kind-of fast and well...he's...you know..."

"A dark wizard?" Arthur raised an eyebrow with a little smirk at his son.

"A bloke," Percy finished with a matching smirk at his dad. This got a chuckle from the older man and Percy felt like a hippogriff sized weight was lifted from his chest as he finally

allowed himself to believe that maybe he could actually work things out with his family before having to go through a tragedy this time around.

“There was that...” Arthur chuckled again, his lined face taking on the carefree look Percy had missed seeing for many years now. “Your mum may be talking up the advantages of adoption at some point, but with seven of you children, odds were that one of you at least wouldn’t be completely straight. We didn’t quite plan for the dark wizard bit though.”

“He’s not a bad person,” Percy cut in with a frown, hoping that they’d listened to Harry as he thought they had. Harry and Hermione had sat them down and had a very similar discussion with his parents in the future and they had come to terms with Harry before, but he just *wasn’t* their Harry this time around.

Arthur put a hand on his son’s arm and gave it a squeeze. “We know that, and have even been doing our own research, but in Britain, it has always been more black and white. The dark wizards here almost always follow You-Know-Who, so it tends to be the standard response to believe them evil.”

Percy nodded slowly and tried to remember just what had caused the rift in their relationship so many years ago. “I’m sorry I was an idiot at the beginning of summer. I just didn’t want to believe he returned. I didn’t want us to be heading towards another war.” He *thought* that was it. Did he say anything in particular he needed to apologize for though?

Arthur gave a little wave of his hand, seeming willing to accept whatever Percy said as long as he wanted back in the family. Percy really hoped he hadn’t said anything personally offensive to his parents since he wasn’t going to be able to remember exact wording to apologize to them for it. “Erm, would you and Mum want to get dinner with Hadrian and me soon? We could come to where you are staying now or meet up in Diagon Alley. I’m sure you still have a lot of questions...”

Arthur gave him a smile and another pat to the arm. “We’d love that, and yes. Your boyfriend does seem a bit older than you, so we’d like to get to know him as a person, just to make sure he’s treating you well and all. We really only talked about his magic use and his mastery when we met.”

Percy had to hold in a laugh at Harry now being the older one. With Harry unglamoured, their age gap was much larger than the real one between them though. Plus, with everything

going on in Harry's before life with people trying to kill him and the media attention on him, it was actually Percy who'd had more romantic relationships before they got together than Harry though, even with (or maybe because of) his fame. Regardless, it was all very hilarious to Percy as he tried to wipe the emotion off his face.

"You have nothing to be concerned about with Hadrian," he said, not able to stop the amused smile. "He would love to answer all your questions though, I'm sure. His parents passed years ago, so I think he'd really appreciate being around you and Mum." It was a bit low of a tactic, but he knew it was both true and something that would get his mother firmly on Harry's side now.

"Great, I'll owl later then," Arthur nodded firmly. "You looked like you were heading to something though, so I shouldn't keep you."

Percy nodded and couldn't stop himself from giving his surprised father a quick hug. "Just a meeting. I'll see you soon...and, Dad...I love you."

Arthur Weasley was left stunned as his son rushed off towards the lifts. Percy had always been the least emotive of all his children, and they hadn't hugged in years. He was surprised, but hopeful that maybe things were looking better now for their relationship. He had a feeling that at least some of this could be attributed the pierced and tattooed young man that had shown up at Grimmauld days before. He still wasn't sure what he thought of the older, darker, and more haunted young man, but he was willing to give it all a try if it pulled his family back together again.

Percy removed his glamour before stepping from the lift and quickly rushed to the Unspeakable changing rooms. He took off his leather wristband and waved his mark over the wards to grant himself entry. There were always a few robes left in the small room for those who had a major spill or explosion in their experiments, so it wasn't difficult to snag an obscuring robe that would fit him. Taking in a deep breath, Percy turned and slowly made his way out of the changing room and down the hallway to where their meetings were usually held in a surprisingly bland conference room.

Percy once more waved his mark over the wards, checking himself in for the meeting and granting his entry. There were more grey-robed individuals milling around the conference

room than there had been in Percy's time was his guess as he tried to blend into the background. He found an empty chair as close to the door as he could and settled in to hopefully be invisible for the next hour or so.

With a relieved breath out, Percy noted the red-hemmed supervisor looked to be a woman, so it wasn't Supervisor Davids. That didn't mean he wasn't in the room, but at least Percy's former seer-supervisor wasn't the one running the meeting. "Settle in everyone!" The woman called out, causing the group to end their conversations and find seats.

"As usual, let's start with some housekeeping," she picked up a roll of parchment that must have had the agenda on it. "If you leave food in the break room, it will be thrown away at the end of day on Sundays. It is your responsibility to collect anything you've left, and no food storage containers will be returned...I'm looking at you Unspeakable Edwards," she ended with a playful glare (at least he assumed since he couldn't see her face) to a robbed figure that chuckled in the corner.

Percy was impressed. Somehow the supervisor seemed to know them just as well as his old supervisor did. Maybe it was a kind of magic that came with the position. It was very worrisome though for when she saw him. She was already continuing in her announcements though.

"It is a general consensus that we all request the Love Department to move on from rabbits in your experiments. It's getting out of hand, and they bite," she looked up and many chuckled in the room.

"What do they suggest then? Knifflers? Rabbits at least are slower," an unspeakable in front of Percy leaned over to grumble to his colleague who must both be in the department apparently breeding rabbits.

"There was a breakout last week," the unspeakable beside Percy leaned over to tell him quietly while the supervisor had moved on to the odd smell emanating from the Euphoria Department that was causing headaches and bouts of uncontrollable laughter. "I damn near stepped on a rabbit coming out of the lifts," the man chuckled. Percy raised an eyebrow, not sure why the man was filling him in on this but nodded his head in thanks for the information regardless.

“On to department updates,” the supervisor picked up a quill and poised it over her parchment to take notes. “The Mind-Magic Department is up first...”

“Could we possibly be moved farther from the Euphoria Department,” an unspeakable raised their hand to draw the supervisor’s attention to them. “Their experiments intersect with ours occasionally to some very dangerous results.”

The supervisor made a note and nodded her head. “Actually, I’m hearing the beginning of a wonderful collaboration here. I’m going to assign you to help with whatever experiment is causing the smell and they can help with potions and charms that intersect with the mind.”

Both departments were clearly upset as unspeakables on either side of the room, as far away from each other as possible, crossed their arms and supposedly glared under their hoods. “They absolutely *hate* each other,” the unspeakable leaned over to whisper to Percy again. “Personally, I think it’s because their research could be rolled into the same department, and they are all concerned about their jobs. I give it a week before there is some kind of literal explosion that comes from their departments.”

Percy nodded thoughtfully. He was fairly certain there wasn’t a Euphoria Department in his time. There *was* a large Mind-Magic Department though. He looked at the man beside him and narrowed his eyes. What were the chances this unspeakable was a younger Supervisor Davids?

“Divination Department,” the woman rattled off next, causing the man beside Percy to straighten up more.

Percy groaned at his luck while Unspeakable Davids explained their promising work with some new crystal balls they’d developed from beside him. The man ended with a little flourish of his hand. “If anyone wants to help test them, we’re taking bets on the Puddlemere United and Falmouth Falcons game,” he ended with a chuckle, causing most of the room to laugh as well. “The balls say Puddlemere for the win.”

“I don’t see how that helps test them, but put me down for two galleons on Falmouth. They have the best offense no matter what your crystals say,” the supervisor shook her head and continued on to the Time Department.

“Easiest two galleons I’ve ever made,” the man remarked to Percy while the meeting continued. “No one ever does seem to think we’ll be right.”

As the meeting began to wrap up, the supervisor paused in her progression through the departments. Percy was certain she’d be frowning if he could see her face. “Erm... The Soul Department?” She asked as more of a question than a statement. “Unspeakable... Smith?”

Percy really wanted to just melt into a puddle on the floor when Davids looked over at him. “Er...” he spoke up, causing many hoods to turn his way. “I’ve had some minimal success with animals recently when studying inferi. However, their souls are much more simplistic than a human. I’ve also been interested in a soul’s magnetism recently and its desire to remain whole even when split.”

The supervisor was nodding along and making copious notes on her parchment. “Do you have need of any materials for your experiments?”

“Er... not at this time,” he quickly said, just wanting this over with.

She nodded once more before pinning him with a look even from under her obscuring hood. “Now, who might I ask hired you? And when did we establish a Soul-Magic Department? Do you even have office space?”

Percy’s mouth dropped open, not sure how to answer any of those questions. “I believe it was the Time Department, ma’am,” Davids raised his hand slightly beside Percy to add in.

“Ahh,” the woman nodded before making another note on her parchment. “I guess that explains the soul magnetism research... bloody time-travel,” she grumbled before looking up again. The Time Department were all collectively leaning forward and looking uncomfortably interested in him.

“Right, thank you Unspeakable Davids,” she nodded to the man that clapped Percy on the shoulder companionably. “As per our procedure, if you’re from more than three days in the future or past, you must meet with the Time Department. However, I assume you will be more capable of handling the issue with your double soul than they will given your research.

I expect a summary of all your research on my desk by the end of next week or before you go back to your own time if that's before then and even possible."

"Er...yes, ma'am," he nodded quickly in shock. He didn't know there was a procedure for this. However, he didn't think anyone had been sent forward or backwards in time more than three days while he was an Unspeakable. Honestly, they had only recently recovered from Harry's destructive fifth year escapade through their department though since they had been unable to rebuild during Voldemort's take-over and then time-dust was very dangerous and difficult to manufacture.

The meeting continued with some last-minute announcements and a reminder for when their next meeting would be held the next month before they were all adjourned. "I'll walk you down to those Time-vultures," Davids offered as he stood and opened the door, motioning for Percy to make his escape before the Time Department had the opportunity to corner him in the conference room.

"Thanks," Percy hurried into the hallway and towards where he knew the department to be located. "Erm...so..."

"Right," Davids cut him off and strode forward. "Now, you want a prophesy, am I correct? I didn't see which one you want or why, but I'll tell you the same thing I did in my vision. Prophecies cannot be removed from the Department of Mysteries. They can be retrieved and listened to by those they were made for, but they will immediately reappear on their shelf if someone were to actually walk out of the lifts with one in their hands."

"Oh...that's inconvenient," Percy took the man's knowledge in stride. He *had* helped him to come back in time, and frankly, no one in the Department of Mysteries seemed too concerned. However, the Department of Mysteries was used to a level of chaos that was only rivaled by Harry Potter's life in general. If he remembered correctly, Harry's prophesy had broken before they tried to leave with it...which meant that it probably reappeared on the shelf in the department afterwards...he wondered if anyone actually checked that once the dust cleared. Voldemort clearly hadn't.

"Bring the person the prophesy is about with you, and I can set up a viewing," Davids continued, not seeming to pay any attention to Percy's shock beside him. He waved a hand and the doors spun around them before his Unspeakable mark flashed causing the doors to stop with the Time Department right in front of them.

“Look...I get the feeling that I helped you with all this for some strange reason, but I don’t know why...I recommend not telling me, and especially not telling those obsessed idiots in the Time Department. Luckily, you’re one of us, so they can’t just keep you down here, but never let on that you didn’t come alone, you hear?”

Percy nodded firmly, already knowing it would be a bad idea to mention Harry. “Do you know what they’re going to do to me?” He asked with some fear when they entered the room he’d only been in a few times during his days in the department.

Davids shrugged and followed him through the door. “A bunch of diagnostics and questions that you will avoid answering. Just cite future consequences as an excuse. How’s your soul, may I ask?”

Percy sighed and stepped into the room. “I replaced my younger self, so my soul is intact and in no danger.”

Davids nodded. “Well...at least you don’t have to worry about them heading off to kidnap the younger you and possibly murdering one of the versions to keep your soul from splitting.”

“They’d do that?!!” He gasped out. Clearly, Percy was perfectly fine with doing some things not exactly legal or moral when called for, but that was something he’d never even consider doing to his or Harry’s younger selves.

“Now you know why I call them Time-vultures,” Davids said dryly before stepping back out into the hallway. “Good luck! See you soon!” he called, closing the door behind him.

Percy sighed and sat down on a chair beside the cabinet full of time-turners. He was in for a long round of diagnostic spells and annoyingly excited unspeakables. Clearly, he was helping their research, so it would be like pulling teeth to be allowed to leave now. He was absolutely *not* missing his evening with his partner though, so they could just deal with it.

Harry had absolutely no clue where he was going. Yes, he could have thought this through much more and actually come up with a plan, but what was the fun in that? Besides, he had two wands, two silver knives, and maybe some connection to Death. That seemed pretty prepared in his world. "Point me, Fenrir Greyback," he said as his ebony wand spun in his hand.

The wand eventually just gave up and pointed upwards into the sky after a moment. Clearly the werewolf was too far away for it to register direction, which was actually a relief to know since Harry was just outside of the school wards. It wouldn't be good for that monster to be anywhere near the school. Now, he had to actually give it some thought though...what did he know about Fenrir? Did the werewolf have a house or did he live in woods somewhere?

With a grumble, Harry gave up since he clearly had never known where the man lived in his past. He *had* actually been the one to eventually kill the werewolf after the war ended when he was cornered leaving Andromeda's house. Fenrir had apparently escaped the aurors and come almost directly after Harry. For his part, Harry hadn't stopped to chat when he was attacked that close to his godson though. Fenrir hadn't had time to say much before Harry was cleaning up the mess and asking Andy if it'd be best to call the aurors or hide the body... they had eventually called the aurors, Andy just wasn't as up for hiding bodies as much as Percy was unfortunately.

He pulled one of his knives out of the belt he had shoved them in and made a little cut to the palm of his hand. Though he'd studied it in his mastery, he'd never gotten to use this spell before since he'd never been actually related to anyone in his lifetime, so he was very excited to try it now that he had Sirius. "Loqui ad familiam," he said quietly into his hand before breathing out a breath of magic across the cut.

A fuzziness buzzed in Harry's ears and his vision dulled around him. It wasn't long before he felt another presence by him, almost like he could reach out and touch them even though he couldn't see anything. "*Sup, Siri?!?*" Harry laughed out mentally, feeling the presence jump in surprise.

"*Harry?*" The surprised question floated through the newly established link. "*Where are you? Are you in my head?!? What did you do?!*"

“Yup! I had a quick question and didn’t want to wait on an owl. This is just a little family, blood-magic link that’s entirely temporary, so nothing to worry about,” he said unconcernedly. He figured it was probably disorienting to have someone suddenly talk to you in your mind, but it’s not like it hadn’t happened before to Harry.

“You free right now?”

A long-suffering sigh went through their link. *“Remind me to give you a communication mirror, and please never do this again. It’s very uncomfortable and disconcerting, especially since I’m currently in the loo.”*

“Ah, so you are free,” Harry chuckled at the man, but did actually want that mirror. It was so inconvenient to not be able to cast a patronus. *“Could you ask Remus if he happens to know where Fenrir Greyback is?”*

“What do you want with that monster?” Sirius asked in clear suspicion. *“What are you planning, Harry?”*

“I had a free evening and wanted to work a little on my to-do list,” Harry rolled his eyes in the haze around him. *“Just ask for me, please.”*

“I’m in the loo! I told you!” Sirius huffed but Harry did feel him move in their link a little farther away and muffled communication happening on the other end. It didn’t take long before Sirius’s consciousness was back tuned in to his.

“Moony says to stay away from Greyback,” Sirius relayed through their link. *“He also wants you to explain this spell to him in great detail while he takes notes next you see him.”*

“Sure, yeah, heard and noted,” Harry rolled his eyes at their misplaced protectiveness. *“Did he happen to say where Greyback might be though?”*

Sirius moved away again, and there was louder grumblings on the other end before he was back. *“Remy says that he has a place somewhere in Sheffield. If you can get there, a point-me*

spell should work since he spends most nights outside his wards until late at night. Remy also reiterates that you are to go nowhere near Greyback and is offering to join if you are going to completely disregard the warning. Personally, I'd like in too if you want company," Sirius added a little excitedly at the end.

"I'm not doing anything, don't worry about me," Harry said to no one's belief at all.
"Anyway, remember to wash your hands, and I'll see you next week sometime!"

"Harry, wait!!!"

Harry tapped the palm of his hand with his wand, healing the cut and severing the connection with a large smile. Right, Operation Save Lavender Brown was back on! Well...and also save a whole bunch of kids from becoming werewolves and muggleborn deaths and Bill from getting mauled...anyway, that name was too long. With a twist, Harry popped off to Sheffield to hunt down a werewolf!

Harry found Greyback stalking a child who was a little too far away from their mother on a playground just as the sun was going down on the horizon. Harry saw red as he clenched his fists in anger, drawing blood with his nails. The whole situation was most definitely worse since this wasn't even a full moon...there were some really bad implications for what Greyback might be doing.

"Well, hullo," Harry drawled from where he was nonchalantly leaning against a tree behind the monster and inside the small forest Greyback was crouched at the edge of. "Funny finding you here this evening when I happened to be out for a stroll."

Greyback stood and spun around, crouching as he snarled and his nails grew longer, partially transforming. "Who are you, and what do you want?" He growled out. "Where did you even come from, wizard?"

Harry frowned. Oh yeah, he wouldn't know who he was...oh well, didn't matter anyway. "Give me a minute," Harry held up a finger and stared at the werewolf deeply.

“Die...I command you,” he ordered firmly, trying to pull whatever kind of death magic he happened to have but not exactly sure how to access it.

Greyback’s eyebrow went up over his beady amber eye and he smirked at the idiot in front of him. “I believe the spell is Avada Kedavra, and you’d need a wand for that,” he looked the dark wizard up and down and was absolutely not impressed. “Not that I’m going to give you the chance to try it...”

“Just giving something a go...looks like it didn’t work though,” Harry shrugged. His wand fell into his hand from its holster just as Greyback lunged.

Harry stepped aside and the man flew by him while Harry threw a silencing ward around their part of the woods. It wouldn’t do for the child or their mother to come over to see what the commotion was. *Sectumsempra!* Harry cast nonverbally at almost the same time, the spell just narrowly missing Greyback’s arm and taking out a huge chunk of the tree behind him.

Greyback’s eyes narrowed, realizing this may be a little more difficult than he originally anticipated. He dove and rolled to behind Harry who spun around in anticipation of the move. “Avada Kedavra!” he cast, the green light of the spell almost singeing Greyback’s hair as he had to drop flat to the ground to avoid it.

Greyback actually pulled his wand from his back pocket in that moment. “Incarcerous!” He cast.

“Protego!” Harry blocked the spell easily. It probably didn’t say anything good about Harry’s mental state that he was actually a bit flattered that Greyback had pulled out his wand. He wasn’t a strong wizard at all, so pulling out his wand was rarely a go-to for him. It said he was actually viewing Harry as a threat now though.

“Crucio!” Greyback cast next, hitting the tree behind where Harry had disappeared from a second before.

Harry apparated to just behind Greyback and threw one of his silver knives immediately, catching the man's leg with the blade. The werewolf snarled and turned around, his teeth growing as he more closely resembled the beast he would be on a full moon. Greyback threw the knife at Harry and another crucio at the exact same time.

Having to make a choice, Harry dodged the knife into the path of the torture curse. The curse knocked him from his feet, but Harry just screamed loudly as he jumped right back up through the pain. Greyback had already lunged at him through. Harry felt white hot pain slash through his shoulder as he spun out of the way, the werewolf's claws just catching his shoulder as Greyback overstepped and fell from his lunge off to Harry's right, also knocking the wand from Harry's hand.

Not sparing a look at his arm, Harry threw his next knife, this one embedding itself in the man's side as Greyback raised his wand once more. Harry looked around but didn't see his wand as Greyback hissed in pain and cast an Avada Kedavra at Harry, causing him to have to dodge even further from where his wand would be.

Greyback stood tall, holding the knife in his hand now and ferally growling at where Harry had fallen to the ground. The monster had to die and now. Harry narrowed his eyes; he couldn't leave him for the three more years it would take for him to kill the man in his first timeline. He didn't even know what would have happened to the child and the mother if he hadn't shown up that evening. Harry felt his second wand fall into his hand. He hadn't pulled it from the holster, but his holly wand had always had a mind of its own it seemed. He knew there were going to be consequences for using a wand with the trace on it outside of Hogwarts, but Greyback was almost on him with the knife, and he wasn't so sure Percy's guess that he might not be able to die was legitimate at all.

"Avada Kedavra!" Harry cast with the wand, letting out a breath when this time the green light caught the werewolf right in the chest.

Learning from Voldemort's mistake, Harry stood and walked over to check for himself that the man was dead, which he most definitely was. Harry fell down onto his bum beside the dead werewolf and let out a breath while the adrenaline slowly left his body. He didn't know how long it would take for someone to realize he'd used the wand, but he needed to leave quickly. Harry looked down at his wand and paused with a deep frown on his face...this wasn't his holly wand.

It might actually have been better for him to use the wand with the trace on it, Harry blinked and thought through his surprise. In his hand, he held the very familiar elder wand, the death stick. Merlin, Dumbledore was going to have a hippogriff!

Harry focused on the wand, trying to send it back to Dumbledore with his magic. Nothing happened. "Go back!" He ordered the wand next.

It just sat in his hand like it was a normal piece of wood and not some incredibly damning piece of magic. "You're a very good wand, and thank you, but you need to go one back to Dumbledore now," he tried reasoning with it next. "You're going to get me in trouble."

When still nothing happened, Harry grumbled and shoved the elder wand into the holster on his arm before standing to find the ebony wand in the grass. It didn't take long to track it down before he had to finally look at his torn shoulder with a wince. After a failed episkey, Harry conjured some bandages and wrapped it to the best of his ability one handed. He frowned at Greyback...well, there was nothing for it. He was going to have to go check in on Regulus and Umbridge, he guessed. At least he had plenty of blood on him to open the cave with.

Percy was very tired but rallying when he got closer to his rooms where he hoped his partner was waiting on him. It had taken *forever* to get away from those who he was now also calling the Time-vultures, and he was much later returning to the castle than he had planned. He quickly opened the door to his chambers to step into a dark room, only lit by the fire burning brightly in fireplace. The room wasn't empty though, he caught the sheen of amber in the light as Harry raised his glass of whiskey to take a sip.

"I'm so happy to see you. You have no idea how tiresome my coworkers can be," he sighed out loudly and tossed his robes on the hook by the door before stepping forward. He stopped immediately as Harry took another sip of his drink and Percy finally noted that he was shirtless and had a large bandage wrapped around one shoulder.

"Bloody Morgana and the horse she rode in on, Harry!" He gasped out in surprise. "What happened to you?!!"

Harry put down the glass and smiled at the man through his split lip. "I'm fine, Percy, I promise, but I could use a little help if you're up to it."

"Bloody hell!" Percy swore again before kneeling down in front of Harry to examine him better with concern on his face.

"It's just some scrapes and bruises besides my shoulder," Harry told him, putting a hand lovingly on Percy's cheek with a small smile. "Please don't be mad, but Greyback was still out there, and I didn't want him to keep doing what he did before for the next three years. We don't even know all the damage he did before, and I'm not sure what I interrupted tonight, but it was definitely bad."

Percy nodded as Harry's explanation washed over him while he was instead focusing on removing the bandages around Harry's shoulder to see it better. "What all did you try putting on it already?"

"I tried an episkey and some Essence of Murtlap, neither did much," he explained with an almost disinterested look at the four long scratches that went over his shoulder from his front to his back. "I might need stitches."

Percy sighed and conjured a wet rag to wipe off some of the blood to see it better. "I'm assuming since it was Greyback, and thankfully not the full moon, that you'll just like your steaks a little rarer now?"

Harry chuckled and winced at the movement. "At least it was me and my shoulder and not Bill and his face," he said wryly. "I already liked my steaks fairly rare anyway."

"You did kill him, right?" Percy looked up at him, a hard gleam in his eyes that said he was going to take care of it if Harry hadn't.

"Yep..." Harry lifted his glass for another sip. "He's hanging out with Umbridge currently and making friends with some inferi."

“Good,” he firmly nodded and sat back on the ground with a tired sigh. “Harry...neither one of us are healers, and a partially transformed werewolf scratch isn’t an easy injury to just take care of. We need to get you looked at. I would wager it will more easily get infected than a normal injury.”

“And who would we get to do that? St. Mungo’s?” Harry snorted with no amusement behind it but a heavy dose of bitterness.

Percy put a hand on his knee. “No, but we could get Snape. We can come up with some lie, but I’m not going to try to sew you up when I’ve never held a needle in my life.”

Harry slowly nodded. “I get it, but what could we even tell him? This is clearly from a werewolf, and Greyback is the only one I know of that can partially transform when it isn’t a full moon. Plus, I’m in the castle. I shouldn’t be able to get into the castle...I guess we could say you told me about one of the secret passages though for that one.”

“I’ll go get him and think of something to say on the way. I’m sure it’s not out of the realm of possibility for Greyback and you to run into each other and him to attack,” Percy stood and kissed Harry, just so thankful he was still alive. “While I’m gone, you figure out some way to cover these,” He ran a finger across the wolf, grim, and stag tattoo on Harry’s ribs and ended it with a tap on the cauldron that had a snake rising in the steam. Snape probably wouldn’t figure out that tattoo was for him, but it was best not to chance it.

“You aren’t mad at me?” Harry asked with a little concerned frown that stopped Percy on his way out.

“Oh, I’m pretty pissed,” Percy gave him a smile over his shoulder. “Mainly that you didn’t take me, but I get why you did it and that you saved so many people in the process, my brother included. I’ll get over it, but I’m mainly upset that our night got ruined.”

Harry nodded and gave him a lecherous look. “Trust me, I’ll make it up to you.”

“I’m holding you to that Hadrian Potter,” Percy smirked back at him before leaving the rooms to go find Snape.

Harry looked over at the end table that had the elder wand laying on it that Percy hadn't seemed to notice in his worry. He opened the drawer and put the wand in it with a frown before closing it again. He didn't know what the wand coming to him meant, or how he was going to handle Dumbledore, or what Dumbledore might be doing at this very moment since his wand had disappeared, but Harry was sure that Percy was probably right once again in his theories and this was all something they'd just have to handle in the morning.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Dumbledore is very concerned about so many things...

Severus Snape's Frustrating Night

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry frowned at the glamour over his very identity-revealing tattoos. It was fine for the average person, but it wasn't as good as the unspeakable glamour he normally wore, and Snape was not the average person. He had a feeling the man would notice that the glamour existed, even if he couldn't tell what was under it. Oh well, there were many reasons why a person wouldn't want others to see some tattoos they had that were normally covered by clothes. Regardless, Percy's door was opening, and time was up anyway for him to do anything differently.

A very stern-looking Snape followed in Percy and frowned at the injured man still sipping whiskey on the couch. "Alcohol is very bad idea when you are bleeding," he drawled before stepping forward to look at the man's shoulder. "Why am I not surprised that I find myself healing you late at night in the castle you should not even be able to gain access to anyway?" he sighed as he cast a diagnostic at the deep scratches. Harry looked around him at Percy who just smirked at his partner with a shrug. That was very not helpful as a hint for what he'd told the man.

"Thank you, Severus. I'm sorry for the inconvenience. I hate we keep dragging you into my medical issues," he smiled at his friend in thankfulness. "I asked Percy to just stitch me up, but apparently, he thought his sewing skills weren't up to the task. I wouldn't have come to you, but St. Mungo's is not dark wizard friendly at all."

"Percy did mention you'd had bad experiences with them in the past," he nodded with an understanding hum before looking up with narrowed eyes. Snape's face took on a stern look that Harry could only guess would be on a disapproving parent as strange as that sounded. "Now, care to explain why you would pick a fight with Fenrir Greyback of all people and why you were even around him to begin with?"

Harry looked over his shoulder again at Percy. "No, don't look at him," Snape moved into his line of sight and glared. "Percy spun some story about you being in the wrong place at the wrong time in Knockturn Alley. What *Percival Weasley* apparently does not know is that Greyback has been banned from most businesses in Knockturn and hasn't shown his face there in months. So...I would sincerely hope your partner is lying *for* you and actually knows what went on this evening, but I also cannot disregard the circumstances where you have lied to your partner as well."

“Er...” Harry’s eyes widened in shock at how Snape had put those pieces together, trying to ignore Percy who was heroically stifling a laugh behind the man who seemed to actually be protecting his former student for some very strange reason.

“So, it’s the first then,” Snape motioned behind himself with an eyeroll to where he really shouldn’t have been able to see Percy trying not to laugh. “Care to tell me what both of you are attempting to hide then?” He turned to keep both of them in his eyeline now.

“Well...” Harry began sheepishly. Snape, however, cut him off with a wave of his hand to stop him before tapping his wand to Harry’s shoulder and nonverbally casting some spell that had Harry suddenly, and quite painfully, stitched up with neat and excellently done little stitches.

“That’s always best to do while one is distracted,” the Potion Master smirked at them both while Harry gasped out and swore before taking another large swig of his drink.

“Bloody hell, you acerbic git of a bastard!” Harry continued with a grunt of pain and shocked look at his shoulder.

“Indeed,” Snape nodded and just continued to smirk smugly at the man. “Now, what I’ve pieced together is one...Percival Weasley is for some very unknown, shocking, and inexplicable reason an Unspeakable,” he waved his hand dramatically towards the grey robes hanging by the door that neither had even thought about hiding in the shock of Harry’s injuries.

“Oops,” Percy gave his robes an exasperated eyeroll before giving up and just plopping down on the couch beside Harry. He promptly stole Harry’s almost empty whiskey glass to refill it and keep it for himself.

“Two,” Snape held up two fingers with a glare at Harry now. “My educated guess is that you are currently employed as a hit wizard. Based on the damage to your body and that you’ve clearly spent more time in Britain than you want everyone to believe, that is the only conclusion I can come reasonably to. Now, I have not been able to determine if your cousin knows this or what your motives are for trying to befriend me might be...However, I would

really appreciate it if you would explain this to me without me forcing you to do it under Veritaserum, which I will do if I believe you to be lying.”

Harry nodded slowly in appreciation at just what all Snape had deduced...even if he was wrong, it was still impressive. Also, he fully believed that Snape could and would know if he was lying to him and would most definitely be able to sneak him some of that Veritaserum he definitely knew he had when he least expected it. “Well...” he began again as his brain fuzzed, not actually being able to come up with a good lie at the moment.

The room was silent as Harry’s brain just wasn’t working. Mostly because of the pain he was in currently. “Fuck it!” He sighed and just leaned his head on Percy’s shoulder. “I can’t come up with a good lie right now!”

Percy shook his head and laughed, motioning for Snape to have a seat. “You’ll want to sit for this then Professor. It’s a long and very convoluted explanation.”

“Indeed?” Snape did sit down as he raised an eyebrow questioningly at the two. “Pray tell... what *is* going on then? How long have you been a hit wizard? Why are some of your tattoos glamoured? And how did *you* become an Unspeakable?” He addressed them both respectively while also staring in frustration at the glamour covering part of Harry’s ribcage.

Percy kissed the top of Harry’s head on his shoulder with a little smirk. “Love? Were you actually recruited by the hit wizards? I mean, that *does* seem like something they would do. Did you turn them down or something?”

Harry snorted a laugh. “Yeah, right after I finished my mastery they approached me. I don’t even know why I took the meeting; it’s not like I was going to sign-on at that point anyway. It ended up not mattering though. When they saw my runes, they had a little heated discussion amongst themselves, figured out what I was using them for, and promptly apologized for even reaching out. They said I was clearly not going to pass their psych evaluation.”

Percy gave a full laugh at that while Snape just looked on very confused. “Right, so how much are we going to tell that nosey git then?” He asked Harry with a smirk and wave of his whiskey glass to the man who was looking like he might curse them any minute now unless they started giving him some actual information.

Harry just studied the man with his haunted, green eyes from where he didn't plan to move away from Percy's shoulder any time soon. "I want to tell you everything, Severus, but I don't think you're ready to hear everything just yet, or maybe I'm just not ready to tell it. Would you be willing to accept the *what* of my plans right now and wait to hear the *why*? The glamoured tattoos and the damage to my body are actually part of the why and very personal. I'd like to keep that to myself for just a little longer, but I promise I'll tell you one day."

Snape crossed his arms and leaned back in the armchair with a glare in the dim room, still only lit by the firelight. "What all does your cousin know?" He was not willing for Sirius Black of all people to know more than him. He fully believed that people should be allowed their secrets, but he at least wanted to know as much as that annoying man!

Harry chuckled, understanding *exactly* what the man was thinking. "Sirius has the opposite. He knows the why, but he's not ready to hear the what of my plans just yet. So, you'll know more than him in one area anyway."

"You two are ridiculous, and I haven't even met Sirius Black yet," Percy chuckled at the man who was only actually four years his senior and even then seemed so very much younger than what he remembered from when he was first in 1995.

Snape rolled his eyes before conjuring his own glass and taking the bottle of whiskey from the low coffee table. "Look...Salazar knows that I have my secrets and things I would like to keep to myself, and you do not owe me anything about your personal life and motivations. However, I *am* owed information on your plans and intentions since I was the one that vouched for you with the Order. So, if you are willing to tell me that, then we are square for now. I do reserve the right to some answers to at least a few of the questions that have been eating away at me since we met though."

"Fair," Harry grinned at him and finally peeled himself off of Percy to sit up and actually explain what was probably not going to be taken well at all. Percy put a comforting hand on his knee and settled in to study the reactions of the potion master in front of them, to step in if anything became volatile.

"I would like to answer one of your questions before we get started," Percy cut in to say. "I am an Unspeakable as you have deduced. As you should know, that is all I can tell you

though. The position of *being* an Unspeakable is not a closely guarded secret; however, what we do and our areas of research within the Department of Mysteries is secret from even our coworkers. So, I will only say that it may have some bearing on why I'm teaching DADA, but beyond that, I can't even legally tell you what I do."

Snape nodded in understanding of the explanation. Rookwood was the only Unspeakable he had ever been closely associated with, and even then, he'd maintained his distance since that Death Eater was one of the more zealous and disturbing of the Dark Lord's supporters. He was extremely glad the man was still currently rotting in Azkaban. "But you are *not* a hit wizard?" He instead asked Hadrian.

"No," Harry shook his head. "I am, as I have already told you, currently unemployed. I have my mastery in Dark Arts, and back when I was actively working, I was a dark artifact dealer and brewed potions that were on the darker side but also which were useful and helpful...I have never dealt in any potion or artifact whose only purpose was harm. Clearly, some of what I dealt in *could* cause harm, but even water can harm a person if they are submerged in it."

"Agreed, but that does not explain your purpose here unless you are about to tell me your only purpose for being in Britain is Percy," Snape drawled with a sneer that clearly showed he wasn't going to believe that excuse at all.

"I'd like to think for my own ego's sake that I *could* be," Percy glared at the man with a huff.

"Of course, dear," Harry laughed and then winced as his shoulder pulled some. "Bloody hell, werewolf scratches are no joke."

Snape nodded and pulled a vial of potion out of one of his pockets. "You will need this. Your injury is worse because of your former exposure to vampire bites. While neither injury will turn you, the residue from each will fight each other. It does not help how close their proximity on your person is," he explained, handing the potion over. "That will help dull the interaction until it can calm down over time."

Percy reached forward to take the potion from him. "Thanks, Severus. You really are going above and beyond here," Harry drank the potion gratefully, knowing the man wouldn't poison him...or well, if he did, it would be sneakier than this at the very least. "My best mate

was turned into a vampire years ago. For some odd reason, he found me quite tasty. It actually became a bit of a running joke between me and his wife, which he frankly didn't appreciate nearly as much as we did."

This caused Percy to wince at the memories of that time that were both happy and very emotionally painful. Snape noted the wince and frowned, not knowing where it came from. "Well...that was *one* of my many questions. What has become of your friend? Are you still in touch?"

"He died," Percy flatly answered for Harry. "Can we move this along some? I would like to get some sleep tonight," he added, not able to keep the strain out of his voice completely.

"Right, yeah, so pulling off the plaster..." Harry took in a deep breath and looked intensely at the man in front of them. "I'm planning to kill off old Tom and take his place. He does not fulfill Magic's requirements of a dark lord and is hurting both our cause and this society. So...I'm going to step in and try to make changes to help those who are aligned with the dark, and most importantly creatures in our society who have been systematically oppressed for centuries."

"In a nutshell," Percy added on with a laugh at the very blunt explanation.

For his part, Snape sat stunned for a moment and then slowly drained his glass of whiskey before pouring another. "You will not succeed," he then said calmly before taking another sip. "You have no chance of vanquishing the current Dark Lord, and I do not see how you, an unknown, can gain enough support to not be immediately stopped by the aurors if you try to push forward any changes, especially for regulated creatures."

Harry just waited as the silence stretched on. "Is that your only objection?" He finally asked impatiently as Snape didn't seem capable or willing to say anything else. "It's only the practicality you oppose, not the goal?"

Frankly, Snape was completely reeling. This was absolutely *not* what he'd expected his new friend to say or even within the realm of his guesses. "In theory, you fulfill the requirements of vast knowledge of the dark arts, a platform to help and support the dark, and a dark core," he eventually began with a frown to cover his racing heart as his anxiety at just what these two young men might be planning. "However, I do not see how you can gain the following

necessary or what makes *you* think you have the right to even attempt this.”

Percy opened his mouth to defend his partner, but Harry placed a hand on his knee to stop him. “No, he’s right,” he said to both of them. “I don’t inherently have *any* right. You, Severus, have just as much right as I do, or even Percy if he wanted. However, I’m willing. If someone else was able to and wanted to take my place in all this, hell, this is the *last* thing I wanted to do with my life! I’m not willing to stand by any longer though, and that goes to my motivations that I’m not willing to discuss with you yet.”

“Well...there is that one thing...” Percy raised an eyebrow at him, reminding him of the whole Master of Death thing that Harry really didn’t want to have to deal with right now.

“Yeah, well,” Harry huffed, and he glared off into the distance at Fate or Destiny or whatever. “That’s a whole other thing...*anyway*...”

“No,” Snape shook his head firmly, downing the last of this second glass of whiskey. “You will *not* be going up against the Dark Lord. I won’t allow it! He is as powerful as he is insane. Besides, you don’t have the full story. There are some extenuating circumstances that make his demise extremely unlikely...”

Harry just nodded, knowing he meant the prophesy and that there was some connection to Harry Potter that Snape knew existed even if he didn’t know the full prophesy. “Yeah, yeah... You know stuff, I know stuff, we really should compare notes sometime, but I doubt you’re going to willing do that now...”

Harry raised an eyebrow at the man whose lips pursed as he glared right back. “Regardless, I clearly have no nefarious intentions against your Order if we are both out for Tom’s death currently, so that should allay some of your concerns, right?”

“For the Order, yes, for yourself, no,” Snape put down his glass to cross his arms and glare more sternly at the man. “I will not allow you to commit suicide, which is basically what your plans amount to. If for some miraculous reason you do succeed in usurping the Dark Lord, then you would have the Order itself to contend with. British wixen are unaccustomed to believing in anything besides Light is good and Dark is bad.”

“He already has Sirius Black and my parents listening to him though,” Percy smirked at the man. Snape had to admit, he did have a small point there. “Hadrian can be very persuasive and charismatic when he really tries to be.”

“Plus, I just killed Greyback,” Harry had to grin at that, even if his shoulder hurt. “Now, I can try to get to werewolves to my side since they frankly didn’t like him either.”

“That will not help you much at all, even *if* you are successful,” Snape grumbled, now realizing he was more than likely going to need to go discuss this with Sirius for Hadrian’s own good, as terrible as that plan sounded.

Harry shrugged with a wince. “Well, I already have the goblins on my side and the house elves. Although, I *did* send back the house elves’ list of demands and tell them to add more. They really are terrible at negotiation.”

“I think that makes *you* the one that’s terrible at negotiation,” Percy laughed at him, kissing the side of his head.

Harry grumbled. “Well, I want them to at least add the provision of immediate freedom for any and all house elves that want it as well as housing and a means to gainful employment while they set themselves up. That didn’t go over very well though. Some thought it was a good idea to add even if they didn’t want it themselves and others thought it was too scandalous. Last I heard, Kreacher of all people, had some excellent ideas for some caveats to add that would get both sides more on board.”

“Wait, wait! Excuse me...did you say that the goblins are supporting you?!!” Snape sputtered in complete shock. The goblins were neutral. They were always neutral in wixen conflicts unless they were the ones fighting against the wixen. He wasn’t even going to try to process the ramification of *house elves* joining a side!!

“Tentatively,” Harry huffed at all the negotiations that had been going on. “They’ve actually assigned me a lot of paperwork and contract stuff which I really don’t have the legal knowledge to understand. I’ll probably end up agreeing to something that will have me selling them my soul or something eventually unless I get some help.” He was definitely going to have to get Flitwick to help him some or hire a solicitor...that might be a good idea anyway.

Snape slowly nodded. "You are going to get yourself killed, Percy, and me too..." he concluded. "Forget Azkaban, we will all be killed..."

Harry looked up at Percy questioningly. "You know...maybe I should try to get the dementors on my side..." he remarked, decidedly not looking over towards where the elder wand was hanging out in Percy's side table drawer.

"You bloody will not...!" Snape's oncoming rant was interrupted as a silvery phoenix patronus glided through Percy's wall.

"Severus, please come to my office as soon as possible," Dumbledore's voice emanated from the patronus before it disappeared.

Snape frowned angrily at the place the phoenix had been moments before. "If this is because you are in the castle..." he turned to pin Hadrian with a glare.

"Hey! I'm very good at sneaking around. I find it personally offensive you think I would get caught. This is something different," Harry protested, knowing exactly why Dumbledore was probably freaking out.

Snape stood to go before looking at both men on the couch. "You," he pointed at Hadrian. "You leave before anyone catches you in the morning, and you," he turned to Percy. "You will provide me a list of all those secret passages you said earlier that your brothers know about. It is unsafe to leave then unwarded."

"But what if I want to visit," Harry pouted, knowing he could just ask Dobby to take him in and out of the castle, so it wasn't a big deal regardless, but still wanting to tease Snape.

"Make nice with the headmaster then," Snape smirked at him before turning on his heel and quickly striding through the door and out into the castle.

“Well...at least he bought the secret passage lie I told...although, I guess it was technically the truth,” Percy shrugged. “What do you think Dumbledore wants?”

“I have some ideas,” Harry pursed his lips. “I might happen to have his wand hiding in that drawer.” He pointed to the side table.

Percy started before he frowned as sudden understanding dawned on him. “You mean the *elder wand*, right? One of the Deathly Hallows and belonging to the Master of Death? That wand?”

“Yeah...It might have defected to me when I really, *really* wanted to kill Greyback and didn’t have my own wand in my hand at the time,” he sheepishly explained with a grimace.

“Morgana! I’d hate to be Snape right now,” Percy laughed and stood, holding out his hand to help Harry up. “Let’s get you to bed. You’re going to be soooo sore tomorrow.”

“We’re not going to talk about this whole Master of Death thing then?” Harry took the hand up but with a confused frown.

“Nothing to talk about,” Percy helped him towards the bedroom. “We need to set up some controlled experiments and get the resurrection stone next...I think we could use the chamber...”

“Ergh! Let’s just sleep for now,” Harry grumbled, seeing more homework in his future. “Besides, I want to hear all about your meeting at some point.”

“Oh yeah...so Davids is definitely there already, and apparently there *is* a procedure for time-travel,” Percy laughed as they entered the bedroom and Harry was already asking questions.

Severus Snape frowned at the almost frantically pacing man he found when he entered the headmaster's office. It had already been a *very* trying evening, and he suddenly realized it was clearly nowhere near over yet. He wished he'd had more of the whiskey in Percy's room now.

"Headmaster? You wanted to see me?" He crossed his arms and waited for the man he'd never seen quite so agitated before to acknowledge him.

"Severus! Have you heard anything from Tom or your contacts or anyone this evening?!" Dumbledore stopped and pinned Snape with his bright, blue eyes that were shockingly lacking their normal twinkle.

Snape frowned. He didn't suppose Hadrian counted for what the headmaster was asking. "No. Did something happen?" He asked, wondering just what calamity had struck their world now.

Dumbledore waved his hands out in exasperation in something between a surrender and a shrug. "I don't know...something is happening, and I am very concerned, Severus."

"Care to be more specific, headmaster. We *are* in a war if you have not noticed," Snape raised an eyebrow in question. Something very dramatic must have happened, why wouldn't the man just spit it out?! Albus really was very frustrating all the time.

"My wand went missing," Dumbledore sighed and sank into the chair behind his desk, looking older than he had just moments before. "That coupled with what you said about Tom not being able to access Harry's mind anymore...it's starting to sound like we might have another player in all this. It's the only thing I can think of since Harry is incapable of blocking his own mind and no one should even know about my wand..."

"What about your wand?" Snape was now very interested. He *had* just heard of a third player, one which he didn't believe for a second would be effective or could do either of the things Dumbledore was suggesting, or even why he want to do either. Why would anyone want Dumbledore's wand anyway? It's not like the man couldn't just floo over to Diagon and get another one.

Dumbledore waved his hand dismissively, which always meant he refused to tell Severus whatever he was alluding to. It was highly irritating, even more than Hadrian who had at least explained why he didn't want to tell Snape everything. It was like 1992 again when Dumbledore only ever gave anyone half answers even when he seemed to know what was going on. Severus still wasn't sure what exactly had caused the petrifications that year, only that Potter had somehow stopped it. This year seemed to be heading a very similar direction.

"Headmaster, if I do not know what is going on, then I cannot help you," he tried a new tactic.

Dumbledore's head shot up and he narrowed his eyes at Snape. "Actually, I *do* think you can help," he began as an idea seemed to be forming for him. "You will teach Harry Occlumency. Yes! That's just the thing to solve this."

"Excuse me?!!" Snape's eyebrows shot up at the insane drivel that was pouring from the elderly man's mouth. "I will do no such thing!"

"Yes, that's it," Dumbledore was nodding now, completely ignoring Snape's protests. "I'll tell him it's to keep him safe from Tom...no, it'll keep the Order and his godfather safe. Yes, that's better. While you're teaching him, you will search his mind for whatever is keeping Voldemort out and who put it there. That may lead to information on my wand as well. They *must* be connected, either that or Tom is getting much wilier in his old age, which doesn't bode well for us either."

Snape winced at the flash of pain that Dumbledore seemed to always purposefully inflict. "So, you want me dead..." he said as dryly as possible to hopefully cause the man to think over just what he was asking. "If the Dark Lord were to ever find out I was teaching Potter Occlumency, it would be my immediate demise."

Dumbledore just waved him off, seemingly uncaring. "Tell him it's how you convinced me to let you root through Harry's mind then. He wanted you to find out what is going on as well."

Snape sighed again at the man's obtuseness. "Legilimency as you are suggesting would cause a great deal of pain to Potter. It is an invasive spell."

Dumbledore was already standing, clearly expecting Snape to leave for the evening now that he had his orders. “I will tell him it’s necessary. Harry will do what he must. He’s had worse anyway. I’ll set it up with him. Clear your Thursday evenings...hmm, we’ll call it Remedial Potions or something like that. Good evening, Severus...”

Clearly dismissed, Snape was almost in a daze as he unconsciously stepped out of the office onto the moving staircase. Was the headmaster really suggesting he torture a student to get information? Clearly, he didn’t say it in so many words, but that was essentially what he’d requested. Also, it was highly concerning Dumbledore’s throw-away suggestion that Potter had ‘had worse’ as well. What was that supposed to mean? He knew the Dark Lord had cast the torture curse on the boy a couple times the year before, but Dumbledore’s comment had sounded like it ran deeper than that.

It was beginning to sound like Snape needed to watch Potter much more closely and fast, before his now booked Thursdays. It also sounded like he needed to meet with Sirius Black as soon as possible, now both to discuss Hadrian’s suicidal plans and how to stop him as well as to discuss exactly what his suspicions were about Potter’s homelife. He was starting to believe the man might actually have something there. The implications of the Boy-Who-Lived in an abusive home though, that he wasn’t sure what to make of it. It could tear their world apart. Who had placed Potter with his relatives? Who had kept him out of the public eye all those years? And how in Salazar’s name was he going to get out of these Occlumency lessons?!

Harry turned over in his sleep and groaned, immediately awake from the shooting pain coming from his shoulder. “Merlin’s balls,” he groaned out and rolled over to his other side.

Percy chuckled and kissed his messy hair. “I told you that you’d be sore today. You need to head out soon to make it to the Tower before breakfast,” he warned.

“Can’t I just stay here today? It’s Sunday,” Harry cracked open one eye and then the other to plead with his partner who was looking quite spectacular with his long, red hair in crazy curls, his soft blue-stripped pajamas, and his kind, blue eyes sleepily looking at Harry.

“Too many people would ask questions. I bet you weren’t at dinner last night either,” Percy reminded him, causing Harry to grimace but snuggle just a little closer to Percy anyway, going to soak up as much comfort as possible in the few minutes he had before the man kicked him out of bed.

“You have another of Snape’s pain potions?” Harry asked, and immediately smiled when Percy summoned one from the other room and handed it to him. “Angels! Both of you!” He quickly swallowed the recommended amount.

“No more than three doses a day,” Percy reminded him as he ran his fingers through Harry’s long hair to get some of the knots out.

“Right, what is it?” Harry put the vial on the nightstand and leaned on his good shoulder to look at Percy better. “You’re looking very contemplative this morning, which means something is on your mind. You have the ‘I’m not sure I should ask’ look on your face you get sometimes, usually when I’m doing something questionable. I don’t *think* I’ve done anything you don’t already know about recently though.”

Percy sighed and put his hand on Harry’s hip, playing with a little hole in Dudley’s old t-shirt that Harry kept in his room to sleep in. It was making Harry *very* nervous. “That’s not it,” he seemed not able to meet Harry’s eyes. “It was something Snape said last night...”

“Right,” Harry said slowly and waited. “Snape will be a problem; we already know that. At least he just thinks I’m incapable and not evil or something. What did he say to cause these wrinkles though?” Harry ran his thumb across the Percy’s furrowed brow, getting just the hint of a smile from the man.

“Nothing,” Percy sighed loudly. “He just said that you hadn’t come to Britain for me, which is completely true since you live here, but it got me thinking. Are we only together because there was no one else? I mean, if we fix everything here, you’re going to have options. I won’t be the only one anymore.”

Harry was completely shocked, and his eyes widened in surprise. “Perce...is that what you think? That you’re some kind of last resort or something? I mean...I know I wasn’t too quick on wanting to label what we have, but that wasn’t because I didn’t want to be with you, I just didn’t think it was anyone’s bloody business! I’m so sorry if I made you feel that way!”

“No,” Percy shook his head and put a hand on Harry’s cheek to stop him. “No, it’s just that I know you were with one of the other dark arts students in Amsterdam for a while and you came back to Britain for all of us. You could find him again once this is all over with and you can put yourself first for once.”

Harry wasn’t sure where this had come from or if it were always lying dormant under their relationship. He didn’t like it one bit! “First of all, he dumped me and was a right git about it!” Harry now sat up to look down at Percy better. “I want *you*, no one else! Who else is stupid enough to jump back in time 12 years with me and then go and make me an emotional support inferius?!! There is literally no one else on the planet I’d rather annoy for the rest of my life than you!”

“Yeah, but...” Percy trailed off, not seeming to get it.

“What about you though?” Harry asked, realizing that maybe this wasn’t actually about him at all. “I was there. I was convenient, and I didn’t ask questions you didn’t want to answer. I can’t believe you would put up with me if this wasn’t all real, but maybe it’s too much for you. Would you rather be with someone else? Your life would be easier; you should find someone who isn’t so damaged.”

Harry felt like his heart was literally tearing apart. The edges of his vision were getting dark like he might blackout, and he was doing his absolute best to hold himself together, to act like this wasn’t the most important conversation he’s had in his entire life and that he might just not live through it. He’d have to be strong for Percy, so he could leave him and know it was ok.

“What?! No!” Percy shot up in the bed and put his hands on either side of Harry’s face. “Breathe, love...” he said calmly, catching on to how much this was affecting Harry even if he was hiding it. “It’s going to be ok, neither of us are going anywhere.”

“Harry...” Percy said clearly, keeping eye contact as Harry slightly calmed down. “I’m so sorry. That’s not what I meant at all. I just didn’t want you to stay with me out of some kind of obligation from a future that no longer exists. I love you though, and I don’t want anyone else. I choose you. That’s why I bloody well jumped through time with you!”

“Percy Weasley, don’t you do that to me again,” Harry ordered with a frown before letting out a breath of relief and pushing Percy back to where he could lay on top of him on the bed, to make sure he couldn’t go anywhere at least for now. “If you want to break up with me, I understand, but never assume I don’t want to be with you. I love you, and you’re the best thing in my life.”

“Then you just go ahead and believe the same for me,” Percy lifted his head to kiss Harry’s lips. “I don’t want to break up with you. I just let the insecurity get to me for a minute. I’m sorry.”

“Next time, let’s just shag or something when you’re feeling insecure, right? Sounds like a better way of dealing with it to me,” Harry grumbled, wishing he wasn’t currently very injured and with stitches so he could make good on that.

Percy laughed. “I believe the experts suggest communication instead.”

“Merlin, *that* I’m not good at,” Harry rolled his eyes before kissing Percy again. “We really should recruit a mind-healer to our side. Oh, and a solicitor as well, that was a thought I had last night, one that was actually helpful instead of panic inducing.”

“I’m never going to live this down, am I?” Percy gave a fake sigh and smile at the man on top of him.

“Nope,” Harry popped the ‘p’ with a smirk. “Especially, since Death might not be able to find me or some such rot, so I’m not allowed to die first or whatever your stipulations were.”

“Yes...experiments,” Percy nodded, and shifted a grumbling Harry off of him to jump out of bed and start planning excitedly.

“I should be concerned that you want to experiment on me!” Harry called after him. “And Merlin knows I wish I meant that in the sexual sense!”

“Get to breakfast before my brother comes looking for you!” Percy called back from where he was already making notes in a notebook for things he wanted to test out with Harry. “And take the elder wand with you. I don’t want a deathly hallow lying around my rooms where some embodiment of Death might come looking for it.”

“Wait...you don’t think there’s an actual *being* that’s Death, right?” Harry was ashen as he came out of the bedroom to ask in shock. “You don’t think I’m actually going to meet Death, do you?!”

Percy barely looked up from his notes with a shrug. “If you do, ask him if a dementor could put a human’s soul into an already created inferius body, will you? I’ve been trying to figure that one out for ages.”

“I may love you, but I also hate you,” Harry glared at him while painfully trying to pull on his jeans.

“Well, you’re stuck with me apparently,” Percy did look up to smile at him fondly at that one, infinitely glad their morning conversation hadn’t gone as badly as he’d expected it to go.

He wasn’t sure what he would do without Harry. He hadn’t told his partner yet, but he’d loved Harry from well before they’d gotten together. He’d loved him from when he’d taken the time to help George get back on his feet after losing Fred, when he’d cheered Ginny on at her quidditch matches even after they’d broken up, how he’d just patiently read a book when vampire Ron got hungry and wanted to snack on him making jokes to Hermione about it the whole time, and when he’d fallen apart at every tragedy and then got right back up again time and again to keep living. He just kept everyone else around him from falling apart and supported everyone around him, making everyone feel loved, even if it hurt Harry himself. That was something Percy swore to keep from happening this time. If nothing else, *he* was going to keep Harry together, and love Harry, and make sure that his partner had someone in his life that put him first since he clearly didn’t do that for himself.

“Here, let me help you,” Percy strode over to save Harry from the shirt that was clearly beyond his current capabilities to pull over his head. “Make sure the glamour covers your injuries.”

“Hey, Percy...” Harry was grinning at him when Percy pulled the neck of the shirt over Harry’s head.

“Yes, my love?”

“Greyback is dead and can’t kill Lavender, that’s one death we stopped,” he grinned widely at something they had actually accomplished.

Percy chuckled and helped him put his arms through the sleeves. “Now, you just have to worry that Snape will run off to rat you out to your godfather.”

“I doubt it,” Harry frowned, not overly concerned. “They really hate spending any time with each other at all. Besides, if he does, at least that means I don’t have to break the whole dark lord plans to Siri and he can just get his whole freak-out out of the way.”

“Hmm,” Percy mused, thinking Harry might not be quite reading the situation as it was. “Ten galleons says you get a letter from Sirius about it before Wednesday.”

“I’ll take that,” Harry grinned, really not thinking they would purposely spend time together of their own volition. “I should probably owl Siri that I’m still alive though...I did mention I’d asked him and Remus for Greyback’s location, right?”

Percy sighed and just shoved him towards the door. “You better have your DADA essay written before class on Monday. I’m not taking werewolf murder as an excuse for it being late!”

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Harry Potter is acting suspicious...although, Snape tends to think he's always acting suspicious...

Recruitment

Chapter Notes

Is it just me or did anyone else picture Severus Snape as more of a mid-thirties Dave Navarro instead of a fifties Alan Rickman (who was amazing, don't get me wrong)?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ron, Hermione, Sephie, and Neville met Harry on his way to the Great Hall in an empty corridor. “Hey guys!” He smiled broadly at the worried group. “Looks like someone was finally forgiven!” He remarked to Neville who was holding Sephie who looked very grumpy in her pink jumper that morning.

“She made it clear it was only probationary,” Neville looked at the cat in his arms with a bit of concern.

“Two questions ...” Ron held up two fingers with a chastising look on his face that Harry wasn’t sure he’d ever seen on young Ron yet but which he’d gotten a lot from much older Ron. “One, why was Dobby popping in and out of the dorm grabbing things for you last night when you know Nev and I would end up having to cover for you with Seamus and Dean, and two, why does your cat’s eyes glow red in the dark...granted, I might not want to know the answer to that one since I was the one she decided to scare into an early grave when she woke me up sleeping on my chest.”

“While you answer...” Hermione motioned to her unbraided hair. “You’re slacking on your job.”

Harry chuckled and also winced when he gathered her hair and the movement pulled on his injured shoulder. He felt his own invisible ponytail shrug over his shoulder since Percy was remarkably bad at braiding and had only pulled it back into one of his ever-present hair bands since Harry couldn’t lift his arm that much to do his own hair that morning.

Even with Percy’s hair being slightly longer than it was originally as a 19-year-old, it was not long enough to pull into a ponytail with his glamour on, so Harry found it amusing that no

one had commented on the fact that the DADA professor always seemed to have one or two hair ties around his wrist or on his person even when his hair didn't look long enough to pull back.

"You injured, mate?" Neville asked in concern, shifting the inferius in his arms to be a little more comfortable.

"Just a minor shoulder thing," Harry brushed him off with a smile while he braided Hermione's hair quickly in the hallway. "Right, so I'm sorry about Dobby, but I was waiting on your brother a while and wanted to look over the house elves' list of demands...which Hermione, you'll be happy to hear I sent back and told them to add more onto it, and I also needed my toothbrush."

"I approve..." She gave him a little side-eyed smile. "Any my parents approve of your oral hygiene."

Ron grumbled and crossed his arms. "Well, Dean and Seamus think you spent the night in the infirmary with a stomach bug now, so look ill if they bring it up. Second question though... the naked, demon cat?"

"Well, she's not a *normal* cat, but really, nothing is normal in our world," Harry didn't meet their eyes as he finished and tied off Hermione's hair. "Er...Percy kind-of made her for me, but she's such a sweetie, isn't she," he cooed to the cat at the end.

"I have a feeling I'm going to want you to take her," Neville paled some and held the cat out in anticipation of his friend explaining exactly what he meant by that. If Harry was avoiding saying it this much, then it must be highly questionable at the very least.

Harry went to grab her but winced once again. "Er...maybe you should keep her for a little while. The shoulder thing is a bit of an annoyance."

"What did my brother for make you that somehow resembles a cat, Hadrian James Potter-Black?!" Ron now moved slightly to stand between the cat and Hermione who just rolled her

eyes at him and reached around to pet the cat anyway to her boyfriend's frustration. "Is she transfigured from something? What is she transfigured from?!"

"Shh!" Harry looked around them quickly but didn't see anyone. "Don't use that name out in the open...Snape would have a meltdown if he heard you!"

"You're going to have to tell him at some point, Harry. I haven't known about all this long, but even that one time in Hogsmeade, and I could tell you're both getting attached," Neville reminded him as Hermione took the cat from the grateful teen.

"Yeah, well...I at least broke my plans to him last night about...you know, stuff... so let's let that sink in first, then I'll do my best to keep him from hating me when I tell him the rest," he sighed tiredly.

"Why'd you see Snape last night? I thought you were with Percy?" Hermione now frowned at him in suspicion even as she kissed the top of Sephie's bald head. "How did he take it though?"

Harry shrugged. "Percy refused to stitch me up even though he's proven he's not squeamish around blood...apparently Molly never taught him to sew, so he got Snape who, of course, knew a spell, probably even invented it himself," Harry rolled his eyes and started walking towards the Great Hall again.

"Anyway, Snape's a suspicious git, as we all know, so he'd put together some of the information. Overall, he took it well. He just said I was going to die and get everyone around me killed as well...the usual."

"What did you do to need to get stitched up?! And how exactly did my brother prove he isn't squeamish around blood?!!" Ron's voice had risen to an octave that would make an opera singer proud in his shock. "And don't think I've forgotten about the cat!!"

Harry stopped right before they would enter a busy hallway to give them a stern look they had all yet to see on his face. "We can talk about all this later when we're behind a privacy ward. For now, just know that I took care of a problem that you don't need to know about.

I'm fine and Percy is fine. And there is nothing wrong with my cat. She is just a little extra magical, and that's all you need to know for now."

They all collectively swallowed a bit of fear until Harry's face immediately cleared up and he looked fifteen again. "Professor!" He greeted the Charms professor who had just walked up to their group with a raised eyebrow from where he seemed to already be leaving breakfast.

"Mr. Potter, could you stop by my office after your breakfast?" Filius Flitwick asked with an air of it being important. Harry was certain it was about his 'inner circle' meeting...that now needed to be moved if Snape was going to seal off all the secret passageways...bugger!

Harry nodded firmly. "I'll eat a couple eggs, some toast, and head right there!"

"No hurry. I'll just be doing my marking," he nodded to them all before continuing on his way.

"See...you never know who's just going to pop up," Harry warned them again. Thankfully Flitwick knew everything anyway, but it could have been McGonagall. Dumbledore was still avoiding him, so at least they were safe there. "Anyway...how's the extra homework going?"

"I've only gotten through the first chapter of the book...it's really complicated," Neville wrinkled his nose in frustration at the ancient Occlumency book Ron had just passed off to him.

"You'll get it, Nev. You picked it up really well in the future, so I know you can do it," Harry assured him vehemently, knowing how Neville was very unsure of himself at this point in time.

"I think I'm ready to give it a go," Hermione remarked confidently to no one's surprise.

"I'm almost there, but everything's still a bit shaky in here. I don't think it'd hold up to anyone pushing yet," Ron tapped his temple to illustrate the point.

Harry just nodded in pride and love for his friends who were really working hard at shielding their minds. “You all are doing brilliant! Hermione, would you rather that I test your shields, or would you be more comfortable with Percy? I promise that if either of us do get through them, we’re not going to dig into your memories.”

“You, definitely!” Hermione shot a little scared and embarrassed look at the head table where Ron’s older brother was already pouring himself some tea.

“Percy’s office this evening then!” He nodded as they made their way towards the Gryffindor table. “You all can see how it goes, and it might help you as you’re working on your own.”

Harry’s injured shoulder was roughly collided with from behind as Malfoy pushed past their group with a hissed “Potty!” Harry’s breath caught in pain as he willed himself to not make any outward show of just how very much that had hurt. He did turn a sickly shade of white though as he bit his tongue.

“Hey! Watch where you’re going!” Ron snarled after the Slytherin as all Harry’s friends glanced at him in fear to see just how he was going to react to the spoiled brat.

After a couple deep breaths, Harry just nodded and started walking again to a mostly empty spot at the Gryffindor table. “I can’t believe that prat! Thinks he owns the school!” Ron was still fuming.

“That was very mature of you, Harry,” Hermione said only slightly patronizingly while Harry eyed the bowl of eggs that was just a bit too far out of his reach with his bum shoulder that was now throbbing.

“Hermione...I really hope at this point that I’m above cursing fifteen-year-olds whose only offense is being spoiled and emotionally abused by his father...even if it’ll be years before he will be willing to admit it to himself,” Harry rolled his eyes at her belief that he’d just hex Malfoy like he would have when they were both children. “Please pass the eggs, Ron.”

“They’re right in front of you,” Ron grumbled, still shooting murderous looks over to the Slytherin table.

“I can’t exactly reach that far right now...shoulder,” he reminded them with a grimace.

“I got you,” Neville jumped to grab the eggs and started loading up Harry’s plate. “Just say when...”

“What do you mean about Malfoy’s father?” Hermione asked, passing some sausage to Sephie who was eating it happily.

Harry thanked Neville and shoveled some eggs into his mouth. He chewed slowly, weighing his words heavily since he didn’t want to say anything that would break future Draco’s trust even if he was in the past currently.

“Lucius Malfoy has already tried to kill me...erm...once or maybe twice at this point... definitely once,” he finally said since he thought it was the end of fifth year in the ministry where he’d racked up the second time the man tried to kill him. “Anyway, he’s not a good person. Actually, I don’t really even know how involved he is with everything right now... maybe I should put him on my list...though, he did try to turn things around at the end...”

Harry trailed off as he tried to decide if he needed to kill Lucius Malfoy or not. It would definitely make Narcissa’s life easier, and Draco would maybe avoid the worst of the man’s manipulations. Lucius had gone to prison right after the war though, so Harry wasn’t sure how redeemable he might be currently since he’d had very little interactions with the man.

“Merlin...I’m going to have to talk to Snape or Draco I guess to get the full picture,” he finally concluded with a huff. He really wanted to avoid talking to Draco if at all possible since they had made absolutely no inroads into being friends at this point in time. “Maybe Dobby can fill me in without having to go to them.”

“What are we talking about exactly?” Neville asked with a look on his face that said he knew *exactly* what Harry was talking about and didn’t approve.

Harry just buttered a piece of toast with a smirk at him. “Hey, Nev...are you planning to go home for Christmas or are you going to stay at the castle?”

“Er...Gran wants me home...” Neville trailed off with a concerned raise of his eyebrow.

Harry just nodded and bit off a huge bite of the toast. “Thanks! Good to know!”

“Harry...you will not be killing my Uncle Algie...” Neville leaned in to quietly hiss at Harry insistently.

Hermione and Ron’s heads shot up to look at the two of them in shock. “Who? Me? I wouldn’t hurt a bowtruckle,” Harry laughed and shut down the conversation with a pointed glance to everyone around them. “Besides, it’s just now October...a lot can happen in two months’ time.”

Potter was acting strange; Snape concluded from where he was stirring his tea slowly at the head table and studying the Golden Trio that had recently seemed to add Longbottom to the core group along with that naked animal Potter treated as a baby. When his godson had shoved past Potter, Snape had already pulled his wand out of his sleeve to stop whatever fight was sure to ensue, but Potter hadn’t risen to the occasion. Yes, he’d seemed affected...he’d stood still and turned pale like he was pushing down his anger or something before just shaking his head and continuing along as if nothing had happened. That was not the hot-headed behavior the Gryffindor brat was known for showing.

He watched while Potter seemed to be mildly upset at something before just shrugging and pushing whatever it was aside once again. Longbottom was acting strangely too through all this. He’d put food on Potter’s plate and then seemed to be angry or upset about something himself that shocked the other two-thirds of the Golden Trio before they all look around themselves and seemed to change the subject.

What was going on? There seemed to be some dissent amongst the Gryffindor clique...or, they were planning something. The second seemed much more likely knowing that group. It must have something to do with Draco if they were not engaging in their normal adolescent taunting. If so...he would be willing to bet his best silver cauldron that Sirius was behind this and was helping his godson with a prank. Snape narrowed his eyes and tapped his wand on the table, conjuring a piece of paper and a quill. He was going to need to send that note immediately to Sirius for a meeting to put a stop to all this insanity with Hadrian, Potter, and everyone involved.

Snape had just finished his letter requesting a meeting when Potter pushed away from the table and hurried off, leaving his naked animal with the Granger girl. That was interesting... he never usually left the animal. Snape stood and decided to follow along behind the teen since his friends seemed to be remaining behind to eat a more leisurely breakfast without him.

Potter was laughably easy to follow as he seemed to pause occasionally to look out a window or tie his shoe or scratch his head like he was thinking about something. It was almost like he knew he was being followed and was seeing how long Snape would stick with him. That was absurd though. Severus Snape was a spy and very well versed in remaining hidden when surveilling a person. There was no way Potter knew he was being followed.

He let Potter get a little farther away from him to be safe and melted into the shadows. They seemed to be heading towards the Charms classroom or possibly Flitwick's office. He wasn't sure which as Potter turned a corner in front of him. Snape heard a pained yelp and hurried forward in concern. Skidding to a stop in a deserted hallway, Snape raised his wand and lit it with a nonverbal lumos spell.

It was empty...there were no classrooms, supply cupboards, or secret passages that he knew of where Potter could have disappeared to in the amount of time it had taken him to turn the corner. He ran his hand along the stone wall, searching for something he must be missing. Potter was gone...had the cry been from him? What had happened? Had he been attacked?

"Point me, Harry Potter," he cast with his wand next, and the wand spun around before just pointing straight up to the ceiling. It shouldn't have done that. The students were trackable in the castle to all professors...Potter should not have the knowledge needed to keep himself from being tracked...he also shouldn't be able to keep someone out of his mind...something was going on and Snape felt like he was almost to the answer...it was like he knew what it was but was missing some crucial step to put it together to make sense.

Snape made his way to Filius's office as it seemed the most likely direction Potter had been heading since the Charms classroom wouldn't have been in use on a Sunday. He paused in the doorway wondering just how paranoid he was being, but then decided that with Potter that answer was decidedly that one could never be *too* paranoid. That had been proven over and over again since the boy was an infant.

He promptly knocked at the open door. "Filius," he greeted his colleague who looked up at him from a large pile of marking with a questioning but not upset look on his face at the interruption.

"Ah, Severus...how are you this weekend?" The man motioned for him to come in and sit. "What can I help our Potion Master with today?"

"Have you seen Potter just now?" Snape sank into the slightly too short couch that always made him feel like a child with a frown. "I was walking behind him in the corridor and heard a cry, then he seemed to have disappeared."

Filius paused where he had just been about to offer his colleague tea. "Mr. Potter? He was supposed to come and discuss a project I have him working on after breakfast," he said, but shook his head, with a dismissive wave of his hand. With his knowledge of just who Harry Potter really was, he wasn't concerned at all about him while in the castle.

"I wouldn't worry. He'll pop in any time now. There are more secret passages in this castle than even Dumbledore knows about, I'm sure. He probably just forgot something in Gryffindor Tower and made a detour."

The yelp he'd heard earlier had sounded like someone was in pain though. Snape didn't have any solid evidence, but the fact he couldn't track Potter was concerning in itself. "I tried to track him though..."

"Hey Professor...sorry it took me a while at breakfast," Potter had appeared in the doorway almost instantaneously, only Snape's years of Occlumency training kept him from jumping out of his skin.

“Merlin, Potter, you know not to interrupt your professors!” He growled, more in anger at his own reactions than Potter’s sudden appearance. And, honestly, the boy looked pretty bad. He was pale and sweating, and his hands seemed to be shaking some.

“Are you alright, Mr. Potter?” Flitwick asked in concern, also noting the boy’s odd behavior.

“Oh, yeah, fine...I think I might be getting a touch of a cold,” Potter smiled insipiently at them. “I’ll stop by Madam Pomfrey’s after our meeting.”

“Of course, of course,” Filius nodded firmly. “Severus? Was there anything you needed from me?”

“Hm, no,” Snape stood, now feeling almost embarrassed at his actions but also still suspicious at whatever he’d witnessed in the corridor. He was going to head straight to the owlery to send that letter to Black...*Sirius*! (It was still frustrating he had to call the man by his first name since there were now two Blacks). Then, he was going to spend some time relaxing on his Sunday by trying to figure out just what that animal was that produced the potion ingredients Hadrian had sent him.

“Have a good day, Professor!” Potter called after him and Snape sneered, wondering if there was something he could give the boy detention for, but giving it up as not worth his time and strode purposefully down the corridor.

“Merlin, Flitwick!” Harry collapsed onto the low couch Snape had been sitting on just moments before and dug a potion vial out of his pocket. “Ward it please!” He waved to the door while take a large swig of whatever was in the vial.

Filius made sure they would not be overheard or disturbed before turning back around to see a twenty-seven-year-old man sitting on his couch and holding his arm like it was injured. “What happened?” Flitwick promptly stepped over to look at the man’s shoulder in concern.

“I’m fine, I promise,” Harry took in a hissed break of pain when the professor pulled his sleeve up slightly to expose a bandage that definitely needed to be changed based on the amount of blood that had seeped through.

“*That* is not fine,” Flitwick narrowed his eyes at the man before summoning a first-aid kit from a corner cupboard. “How did this happen?”

Harry hummed evasively before just banishing his shirt that was now also stained with blood. “I’ll call Dobby to bring me a new one before I leave,” he explained. “I, er...well, I dealt with our Greyback problem, so now I am free to approach the werewolves to see if they will join our side.”

Flitwick didn’t react as he peeled back the bandage and banished it. He opened the kit and pulled out a clean bandage. “Hmm, well, good riddance to that monster. Who stitched you up? This looks well done, especially for a werewolf scratch, even if it wasn’t the full moon.”

“Snape did,” Harry winced as the new bandage was pressed down and taped. “I wasn’t trying to be suspicious with him here just now, but the Weasley twins yanked me into a secret passage on the way here by my injured arm, and I almost crucio’d them for it!”

“Unforgiveables, Mr. Potter, really?” Flitwick raised a judging eyebrow before sitting on the armchair in front of Harry and flicking his wand to get the tea to start brewing.

“I said *almost*,” Harry rolled his eyes and scoffed, he would absolutely never actually curse the twins no matter what they did. However, they were at war, so Flitwick was going to have to be a little more flexible in his morals. “Anyway...the twins are going to be a small problem. I promised I would talk to them later and explain things, but they caught me staying the night in Percy’s rooms and understandably have questions.”

Harry was fuming at the twins, himself, future George who’d never told him, and just fate in general. Honestly, it was quite brilliant of the twins, and made oh so much sense now in hindsight. But, apparently, they hadn’t been quite as nice to him in his third year as he’d always thought. They didn’t just part with the Marauder’s Map out of the goodness of their hearts for a poor third year in need, no...they’d learned how to copy it first.

“How in Hecate’s name are you going to explain that?!” Flitwick asked with an amused chuckle at someone else falling victim to those two menaces.

Harry grumbled and wondered if he could just obliviate them. However, he would have to find their version of the map then too, and he didn't like his chances against the Weasley twins trying to hide something... “This is more complicated than I had planned.”

“There was a plan?” Flitwick caught the teapot floating their way and reminded the young man with a smirk just how not-thought-out all this was.

“Yeah, well, Fred hasn’t been alive in my time for ten years, and I forgot just how brilliantly devious those two can be together,” Harry grumbled and reached out for the offered teacup with his uninjured arm.

“I trust you will think of something that will not put any of my students in harm’s way,” Flitwick ordered sternly. “Now, I talked with my cousin Ragnok, and he is willing to attend your meeting on behalf of the Goblin Nation even though you haven’t signed the contracts yet.”

“Right, yeah, so we’re going to need to move that meeting back to the next Hogsmeade weekend,” Harry sighed, thankful for the caffeine in his tea that was very needed. “Snape is going to ward the tunnels into the castle, which is frankly long overdue even if inconvenient to us. I can still get out with Dobby’s help, but getting Ron, Hermione, and Neville out too is asking a lot, and we can’t keep them out of the meeting when they’re already so involved just by knowing me. I promise I’ll keep them away from any danger though,” Harry added on quickly at the end before the professor could protest.

Flitwick nodded slowly, realizing the teens would insist on at least knowing what was happening even if they weren’t involved based on everything they’d been up to the last four years. “We can do that. It will also give you time to go over the contract more thoroughly and sign it. The next Hogsmeade weekend is scheduled for Halloween weekend.”

Harry groaned loudly. “Sorry, I just hate Halloween, it’s cursed. Even after Hogwarts and the war, terrible things always seemed to find me that day,” he grumbled. “I don’t *think* anything

major happened on it this year, but that probably just means I've changed something that will now cause something bad to happen. Dobby!" He called out unexpectedly.

With a pop the elf was bouncing on the balls of his feet in front of Harry with a jaunty sailor hat on his head this time. Harry raised an eyebrow at it. "You been shopping in the Come-and-Go room, Dobs?"

"Does Dark Master Harry Potter sir like?!" Dobby grinned and adjusted the hat to an even jauntier angle.

"Love it," Harry nodded firmly and gave him a smile. "I have a couple questions, Dobby, that I think you can help me with."

"Yes, sir!" Dobby saluted and stood at attention, causing Flitwick to almost choke on his tea in amusement.

"First, do you think Head Elf Bipsy could attend the inner circle meeting if we moved it to Halloween weekend? I know you all are really busy then with the feast?"

Dobby thought about it and nodded. "We's can work something out. Kreacher can goes to the meeting and fill us in if we needs to."

"Great!" Harry nodded at them both. "Brilliant, and if anything terrible does happen on that cursed day, I don't think I can be anywhere safer than with the goblins and house elves."

"And the centaures," Dobby added in, looking smug that house elves were in that list. "Kreacher asked Winky to meets with the centaures, and they's said they would send a representative."

"Even better!" Harry grinned broadly at Flitwick who looked completely shocked at that news. He'd never thought about house elves being good ambassadors, but no one ever

suspected them of having ill intentions or were wary of them, so it made sense. Things were moving faster than he'd thought.

"Let's do the Shrieking Shack then so we can all fit and not raise questions," Harry was continuing. "Also, my next question is for both of you... Flitwick, what do you think it would take to negotiate with the goblins for a cursed object that's currently in a Gringotts vault of a convicted felon?"

Flitwick sat his teacup down and crossed his arms. "An object in a vault at Gringotts? You don't have that much money or power to negotiate."

Harry frowned at that answer before looking at Dobby. "What's the extent of elf magic? For instance, if I were to ask you to get me an object in a vault, could you?"

"Excuse me?!!" Flitwick protested in shock and outrage while Dobby looked like he'd just failed miserably at his job.

"I's can't Master Harry Potter, sir, not unless it's the master's vault," Dobby almost wailed.

"No, no, don't worry about it!" Harry assured the elf quickly and took one of Dobby's hands in both of his reassuringly. "It's fine, Dobby. You are doing an excellent job, and I couldn't survive without all you, Winky, and Kreacher have been doing."

"Mr. Potter... You will not attempt to rob Gringotts!" Flitwick protested firmly.

Harry huffed and rolled his eyes. "Then we've lost the war. I had to rob it the first time around to get the object we need, but I was hoping to do it a bit easier this time. If I don't get the cup in Bellatrix Lestrange's vault, then Voldemort can never be killed. Talk to Ragnok and see if there is anything he can do," Harry told him seriously, hoping it got across just how important this was to ending the war.

“We must get that cup, and I’ll rob the bank again if I need to, and hopefully do it a little easier this time...although, now I might also have to break into Azkaban to do it,” he sighed tiredly at the end remembering he’d need a hair from Bellatrix.

Dobby patted Harry’s hand this time soothingly, and not taken aback at all at the possibility of bank robbery or breaking into a prison. “We’s figure something out Harry Potter, sir...”

“Thanks Dobby,” he smiled at his friend. “Would you mind grabbing me a clean shirt from my trunk?”

“Yes, sir! Oh, before I forget,” Dobby pulled a thick letter from his toga and gave Harry an embarrassed smile. “Please pass this to Kreacher from me.”

“Of course,” Harry put the letter in his pocket just as Dobby popped out. He chuckled to Flitwick. “Merlin, I think I might be in the middle of some kind-of house elf love triangle between Dobby, Winky, and Kreacher. I’m not sure how to get out of it at this point either.”

Flitwick was still glaring at him. “You will not be robbing my family’s bank, and you will tell me how you did it the last time as well.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “I can’t tell you that or they might tighten security. Besides, I’m sure there’s something Ragnok wants that I can give him. Just ask.”

“Oh, I’m certain they will already be tightening security,” Flitwick glared, but also made a mental note to find something Gringotts would want that they could negotiate with.

Snape felt ridiculous. He did not wait outside of pubs for people he would not recognize when he saw them. It was highly inconvenient! It was also shocking just how quickly Sirius Black had agreed to his meeting and that he had insisted on it being that very evening and at this little pub at the crossroads of Diagon and Knockturn Alleys that Snape had only ever been to once. If he remembered correctly, it did have fairly good fish and chips though.

While he waited, Snape was wracking his brain to figure out if he'd heard absolutely any mention of a basilisk in the past few years still in existence somewhere out in the world. He was certain he would remember a basilisk being mentioned though. That was just unthinkable! How could Hadrian have stumbled upon a recently deceased extinct creature that could frankly kill an entire town easily if it wanted to. Maybe his tests had been incorrect...but he'd done it twice when it had seemed to read basilisk.

"Severus!" A twenty-something young man with sandy hair and hazel eyes greeted him with a huge smile. "Thanks for coming!"

"Black?" He raised an eyebrow in question at the disguise. It seemed the Polyjuice Potion he'd helped Hadrian with had turned out well. "What did I curse James Potter to do in our fourth year that earned him detention with McGonagall?"

The man laughed loudly, smile never faltering. "Merlin! That was hilarious! You cursed him to hit on everyone. I believe it was when he told McGonagall that he could make her purr with his magic fingers that he was given detention. Even once she knew he'd been cursed, she still made him serve detention for having filthy thoughts in his head!"

"It *was* one of my better spells," Snape gave Sirius a little amused smile before opening the door to the pub. "Shall we...?"

"It's been ages since I was here!" Sirius hurried in to choose them a booth that could be easily warded. "Well...fourteen years if we're going to be exact. I hope they still have that spicy mead!"

It turned out they did and had the fish and chips on special when they both ordered and heavily warded an out of the way booth in the back, not even getting a raise of an eyebrow from their waiter. They *were* right by Knockturn Alley, so it probably happened a lot. Snape was absolutely not going to admit that it was an unexpectedly nice dinner for his Sunday evening.

"So, what did you want to talk about? I'm guessing this has something to do with my cousin?" Sirius smirked at him and took a deep sip of his drink happily. "Did he do

something? If he hasn't, I'm sure he will soon knowing him. He scared Remy and I to death yesterday, but we got an owl from him right after you, and it seemed it was all nothing."

"If you are talking about his murder of Fenrir Greyback and getting a few new scars to add to his collection, then I do not want to hear your definition of 'something' then," Snape sneered, more at his worry over Hadrian than anything else.

Sirius's jaw dropped in surprise. He figured he probably should have guessed that, but Harry's letter had just said he was fine and was sorry for worrying them the night before. "Well...I guess that explains why he asked Remus where Greyback lived then...I can't say I'm upset about that monster, but is Hadrian really ok? You said he got some scars?"

"He will be fine, maybe some slight lingering effects, especially with his exposure to vampire bites, but nothing that will significantly impact him," Snape explained and poured them both more of the mead out of the pitcher Sirius had ordered.

"Vampire bites?" Sirius frowned now, realizing he knew absolutely nothing about Hadrian. "When was he bitten by a vampire?"

"Look, I'm not here to talk about Hadrian's past, which I also have basically confirmed through my scans was very abusive..."

Sirius held up a hand to stop him. Snape didn't realize just how shocking that confirmation was. Even if Sirius had suspected it before, to have someone with healer training to confirm it... "I need a second," he pinched the bridge of his nose and took in a deep breath.

Snape raised an eyebrow. He'd assumed Sirius had known even if Hadrian had never told him. "I thought you had guessed as much?"

Sirius nodded and slowly opened his eyes, before downing his drink and pouring another. "Godric, I wish we'd gotten firewhisky now," he remarked before turning his hazel eyes on Snape with a haunted look. "Yes, I had guessed as much, but having it confirmed hurts more than you know. There are people that should have caught the abuse before you...I being one

of them.”

“You were in prison for twelve years, Black,” Snape found himself reassuring the man surprisingly.

“I have no need of you to assuage my guilt, Severus, I have plenty to sustain me for a long while,” he dryly remarked and leaned back in the booth. “Now, what about Hadrian did you actually want to talk about?”

“He mentioned he hadn’t told you his plans for moving to Britain?” Snape clasped his hands together and sent a quick plea to the universe that his friend would forgive his betrayal of his trust, especially when this was for his own good.

Sirius raised an eyebrow, which looked much less aristocratic and imposing on his borrowed face. “No, he has not. I have my guesses, but I will not betray my cousin’s trust...”

“Well, I’m going to,” Snape sighed tiredly and ran a hand through his hair. “You have to help me. We can’t let him do what he has planned. He doesn’t know everything, and he’s going to get himself killed.”

Sirius highly doubted Snape knew more than Harry about what was going on at this point, and Harry had assured him that he didn’t plan on dying *this* time around, which was concerning in itself. “I think you are underestimating Hadrian,” he said snagging a chip to snack on.

Severus looked around them, even knowing they were behind a privacy ward before leaning forward to whisper. “He’s going to attempt to kill the Dark Lord.”

Sirius nodded at that since it wasn't news. That was a bit he actually did know along with the fact that only Harry could kill the man, which if Snape knew, was probably what was freaking him out. “Yes, he did mention that. Aren’t we all attempting that right now though?”

“Yes, but...” Snape trailed off realizing he didn’t actually have an answer to that. He knew that Harry Potter was the only one that could do the final deed, but that didn’t mean that they weren’t all currently trying to end the Dark Lord’s reign, he just hadn’t thought of it that way when Hadrian had been assuring him he was going to kill the monster.

“I think you have about as much luck with convincing Hadrian to not go after Vol... You-Know-Who as you do Dumbledore,” Sirius caught himself before he could do something to cause Snape pain.

Snape gave Sirius a surprised look at his consideration, one that was rarely even thought of by the rest of the Order. “Fine, I will concede that point for now,” he eventually said, not giving up, but vowing to see if he could redirect Hadrian’s efforts now instead.

“After that though, he wants to take over...he wants to be the next Dark Lord,” he whispered next as if the current one would pop up behind him and murder him on the spot.

Sirius frowned and sat down the chip he’d just picked up. Well, it wasn’t what he’d thought Harry had planned to do. But...he had assumed his godson had some plans to take over or influence politics, and Harry *was* a master of dark arts. “What are the requirements to be a Dark Lord again?” He asked as Snape’s words sank in. It might actually be the logical move for his godson...

“I can’t believe you aren’t throwing a fit right now!” Snape frantically hissed. He hadn’t expected Sirius to be so calm. If anyone was going to freak out even more than himself, it should be this man who had almost had a phobia of all things dark when they were teenagers.

“Well, I don’t exactly know the requirements now, do it?” Sirius said calmly as if talking down someone who was panicking, which he kind of was. “If I’m going to go along with what all you and Hadrian have been saying and believe that dark doesn’t equal evil, then I have to also entertain the thought that a dark lord doesn’t have to be evil either, right? So, what are the requirements again? Does he fit them?”

Snape ran a hand over his face in frustration. “I cannot believe you are actually considering this! Yes, he fits the bloody requirements, and no, a dark lord actually should *not* be evil as part of the requirements, but you know Dumbledore will never let a new dark lord rise! He will mobilize the Order against *Hadrian* next!”

Sirius slowly nodded at this. So, it did make sense for Harry to take over as a dark lord, and they already knew Dumbledore was a problem, one that he now knew was complicit in his godson's abuse if he knew anything at all of his homelife, which he had to at least be negligent by keeping Remus away and lying to him all those years...

"Please don't take what I'm saying the wrong way," he slowly said, weighing his words as Snape had always seemed to be Dumbledore's man through and through. However, he'd loved Lily, anyone who knew them in school knew that. This was the line, which one would Snape stand by in the end...

"But...I'm not so sure I'm with Dumbledore anymore either. What I mean is that, I'm still stuck on the fact that I think, no, I *know* Harry was in an abusive home," he growled as now he actually did know. "Dumbledore had to know something since he was the one that placed Harry with his relatives. I gave Harry to Hagrid that night it all happened, and we both know who Hagrid answers to."

"Just because he placed Potter with Petunia does not mean he knew of any abuse...are you *sure*? Are you *positive* Lily's son was abused?" He asked, a sinking feeling in his stomach.

Sirius opened his mouth then stopped, his eyes widening. Severus was a Roman emperor's name. His brain flicked through the many genealogy lessons he'd been forced to sit through from his father as a child. Snape was descended from the Prince family...and they always used Roman emperor names for the male children just as the Black's used constellation names. Lily had insisted they use a Roman emperor's name for Hadrian...did that mean she and Snape were still friends even after all that had happened?

Harry was without a doubt James's son (thank Merlin!) because of both how Harry looked as a child and that Sirius was quite certain that Snape was out as gay even while they were at Hogwarts, but maybe Lily was reaching out to her friend in her own way. Maybe Snape would be easier to convince to follow Harry instead of Dumbledore than he'd originally thought. If Lily and Snape had kept in touch over the years even after Hogwarts, it would make sense for neither Lily nor Snape to mention it to the marauders since their history was so very well known...and Snape had come over to their side *before* the Potters were killed.

“You just had some kind of epiphany? Care to share with the class?” Snape raised a questioning eyebrow.

“Severus...if I can prove to you that Harry was in fact abused and that Dumbledore knew about it, would you stay with Dumbledore or would you consider Hadrian as a third side?” He asked, seeing Harry’s side expand before his eyes. If they could tarnish Dumbledore’s reputation, there would be so many people who would be rushing to choose a third option between the two sides of the war.

Snape huffed and stole a chip off Sirius’s plate. “Sirius, if you can convince me that Hadrian has any chance at all of being successful, then I would join his side immediately. If you can convince me that Dumbledore knew anything at all about Harry Potter being abused and did nothing, then I will kill the man myself.”

Sirius smiled, and even through the Polyjuice Potion, his eyes flashed, and a shiver ran down Snape’s spine as what was called the Black Madness lit the man’s face. To his immense surprise, Snape wasn’t concerned in the slightest, he was excited...there was a shift in power, and something was happening...

Chapter End Notes

Up next: It's a very long night...Snape still hasn't gotten to ask about the basilisk or Dumbledore's order for him to sift through Harry's mind yet...and the twins are still waiting for their explanation!

The Long Day

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sirius Black crossed his arms and leaned back in the booth he was sharing with Severus Snape. He knew his slightly unhinged smile wasn't exactly very reassuring, Remy called it the 'oh hell we're all going to die' smile, but he was starting to see just why Harry liked and said he needed Snape so much. "Right, so I'm going to have to talk to Hadrian and Harry both before we can really talk about all this," he finally said as Snape waited on the information.

"Of course," Snape huffed and rolled his eyes, coming to terms that he wasn't going to get anything concrete at that moment as much as that severely irritated him.

"Some things I don't know for sure and don't want to lie to you, and some things are secrets that aren't mine, and I don't have the right to share," Sirius explained quickly so Snape would know he wasn't being intentionally evasive and really did want to tell him. "What I *can* tell you..."

Sirius took in a deep breath, finding the right words while Snape stared at him like he could see right through him. Thankfully, he had Azkaban brain, or he was sure Snape would be using some legilimency on him in that moment. "What I've put together from comments from a lot of people is that Remus and Harry didn't meet until Remy taught at Hogwarts in Harry's third year."

"Alright...so they did not know each other," Snape raised an eyebrow waiting for the significance that he didn't quite see.

"They didn't meet when Harry was little because Dumbledore told Remus he couldn't visit for Harry's safety," Sirius continued, leaning forward now to give Snape a significant look and wishing he had his own face and expressions for this important conversation. "Remus asked every year after Harry, and Dumbledore told him that Harry was perfectly fine and happy and that he had checked on him...either Dumbledore just lied outright and never checked on Harry or somehow he knew and did nothing..."

Snape felt like his lungs were starting to contract and he had a pain in his chest. He had been told Harry was treated like a little prince by Dumbledore. While he still didn't want to believe Harry Potter had been left in an abusive home, what Dumbledore had said just the day before, paired with Sirius's claims...

"Dumbledore has requested that I teach Potter Occlumency," Snape breathed out, realizing just how very close the two of them were, almost touching over the table, and leaned back. He didn't want to believe Sirius was right, but it was looking more and more like he was.

"I don't know what happened, but the Dark Lord supposedly was able to access Potter's mind minimally up until a couple months ago when he suddenly wasn't able to anymore...then there was something about Dumbledore's wand, which I personally don't understand, and he didn't explain to me. For some insane reason, Dumbledore believes they may be connected. He's asked that I find out the connection through the guise of teaching Potter Occlumency...do you understand those implications and what that means I have been asked to do..."

Sirius paled significantly. "I see you do," Snape drawled at the sick look he was sure had been on his face when it had been asked of him as well. "Albus made an off-hand comment that Potter 'had experienced worse' when I protested."

"The bastard," Black seethed, his eyes flashing back to ice blue from their hazel as he looked like he could kill the old man on the spot.

"You need to take your Polyjuice again," Snape warned him, seeing the signs it was wearing off. "Getting caught and thrown back in prison will not help Potter in any way. Also, I would personally not like to be the one to have to tell your cousin it happened when I was with you either."

Sirius was swearing vehemently and fluently in several languages the entire time he took a swig of Polyjuice from the flask in his pocket and his eyes returned to hazel. "Bloody fucking hell..." he shoved the flask back in his pocket and actually reached across the table to grab onto Snape's arm. "I'll kill him and feed him to Moony..."

Snape's eyes trailed to the hand on his arm with a frown, but he didn't shake it off understanding the intense emotions the man was experiencing which were probably made worse with the trauma of Azkaban having stripped his nerves and mental processes. "Do you have any ideas as to why the Dark Lord may not have access to Potter's mind anymore? Or

what the hell happened with Dumbledore's wand disappearing? Maybe Potter has said something to you?"

The hand on Snape's arm tightened as Sirius took in a deep breath before seeming to realize what he was doing. "Sorry," he turned slightly pink and mumbled as he returned to his side of the booth and put his hand in his lap, seeming to not know what to do with his hands now. "Erm...the wand, I don't know anything about that. Was there anything significant about it? Was it not the one he bought for school at Ollivander's?"

"There wasn't anything special about it that I know of, but you know Dumbledore...it would not surprise me if it were important for some reason," Snape sighed with a dismissive shrug at his own ignorance on the matter. "Honestly...Percy Weasley is probably the one I should be talking to about this if we think there might be something to do with magical theory or artifacts involved."

"Ah! Yes! Great idea," Sirius almost bounced in his seat, thinking that maybe Snape might know something about Percy at least and he wouldn't have to avoid talking about it. "Just so we're clear...why Percy Weasley in particular?" He asked significantly, wanting to know just how much Snape did about his godson's Unspeakable necromancer partner before he started plying the man with his own questions since he hadn't met Harry's Weasley yet and needed oh so very much more information.

Snape rolled his eyes. "I'm guessing we both know he's an Unspeakable," he explained, more than a little confused when Sirius's face fell slightly...there must be something else he didn't know. Interesting...Well, he was certain he could get whatever it was out of the Hadrian since he clearly didn't seem to want to keep things from him, just not quite ready to share them yet.

"Yes, definitely, Unspeakable," Sirius nodded firmly with a huff of slight disappointment since he apparently didn't know about the soul magic bit, so they couldn't talk about it. "Ask Percy about the wand, and tell him to come visit me or something so I can give him a shovel talk or ask about his intentions or whatever so I don't feel quite so useless in Hadrian's life."

"I will do that if you tell me what you seem to know about Potter's sudden and surprising ability to block the Dark Lord from his mind," he smirked, Black was so very easy to read.

Sirius finished off his mead and gave Snape an exasperated look to cover the fact he was stalling to find a good lie. He had won the coin toss with Remus and had gotten to read Harry's book on horcruxes first. He had thankfully just finished the section it was in earlier that day and passed it to Remus, and the very little he'd learned made him feel sick at the magic that had been living in his pup for years. This was not something he could tell Snape though without breaking "Hadrian's" trust and outing him as Harry. So, he needed some kind of excuse for Harry to possibly know Occlumency already...he hadn't been around Harry enough to teach him himself, disregarding the fact he didn't actually know the skill. Also, Snape was talented enough as a spy to know when he was being lied to, so there would need to be some truth and maybe he could just *imply* a lie...

"Yeah, well, right...I can't tell you everything, but you will actually want to talk to *Hadrian* about this," he said, trying to push off the revelations to his godson so he didn't have to do it.

"Hadrian? Why?" Snape looked a little shocked and confused in the minute expressions he allowed himself to show to others.

"So..." here was the danger zone where Sirius couldn't outright lie but could maybe imply some things. "I never actually said that Hadrian and Harry don't already know each other..."

"You will explain this," Snape ordered, leaning forward and looking dangerously at Sirius, realizing this was extremely significant information if a dark wizard who planned to become a new dark lord was actually in communication with the Light's chosen boy.

"Well, it's not like *I* could be around Harry much as a wanted fugitive, and Hadrian doesn't exactly have a job right now and all, so he might have reached out to Harry for me..." Sirius trailed off, thinking that was probably all he could chance for a lie where the spy was concerned. Hadrian *had* been around Harry, if you squinted at the situation just right.

Snape grumbled and gave a low swear before leaning back, coming to his own conclusions. "I suppose I need to check the Golden Boy for some dark, blood-magic rune tattoos now, don't I? The idiot! That's beyond stupidity for both of them: Hadrian to attempt it and Potter to agree to it! Not even mentioning the fact it's illegal to tattoo a fifteen-year-old!"

"Or it's brilliant and ingenious if it keeps You-Know-Who out of Harry's mind," Sirius gave a mental sigh of relief at the conclusion Snape had jumped to that he had been hoping the

man would. “Regardless, tread lightly with your Occlumency lessons. I’m not sure how much Harry will admit to if you question him directly, your relationship has been very... *antagonistic* up to now.”

Snape gave a snort of agreement before scrubbing a hand over his face, knowing exactly the position he’d put himself in with the boy. “To say the least! Yes, it was my fault, but the Dark Lord was still out there as a wraith that could be returned to a body, and I would personally like to stay alive to see middle age if possible!”

“It is not like I could be even relatively considerate to the brat when he wears every single emotion he has on his face. That first day I had him in Potions class I tested the waters to see his reactions, and the boy has absolutely no filter on his expressions! If I were to show him kindness or reach out to him, he’d look all sickeningly happy at me and either Crabbe or Goyle would immediately report it to their parents, and I’d be dead already now that the Dark Lord has returned...those little snitches!” He swore, wishing he hadn’t had to burn every bridge with Potter...especially now that Snape knew he hadn’t had the pampered life he’d been led to believe.

“You walk a very fine line there as a double agent,” Sirius winced deeply, realizing for the first time just how very much danger Snape was constantly in with both sides of the war knowing he was a spy and having to constantly lie and prove his loyalties to both while neither really trusted him. Without Harry’s absolute assurance from the future and his recent epiphany about Hadrian’s name, Sirius would still be swearing Snape couldn’t be trusted himself. Fortunately, or unfortunately depending on how one looked at it, Harry could hide his emotions and did actually trust Snape now being Hadrian from the future.

“When is your first Occlumency lesson?”

“Thursday if Dumbledore actually sent him the information,” Snape replied and cut off with a hiss as his second master painfully called, causing him to grab his left arm as his nerve ending were blasted with pain. “Salazar’s balls!” He breathed out.

“Sorry,” Sirius grimaced, feeling more for Snape than he ever had in their lives before. He wasn’t sure what it was he felt exactly though. It definitely wasn’t pity... appreciation?... admiration maybe... “I’ll talk to Harry. He should be much less antagonistic on Thursday if I can help it.” That was going to be an interesting conversation, but Harry would have to figure

out some way to cover that he already knew Occlumency. He hoped his godson was up to a bit of acting.

“Thanks, Black...that is actually very...helpful,” Snape grumbled in confusion and pulled out his wand to leave and apparate to the meeting before pausing and sitting back down as another thought occurred to him. “Also, would you happen to know where the hell Hadrian would have been around a dead basilisk? He sent me some parts, and I’m not certain he realizes just how valuable they are.”

“A basilisk?!” Sirius’s eyebrows shot up in complete shock and a bit of fear. “But...those are extinct, right?”

“I thought so, but I have some skin, venom, and bone in my office that leads me to believe that is actually questionable,” he huffed, not liking all the mystery currently in his life.

“You know...I think I remember one of the teens this summer say something about a basilisk, it was just a throwaway comment I didn’t pay much attention to beyond finding it funny that teenagers would actually know what a basilisk was since they’ve been extinct so long,” Sirius was frowning. He thought it might have been Granger, or possibly the Weasley girl, but someone had said something about a situation that was happening that it at least it was better than a basilisk or something...but he hadn’t thought about it since they were clearly extinct.

“I’ll ask...”

Snape nodded and stood. “I will speak to Percy about the wand and let you know if he knows anything about it.”

“Hey Snape...” Sirius called as the man turned again to walk off, a concerned look in his eyes. “Be safe, alright?”

Snape’s eyebrows shot up and he momentarily looked surprised before he gave just the slightest hint of a smile at his former nemesis before nodding and striding away in a swirl of dark robes. Sirius let out a breath and ran his hand over his face. He didn’t know what was happening to him, but he’d thought more about Severus Snape over the past few weeks than

he had in years, and he found he was intrigued, and worried about the spy, and guilty for their past, and just so very...yeah, he was screwed...

Harry glared at Fawkes who actually seemed irritated himself that he'd been called on to deliver a letter like some lowly owl. "You know he's a bastard, right?" Harry asked the bird in all seriousness, crumpling the parchment in his hand. "You've always been kind to me, and saved my life in second year, but Dumbledore...you know what he's doing isn't right...you're better than him."

Fawkes gave a cry that had a mournful note in the sweet tones of the music. Harry wasn't sure exactly how to interpret it, but Fawkes wasn't his familiar and could make his own decisions. "Well, take care of yourself anyway," he said, crossing his arms and leaning against the parapet of the Astronomy Tower where the bird had found him.

With another cry, Fawkes disappeared in a ball of flames, leaving Harry watching the sun go down on the horizon and pondering just what he'd changed to prompt Dumbledore to move his Occlumency lessons to before Christmas break instead of after. It had to be something about the wand, but Harry had no clue why Dumbledore would think he had anything to do with that. His hand trailed to the third wand on his person now, strapped to his right arm, feeling so much more *right* there than either of the other wands on him. Soon, he'd be able to start his own wand shop, he thought wryly.

"Harrikins!" A Weasley twin called out in greeting as they both strode into the tower for their set meeting, still looking suspiciously and in concern at who they thought was a teenager in a possibly compromising situation with a teacher.

"Oh great patron of pranks and little brother of ours!" The other twin added on, George, Harry thought even though it was much harder to tell them apart with George having both ears. Usually, he just picked names for them both and went with it in his head.

"You ready to tell us..."

“Why you were slumming it last night with our git of a brother?” They asked, trading off in the middle of the conversation as they did often, the tone more serious than the words.

“Yeah, Perce’s boyfriend is a bit scary. You might not want to cross him,” Fred continued with a chuckle while they stole a couple of the student chairs strewn about and sat in front of where Harry was still leaning against the parapet.

“Plus, that’s just really morally questionable, Harrykins,” George added on.

Harry rolled his eyes and snorted. “You guys talking about something being morally questionable?! That’s concerning in itself,” he laughed. “By the way, why didn’t you tell me you had a copy of the map?”

“And spill all our secrets?!” They both dramatically gave shocked gasps in unison.

“I don’t suppose I could convince you to give me that map now, could I?” He asked, already knowing the answer but having to give it a try. Unfortunately, with Umbridge not at the school that year, they had no reason to drop out, so it would be an entire year of the two of them knowing where he was in the castle at any given time.

“Now, why would Harrikins want our map, Gred? That sounds suspicious,” George asked his brother with a frown.

“Seems our Har-Bear is up to no good, Forge,” Fred raised an eyebrow as they smirked at each other before turning that smirk as one onto Harry.

“Merlin, I missed his,” Harry couldn’t help the large smile at how in-tune the two were. George was never the same after Fred’s death. He was a ghost of himself, always trailing off in the middle of sentences, waiting for someone else to finish it even years after Fred was gone. “I love you two so much.”

The twins now looked concerned. “Harry...you ok?”

“Our brother’s not hurting you or blackmailing you or something, right?” George asked.

“We’ll take care of him for you ourselves if he is,” Fred said completely seriously and meaning it clearly.

“Merlin, no!” Harry quickly assured them, standing up straight and emphatically shaking his head. “No, it’s nothing like that, but if you’re not going to willingly give me your map, then I’m going to have to fill you in on some things because I’ll definitely be spending as many nights as I possibly can get away with in your brother’s chambers, and in his bed too if I don’t do something to make him pissed at me...the couch does tend to see my stubborn arse more than it should.”

“Harry...you’re 15,” George got really serious to remind him in concern. “And our brother is a professor...”

“Have you seen Hadrian?!” Fred added on with wide eyes. “Dark wizard...muscles...lots of scars...that guy?”

“Actually, I’m 27,” Harry smirked as he crossed his arms and leaned back against the parapet once again. “What all do you know about time-travel?”

“Enough to know that’s impossible to go that far back...”

“Without some serious dark magic...” the twins looked at each other, shock across their faces.

Harry pointed at himself, grin on his face. “Dark wizard, muscles, lots of scars...that’s me.”

“Prove it!” Fred crossed his arms and placed his hand over where Harry knew he kept his wand up his sleeve in a holster like Harry had three of now.

Harry bent over and pulled his own ebony wand out of his ankle holster, still hating the feel of his old holly wand and how sluggish it was now. With a flick, Hadrian Black was standing in front of them. "I swear to both I'm Harry Potter, but I made some very intentional changes to my appearance to be less recognizable to the press and everyone in the future," he explained while the twins studied him, their wands now clearly in their hands warningly.

"He's Harry Potter on the map," George commented to Fred assessingly as he looked the man in front of them over.

"The map doesn't lie," Fred nodded back at him. "I can see it...around his eyes..."

"So...you come back in time and immediately start shacking up with our brother?" George turned to Harry now and asked in confusion. "Why *are* you back in time so far? How is that even possible?"

"And what happened to you?!" Fred added on as Harry's bruises and visible bandage against his neck was visible now as well as his age.

"That's a lot of questions," Harry laughed and reapplied his glamour with another flick of his wand, feeling vulnerable out in the open of the Astronomy Tower. "I'm teaching Ron, Hermione, and Neville Occlumency. You're going to have to learn it too if you want to know everything," he said, also looking at his watch to make sure he wasn't late to Hermione's training session in Percy's office.

"I can't believe Ronnikins is going to try to learn mind magic," Fred commented to George who nodded with a chuckle.

"We're pretty sure Snape and maybe the headmaster are legilimens," George told Harry to explain their knowledge in the subject.

"We haven't gotten to full shields yet, but we've got enough to keep out surface skimming... have since our third year and twenty-fifth detention," Fred smirked at him.

Harry nodded in appreciation. "Of course you do," he rolled his eyes. "Right, well, come with me to your brother's office. We're testing Hermione's shields this evening, and I'll fill you in more there. Importantly though before we go there, and to answer one of your questions, I've actually been with your brother for about two years now...he came back in time with me."

"Percy?! Using dark magic?!" They both sputtered in disbelief. "Definitely not!"

"It's too out in the open here to go into any detail, but yeah," Harry said, looking around. He'd set up wards when he first entered the tower, but he was paranoid enough he would still rather have this discussion in Percy's office.

George's hand suddenly shot out and crushed Fred's arm in a vise grip. "Percy came back in time," he told his brother with a look of horror on his face. "Our brother is back in time *years*."

"Yeah...?" Fred looked at his twin in confusion, not realizing why this was significant (well, definitely significant but George looked ready to pass out) and affecting his brother so much.

"Percy almost cried when we sat down with him the other day in the Three Broomsticks," George explained, blood draining from his face. "I thought he'd missed us since he was avoiding the family all summer, but I had thought it strange and a major over-reaction at the time especially since he'd seen us in class..."

"Unless it had been much longer since he'd talked with us..." Fred finished, understanding making him turn pale now as well.

"We're dead, Fred aren't we...?" George said in almost a whisper before they both turned scared and questioning eyes on Harry.

"A lot of people were...coming back in time wasn't for a lark," Harry said dryly, not wanting to tell them what all happened. "But no...you weren't *both* dead..."

The twins were holding onto each other as if they could physically keep anything bad from happening to the other. The look in their eyes was clear that *that* situation was actually worse than them both having died. From what Harry had seen of George without Fred and them together again now, he could believe it.

“Come down to the office, right? We’ll talk more there...” Harry gave them a sad smile and stepped towards the door. “I promise, I came to help everyone...to change things. I’d never hurt any of you.”

“Of course you did, Harry!” George stood up and scoffed as if that had never been in question even though he still looked exceptionally shaken.

“You wouldn’t be Harry if you didn’t defy the laws of magic to change things for us all,” Fred followed his twin as they both stepped forward and then seemed to remember Harry was injured before they could, Merlin forbid, pull him into a hug or something.

“Come on, let’s get to our big brother’s. I want to see what he looks like under that glamour too,” George led the way down from the tower towards the DADA office.

“So...why exactly are Harry’s cat’s eyes red?” Ron asked his brother as if he were asking about the weather while they all waited on Harry to show up for Hermione’s Occlumency lesson.

“Saw that, did you?” Percy gave his younger brother a grin from where he was finishing up his report for his new supervisor in the Department of Mysteries. He had been shocked when he got the owl that morning that he now had office space and a paycheck heading his way as long as he continued his research.

“Unforeseen side-effect of some research I’ve been doing,” he answered off-handedly while finishing his report with a flourish.

“Exactly what research would turn a cat’s eyes red?” Hermione asked from where Percy had asked her to stir the potion Harry had simmering in the back of his office. They both hoped they weren’t going to need to break into Gringotts, but just in case, it was best to have some magical signature blocking potion on hand if needed.

“How exactly *does* a person clear their mind?! You can’t just *not* think!” Neville grumbled in frustration, still reading the book on Occlumency from where he was sitting as far away from the potion as possible in Percy’s office. He didn’t think he would ever not be a curse at Potions and was skeptical about Harry claiming somehow he’d overcome it to be an auror.

“Research I’m not going to explain to a fifth year,” Percy told Hermione to her frustration before he turned to Neville. “Not exactly clearing your mind completely, but focus on one thing that blocks out everything else, something calming,” he recommended.

“Oh, thank Morgana!” Percy let out a breath when his door opened and he saw his partner, happy to not be left alone with the teenagers for any longer.

“...Nundu bile, some kind of muggle explosive, like maybe gunpowder or C4, and vampire blood if you can get it,” Fred was rattling off as the twins entered behind Harry.

“What are they doing here?” Ron asked in a tone that had just a tinge of jealousy around the edges.

“You need anything, love?” Harry asked, distractedly ignoring Ron, from where he seemed to be jotting down the list the twins had been giving him on a pad of muggle paper.

“From?” Percy stood and began to ward his office door, figuring the twins must now be in on things if they were asking his partner to buy them illegal products.

“I’m going to try to make friends with Stefan again,” Harry responded, taking Percy’s now vacated desk chair and tapping his muggle pen to the pad of paper he was holding. “He’s the

easiest of my old black-market contacts to track down in this current time. I'm pretty sure he's working out of that butcher shop in Knockturn already."

"Freely-given unicorn hair if he can swing it," Percy responded, thinking it would help in his experiments on Harry since it was a pure-Light substance.

Harry grimaced at the memory of having to convince a unicorn to give him some hair for the ritual. Bloody difficult and stubborn horses! "Fine, but that's going to cost you shower sex even if you complain it makes you all prune. Anything unicorn is bloody expensive!"

"Deal, and no getting any explosives for my brothers!" Percy turned a glare on the twins who had been looking between the two of them with their jaws hanging open.

"I miss their fireworks though," Harry pouted.

"Who exactly decided to loop in the chaos twins?!" Ron finally exploded, waving his arms over his head wildly to get everyone's attention.

"The bloody menaces never told me, in fourteen years might I add, that they made a copy of the Marauder's Map," Harry gave the twins a fake glare before removing his glamour with a flick of his wand.

"Godric's ghost!" Neville jumped when he looked up from his book, having forgotten exactly what Harry looked like as an adult. "Warn a person."

"You're warned then," Percy dryly commented before flicking his wand and removing his own glamour.

"Bloody hell!" Ron's eyes widened in shock as everyone took in the older version of Percy. "You said you hadn't changed much!! You look like Bill only thinner and sterner!"

“I haven’t changed much,” Percy frowned and looked to Harry with a questioning raise of his eyebrow.

“In relation to me anyway, but you’re 31, love, it’s still very different from 19,” Harry said with a shrug. He didn’t look that different to Harry, but Percy had filled out a lot more, had the longer hair, and his face was more lined and mature.

“Right, so mind magic, right?” George asked, sitting on the corner of Percy’s desk. “We just learned one of us is dead, so we need to be filled in about what’s happening to stop that tragedy.”

“Yeah, let’s get a move on!” Fred nodded vehemently.

“Join the club,” Ron grumbled and leaned back crossing his arms.

“Yeah, we’re dead too,” Hermione put Harry’s potion back in stasis to join the group.

“I’m not! I’m alive!” Neville raised his hand with a wide grin.

“Yes, you are,” Harry smiled indulgently at Neville before looking over to Percy with a frown. “Oh...er, dear...erm...I might have changed something, and I’m not sure what. I don’t know how it’s going to affect things.”

“We’ve changed a lot, Harry. What specifically happened?” Percy laughed, knowing that the more endearments Harry used when talking to him usually meant he thought he was going to get in trouble for something.

“I don’t know,” Harry shrugged and passed the parchment Fawkes had delivered earlier over to Percy. “This didn’t happen until after your dad was attacked before Christmas last time around.”

“Wait...something happens to Dad?” Ron jumped up in shock. The twins stepped forward in concern as well while Percy took the letter and sat on his desk beside Harry to read it.

“We’ll stop it, don’t worry,” Harry assured the rest of the Weasley’s. “Even if I have to stalk him for a week...er, since I don’t remember the exact date it happened.”

“Hmm...this *is* a problem. If Snape is going to teach you Occlumency, you can’t exactly hide that you already know it, and you definitely can’t let him in your mind,” Percy mused consideringly.

“Yeah, I still can’t get close to Luna,” Harry winced remembering how he had made to walk over to her just the day before, thinking he had everything under control, and had almost had a panic attack himself, not even touching on shielding his emotions from her as an empath. “My mind’s probably a bit like Sirius’s even without all the dementor exposure.”

“You *could* just tell him,” Neville remarked, pointedly not looking up from his book.

“Wait, Harrikins *was* hanging out with the dungeon bat, wasn’t he?” Fred asked, remembering they’d left Hogsmead together.

“How’d that happen?” George finished the question for him.

“None of your business...same as whatever I did or didn’t do to my shoulder,” Harry playfully huffed at them before standing and pulling out his ebony wand again.

“Right, I’ll figure out something with Snape before our meeting, but now, we need to test Hermione’s shields. The twins already have some mild-ones, and if someone is insistent enough to get past those, then all of you...” he looked intensely at the group of teenagers to make it clear he was serious about this. “You just tell them whatever they want to know. I don’t have any secrets worth you getting tortured. You hear me?”

“But...”

“Nope, you tell them everything,” Harry cut off Hermione and looked more adult than they’d ever seen him in his serious glare. “They’ll find it out eventually anyway, and this way you might be able to convince them to use you as a bargaining chip to get me alone. They’ll see you’re more valuable to keep alive and lure me into some kind of trap than to kill you. Save yourself, no matter what. Percy doesn’t think I can die anyway...not sure I believe him, but he’s experimenting on me to figure it out...and not the fun sexy kind of experimenting either unfortunately.”

Percy rolled his eyes at his ridiculous partner while everyone else sputtered in shock and embarrassment. “What do you mean that you might not be able to die?!” Hermione asked next, now looking like she wanted to get in on these experiments...the not sexy kind at least.

“I really have no clue,” Harry shrugged, not caring at the moment anyway. “I’ll let you know once Percy tells me. He’s the expert.”

“How is my brother an expert in death?!” Ron sputtered once more, looking at Percy disbelievingly.

“I’m an Unspeakable,” Percy answered him with a smirk, causing the teenagers to fall silent in shock once more. “Now...Hermione, sit down and get comfortable. Do you want me or Harry to give your shields a little push?”

Remus Lupin pulled his lightweight jacket more tightly around his shoulders, wishing he’d worn one a little heavier. He sighed, staring at the row of bland houses in front of him from where he was leaning against a streetlight in the twilight. Sirius was off meeting with Severus, as world ending and hell freezing over as that sounded, and he’d been left alone at the house with the book on horcruxes. After reading the frustratingly short section on the vile form of magic, Remus had been too keyed up to sit still, horrified at what had been done to his cub all those years before and how he’d had to live with a piece of Voldemort’s soul inside him.

He didn’t know what he thought of this older Harry, not that he didn’t trust him, but he saw his own mistakes in the young man. He hadn’t been there to help, and his cub had suffered...

he didn't even know how much he'd suffered. He should have just ignored Dumbledore and tracked Harry down, even if it meant wandering every street in Surrey and creepily sniffing families. He could deal with the muggle police asking questions if it had led to him finding little Harry.

Then, this past summer, he'd even had guard duty a couple times when he wasn't trying to convince the werewolves to go against Fenrir and join the Light. While he had a sneaking suspicion that Greyback might not be a problem anymore, why hadn't Remus talked to Harry while he was there watching the house? He hadn't wanted to be a bother or a burden, and he'd never even considered that Harry might actually *want* him to come up and talk to him. Just what had happened, even this past summer behind that very normal and average looking door?

"You must be the werewolf one, aren't you?" An old woman startled Remus in his self-deprecating and angry musings. "You're clearly not the fugitive one that were on all the posters."

Remus looked over the elderly woman who was squinting at him in the dim light. He couldn't sense any magic in her at all. She was stooped but still spry, it seemed, and her grey hair was pulled back in a severe bun like Minerva usually wore. She must be a squib...there was a squib woman who had testified at Harry's hearing, wasn't there?

"Yes...I'm Remus Lupin," he eventually admitted slowly, not so sure he wanted to be caught contemplating some definitely illegal plans outside of a house he should really not be anywhere near.

"Well, it's 'bout time!" The woman huffed and turned around, motioning for him to follow her. "Well, come along then. You'll want to come to mine. Here, carry this for me." She picked up a grocery bag she'd sat down on the street with cat food in it and shoved it in his arms.

"We're just going a street over, dear, keep up," she strode away, not looking back to see if she was being followed, though Remus was most definitely hurrying along in this mystery woman's wake now.

Up Next: Remedial Potions with Snape...

Lily's Son

Chapter Notes

This chapter was fighting me, friends. It finally got written though!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Remus Lupin cautiously sipped his overly sweet tea from the tiny, floral teacup in his hand while keeping an eye on the large calico cat giving him a death glare from its perch on the back of the elderly woman's chair across from him...a person he now knew was Arabella Figg. "Don't mind Colonel Scratch there, he's just a mite protective," Arabella waved a hand errantly back at the calico while passing a piece of biscuit to a large, orange cat at her feet.

"Cats don't tend to like me," Remus remarked as several more felines wandered around in the corners of the comfortable, but more than a bit overly cat scented, sitting room.

"I would imagine so," the woman said dryly, hiding a small smile behind her teacup. "Now, why don't you just flip through that photo album sitting there on the coffee table? I have some wonderful pictures of my cats in there, and I do flatter myself that I'm a bit of a photographer. I think you'll find them very interesting."

Remus frowned as he leaned forward to open the large photo album. He decidedly did *not* want to look at pictures of this woman's cats, but she lived just a couple streets over from where Harry grew up, and she seemed to know something. He figured if he humored her, she'd eventually get to the point about why she seemed to be looking for either him or Sirius to show up. "Hmm...yes, they are quite good..." He distractedly commented as he flipped over a page of fluffy kittens framed by flowers and cat toys.

"Yes, all my babies have been extremely photogenic...*all of them*," she said significantly at the end just as Remus flipped the page.

The werewolf sucked in a startled breath when he realized exactly why this woman wanted him to look at pictures of her cats of all things. There, holding a kitten in his lap, was a three- or four-year-old Harry Potter, smiling painfully at the camera through a split lip and black

eye. He looked up as the woman raised an eyebrow and took another sip of her tea.
“Harry...?”

“Go on,” she interrupted in a hard tone. “My pictures cover years...up until just this past summer. There are a few very artful ones in there, ones where Harry has almost more colors on his skin than Colonel Scratch here has in his fur,” she reached up to rub the cat perched imperiously behind her.

Remus flipped through the pages where there were more candid shots of Harry playing with the cats, his arm in a make-shift sling made out of rags, bruises on the back of his neck while he was weeding the yard of what looked to be the house on Privet Drive, and years of abuse recorded in what was disguised as pictures an old and obsessed woman had taken of her cats. “Why...?” was all he was able to get out past the lump in his throat as he turned page after page.

“Why didn’t I do something about it?” She asked, sitting down her teacup and giving him a hard look. “What could I do? I’m a squib. I have no magic, and I’m bloody seventy-five years old, which is old when you have a muggle lifespan like me...forgive my language.”

“But surely...”

“That first picture you saw, I sent a copy of that one to Dumbledore along with every other picture in that album he’s in when I took ‘em,” she interrupted him once more with an angry glare. “I don’t have easy access to owl post or my own transportation, but I made the trip to London regularly to try to get help for that boy. The first few years, I was thanked for the pictures and assured that Harry was ‘accident’ prone and played rough with his cousin but that he was perfectly fine. Harry himself said the same thing when I asked, not that I ever believed him. After that, I never even got responses.”

“How did Dumbledore know though?” Remus frowned. He fully believed the man had never actually checked in on Harry after the things the older Harry had let slip.

“The hell if I know,” she hissed, sounding remarkably like one of her cats. “I were posted here to keep an eye on the lad, and I haven’t seen hide nor hair of Albus Dumbledore until he dropped by after the dem’nter incident this past summer to ask me to speak at little Harry’s

trial. I know a dem'nter even when I can't see one, but I'd lie on that stand faster than you can blink if it meant protecting my Harry!"

"So...he never came by? Not even after this picture?" Remus asked slowly, tasting the anger palpably in his mouth and feeling Moony at the edge of his senses. He flipped back and pointed at the picture where Harry had his arm in the makeshift sling with bruises all over it.

Arabella leaned forward to look at the picture. "Never saw him once, and I only got a few letters updating me on events...that was the day I stood for two hours outside of the muggle police station debating if I should walk in and report something, show them my pictures...I wish I had. I might still if you send him back here after seeing all this and after the dem'nters," she motioned to the album with a dangerous glare at the werewolf she didn't seem frightened of for a second, more like she'd hit him over the head with her purse if he didn't do anything.

Remus ran a hand down his face. There was no way in hell they were letting Hadrian Black walk back into Privet Drive. He would say the same thing about his cub back when he was Harry, but for very different reasons. If someone was going to kill the Dursleys and be sent to Azkaban for it, he wanted to be the one to do it and at least keep his cub safe from that...and he was certain by the little he knew of Hadrian, that he'd have no qualms with killing those monsters if they tried anything.

"Why *didn't* you report it to the muggles?" He finally asked, not judging the woman who had been in an impossible situation, but wondering why all the same.

"The wards," she said simply but with that hiss again. "I was assured by Dumbledore that there were pow'rful wards around Harry's house protecting him. But You-Know-Who was supposedly dead, and his followers had seemingly moved on at the time...so I stood there, weighing the options. If I got the muggles involved, they might get him out to safety, but was it really safer? Were those wards necessary? At the time, I didn't know. I'm not privy to a lot of what's happening in the magical ward since squibs aren't welcome in most places. I didn't know if Harry would be in more danger if he were removed from the wards...now, with the war back on, he seems he might actually be in more danger."

Remus nodded slowly. At the time though...Harry looked around seven or eight...he probably would have been safe outside the wards. It was only after Voldemort rose again, or

when everyone believed he was in danger from Sirius when he was thirteen that the wards would really have been needed and were a good argument.

“Do you know...are those wards really and actually powerful?” Arabella asked insistently with anxiety on her features. “Was I right to leave him, or did I leave the boy to harm when he could have been saved.”

Remus just shook his head in frustration. “I don’t know. It’s only recently that the war is decidedly heating up again. I don’t think any of the Death Eaters were actively after him once the initial activity was quelled in the wake of Voldemort’s fall. However, if the muggles took him away from the Dursleys, it would have gotten back to the ministry eventually, and there would have been chaos as everyone tried to put their hat in for who should be allowed to adopt him. Not all families would be better than the Dursleys unfortunately...”

She let out a frustrated huff which Remus completely agreed with. “Well, I cornered old Mad Eye when he doing his security checks this past summer...he was a friend of my father’s back in the day, and he were the one that told me about you and the fugitive godfather as being the closest adults to Harry...I been expecting either of you to drop by anytime, once you really talked to my Harry boy...what took you so long?!”

“He never talks about his time with his relatives,” Remus closed his eyes and shut the book, not being able to look at it for a second longer. With a sigh, he pulled his wand out of his pocket. “Do you mind if I make a copy of this?”

Arabella crossed her arms and glared at him. “As long as you promise my boy will never step foot in that house again. You and that fugitive man can just go and kidnap him if you need to, but you get him somewhere safe, with good wards, and where Albus Too Many Names Dumbledore doesn’t know where he is!”

“That will not be a problem at all,” Remus tapped his wand to the album, duplicating it on the coffee table. He had a feeling that Harry’s plans were moving forward more than he knew and that he never planned to go to Surrey again. If Remus had anything to say about it, this was the exact evidence they would need to take down the Light...something that he would have been against just a few weeks before, but now...whatever Harry’s plans were, he was in.

Snape growled at the image of Percy Weasley once more standing outside his rooms and waiting on him while he painfully crawled back to his chambers after a Death Eater meeting. “Which house elf do I need to make sure and hand a shirt to this time,” he complained when he opened the door and waited for the DADA professor to enter since he was clearly there to check on his health and well-being.

“First of all, the house elves work for Hogwarts, not for you, so you couldn’t free one if you did actually want to,” Percy responded with a snicker while he made himself at home with Snape’s potions cabinet and collected many of the potions he would need to be mobile to teach the next day. “Second, it was Sirius Black that owled this time. The request to check on you was buried in his demands for a dinner and obligatory shovel-talk, but it was there nonetheless.”

“Black is highly annoying,” Severus groaned, but gratefully took the potions he was handed and waited out the diagnostic spells now being thrown at him.

“Which one?” Percy chuckled and walked over to grab another potion or two his diagnostics said Snape would need.

“Both...and where did your partner find a bloody basilisk?!” He pinned the younger man with a glare while accepting the potions. “They are decidedly extinct according to everyone in the magical community.”

Percy frowned. He had meant to ask Harry about that. He was still confused why Snape didn’t seem to know about the basilisk incident. “A friend ran into it, killed the monster, and gave it to Hadrian to figure out what to do with,” he eventually responded, not wanting to say anything to give Harry away. If Snape did eventually figure out where it came from, then they could still say Harry gave it to Hadrian somehow.

“It is a shame your friend killed it. A live basilisk would be invaluable...where was it anyway?” Snape stretched his long legs out on the couch, planning to sleep right there instead of trying to make it to his room.

Percy rolled his eyes and had Snape floating in the air with a flick of his wand. “Set me down you ingrate!!” Snape protested while he was floated towards his bedroom, swearing the entire way.

“You’ll be in even more pain if you sleep on the couch, and you know I’m right,” Percy informed him before he gently dropped him onto his comfortable bed.

“I blame Hadrian for you somehow lacking all fear of me anymore,” Snape grouched as he rolled over and into his covers more, not undressing, and pulling them up to almost over his eyes.

“Probably true,” Percy shrugged, thinking it was more like he just understood Snape a little more now. “Anyway, the basilisk was trying to kill our friend, so we’re happy he got it first. Let us know what you find out when you test the ingredients, and I’m sure Hadrian can tell you more of the story later.”

“He better,” the cocooned man grumbled, his voice muffled in the duvet.

“Hadrian finished the last round of essays. I’ll set them on your desk,” Percy pulled the ream of parchment out of his pocket. “Also, Hadrian and I are meeting Mum and Dad for dinner before the Order meeting Friday night, so if you get there a little early, you can pass more marking off to him.”

“He had better hurry out before the meeting, Albus has not learned Sirius’s cousin is a dark wizard yet,” he added in, dark eyes following a chuckling Percy out of his room.

“How do you keep sneaking out of school without people noticing?” Sirius Black glared at his grown godson who had reams of parchment spread out over his desk in Grimmauld Place and who seemed to be drowning in paperwork.

“I’m a very generous lover to my fake-Ravenclaw girlfriend,” Hadrian looked up with slightly crossed eyes and a smudge of ink on his nose. “Plus, the twins are in on it all now, and they could distract a niffler from a bank vault if they wanted to.”

“Girlfriend?” Sirius raised an eyebrow and a smirk before sitting in the armchair in front of his own stolen desk.

“Yeah, not sure how that rumor came about or why Ginny at least hasn’t corrected people... Percy isn’t too happy about it since I did actually date Cho Chang, a Ravenclaw, for a very awkward half-second in fifth year the first time through,” Harry shrugged unconcernedly. “I’ll make it up to him though...as soon as I get through the bloody centaur’s demands, this bloody ridiculous contract from the goblins, and Kreacher’s updates to the bloody house elf document,” he groaned tiredly.

Sirius gave a long-suffering sigh before dramatically reaching out a hand. “Give me the goblins’ contract. I did take a course on contract law as a professional development seminar when I was an auror.”

“*You?* Professional development?” Harry gave him a disbelieving look even as he handed over the large stack of elegantly written on parchment.

“It was paid,” he rolled his eyes. “The bloke teaching it was quite fit too.”

“That makes more sense...” Harry nodded with a smirk and pulled the house elf document over towards him, already pulling out a bottle of red ink to circle areas they could ask for more from him in. “Did you hear that I’m supposed to start Occlumency with Snape tomorrow?”

“Hmm, yes, I had dinner with Severus on Sunday night, and he mentioned it,” Sirius said as innocently as possible. “What are you planning to do about that?”

Harry actually set down his quill and looked up again in shock. “You had *dinner* with Snape? Really? I was sure the ritual took me back in time and not to an alternate dimension...I’m wondering if I read that bit wrong in the book now.”

“You were the one that insisted I play nice,” Sirius looked up at him with a glare that was only half serious. “You could have told me yourself that you had injured your shoulder...and that small detail of wanting to become the next dark lord too...”

Harry huffed and gave his shoulder a tentative rub. It was still very sore, and the stitches would need to stay in for another week at least. “The shoulder is fine, and well...I wasn’t sure how you’d take the whole dark lord thing...how *are* you taking it?”

Sirius shrugged and reached over to grab the pencil sitting on the desk in front of him to make some suggestions for changes to the contract. “Snape explained it a little more than what my limited knowledge understood, and it makes sense. I guess I kind of agree that it’s probably the best option, even though it’s going to be difficult and dangerous, Pup. Also...I just offered to look over your contract from the goblins...did you assume I’d be too stupid to realize it was about supporting a new dark lord?”

Harry gave him a death glare. “No, I was kind of hoping you’d figure it out on your own. That’s why I was doing all this work here...well, that and the common room isn’t exactly safe to have documents like these out and about in.”

“Long as you didn’t think I was stupid. My ego is so very fragile you know,” Sirius gave his godson a teasing smile. “Now...what are you going to do about those pesky Occlumency lessons.”

“No fucking clue,” Harry grumbled and viciously circled an entire section in red ink. “I only have until tomorrow night to figure something out, and I really haven’t made any progress there. Any suggestions?”

“Tell him the truth?” Sirius looked up with a shrug. He figured Snape probably wouldn’t take it well initially but would hopefully get over it quickly once he understood.

Harry grumbled something under his breath that Sirius couldn’t hear. “For those of us without werewolf hearing...” he prompted his godson.

Harry huffed and put down the quill again. "I'm worried he won't like me anymore. He *hates* Harry Potter, and well, I don't have a lot of friends close to my age anymore here. I love Ron, Hermione, Neville, and the twins...but it's not the same. They just don't understand what it's like, and I hope they never will. I have Percy and all, but I'm worried if I put everything on him all the time, I'll just burn out our relationship."

"I doubt your Weasley sees it that way," Sirius reached across the table to give Harry's hand a little squeeze. "Also, you have me too...I'm the same age as Severus."

"Yeah, but you're Siri...you're the closest thing to a dad I have, even if you're only seven or eight years older than me right now."

Sirius Black was completely floored. Harry had gone back to looking over his papers, but Sirius's brain just wasn't working. Harry actually saw him as a dad-figure...well...didn't that just completely rock his world and throw everything out of balance? He was flattered, and terrified he wouldn't live up to expectations.

They worked in silence for a while as Sirius tried to wrap his head around having a grown son now and what he needed to do about that...or if he needed to do anything. What did Harry actually expect of him? "You know...Percy and I are having dinner with Molly and Arthur Friday before the Order meeting," Harry finally spoke up conversationally. "You'll *have* to tell me how many shades of red Dumbledore turns when he finally realizes your 'cousin' is a dark wizard and has been hanging around the house for a couple weeks."

Sirius frowned and almost broke the pencil he was holding. He desperately wanted to kick out the Order after what he'd recently found out. "Er...Harry...I should tell you...Remus did a thing..."

Harry's head shot up and he growled dangerously. "What did Remus do? Did he tell Dumbledore about me? I swear, I don't actually need him to get my godson back, I really only need his sperm...and Tonks's permission. He doesn't need to be alive for me to accomplish that."

Sirius choked on air and was certain he was going to die from shock. He didn't know if the correct response was to laugh or faint. "*That's* what you need Remus for?! You want his future kid?!!"

“Well, it’s not like I planned on kidnapping the baby or anything,” Harry grumbled and crossed his arms petulantly. “They’ll love Teddy too, but I want my godson back!”

“Please, *please* don’t tell Moony,” Sirius decided on laughing as he clutched his now aching sides. “I want to tell him, please, can I?...Two years you say? This is the best prank ever! I know they’ve been flirting a bit, but I didn’t think he’d actually end up with my cousin... wow!”

“Don’t get distracted, Padfoot. What did Remus do? How angry am I going to be?” Harry continued his unblinking glare.

“Not, sperm-stealing and murder angry,” Sirius calmed enough to roll his eyes and assure Harry. “He stopped by Privet Drive and ran into Arabella Figg.”

“Ms. Figg? Why would he do that?” Harry frowned, now more confused than anything else. “I bet she introduced him to all her cats and fed him a bunch of biscuits.”

“He was made to look at her cat photos...” Sirius said slowly, waiting for Harry to catch on.

Harry didn’t seem to see what he was getting at. “She made me help with those pictures every time she babysat,” he chuckled at the memory. “I didn’t get it until Percy gave me Sephie...I’ve been thinking about taking a few pictures of her in her little jumpers myself though...maybe I should mail a picture to Ms. Figg...I need to thank her for speaking at my trial anyway...”

Sirius was shocked. Harry didn’t seem to realize what those pictures he’d help take were really for, even with an extra decade to put it together. “Harry...you do realize what Arabella was doing, right?”

Harry frowned even more deeply in confusion at this. “Er...taking pictures of her cats...”

Sirius put down the contract to run a hand over his face and scoot his chair a little closer to Harry. “Look...Arabella Figg was documenting your abuse over the years. She was taking pictures of you, not just the cats...she was trying to get you help...”

Harry’s frown fell even further as he took that in. He’s never realized that. Honestly, he hadn’t even learned Ms. Figg was a squib until his fifth year, then he had only vaguely seen her in passing a couple times when he was back in Surrey after that. He hadn’t really given her much thought over the years. “Oh...” he trailed off.

“Look...can we talk about it?” Sirius leaned forward to put his arms on the desk, giving Harry a sad look. “If you want to that is...”

For his part, Harry just shrugged and picked up the house elves document again. “Nothing to talk about. That was over a decade ago for me. I’ll definitely have to do something nice for Ms. Figg though...I’m guessing she tried to get Dumbledore to step in and he ignored her? Frankly, that doesn’t surprise me at all.”

“Well...we should *do* something! Like kick the Order out of the house, expose Dumbledore, kill the Dursleys, something!” Sirius growled out in frustration. He’d talked Moony out of killing the Dursleys until he could talk to Harry, but they were both so mad they weren’t thinking straight.

Harry raised a very calm eyebrow. “The Order is serving *my* purpose right now in trying to get rid of Voldy, and I don’t want them to turn their attention to me. We will expose Dumbledore if it comes to it, but it needs to be *after* I take care of Voldemort. Lastly...the Dursleys...”

Harry huffed and ran a hand over the piercings in his right ear. “I just...I know I haven’t dealt with anything. I got an entire dissertation from Hermione on dealing with it in the future so I don’t need one from you too, but Dudley actually turned out a solid bloke. The dementor incident really has him turning his life around. I don’t know...we got close in the future, and those are his parents, and he was the one that actually did most of the physical damage, though they should have stopped it...I just...I don’t know how to process this...I don’t want to deal with it now when I’ve put it behind me.”

“Have you really though?” Sirius prodded, seeing Harry’s confusion about the situation but still thinking *something* should be done even if murder wasn’t the answer.

“No,” Harry grumbled, trying to not lie to his godfather. “I don’t see the point now though when I have so much more going on. I have all this,” he waved to the documents. “And I need to head to a meeting with a supplier in Knockturn in just a few minutes, then I have those lessons with Snape to figure out...I just don’t need anything else on my plate right now.”

“Hey...it’ll keep Pup,” Sirius backed off, seeing the panic in his godson’s eyes as he continued to play with his piercings, a clearly visible sign of his anxiety. “Don’t worry about it right now, and we’ll revisit it when things calm down some. Right?”

Harry finally stopped with the piercings and nodded. “Yeah...that sounds good. And...tell Remus thanks. I know he was trying to help, but also, maybe don’t murder anyone right now. I was planning to set him up as the Minister of Magic and he needs a clean record for that.”

Sirius choked once more at that in surprise. “Do *not* tell him that! Please! Can I?! Right after we tell him he needs to shag Tonks on a very specific night two years from now!”

“Granted...as long as Tonks agrees!” Harry held a finger up, knowing he would be damn persuasive. Honestly, he didn’t care much if Remus agreed or not, but Tonks needed to be on board. He was absolutely certain she’d want Teddy though, so it wasn’t even a gamble.

Sirius laughed loudly as he picked up the contract once more and slashed through a clause that would have had Harry as the marketing ambassador for the Goblin Nation...yeah, that wasn’t happening.

Harry felt like he should be humming a funeral march as he made his way towards the dungeons and his first Occlumency lesson with Snape. He supposed it was probably possible to construct shields to make someone think they were seeing into your brain without actually doing it; however, Harry wasn’t that skilled, or rather Snape was too skilled to not catch that. One or the other, it didn’t matter as the end result was the same. There was no way he could fake his way through not knowing Occlumency, and there was no way he could lower his

shields for Snape to see into his mind. So, it was lie his arse off as the current plan...yeah, he knew he wasn't good at planning.

The twins had offered to blow something up as a distraction, and while Harry really did appreciate their support, their fireworks weren't currently up to the first timeline's standards yet. Harry had relegated them to gunpowder for their experiments since Percy refused to allow them to have the C4 he had tracked down, but he figured it was probably gunpowder they'd gotten the first time anyway, so he'd let them experiment a bit before testing anything out when it could hurt someone.

He knocked on the door to Snape's office and steeled himself for whatever was waiting for him on the other side. "Enter!" Was called out in Snape's usual drawl with more than a hint of irritation in it.

Harry opened the door and had to blink a couple time in surprise at the two first year students currently sitting in the student chairs and furiously taking notes. "I will be with you in a moment, Potter," Snape sighed, a look of irritation not hidden in his features.

"Of course, Professor..." Harry was certain he'd ended up in an alternate dimension now. That was the only explanation, he thought as he stood awkwardly in the corner of the room as the two little girls looked up at him and didn't seem traumatized by their current situation at all.

"Right, then you stir it *three times*, not two, not four, but three and counterclockwise," Snape finished his instructions, holding up three fingers sternly. "If it turns blue, you didn't add enough eye of newt and now is the time to add just a hint more. Once it turns a brown-grey color, you can remove it from the heat and let it cool."

"Thank you so much, Professor Snape!" One of the girls chirped as they finished their notes and began to put the parchment in their bags. "I just *told* Mary here that you wouldn't mind helping us. Your notes are always so helpful and encouraging on our essays."

Mary was nodding and smiling with her friend while Harry held in a laugh. Apparently, this was his fault, and he was absolutely loving it! "I expect you will no longer over boil your potions in my class then," Snape drawled, looking like he'd really rather be giving detention instead of helping, but not being able to get out of it.

“Never! We know what we were doing wrong now!” The one that must be Mary assured him as the two little girls stood.

“Thank you so much, Professor! See you in class!” The first one happily called back. Both girls turned a bit pink and shuffled past Harry, giggling behind their hands.

Snape sighed and plopped down into his desk chair, motioning for Harry to now have a seat. It was taking all he had to not just break down laughing, and he was certain that Snape could see the amusement in his eyes regardless. “That Salazar-forsaken idiot,” Snape grumbled under his breath and shuffled some papers on his desk before looking up at Harry, a sneer that was more assessing than anything else on his face.

“Sir...?” Harry waited, not wanting to be the one to start off this farce in the slightest.

“Do you know why you are here?” He drawled, standing to come out from behind his desk and leaned against the front of it across from Harry. He tapped his wand against his arm, and Harry would swear the man looked almost scared...or maybe uncomfortable or something...

Harry nodded, figuring Snape would tell him at some point what was wrong in his own roundabout way. “Er, yeah, Occlumency, but I don’t particularly want to learn it, and I don’t see why I should have to anyway since it’s not standard curriculum,” he said, hoping he could bluff his way out of this if Snape didn’t just curse him first. It was Plan A at least.

“The Headmaster...” Harry was certain there was a sneer in Snape’s voice at that. “Has deemed it necessary to teach you how to keep the Dark Lord out of your mind. As a member of the Order myself, I see the advantages of keeping our secrets from the enemy. Surely, even a dunderhead such as you would agree.”

Right, so Plan B it was then. “I already know Occlumency though,” Harry crossed his arms stubbornly and tried to look like a petulant fifteen-year-old. “I’m reasonably proficient enough to keep my thoughts to myself as long as I’m not in the actual room with Tom, and if we’re in the same room, then I think I have other more pressing problems, agreed?”

Snape's eyes narrowed and Harry felt like he'd given something away by Snape's suspicious look, but no he didn't think he had... Harry kicked himself mentally and swore, he'd referred to Voldemort as Tom since he knew it would hurt Snape to say the name... Harry Potter wouldn't have done that.

Backtracking Harry opened his mouth before Snape could start putting the pieces together. "Hadrian Black taught me over the summer. He's Sirius's cousin and stopped by my house a few times," he explained quickly since Sirius had mentioned he'd let slip to Snape that Harry and Hadrian might know each other. It was the best excuse he could come up with to know a base-level of Occlumency. As long as no one knew about the horcrux, they should buy it.

Snape looked even more like Harry had given him damning information he wasn't sure what to do with. Harry didn't know what he was stepping into *this* time. It seemed like a fairly reasonable excuse to him! "What? You can test my shields if you want...?" Harry offered, feeling like the man was already reading his inmost thoughts at the piercing look he was receiving.

Snape tapped his wand against his arm a couple more times as he stared at the teen in front of him. Something was nagging at the back of his mind... there was something big he was missing. Something wasn't right. Potter shouldn't know mind-magic at the level he was professing... not with a few lessons over the summer if the Dark Lord had a direct link to his mind. For a normal situation, it was reasonable, but not with this supposed direct link... He'd assumed Hadrian had inked some runes onto Harry, not actual Occlumency lessons.

Snape frowned even more deeply. Mind magic was dark magic and would need someone to cast the legilimency spell to test one's shields... that spell would have set off the blood wards he'd been told were around Potter's house since it was invasive dark magic. "You are lying to me... why are you lying? I understand being pig-headed about having to take extra lessons, but you actually understand why they are important... I can clearly see that. Why are you lying about knowing the art then?" He asked. It was rhetorical since he wasn't actually expecting Potter to answer him honestly.

Harry was keeping his panic under wraps as best as possible. He *was* lying, but only partially really. What did Snape know that he didn't know Snape knew?! That's where the trouble lay. "I'm not lying. I already know Occlumency," he said firmly, knowing his only recourse was to dig himself in deeper. "Sirius told you that he asked Hadrian to check in on me. He was really nice and taught me some things while he was there."

Snape's eyes narrowed as he stared even more deeply at the boy fidgeting in front of him, willing his secrets to come into the open without having to break into his mind. If the boy actually did know some Occlumency, breaking into his mind would be even more invasive, painful, and dangerous for him to attempt. Snape's eyes narrowed and his thoughts screeched to a halt as the nervous teen reached up and rubbed a spot in the middle of his eyebrow. It was a nervous habit, one he'd seen many times before but never from Harry Potter.

Snape's hand tightened on his wand, and he slowly reached out with the other. Harry flinched back, which was concerning in itself, but he didn't move out of the way. Snape clapped a hand down on Harry's shoulder and gave it a sharp squeeze. Harry's eyes shot wide and he hissed out a stream of expletives.

"Bloody fucking hell, Severus!! If you'd figured it out, you could have just asked me instead of testing it!!" Harry Bloody Potter or maybe Hadrian Black hissed out and shoved Snape's hand off his shoulder to clutch it to his side. "Merlin's balls! If you tore my stitches, I expect you to fix them, you git!"

Severus Snape didn't know what to think. His mouth dropped open and his brain was not catching up to whatever this new reality was. His wand seemed to have risen of its own accord. "What have you done with Harry Potter?" He found himself asking, even as he knew he did actually know the answer to his question...but that answer was eluding him.

"I fucking killed him," Hadrian looked him right in the eyes, those green eyes so very, *very* familiar. "It was an accident though...I didn't realize I'd over-write my younger self when I came back in time. I should have known though as two souls for one person cannot exist for any length of time in any given reality."

Snape was certain his hand was shaking that was holding his wand, but he couldn't put it down. Hadrian's words were echoing in his brain, but he didn't want to believe them. "You are...you are..."

"Hadrian James Potter-Black," the boy sitting in front of him answered. "My mum named me Hadrian, after a Roman emperor...something her best friend's family always did for their sons. I'm more comfortable with Harry though since I've always been called that instead."

Snape collapsed back onto his desk, his wand faltering as he lowered it. He didn't know what emotions he was feeling in that moment. He felt betrayed, and hurt, and surprised, and oddly *seen*, and just...no, he couldn't process this at all.

"Severus...I really, *really* want to be your friend," the (maybe?) teen was saying even as the words washed over Snape without him really being able to grasp them. "You died in my time, and I learned after that what all you'd done for me. I wanted to get to know you, to be your friend, and I really didn't expect to run into you that day..."

"Bloody hell!" Snape's blood rushed from his face as suddenly remembered how they'd met. "I hit on Lily's son! I bloody hit on Lily Evans's son!!"

Harry shrugged and chuckled, drawing Snape's eyes down to the fifteen-year-old that he now knew was an illusion. "If it makes you feel better...you weren't doing a very good job at it."

Snape's eyes narrowed and he clutched his wand more. "You brat..."

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Harry's Ravenclaw girlfriend...

Harry's Girlfriend

Chapter Notes

I realized Halloween was on a Tuesday in 1995...so, just go with it...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Calm down, Severus,” Harry sighed with an eyeroll while Snape seemed to be having a mental breakdown at the realization of just who Hadrian actually was and the fact that he’d been initially attracted to him. “I’m 27, you didn’t know who I was, and if I wasn’t already dating Percy, I might even have said yes to drinks.”

Snape glared enough that Harry felt it in his bones. “Stop trying to help, you decidedly are not helping!”

Harry huffed a laugh and instead pulled his ebony wand out and threw a few wards at the door before turning back around and dropping his glamour. “Does this help you process some at least?” He asked, causing Snape to throw his arms in the air in frustration and move to crash down into his desk chair.

“Does Mr. Weasley at least know about this?” Snape absently waved a hand in the hardened man’s direction. “I would hope he knew what he was getting into before he entered this relationship.”

“Er...yeah...he actually came back in time with me. Percy is also older than he looks,” Harry returned to his seat with a raised eyebrow, waiting for Snape to blow up or curse him or something. “I tried my best not to lie to you as much as possible, but Percy and I have actually been together for over a couple years instead of less than one. Why don’t you ask me a few questions to set your mind at ease or something. I promise, I was trying to be above board with you, but I didn’t think you’d take my identity well if I just blurted it out when we first met...”

Snape gave a sharp snort of agreement at that while he was obviously trying to line up the two identities in his mind to merge the particulars he already knew. “Percy is actually...31

then?” He commented, having done the mental math with a frown.

“Thereabouts...we might have passed his birthday in the former timeline...” Harry trailed off, not really wanting to do the math himself right then. “So, yeah, he looks a little different than what you see as well. It’s a glamour invented by one of the Unspeakables in the future. It’s really quite good, but we didn’t realize house elves could see through it...and goblins, so Flitwick actually knows all this too.”

“Indeed,” Snape nodded, that little piece of the puzzle finally making much more sense. He just couldn’t believe a 19-year-old would have been recruited into the Unspeakables, but a 31-year-old was much more understandable. He vowed next to interrogate Filius about what he knew at his earliest convenience though.

With a sneer and irritated huff, another piece fell into place. “I am assuming your godfather knows about all this as well by comments he let slip when we had dinner the other night.”

“Yep...he caught me stealing his alcohol, and I ended up caving and explaining what happened to stop the lecture,” Harry laughed and leaned back, crossing his arms. “Which, by the way, any chance you keep some wine or firewhiskey or something in your office?”

“You have a problem, Potter,” Snape sneered at the man across from him, wincing at using the last man.

Harry winced too. “Yeah...that’s too weird now with us. Please either Hadrian or even Black when we’re alone. You say my name like that, and I feel like I’m getting detention.”

Snape nodded. “Agreed. This is all very strange and unprecedented, but I’m still not giving you any alcohol, no matter how old you are.”

“Spoil sport,” Harry sighed and gave up the effort. “What else do you want to know?”

Snape had so many questions that it was difficult to narrow in on what to ask first. “Did you actually kill the Dark Lord in your time, or is that why you came back? Why *did* you come back?”

“Huh? Yeah...sorry, I’ve explained this so many times that I forget who knows what,” Harry chuckled, having thought for some reason Snape already knew why he’d come back in time.

“No, Tom isn’t the actual problem but more a symptom or even instigator. Yeah, it took about two more years before I killed him in the first timeline, and it was really bad, but I think I’ll take care of him by the end of Christmas break this time around, so not really the issue. It was the Ministry and general society that I came back to fix actually. That’s why I’m going the whole dark lord route and all. They became hyper racist and paranoid and were killing all dark creatures and dark practitioners. We’d lost too much to *not* come back in time to do something...whatever the consequences of that.”

Snape tapped the side of his own neck significantly with a questioning frown. “Your vampire friend...?”

“Ron,” Harry nodded. “Yeah, he was turned a little over...er, maybe four years ago in my time. It was everyone though...” Harry paused knowing the information Snape would want to know the most but not sure if he should say it. It needed to be said though.

“Draco was actually one of the first that disappeared,” he finally said hollowly, the memories and his inability to do anything still haunting him.

Snape sat up further in his chair, putting his elbows on the desk in his surprise and concern. “My godson is not a dark creature, and he is more interested in Potions than delving into any of the darker arts to his father’s chagrin. Why would he be targeted? Was it just because of Lucius?”

“No...” Harry scrubbed a hand down his face, knowing the next bit was what he’d hoped to spare everyone from, Draco most importantly but Snape as well. “Draco is forced by his father to become a Death Eater this next summer. I’m hoping to save him from that completely...he was pardoned and only given probation after the war. Kingsley was minister then though...things were good for a while when he was in charge.”

“Shacklebolt?” Snape prompted, needing more information about what happened to his godson in the future. He was doing his best to keep his godson out of things, but Lucius was a fanatic and weak when it came to standing up for anyone besides himself. Kingsley though, he didn’t seem the type to do what Hadrian was explaining. “He seems...uptight but not prejudiced. I would hope he would be a fair minister.”

“Yeah...he was. He just didn’t make it very long. Murdered by centaurs during a diplomatic trip at the end of his first year as minister,” Harry nodded with a grunt of frustration. “It was definitely NOT centaurs...they were *obviously* framed. There was a massive backlash against the centaurs that I tried to stop but was only partially successful at in the original timeline. I have some good ideas as to who actually did the deed, but that doesn’t actually matter because the person who was behind it has already been taken care of.”

“You killed them...” Snape’s eyes widened in shock, and he looked at Harry in a whole new light. He hadn’t quite absorbed the fact that Harry Potter had been the same one to murder Fenrir Greyback a few days before, and he was just now realizing that this dark wizard, who was a master of the dark arts, vying to become the next dark lord, and a murderer was actually *Harry Bloody Potter!*

“Er...nooooo,” Harry said slowly as he gauged the odd expressions crossing Snape’s face. “That was actually Percy, but that’s beside the point...”

“What?!” Snape sputtered in shock.

“Do you want to hear the rest of this story or not?” The young man glared at his friend who was clearly close to either panic or anger or both.

“Please...” Snape took in a deep breath and motioned for Harry to continue.

“Well...Draco and I weren’t super close though we were friendly and getting to be actual friends, but Narcissa and I were close and had a standing tea date on Sundays, so I ran into him quite a bit. It was Astoria Greengrass that found the note though. It sounded like he’d committed suicide. Narcissa and Astoria were distraught, and Blaise and I looked for him or his body for months, but we never found anything,” Harry let out a breath of sadness for everything that happened at that time. Narcissa had never been the same.

“It wasn’t until we realized that all the former Death Eaters had mysteriously disappeared after one extremely flimsy explanation or another that we put together the pieces, that and those of creature descent started going the same way. It was so quiet, and there was always a note, or a notice of the family moving, or something as an excuse for why they were gone... You can’t fight something when you don’t even know it’s happening.”

“Right...so how much have you changed in the timeline already?” Snape was trying to take all this in stride, but it just wasn’t happening. He needed a bottle of Scotch and a week to process everything. Did Potter say he was *friends* with Narcissa Malfoy? How had that happened?!

“The Dark Lord is clearly first since he is the most pressing currently, but what needs to be done after that?” Snape finally asked, pushing everything else to the side to be dealt with once he had that bottle of Scotch. He did best with a clear goal and mission, and it was time to figure one of those out.

Harry shrugged, trusting his new ‘inner circle’ to be the leaders in those regards once they finally had their meeting. “Right now, I’m just focusing on Tom. We’ve changed quite a lot already. I’m sure you’ve realized that Percy was definitely *not* our DADA professor the first time around, and we’re all thankful for that change. Merlin, this year is so much better! I really couldn’t take a repeat of the toad taking over the school.” Harry ended with a shudder just for effect.

“If you’ve changed a lot, then are you not worried that events will have been affected and your plans will no longer be effective moving forward? Lack of future knowledge takes away some of your advantage.” Snape frowned, now wondering how Harry had killed off the Dark Lord that first time around if he was so confident he could do it sooner this time.

“I’m only worried about a couple things that could potentially change, but Tom really didn’t do much before the end of this academic year in the first timeline, and I plan to be done with him by Christmas,” Harry sighed tiredly, letting some of his anxieties show. “I’m mainly worried he’ll move up when he tried to use Nagini to take the prophesy from the Ministry and if he decides to break his followers out of Azkaban early. Those are my main concerns at the moment.”

Snape's brow furrowed. "So, you know of the prophesy..." he let the rest go unsaid.

"Yep, and your part in all of it, and I'll curse you if you try to apologize. You clearly didn't know what it meant or who it was targeting," Harry rolled his eyes not wanting to dredge up the past he wasn't even alive for. "Frankly, I'm starting to wonder if I know the actual prophesy though since I only know what Dumbledore told me. I'm going with Percy to hear it officially in a few weeks if he can swing it with his former supervisor who is currently a member of that department."

"I believe I have reached my capacity to handle your insanity this evening," Snape closed his eyes and leaned back in his desk chair. There were still so many questions, and Snape really didn't know how he felt about anything he'd heard that evening.

"I get that response a lot," Harry just smirked at him, not offended at all.

"I must warn you, Dumbledore had requested I search your mind this evening for information surrounding how you were blocking out the Dark Lord and if you know anything about his wand disappearing...did you have anything to do with that?" Snape opened his eyes to question Harry, now actually thinking he might.

"Er...soooo...you're going to need to lie to Dumbledore about the whole blocking Tom out of my mind thing," Harry reluctantly decided. "Can you and would you do that? Maybe tell him that I found a book on Occlumency at Grimmauld or something? There is something important he's not telling you about that connection, and I *could* tell you now, but I have a feeling I might have overloaded you a bit and it can wait."

"You think?" Snape sarcastically drawled, but would immediately admit he knew Dumbledore was keeping quite a lot from him. "I will inform the headmaster Sirius's cousin assaulted you by placing blocking runes onto your body somewhere...I presume you have some of those?"

Harry hadn't thought of that excuse. It would have been a much easier one to use with Snape. "No, but I can add some," he raised the hem of his school jumper and looked for some empty space. He'd learned Occlumency, so he hadn't thought he would need any blocking runes, but they might still be useful.

“The wand...?” Snape prompted, surreptitiously studying the tattoos he was seeing to try to figure out what they all meant at a later time.

“Huh...” Harry looked up from where he was trying to decide on a good spot for the new tattoos and then winced, his eyes flicking down to his ankle holster. “Yeah...that *was* me but very unintentional. I tried to get it to go back to him, but it doesn’t want to go and is being very stubborn about it.”

“It’s a wand Hadrian,” Snape sighed, feeling like he’d lost a good five years of his life just during this conversation. “It’s an inanimate object without feelings.”

“Nope, not *just* a wand, but again, I’m really trying to be good and respect your mental health at the moment,” Harry smirked.

“You are not helping,” Snape sneered, knowing he needed the rest of the information but feeling that Hadrian might be right and it could wait until he slept on everything he had. “I feel I should note how we both seem to be talking around the fact that you do not trust the headmaster for some reason...is it only because you are a dark wizard, or is there something I should know about?”

Harry shrugged, not knowing the answer to that question himself. “I don’t know anything super specific. He died at the end of my sixth year, but what he did before then...well, it just seemed a bit shady. Some of the things I’ve learned since I’ve been back haven’t really added up either. I’m not willing to trust him because of my magic and my goals, but even besides that...I don’t know. I’m not so sure the headmaster has my best interests at heart. I think I’d like to just confirm what he told me about the prophecy before drawing any major conclusions though. He’s all for the ‘greater good’ and I was most definitely a casualty of that, but I’m wondering if it might be a bit deeper now.”

“We will meet this weekend once I have had time to think through what you have told me this evening,” Snape informed him. “I want the rest of your explanation then...about your connection to the Dark Lord, the wand, how you first defeated the Dark Lord, how you got into the dark arts, what you know of the Dark Lord’s plans, specifically your comment about him breaking his followers out of Azkaban, everything...”

“Sure, I have a meet the parents thing again at Grimmauld tomorrow anyway,” Harry grimaced and stood. “I swear, this was so much easier when they had known me since I was 11. Percy’s dad still looks at me like I might decide to bite him or something.”

Snape motioned for Harry to leave him with a tired sigh. “I suppose I will see you in passing before the Order meeting since you do not have Potions tomorrow. I also clearly expect perfection in all your potions going forward since you learned them at some point remarkably,” he added with a glare at the man who once more looked fifteen.

Harry shrugged and removed his wards. “That’s actually easier for me than trying to only slightly mess them up. Pass me any marking tomorrow as well. Sirius has helped a lot with all the paperwork the goblins have sent me and my schoolwork in laughably easy, so I still have some time at the moment. Your pain potion has been a lifesaver with all the flying I’m expected to do as quidditch captain,” Harry grimaced at the end. “Merlin, I’ve missed the game, but my knee just cannot take the pressure of flying anymore.”

Snape felt like his brain was melting as the last puzzle piece of the two identities seemed to fuse together. Hadrian had been abused as a child and tortured as an adult...Harry Potter had been abused as a child and was currently dealing with a lot of pain. “Hadrian...” he didn’t even know what to say as he trailed off, frantically massaging the headache building in his head.

“What? You look like I’ve broken you again,” Harry stopped on his way out, not knowing what he’d said to cause Snape to look like he might be sick.

Snape just vowed to get trashed over the weekend and probably curse Sirius for not telling him all this. He eventually just pushed it all aside and actually looked at the glamoured man in front of him. “I need to study your knee a little more. We will keep these Occlumency sessions for that purpose. There are some things I believe I can do to heal some of the damage. You need additional potions as well to correct other damage you have sustained, or you will develop arthritis before you reach anything resembling old age.”

Harry looked confused but nodded. “Er...ok, sure. Thanks...Percy’s always on me about my health, so he’ll appreciate that too. Well...see you tomorrow night! Merlin, I hope I see Dumbledore in passing. I’d kill to see his face when he realizes Sirius’s cousin is a dark wizard!”

Harry was laughing the whole way out of Snape's office while the man just lowered his head to his desk and let out a loud groan. He stayed that way for a second before he suddenly raised his head. "And where the bloody hell did he find a basilisk?!" He growled out into the empty office as yet another question occurred to him. He was going to write down all his questions and get each and every one of them answered by force if necessary!

Harry didn't run into Dumbledore before the Order meeting. It was a bloody shame. Snape had gotten there early to finish a potion he had started in his lab at Grimmauld and to pass off what Harry viewed as a vindictive amount of marking to him though. If the man was going to fix his knee, he would prioritize whatever amount of marking he was given regardless. It was worth it! Honestly, just seeing first years think Snape was helpful and approachable was worth it to Harry since Snape seemed to rely on the fact that they *wouldn't* come up to him and seemed to actually be helpful when they did since he didn't know how to handle children who didn't have an inherent fear of him and just thought he was grumpy in person but nice on paper.

Dinner with the Weasley parents was surprisingly unremarkable. That was only because he was with Percy though, and the whole thing ended up being apologies, made up explanations on his and Percy's part, and catching up with their third oldest son on the Weasley parents' part. He did get a bit of a shovel talk that seemed to amuse Percy enormously, but which Harry actually appreciated. He liked that Arthur and Molly were looking after their son in their own way, even if they really didn't have to worry that he was 'older' or even 'more experienced' or that he didn't have a job.

Harry might not be Malfoy wealthy, but he was fairly well off with his trust fund and family vaults. It wasn't spectacular since he had to fund a rebellion with it now, but he also had means to make more money with his mastery, knowledge of the black market, and skillset, and Percy had somehow ended up in a situation where he was being paid by Fudge's office, Hogwarts, and the Unspeakables...they were fine and had honestly never needed to help each other out financially. Harry did start wondering if that was a mistake on his part though. Maybe he should ask Percy if he wanted to merge vaults or at least have one that they both contributed to and could access. He wanted Percy to know he was serious about their relationship, and it seemed that was something neither of them really were good about talking about or knew how to bring up in conversation.

It gave him a lot to think about as they apparated back to Hogsmeade and had to enter the school separately. He had about an hour before the Order meeting started and he could get Walburga to fill him in on what was going on, so Harry made his way to the library where he figured he could ward a corner and start in on Snape's marking while getting the play-by-play from his portrait follower, as reluctant of a follower as she may be.

"Well, there's our disappearing roommate. We were about to think you got eaten by one of Hagrid's pets," Dean Thomas remarked with a smile from where he was sitting a table with Seamus, Lavender, and Parvati where they seemed to all be working on Percy's DADA homework. "Hey, you know the answer to question eight from the homework?" He asked when Harry drew near to them.

"Obstructa armum," Harry told them, happy he'd thought to stash his schoolbag in the Shrieking Shack when he'd left campus so he had it with him now and looked like he was planning to study. "It will reinforce whatever physical structure you are behind to help shield against spellfire. It's the only way to protect against an Unforgivable besides just dodging it."

"Brill! Cheers!" Dean happily wrote down the answer while Seamus seemed to be trying to set Harry on fire with his glare alone...which, knowing Seamus, might actually happen if he stood there long enough.

"Were you with your *girlfriend*?" Lavender turned around to pin Harry with a look saying she needed new gossip and now so that she could procrastinate her homework. "How's that going? You seem to be spending quite a lot of time together."

"Yeah, who is it?" Parvati cut in to ask. "Padma said she doesn't know of any Ravenclaws who disappear with you. Who has stolen you away from the lions?"

"No one, he's probably off concocting stories and planning his next attention seeking catastrophe," Seamus almost hissed at Harry.

For his part, Harry just rolled his eyes. Yes, he was irritated with Seamus, and he desperately wanted Ron to hex the brat, but he was not going to rise to the bait from a literal teenager. "My relationship is my own business," he tried to deflect the girls' prying looks.

“If I want to be out of our dorm room as much as possible, I’m sure you understand,” he said with a pointed glance at Seamus. “It’s not the most welcoming atmosphere these days.”

“Fine, but *who* is it?!” Lavender insisted. “If Padma can’t figure it out, then we might just have to conclude this mystery girlfriend is made up.”

“Yeah, Harry...as your Yule Ball date, I think I should at least get a hint...” Parvati teased, which actually did make Harry laugh at that fiasco of a night.

“I think you deserve a medal for that, but no, she wants to stay out of all my press and everything,” Harry tried to leave, but Lavender stopped him again.

“Please Harry...just tell us who she is,” she pleaded with him.

“Lavender...look...” Harry trailed off, frantically trying to come up with some kind of excuse that didn’t sound made up.

“It’s me. I’m his girlfriend,” a silvery voice answered from behind Harry, causing him to tense up and consider just running from it. “I asked him to keep quiet about it because I don’t like a lot of attention.”

Harry didn’t know how to leave at this point, so he did his best to bury any and all emotions behind the strongest Occlumency shields he possibly could as Luna Lovegood seemed to float over from the corner of the library to standing right beside him. Harry felt hollow and empty as he just kept pushing the waves of distress and pain down deeper and deeper into himself. He knew he looked blank and off as he turned and plastered what might pass for a smile on his face as he stood in Luna’s presence for the first time since he’d tried to erase her existence from his memory in the wake of what he could not bring himself to face outside of so many layers of wards protecting himself from the emotions in his own mind.

“Luna, hi,” he said, acknowledging her. “I didn’t see you there.” He didn’t know why Luna had stepped in as his imaginary girlfriend, but knowing Luna, she had her reasons and was decidedly right in whatever conclusion she’d come to.

“Hello, Harry,” she said as if this wasn’t the literal first time they had talked to each other in this timeline. “May I steal my boyfriend?” She turned to the speechless group at the table that seemed to all be shocked into silence. “I have a question about my Charms essay that he promised to help me with.”

“Luna?” Parvati asked blankly. “Huh?”

“Er...yeah,” Dean motioned for her to steal Harry away while everyone else just stared.

“Wait...I didn’t know you two even knew each other,” Lavender finally spoke up to ask, her face breaking into a smile at the fact she would be the first to know this juicy new information.

“Oh yes,” Luna answered for him, putting her small hand on his arm and breaking his heart just a little more. “We met when he was visiting the Burrow...I live next door to the Weasleys.”

“Luna is my heart,” Harry answered in the absolute truth as he tried to contain anything that would hurt the wonderful girl next to him. “She is the best person I know.” The deep gratitude and love he had for her slipped out from behind his shields at his words, and Harry felt Luna’s hand tighten on his arm.

Beside looking slightly shaken, Luna passed off Harry’s slip with a shake of her head. “We must go. There are only a couple hours until curfew, and I want some alone time with Harry as well.”

Harry allowed himself to be dragged away to the more secluded part of the library he had been heading to originally while his housemates frantically whispered about them in their absence. “What was that?” He asked Luna when they were far enough away not to be heard.

“Do you know a privacy spell or ward?” The Ravenclaw fourth year asked with a vague wave around them and their study carrel.

“Yes, of course,” Harry quickly cast several high-level wards he really shouldn’t know before turning back to Luna who had sat down at the desk and seemed to be staring into space.

“Please, keep your shields up if you can. You are quite overwhelming,” she remarked as if talking about the weather. Harry had missed that so much! Luna was a hole missing from his life, and he did his best to contain the absolute joy he had in her presence down with the pain, sealed and locked away.

“How did you figure it out...or actually *what* have you figured out?” Harry chuckled and joined her at the table, giving her that tense smile again that was just a little too vacant in contrast to her vacant but full of feeling look she wore most of the time as she tried to filter out everyone’s emotions around her.

“Hmm,” she mused, giving him a smile and her full attention that was like the sun turned directly on you. “I know you love me, and that you lost me...it was very painful. I can feel it whenever you walk by. You’ve been trying to avoid me, but you don’t always see me until I’m quite close. I disappear that way for most people, even if you seem more attuned to my presence than others. Are you from the future? It is my best guess for the emotions I feel from you...also, you seem not surprised at all that I can feel your emotions...something else that tells me you already knew this.”

Harry nodded. “Yes, twelve years in the future,” he said without reserve. Whatever Luna wanted to know, he’d tell her. “I’m not avoiding you because I don’t want to be around you, but there is a lot of pain, and I don’t want to hurt you.”

Luna nodded in understanding. “As good as your mind magic is, I can still feel the edges. You have not handled your pain and loss well...it’s not healthy to hold onto everything. You must move forward.”

Harry opened his mouth to protest that he had but shut it once more. If Luna said it was true, then it was. “I’ll do better...I promise, I’m trying.”

She nodded at him with a kind smile and a hand placed on his arm. “I know, but I’m also not *your* Luna. You’ll have to get to know me as I am now, not who I could be.”

Harry nodded with feeling. It was the same with all of his friends. He had to keep reminding himself of that whenever he looked at Neville or Ron or Draco or any of them. “Yes, I know that. I will. What all do you want to know? I’ll tell you anything.”

Luna just gave him that look that said she was seeing right through him again. “I think you had other plans tonight,” she responded as she stood. “I don’t know you Harry Potter...and I think I would like to get to know you as who you are now. I don’t need to know who you were.”

“Thank you,” Harry breathed out, not even knowing that was what he needed to hear. She was the first person that didn’t want to know everything that had happened to him over the past decade and why. She just wanted to get to know *him* as he was...flaws, slight mental instabilities, paranoia, and impulsive tendencies and all. “I’d really like that...er, I have to ask though...how did you know I don’t actually have a girlfriend?”

Luna smiled more broadly at him. “I can feel the love you and Professor Weasley have for each other from across the Great Hall,” she giggled. “You might want to tell him to work on his mind magic just a little more,” she added before stepping outside of the wards and giving him a parting wave. “See you for breakfast *Har-Bear*.”

Harry let out a deep breath and had to laugh as he pulled Walburga’s small portrait out of his pocket. He wasn’t sure if Luna as a fake girlfriend helped his story or not, but it was sure fun regardless. He was still laughing as he opened the clasp and her stern face appeared. “Hey Walburga, what’s up?”

The woman sneered at him, clearly wanting to curse him from her painted image. “What is up is that you have kept me waiting, you imbecile! I don’t have all day to cater to your every whim!”

Harry stopped laughing and rolled his eyes. “It’s not like you have a busy social life I’m keeping you from,” he dryly remarked. He would never like this woman no matter how much their goals currently aligned. “What’s going on in the Order meeting?”

Walburga sneered but ducked out of the frame to check her other portrait. She reappeared shortly after. “Your Light Lord is throwing a fit worthy of a toddler,” she reported with venom. “He has been for the past ten minutes. He believes he should have been informed immediately that you were a dark wizard, and you should never have been allowed in the house. The bigotry of that man!”

Harry snorted a laugh. “Yes, well, that was expected. What is everyone else saying? Sirius, Snape, the Weasleys? Are they planning to ban me?”

Walburga gave him another look that called him an idiot. “You own the house and control the wards.”

“I *know* that,” Harry rolled his eyes. “I’m asking what he wants, not what’s actually going to happen.”

Walburga huffed but reluctantly answered him. “My ingrate of a son said he’d throw the Order out before you; your potion master reminded them all that he is a dark wizard; the Weasleys are trying to reason with him using many of the arguments you have been telling them recently; and that werewolf of yours has broken three spoons and a knife of my good flatware! My son just keeps giving him more pieces! He had better fix them or I expect you to curse him for me!”

Harry was very surprised that Remus seemed upset for him, but it did sound hopeful that maybe they actually could have some kind of relationship moving forward. “Well...that’s nice,” he lamely commented since he was still shoring up most of his emotions in the wake of Luna being with him. “What did Dumbledore say?”

Walburga hissed at him but left to check and make sure she wasn’t missing anything. She returned looking more irritated than even when she left. “He’s insisting on meeting with you soon, so prepare yourself,” was the explanation she gave. “While I have no faith in your capabilities, I do still hope you are able to get in some good curses before he kills you.”

“Dumbledore isn’t going to kill me,” Harry answered with little faith behind the words. He honestly didn’t know what Dumbledore would do. He wouldn’t kill Hadrian Black, random dark wizard, but if he found out he was planning to become the next dark lord...it was a good thing Harry *probably* couldn’t be killed...

“Regardless, your potion master will be contacting you about a meeting,” the portrait continued. “They have moved on and your werewolf is being sent on a recruitment mission since it seems my old friend Fenrir has gone missing...shame.”

Harry almost set the portrait on fire right then, but he needed the spy inside the house... although with Sirius, Remus, and Severus...maybe he *could* set her on fire soon. “Remember your vows, Walburga,” he warned her darkly. “I allow you a great deal of leeway with your editorializing, but I will not have you going against my plans, and people like Greyback are not welcome in the movement I am building.”

The portrait paused in her rants with a frown. “Yes, my lord,” she begrudgingly finally ground out as Harry’s look pulled on the magic imbued in her painting and made it run cold.

“Good,” he let off his hold on her magic slightly and gave her a smirk of a smile. “Now, when you find Sirius alone, tell him that I need him at the Shrieking Shack at noon on Halloween for a meeting. I may see him before then, but just in case. It’s a Tuesday, but the students are allowed a day in Hogsmeade before the feast since it’s a holiday.”

“I may be dead, but I remember my time at Hogwarts,” the portrait sneered right back at him but agreed to do it.

“Great! Be good and tell Kreacher I miss him,” Harry instructed.

“I’ll do no such thing!” Was screamed through the portrait as Harry snapped the clasp shut and tossed it back into his bag.

With a chuckle, Harry pulled the pile of parchment Snape had given him out of his bag and cracked his knuckles. He’d start with the first years. He was thinking Snape would be extra encouraging about the progress they were making and their improvement this time around.

Severus Snape really wanted to punch something or someone. He had never been one for physical violence, but he was swiftly reconsidering it. He had only a moment with Hadrian and Percy as they were leaving the house, and it was not a good opportunity to talk. He needed more information though and now his confusion and anger had only been growing. He had no specific place to turn that anger though. After sleeping on the matter he knew, he had even more questions he had to know the answers to. He was also getting more and more suspicious of Dumbledore from the very little that Hadrian had let slip about his, so this meeting was slowly killing him.

The Order meeting was even more insufferable than usual since Dumbledore had predictably overreacted to Hadrian's magical alignment. Surprisingly, even Moody had spoken up for the man he hadn't met yet though. As an auror, while Moody knew that there were many dark wizards that used their magic for evil, he also knew that dark wizards from other countries had a much different view about the balance of magic and were not necessarily aligned with their current Dark Lord. Since Hadrian studied in Amsterdam, even Moody had been willing to hear him out, something Dumbledore was furious about.

It seemed that Sirius's adamant stance that he sided with Hadrian and the Order could fuck off if they made him choose was the deciding factor since Grimmauld was the absolute most secure house they could meet in. Severus was surprised to see the sheer amount of broken flatware Lupin had collected over the entire discussion from where Sirius seemed to be feeding him the pieces to keep him from blowing up over the whole thing. It seemed the werewolf might also know just who Sirius's 'cousin' really was. It was something to consider anyway...that and the fact that no one had seemed to care to let him in on that secret until Hadrian accidentally did.

The desire to punch something had Snape hanging back while the rest of the Order cleared out, Lupin included since he now had shot at actually succeeding in his recruitment mission now that Greyback was 'mysteriously' dead. Dumbledore seemed to think the Dark Lord might have done it over some slight, and Moody was theorizing it was the werewolves themselves that finally banded together in their hate and fear of him. Snape shared a look with Sirius who desperately needed to work on hiding his emotions since his eyes sparkled with glee at it all.

"Offer me a drink, Black," Snape ordered Sirius tersely who was one of the last to stand from the table to leave the kitchen.

Sirius cracked his back and raised a questioning eyebrow at the man. "Sure...with Remus gone now, no one is monitoring my Firewhiskey...er...let's go to the study," he motioned and

strode out of the room and into the study that seemed much better cared for and less dusty than even the last time Snape had seen it.

Snape threw up the best wards he knew at the door as soon as they entered while Sirius pulled a bottle of amber liquid out of a desk in the corner before placing it on the coffee table with two tumblers. "Rough week?" Sirius conversationally asked with a small smile when Snape turned back around.

Without comment, Snape strode over and shoved Black hard against the bookshelf in the corner, knocking the wind out of him. "When were you going to tell me Hadrian Black was Harry Bloody Potter?!" He hissed. "Let me guess...never?!"

"It wasn't my secret to tell!" Sirius gasped back, looking around for an escape. He hadn't seen this turn of events coming. He'd thought they were getting along quite well recently. "What's your damage, Snape?! I told you that I couldn't tell you everything!"

Snape just pushed him painfully back against the shelf once more. He knew he wasn't actually mad at Sirius in some far off corner of his brain, but he didn't know how to handle this anger inside of him, and he didn't have anything to take it out on. Sirius had always been good for a fight in the past, but the man didn't seem to be obliging him this time around.

"Were you both getting a good laugh out of all this?! Keep Snape in the dark and make him think we're friends, then what?! What then?!" He growled and shoved the man once more almost frantically.

"Nothing!" Sirius protested, eyes wide. "Harry really does want to be your friend...I...er..."

"You?! You what?!" Snape shoved him again, needing him to fight back.

"I...well...I don't know..." Sirius looked around for an escape once more. "I'm not going to fight you, Severus. I get you're mad, but I'm not your enemy!"

“You *don't know*! What's that supposed to mean?!” Snape growled, more in confusion now. “You don't know what you want from me?!”

“Well...yeah,” Sirius blushed and shrugged. It was the blush that had Snape stop in his antagonizing in favor of confusion.

“What?” He still had a hand raised to shove the man again, but just stood there. “What does that mean?”

Sirius let out a breath and ran a hand down his face. “Look, Severus...I'm not going to fight you,” he said as he reached out a hand and fisted the front of Snape's dark robes.

Snape looked down at the hand and raised a questioning eyebrow. “If you don't want to fight then...”

Snape couldn't get out the rest of his sentence because he felt like his brain was melting once more for the second time in as many days. Sirius had pulled him forward and his face was centimeters from Snape's own. “If you aren't going to punch me, then I'm going to kiss you,” Sirius informed him matter-of-factly. “I'm not good with words...but I can show you what I want from you.”

Snape gaped, eyes wide before putting a hand on Sirius's arm that was still holding onto him. “I might still punch you,” he remarked before crossing the short distance between them when he finally caught on to what Sirius was talking about.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Dumbledore meets Hadrian...

I'm thinking about a next fic once this one is done. Any suggestions for pairings? It could be one I've already done or a new one.

Changing Relationships

Chapter Notes

Sorry all, summer has been unexpectedly busy with work. I'll eventually get back on a more consistent updating schedule. Not a whole lot, plot-wise, happens in this chapter, but I promise the next two are going to be much more plot-forward.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Harry was sitting with Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Ginny at the Gryffindor table for breakfast when Luna walked over and squeezed onto the bench between Neville and Harry, almost shoving over a protesting Neville. “Good morning, Love-Bunny...pass the scones, please,” she grinned at Harry as if this were a normal occurrence for them and not remarkable at all.

While suppressing as much of his emotions as possible, Harry still couldn't help the loud laugh that escaped as he grabbed the plate of scones. “Anything for you, Sugar-Lips.”

“Er...I think I missed something...” Neville looked at Ron and Hermione in surprise to see if they knew what was going on. Ron just shrugged and went back to his porridge, but Hermione frowned and opened her mouth a couple times, wanting to ask the question, but not sure if she should with Ginny there beside them.

It was Ginny who finally broke out of them all though. “Er...Harry...I realize you don't have to have everything about yourself figured out in school, and I'm supportive no matter what, but, erm, weren't you dating someone very...*different* not too long ago,” she said with a raise of her eyebrow at a smirking Luna. “Not that I don't love you, Luna...don't get me wrong.”

“Sephie!” Harry was immediately distracted as his cat jumped up onto the table from his lap and pounced to chase away a mail owl that had hung around for snacks after making its delivery.

Ron, never looking up from his porridge, reached out a hand and held off the inferius to give the owl enough time to fly away. “No, Seph...” he rolled his eyes, but left the cat on the

table, seemingly no longer phased by an inferius cat...either that or just too tired to care. “Yeah, Harry...my very gay friend, what gives?” He did finally look up and raised a warning eyebrow, probably thinking he was being protective of his brother, but there was more exasperation than anything else in the look. Clearly he trusted Harry even if he had to make a token protest.

Luna looked around, but they were fairly separate from the rest of the people at the table, as was usual for their group. “I’m his toupee,” she remarked with a secretive bump of her shoulder to Harry’s before reaching for the pumpkin juice.

“Toupee?” Hermione frowned even more deeply in her confusion.

Harry barked out a sharp and fairly unstable laugh again that had Sephie look up and make a little chirping noise before hurrying over to him for head scratches. “I think she means beard,” he laughed louder as he kissed the top of his cat’s head and patted her bottom.

Luna frowned and shrugged. “That’s so much less interesting,” she remarked airily before taking a large bite of scone.

Harry looked kindly at a confused Ginny. “My significant other isn’t ready for everyone to know we’re dating yet. When Lavender and Parvati got insistent on ferreting more information out of me, Luna stepped in to save my ass,” he explained with a grin at the blonde beside him.

“Well...that’s nice of you...” Hermione remarked with a questioning look that clearly wondered just how much Luna knew and how Harry was holding together with her near. Ginny didn’t know anything though, so Hermione couldn’t ask the question that was making her brain itch with her need to ask it.

“But what if you find someone you want to date?” Neville asked Luna instead with a thoughtful tilt of his head at the fake relationship. He had recently been filled in that Harry and Luna had some kind of a traumatic history in the original timeline, but what that history was he didn’t know.

Harry opened his mouth to explain that Luna was aromantic since separating her own emotions from someone else's in a relationship was just too confusing and frustrating for her to want to deal with long term. Plus, the fact that every negative emotion her partner had, she knew about, and no one could ever get away with a lie or even covering over when they were having a bad day. Luna had eventually decided that it just wasn't something she wanted to deal with in her life. Before saying any of that, Harry quickly checked himself and closed his mouth with a click. He realized that Luna might not have gotten to that place yet as a fourteen-year-old, and he wasn't going to out her, especially if it was to herself.

For her part, Luna just shrugged unconcernedly. "I doubt that'll happen," she said vaguely, not seeming to care at all. "If I do find someone, I'm sure Harry and I can stage a public break-up or something."

"Ooo, we should do that anyway!" Harry grinned at her even more broadly. "That would be so much fun!"

Ginny laughed and stood. "You're both so weird. I should have figured when you finally met you'd gang up and do something like this...I have revising to do," she gave them all a little wave before walking towards the door, still chuckling and shaking her head. She stopped just a few paces away. "Still on for practice later? You didn't seem very enthusiastic when you scheduled the team practice."

Harry shared a look with Ron who just raised a questioning eyebrow himself. He ended up nodding but with a little grimace. If it wouldn't give him away, he'd just let the Gryffindor team bomb the cup that year, but he had to look like he was excited, wanted to win, and not in pain. "Yeah, see you later," he waved back, but she was already walking away.

With a sigh, Harry looked up to the staff table, his face falling into a concerned frown. "I wonder where Snape is. He's usually at breakfast by now even on weekends." Harry's eyes caught Percy's who just looked over at the empty seat beside him and shrugged. Percy shared a concerned look with him though about their missing potion master.

"Snape can take care of himself, mate," Ron remarked, not even looking up from his porridge this time, and seeming much less concerned than his friend and his brother.

“What if he had a *meeting* last night though?” Hermione hissed under her breath, shooting a surreptitious look over at Luna, still not knowing how much she knew.

“Ah...that’s my cue,” Luna swallowed and stood, picking up her half-eaten scone to take with her. “It’s too early to deal with all this...” she waved a hand over their little group to signify all the worry and conflicting emotions they were giving off.

“They’re almost to full shields,” Harry informed her, sparing an eye-roll for his friends at letting their emotions go. “I’ll get them there soon.”

Luna just shrugged and gave them all a vacant smile. “Well...fill them in about me anyway if you haven’t already. I’m off to the stressed Ravenclaws...they at least are straightforward and predictable with their emotions. Don’t be a stranger, Honey-Cakes,” Luna kissed the top of Harry’s head, probably leaving scone crumbs in his hair. Harry grinned widely at her, not caring if the entire scone was in his hair as she walked off.

“Gin was right; you’re both weird,” Ron snorted, expertly dodging a swat to his arm from his girlfriend.

Neville frowned after Luna. “You sure this is a good idea, Harry? There’s a lot that can go wrong with a fake relationship and people asking questions.”

“Probably not, but it’ll be fun,” Harry shrugged and smirked at him before standing and scooping Sephie up into his arms. “Well...I’m off to see a wizard!” He informed them all before turning on his heel to walk off.

“That’s not informative at all in this school!” Hermione called back with an eye-roll. They all knew he was tracking Snape down though, so it’s not like he really needed to clarify which wizard he was off to see.

Harry only made it down a couple corridors before a “Mister Potter,” dryly drawled stopped him in his tracks with a huge grin. "A moment of your time please."

“Yes, Professor Weasley?” Harry turned with a positively lecherous grin on his face to his partner who was waiting in an alcove for him.

“I could give you detention for that look alone,” Percy snorted in amusement at the supposed-student before pulling him into the alcove and throwing up a privacy ward. “You checking in on Severus? Want me to come along?”

“Nah, I got it. My healing spells are a little better than yours anyway,” Harry sighed. “He was fine when we left him last night. Walburga didn’t say anything about him going off on a mission or anything either. He’d bloody better not have gotten himself into any trouble after the meeting.”

"I hear you have a new girlfriend," Percy grinned at him. "I thought I was the bisexual one in this relationship."

"Ha ha," Harry snorted before looking around to see if they were alone before giving Percy a quick kiss.

"How's Luna? Any emotional leakage?" Percy asked seriously as soon as Harry pulled away.

With a tired sigh, Harry shrugged. "She's fine. I'm pushing everything down fairly well, and the longer I'm around her, the more I can stay in the moment. She doesn't stay around me too long though as I get a bit much over time."

Percy pet Sephie’s head and nodded in understanding. “Good, then, I'm glad she's back in your life. I missed her myself. Well, I’m heading to the ministry today to check in at my office,” he informed Harry, his raise of an eyebrow making it very clear he meant the Department of Mysteries and not Fudge’s office.

“Give Davids my best, ask him when it's best for me to drop by to hear the prophesy, and see if you can make friends with the Veil of Death people too,” Harry scratched his neck, really not wanting to go anywhere near that veil again, but it was his newest idea for getting rid of the horcruxes. “I’m thinking maybe we could just chuck the artifacts in there to solve our

little problem if they'll let us near enough to it."

Percy's look was somewhere between horrified and completely scandalized. "What?" Harry asked him in confusion when he seemed incapable of speaking.

Percy sputtered a couple times. "Those are priceless magical artifacts!" He exclaimed in a voice very much like Hermione's if Harry had suggested burning a library to the ground and dancing on the ashes.

Harry gave him a disbelieving look that this was surprisingly where Percy was drawing a line out of everything. "If you remember, I destroyed them the first time..."

"Well! We're not this time! Plus, it wouldn't work anyway. The Veil destroys the body not the soul. It would be the same as if you just stabbed them with a basilisk fang. The soul would return to the main piece," Percy explained in indignation, his forehead crinkling in a way that Harry found very cute.

"Besides...I'm technically part of that department anyway...or adjacent at least," he trailed off in a mumble, not really wanting to admit that little piece of information he'd purposely never let drop to Harry before.

Now it was Harry's turn to glare at him, not liking that new information even a tiny bit even if it was convenient. He didn't want anyone he knew anywhere near that abomination in the death chamber, let alone researching the Veil. "We *will* be talking about this later," he darkly informed Percy, getting a resigned huff in return. Harry saw an argument brewing in their future that Percy was not going to worm his way out of.

"Fine, but keep next weekend free of quidditch practice when you meet with the team later... I have an experiment I want to try on you then," Percy instructed, not afraid of Harry's ire even a tiny bit, though he did feel bad keeping that secret from him when Sirius had died there. That was specifically *why* he hadn't told Harry that he sometimes studied the Veil though.

"Ah, luv...if you wanted to kill me, you just had to ask..." Harry smirked playfully behind himself while he and Sephie sauntered off to track down the dungeon bat and save the

argument for later that night.

Severus Snape sat at his desk nursing the mother of all hangovers, one which his hangover potion only put a dent in instead of curing. Oh, he had made very bad decisions the night before...then they'd started drinking and he'd made even worse decisions. The scary thing was...he found himself not completely wishing that it wouldn't happen again, which in Snape's internal monologue meant he did actually, really, very much want it to happen again though he'd never admit it, least of all to himself. He was torn between wanting to murder Sirius Black and...well, start a repeat of all those very bad decisions.

Someone plowed through the wards around his office as if they didn't even exist, making Snape wince and plan to curse whoever walked through his door, which he was certain was either Potter or Dumbledore with the blatant disregard for his personal wards and space.

"You're alive!" The too awake and perky Gryffindor brat, happily threw up a nonverbal shield, blocking the hex Snape sent his way. Snape was only passably grateful it was Potter instead of the headmaster in the grand scheme of annoyances in his life.

"Nice one," Potter gave him an impressed smile at the hex before placing that hairless monstrosity that was supposedly a cat down on the floor of his office. "Now...why weren't you at breakfast? I'm guessing hangover by your general look and demeanor, but I'm not going to rule out torture until you tell me otherwise."

Snape closed his eyes and tried to remind himself that Potter was Hadrian, and he did actually like Hadrian. He might have possibly been unfair to Potter as well, but he didn't really have the mental capacity currently to examine that. When he reopened his eyes, Hadrian Black was standing before him without his glamour and with much stronger wards over his door.

"Hadrian..." he acknowledged the man who looked like he was itching to start casting diagnostic charms at him. "It is only a hangover, and recovery from a late night. I have been acutely reminded that I am not as young as I once was."

“I didn’t know the Order meeting after-party got that wild,” Hadrian smirked at him before making himself at home in Snape’s office by plopping into the student chair across from him.

Snape gave him a withering glare. “Is there something you need?”

“Nope,” Hadrian shrugged and smiled as the bald cat wearing a neon orange jumper of all things jumped up onto Snape’s desk. The man glared in disgust at the cat who ignored him steadfastly. “I just wanted to make sure you weren’t off dying somewhere. You weren’t at breakfast, and your schedule tends to be predictable when Tom isn’t ordering you around... you might want to vary that up a bit, you know. I’ve learned it’s best that no one knows the exact time you arrive places, especially where easily drugged food will be available.”

“What is your cat wearing?” Snape glared in disgust at the beast. “And, I’m perfectly capable of checking my food for poisons...I am a potion master if you remember.”

Snape frowned as another puzzle piece connecting Hadrian to Potter seemed out of place. “Being on a student class schedule again must be killing you with having to be places at very specific times.”

“Hermione won’t give me her good yarn anymore after the last two jumpers turned out all wonky,” Hadrian rolled his eyes good-humoredly at the cat. “However, this one turned out pretty good, besides the color, if I say so myself. And yes, Percy stole my backpack flask, so I’m slowly dying inside. Dobby checks my food for poisons though, and I try to take very different secret passages to get anywhere, and I check over my dad’s old map to see where people are along my routes, so I’m making it with minimal psychological damage. Personally, I think my backpack flask has become Percy’s desk flask, but he just glares at me when I ask for it back.”

“You will remember this conversation next time I tell you that you have a problem and refuse to give you alcohol,” Snape glared at him in a mirror of the look he’d gotten from Percy when he’d stolen the flask.

“I’m not the one with a hangover,” Hadrian just reminded him with a smirk. “So...while I’m here anyway, when is Hadrian Black’s meeting with Dumbledore? I’ll have to see if I can fit him in between classes, killing off Tom, and trying to take over wizarding Britain.”

Snape was somehow not surprised that Hadrian already knew what they had discussed at the meeting he hadn't been invited to. "I suppose Sirius owled you this morning?" He asked, wondering how the man was coherent enough to owl when he'd had just as much to drink as Snape and had a lower tolerance after his years in prison. When he'd left the man's room that morning, he was definitely still in bed and grumbling about his head, his muscles, the light coming through the curtains, and anything else he could think of...though, surprisingly not Snape's presence, which he was very quick to deprive the hungover fugitive of.

"Huh? No, I have a spy in the Order," Hadrian gave him a shit-eating grin at that.

Snape rolled his eyes. "Lupin, I suppose...he did seem abnormally protective of you."

"Nope," Harry grinned even wider. "You should know that the best spy is one that no one knows about...although, that hasn't been the route you are taking."

"To the detriment of my nerves and general health and well-being," Snape huffed a pained laugh. "That house elf then...whatever his name is."

"Kreacher?" Hadrian's grin slightly fell before ratcheting back up to a 10. "Not this time, I guess I have multiple spies...cool, go me. I'm killing this dark lord thing already!"

Snape couldn't bring himself to care and would prefer to be left alone to his misery. "Wednesday, if you can swing it," he answered the man's original question. "I knew you had a larger free period then, so I suggested it as a good day. He is awaiting your owl."

"Hmm...you think he could be strung along for a couple weeks?" Hadrian mused while the cat was now trying to get Snape to pet her and getting a murderous look for her troubles. "Percy is going to try to kill me next weekend, or something like that, then the next Tuesday is Halloween, and I refuse to do anything besides my new 'inner-circle' meeting because the day is cursed...you're invited to that by-the-way. I'd rather meet with Dumbledore once I already have all the details worked out with the Goblin Nation, the centaurs, and I just heard that my old banshee friend is going to be there...not that she remembers we were friends, but at least I got her as a friend without getting stabbed this time. I consider that a huge win."

Snape's mind was reeling, and he was suddenly very surprised that any of his marking had gotten done at all. Hadrian must really not do well with free time in the slightest. He could see that clearly now. There was so much in that sentence that he really didn't want to touch, so he just pushed it all under a metaphorical rug in his head to deal with later.

"Just go to the meeting on Wednesday, Harry..." Snape grimaced and closed his eyes. "I will see what I can do about your ill-advised meeting on Halloween...*if* your boyfriend hasn't killed you first, that is. I won't blame him if he does though."

"Hey! You called me Harry!" The man was giving him the most unhinged smile Snape had seen on anyone's face besides Sirius Black, so he figured it must be something genetic that transferred over from whatever blood adoption ritual they'd done to get Hadrian onto the Black tapestry at Grimmauld.

"My mistake," he sighed and knew his (friend?) wasn't going to let it go. "Before you leave, because you are most definitely leaving, please put me out of my misery and at least tell me where the basilisk parts came from? And, do you have more venom you could give me for an experiment I want to run?"

Hadrian was now looking at him very confused. "Of course, I can give you all the venom you need...what do you mean '*where*' the basilisk came from?"

"I mean that basilisks are extinct. Where did you find one, Hadrian?" He asked again in exasperation. Was the man being purposefully obtuse?!

"I figured that was the biggest give-away to my identity," Hadrian still looked very confused. "I got them from the basilisk I killed...I thought you'd realize that. How did you *not* realize that?! You were the one that said the Chamber of Secrets would be a good place around the school for Percy to do some dark magic if he could convince 'Harry' to tell him where it was."

Snape felt his vision blur slightly around the edges as what Hadrian seemed to be implying started to sink in. He gaped at the confused man sitting in front of him. "Are you...are you expecting me to believe that a *basilisk* was the monster in the Chamber of Secrets?!!"

Snape hissed in pain at the sudden scratch on his hand he got from Potter's cat who took offense to his raised voice. "Merlin, sorry, Severus!" Hadrian broke out of his confusion to scoop up the cat. "Bad Sephie!... Well, good girl protecting us, but Sev is our friend," he cooed at the cat now on his lap.

"Ignore the cat, Potter!" Snape urgently snapped his fingers in front of Hadrian's face. "Was there a *bloody basilisk* in this school where *children* live?!!"

"Well, yeah... what did you think was petrifying students?" Hadrian looked at him like he'd lost all his senses. "I thought Dumbledore told everyone what happened."

"He said there was a runic stone to summon and command a svartálfar in the chamber! He said you went down and ended up calling your house elf friend... Dobby was it?... to banish it! He bloody well *didn't* tell anyone it was a basilisk!!"

Harry raised an eyebrow before slowly putting the squirming cat back down on the floor. He gave it some thought. It would have made sense and been soooo much better than a basilisk. A dark elf could easily petrify students as a powerful and dark prankster creature, especially if it was being commanded by someone, but they were also much less powerful than, and easily banished by, a house elf.

"Oh..." he finally said lamely in response.

"*OH?!!* What's that supposed to mean?!" Snape waved his hand wildly before having to stop when he suddenly realized he was bleeding. He rolled his eyes. "Episkey," he tapped his hand and frowned when nothing happened to the scratch.

"That's not going to work with Sephie's scratches," Hadrian quickly conjured some bandages and grabbed Snape's hand to wrap it for him. "Now... I think we can agree that Dumbledore might just be a bastard. It was most definitely a basilisk back in my second year, and I'm guessing he lied to the staff to keep the school from being closed down... why, I don't know; you'd have to ask him. I'm surprised this is the first I'm hearing of the lie, but with the war and all, it wasn't really something that seemed important, so I guess I never really talked

about it with anyone. It was dead, so those of us who knew it was a basilisk just didn't mention it much since we thought everyone knew already."

Snape still had that light-headed fuzzy feeling from the shock of there being a bloody basilisk in the school as he watched Hadrian tie off the bandage. "I am going to murder that man..."

Hadrian shrugged unconcernedly. "You did it once already, can't be too hard a second time, maybe make it a little less public this time around though." Snape closed his eyes and breathed in a calming breath of 'Yes, Hadrian is insane' and let go a less calming breath of 'he's still probably the world's best option.'

"Avada kedavra on the Astronomy Tower," Hadrian answered his unasked question. "You'd worked it out with him ahead of time though because he was already dying from a curse he was stupid enough to fall into, so not exactly murder."

"Why does episkey not work with your cat's scratches in particular?" Snape asked instead, needing to change the subject for his own mental health.

Hadrian shrugged. "Weird magic interaction-thingy since Percy made her for me with his unspeakable, mojo, magic stuff..." he trailed off and Snape knew by Hadrian's inability to meet his eyes that he most definitely did *not* want to ask any follow-up questions.

"*Anyway...*" Hadrian cleared his throat and sat up straighter, looking at Snape confidently again. "Speaking of murder and second year...what are your thoughts on Lucius Malfoy? I'm thinking of killing him, but I'm not sure how redeemable he actually is since I never interacted with him much before he was carted off to Azkaben. Dobby is pro-murdering, I'm certain Draco would vote no at the moment even if it's the best option, and Percy really doesn't care, so I need a tiebreaker. I'd ask Narcissa, but I've yet to figure out how to be friends with her again yet. What do you think?"

Snape slowly opened his desk drawer and took out another hangover potion to down, hoping it would do something, anything. "Start from the beginning," he found himself saying, knowing it was a bad idea. "What part did Lucius play exactly in the whole basilisk fiasco that I'm somehow just learning about?"

Something weird was going on with Sirius. Harry was grumbling to himself his entire long walk from Hogsmeade back up to the castle after sneaking out of the castle earlier as Harry (with Dobby's help since Snape had warded all the secret passages) and returning as Hadrian Black. He was wearing his normal magical, rock band t-shirt and worn jeans that he felt most comfortable in as his actual self, not willing to dress up for someone he no longer respected in the slightest. He was more concerned about his godfather than this idiotic meeting with the headmaster though.

Yes, the meeting was important since he was certain Dumbledore probably wanted him dead on some level, but he also knew the man wouldn't just murder him right there in his office. It's not like Hadrian was the first dark wizard in the school anyway. Lucius Malfoy and Theodore Nott's father were both on the school board for Merlin's sake! Anyway... somehow Sirius had learned about the basilisk and lost his ever loving mind. Somehow meaning Snape most definitely.

First of all, why were those two talking behind his back anyway? It's not like they were friends! Then, Sirius kept saying "we" in his letter that seemed to also be tear-stained, and he clearly wasn't talking about Lupin who was still off with the werewolves. It was obviously referencing him and Snape, but when did they become a "we?" They both seemed to be ganging up on him about seeing a mind-healer, which yeah, he did need to do, but that would have been someone in the Goblin Nation or something right now since he was not ready to be outed as Harry Potter/new Dark Lord to the wizarding world just yet. It wasn't just the basilisk-thing either, the letter was trying to say something or reference something about Harry's past that he wasn't actually saying, and Harry just wasn't following. It was all very confusing...

Harry had to put his thoughts on hold as a stern Professor McGonagall was standing at the door of the castle to greet him. "Hullo," he remarked to the woman with a self-conscious shrug and small smile. He didn't care how old or powerful he got, that woman still had the ability to scare him and make him feel eleven all over again, second only to Poppy Pomfrey. "I'm Hadrian... Hadrian Black."

"Yes, I was informed of your arrival. I'm to take you to the headmaster. I am Professor McGonagall," she reached out a hand to shake. Hadrian quickly shook her hand, not sure if her expression was neutral, disapproving, or just trying to figure him out.

“Good to meet you...and to finally see the school. I’ve heard so many good things from my cousin about his time here,” Hadrian conversationally remarked as he followed his head of house into the castle and quickly headed towards the headmaster’s office.

McGonagall’s lips thinned. “Don’t believe a third of what Sirius Black tells you. That man was, and is still, a menace.”

Harry almost choked on a laugh when he realized the woman was making a joke. He still couldn’t tell what she thought of him, but it was a damn good sign. “Merlin! Less than a third!” He laughed in agreement. “I believe his friend, Remus, just a few slight percentages more.”

“I heard you had private tutors instead of attending a school such as ours?” McGonagall remarked, with a small backwards glance to the man hurrying along in her wake. “Tutors proficient in runic, blood magic is seems...”

“Er...yeah, but no, the runes came later with my mastery. I studied the Dark Arts under a master in Amsterdam,” he informed her. “I followed Percy here...erm, I’m his partner. I’m not sure he’s mentioned me, but there aren’t a whole lot of jobs in Britain for dark wizards... I’m leaning towards either the Unspeakables or Hit Wizards...” he explained, listing the only two careers friendly to dark wizards with the ministry. He and Percy had decided that saying he wanted to work at the ministry was the safest lie to place him in a ‘safe’ category with Dumbledore. Anything else and he would be too much of an unknown and mark him as a liability immediately.

They suddenly came to the gargoyle guarding Dumbledore’s tower office and McGonagall promptly gave it the password. “Mr. Weasley has mentioned you in passing, but we have not spent much time together since he joined the staff regrettably. I wish you luck with your career though. It is admirable to follow your younger partner here when you must have already been established yourself.”

Harry couldn’t help giving his long braid a slight tug before nervously twisting the silver ring in his ear. “Er, yeah...Percy’s worth it, and Siri too if we can ever get him a fair trial...”

“Indeed, he is...” McGonagall motioned towards the moving staircase. “Just through there, Mr. Black. Also, you may want to be discreet in who you mention Sirius Black around. Not

everyone will be as understanding where he is concerned as the headmaster and I.”

“Thank you for the advice,” he nodded and smiled at her before quickly escaping up the stairway, fairly positive he was running to a much worse situation though.

Harry firmly slammed down every Occlumency shield he had as he stepped off the stairway and gave the door to the office a quick rap. “Enter,” a deceptively mild voice called from the office.

Taking a deep breath, Harry turned the brass doorknob and pushed open the door, stepping into an office that he’d hoped (without much conviction) that he could avoid all year. “Headmaster Dumbledore?” He smiled at the elderly man who looked up from a desk covered in parchment, appearing busy even though Harry knew he had probably been tracking his steps since he entered the castle with some of the little silver devices he recognized now as an adult through his black-market dealings as various magical tracking and spy equipment.

“Ah, Mr. Black, I’ve heard so much about you from your cousin and Mr. Lupin,” Dumbledore stood and reached out a hand to shake, his blue eyes twinkling and a push against Harry’s Occlumency shields going unmentioned by the both of them.

Harry shook the hand offered and raised an eyebrow at the mental test, but let it pass. It was the least of his worries about the man in front of him. “As have I,” he said instead as he took a seat in the garishly purple armchair across the desk from the man. Harry caught Fawkes out of the corner of his eyes giving him a quizzical look and decided to ignore and avoid the bird as much as possible. He really didn’t know much about phoenix magic and didn’t want to find anything out the hard way.

“I understand you have some concerns about me visiting my cousin at his house?” Hadrian remarked lightly as if he didn’t understand where those concerns were coming from at all. “I can assure you, I’m harmless. I am only here to visit my favorite cousin and be near my partner.”

“Percival Weasley,” Dumbledore steepled his fingers under his chin as he leaned his elbows on his desk and quietly studied the man in front of him.

Harry refused to quake under the ice-blue stare he was receiving. He'd thought he'd gotten over most of his conflicted feeling for the man after he'd seen him at his ministry trial in the summer, but no, he was still vacillating between wanting the grandfatherly man to approve of him and being murderously angry at him all at the same time. "Percy is my world, sir," he said quietly and honestly. "I'm happy he's found a home here again on your staff."

Dumbledore slowly nodded. "Mr. Weasley was appointed by the ministry to serve as our DADA professor this year since we had no applicants," he said unnecessarily since that was common knowledge, but the remark also spoke volumes to how much (not at all) the headmaster valued his newest staff member.

Harry did his best to bury all his emotions and give the man in front of him a smile as if he didn't know exactly what this man thought of him, a dark wizard, and his partner just by association. "Yes, well, I understand there is a little misunderstanding and some prejudice about the type of magic alignment I lean towards here in Britain," he said lightly as if it were just a little issue like music piracy or speeding in the muggle world.

"I hope you wouldn't hold that against my partner, a member of one of your *light* families." It took everything Harry had to not chuckle at his necromancer partner who was being assigned as "light" by association.

Dumbledore finally sat back up straight, giving Hadrian a paternalistic look that clearly communicated they were getting down to business now. "Son, I'm more concerned with your interactions and intentions with one Harry Potter. Please do tell me, just how many times have you met with the boy since you returned to England? And what have you told him?"

Hadrian batted away another mental attempt on his shields and remembered Snape was going to tell Dumbledore something about him putting blocking runes on young Harry...bollocks! Well, it was story time he guessed. Time to lie through his teeth like his life depended on it, because by Dumbledore's look now, it definitely did.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: Percy's side-projects make an appearance...

Just Harry Playing with Fire...Again

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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“Oh, Harry Potter, yeah...good kid there,” Harry said with a shit-eating grin on his face and a nod at the headmaster who was trying to look threatening. The look probably would have been effective on anyone besides Harry...and maybe Voldemort, but Harry didn’t like being compared to that monster at all, even if it was just in his own mind.

“How long have you and young Harry been acquainted?” Dumbledore leaned forward, glaring at the dark wizard in front of him. Harry knew that Dumbledore could not realize the significance of how he phrased that question and how true it was. Harry...or rather Hadrian, really hadn’t been acquainted with *young* Harry at all, or at least not since he had actually *been* young Harry.

“Honestly,” Harry smiled since it was actually the truth. “We aren’t well acquainted. I don’t know Harry that well at all.” At least not at this point in his life being so far removed from being fifteen. It was why Ron, Hermione, and even Neville had been having to run interference for him so often in classes and amongst his classmates when he just couldn’t act like his younger self anymore.

“That is not what I have been led to believe,” Dumbledore continued his interrogation with a sneer at what he believed to be a lie from the other man. “It is my understanding you have been practicing some questionable dark magic on one of my students. I must insist you tell me everything that has transpired in your interactions immediately.”

Harry's smile widened even more, making him look a little unstable probably. While he knew exactly where Dumbledore was coming from in his concern for Harry, *Hadrian* wouldn't, and he was well within his rights to act as ignorant as he really wanted to in this situation as Hadrian Black.

"Er, sir...I don't understand," he said as innocently as possible. "I haven't contacted Harry Potter since this past summer. We only ever talked a couple times when he wasn't in school or one of your students. I don't see why my limited interactions with Mr. Potter concern you at all at headmaster of Hogwarts."

"Anything pertaining to the safety and well-being of my students concerns me, Mr. Black," Dumbledore almost growled at the man who was messing with his plans. Fawkes added a little trill at the comment that Harry still wasn't able to determine if it was in agreement or not.

"Riiight..." Harry slowly said, raising an eyebrow in disbelief at the headmaster he's once almost worshipped. His safety had never been a concern of Albus Dumbledore, that was a fact that Harry knew intimately well no matter what other conflicted feelings he had towards his former headmaster.

"Well, you can put your mind at ease then. I've done nothing to harm Mr. Potter, only help him. Sirius was concerned about his godson and asked me to stop by and check on him over the summer. I only saw him twice. The first time we just talked, got to know each other, and I asked him about how he was doing in the wake of seeing one of his friends murdered in front of him," Harry couldn't help the accusing glare at Dumbledore for never checking on his younger self after that or at least offering some form of grief counseling. Between that and losing Sirius the next year, Harry had officially started his downward spiral then that he was only now trying his best to claw himself out of.

"What about the second visit?" Dumbledore prodded, putting his magic behind the words to create a feeling of heaviness in the air. Harry almost laughed at the wizard's attempt at intimidation. It would have worked on a student or a bureaucrat who didn't recognize the tactic, but someone who was used to living in a war zone, who dealt with shady black-market types (who *was* a shady black-market type), and who had actually been tortured several times...well, it was just pathetic. Also worth noting, Dumbledore hadn't even thought to ask how Harry had been in his grief that summer...

Harry made a show of looking a little bashful and ashamed. “Well...sir, I must admit, I’m more used to the laws in Amsterdam than here in the UK. I haven’t lived here in so long, and I might not have realized things were different here until *after* the fact.”

“After what fact?” The headmaster frowned darkly at him.

“Er...well, Harry had been complaining about nightmares and headaches in his letter with Sirius and when we talked, and it seemed that your current dark lord had created some sort of connection with his mind that I haven't seen before. I didn't have the time to teach the kid Occlumency over the summer, so I just blocked the connection for him to give him some temporary relief. He should still learn Occlumency though if you have someone who can teach him. The connection can open up again if he doesn't learn it for himself,” Harry shrugged with that bashful grin.

Harry continued as if he was concerned what the man thought while he watched Dumbledore process the implication of what he'd said. “You see, it’s legal to tattoo someone under 18 in Amsterdam with their parent or guardian’s permission, and Sirius was perfectly fine with it. I didn’t realize until later that the laws here are stricter in those regards. It’s only the muggle police who actually care though since dark magic is thankfully still not illegal here in your society, and runic blood magic is still sometimes used on children in dire situations such as the one I encountered with young Harry.”

Harry really did want Dumbledore to try to get the muggle police to go after him. It would be absolutely hilarious! It would be even more hilarious to see Dumbledore trying to interact with the muggle police and not be locked up because they thought he was drunk or insane. Dumbledore himself looked murderous though currently. Yes, what Hadrian had done was *technically* illegal in the muggle world, but it also wasn’t illegal in the wixen part of society...and there really wasn’t anything the man could do about it.

“Mr. Black...” Dumbledore’s seething was so concentrated that Harry was surprised steam wasn’t coming from his ears. He continued to speak as if Hadrian was one of his students or at least a small child in need of a stern talking to. “I forbid you from interacting with Harry Potter from this day forward. What you did was unconscionable! Using dark magic on a minor! I would restrict you from your cousin’s house if your influence on him wasn’t so... stabilizing. You will not be allowed to roam freely in the house though. I expect you to stay with your cousin, Mr. Lupin, or one of the Weasleys whenever you are inside the house. Have

I made myself clear?”

Harry’s eyebrows went up almost to his hairline at the man’s audacity. Yes, he did help Sirius a lot mentally and he was much better now than in Harry’s first timeline, but regardless of his influence on Sirius, Dumbledore had to realize that Harry...or rather Hadrian, would know that a *headmaster* of a school had no right or ability to restrict him from his ancestral house as a member of the Black family, even if he didn’t know that Hadrian owned the house. Well...*that* could certainly be rectified!

Harry gave Dumbledore his most unhinged smile, the one that even had Percy shivering (but definitely in a *very* different way), the one which usually preceded murder and mayhem. “*Headmaster* Dumbledore,” he emphasized the man’s title to show just how little influence he really had over Hadrian. “I’m sure you remember, but those of your advanced age sometimes struggle in that area...so, I will remind you. My cousin, Sirius Black, was disowned from the Black family way back when he was sixteen.”

Dumbledore’s face fell in confusion. Yes, he’d known Sirius had been disowned, but he was sure it wasn’t formally and legally filed because that would mean...

“Sirius has no legal rights to the Black family manor, the Black family vaults, or the Black family Wizengamot seat,” Hadrian finished Dumbledore’s thought with that terrifying grin.

Ok, so he was stretching the truth since Sirius did actually have those legal rights in his first timeline and even before Harry had come back in time, but ever since Harry’s trip back though time, he was the one magically determined as the Black heir. Sirius would always be taken care of if Harry had any say in the matter, but Hadrian Black was the magical and legal head of the family now.

“But...no...that’s not...” Dumbledore looked even more confused because he’d placed the fidelus charm on the house, but if that were the case, it wouldn’t have been binding if Sirius wasn’t the legal owner.

Harry shrugged and stood, seeing where the man’s mind was going. “I never actually needed to be told where the house was located. I share secret-keeper power with you since Sirius didn’t have the authority to take part in the spell without me there, and since I’m the legal owner, it will be so very easy for me to cut you out of that power altogether. You, my cousin,

your *Order*, are all at Black Manor by my permission and at my whim. You're lucky that I prefer to stay at Percy's flat while he's away here at the school and don't want to live at the manor full-time...However, I can and will move in if I deem it necessary. Now, if you will excuse me...I believe Professor McGonagall has been waiting for me long enough out in the corridor, and I have business to attend to of my own today. I look forward to seeing you at the next Wizengamot meeting, Professor Dumbledore."

Harry didn't particularly want to have to attend Wizengamot meetings, they were just so *boring*, but Dumbledore was going to be a problem, and he *was* the new dark lord, so he should probably suck it up and do his bloody job. He turned back around to address the headmaster just when the elderly man seemed to be recovering to take up the argument once more. "Oh, and I also expect to have a very long conversation with my cousin about his responsibilities where young Harry are concerned. It seems that there are those who have taken an unhealthy interest in a child they have no legal claim to...very concerning that."

Harry turned the doorknob and exited the room, smiling to himself as an indignant squawk followed by the angry shattering of glass echoed behind him in the office. He had to stop himself chuckling as he stepped off the staircase to greet McGonagall once more. "Sorry that took so long," he gave the woman an apologetic look.

She waved him off unconcernedly before leading the young man back towards the exit. "I assume your meeting went well?" She looked behind herself at the man following her to ask. The dark wizard had looked happy and not upset when he'd met her once more, so she assumed everything must have been smoothed over with Albus, and he'd been deemed harmless.

"Very well, thank you," Hadrian beamed at her. "Now, Professor, I hear you've mastered the animagus transformation. That is extremely impressive, and I'm beyond jealous! How long did it take you? It's something I've always wanted to do but never found the time. Was it very difficult to initially undertake? How does it feel to be an animal and have their senses?"

Minerva McGonagall smiled at the young man who was eager to learn and kept up a lively conversation with him about the animagus transformation and her experiences all the way down to the gates of the grounds since the front door just didn't give them enough time to discuss everything. She gave the lad a fond wave as he disappeared on the other side of the wards, promising her to owl with more questions. Now, *that* was a young man she would love to talk to again. He was kind, genuinely interested in what she had to tell him, and asked thought-provoking questions. It was a shame he'd settled on the questionable field of dark magic instead of transfiguration, but since Albus must have decided that he was on their side,

she was looking forward to seeing if Hadrian Black had any insights about where dark magic intersected with transfiguration since she was much less knowledgeable there. Thankfully, she would likely run into him often visiting Percival or even at Headquarters...if not, she was at least looking forward to his owls.

Dear Siri,

Heads up, Dumbleduck is on a rampage. I pissed him off royally, and I'm personally very proud of that feat. Anyway, you might want to lay low or even take some of your Polyjuice and escape for a bit if he drops by. I ended up telling him I own the house and threatened to kick him and the Order out after some very inappropriate demands on his part. I may also have subtly (or not) threatened to use the Wizengamot seat against him.

Also, did Snape happen to fill you in on the lie he came up with that I tattooed blocking runes on Harry to keep Voldyshorts out of his head? If not, heads up, you approved that supposed plan and gave your permission. I get that Dumbledore needs me...or rather Harry...whatever, to die, but I don't see why it's necessary to keep the connection open to Voldy right now. It's not like young me actually learned how to use it to my advantage until I was like 17. Before then, I just got you killed with it.

...I guess there was the Arthur Weasley thing though...Merlin, I keep forgetting about that! Could you get me the Order's rotation for the guards around the Department of Mysteries?

...Actually, scratch that. I'd hate for any of you to get eaten by Nagini if she gets sent early... well, except Mundungus, he can get eaten for all I care. I'll handle that from the other direction.

Now, care to share why you and Snape seem to be friends all of a sudden?! You do remember that you tried to feed him to Moony once, right?

Love,

The bestest godson ever

X

X

X

Harry,

I don't give a flying fuck what Dumbledore thinks or wants anymore! I'll smooth things over because I know it's best we keep the Order at the house to better keep tabs on what they're doing since I won't have as much access if it moves anywhere else. That doesn't mean that I'm not ready to poison that bastard's lemon drops though!

However, should I be concerned about what you mean by handling it 'from the other direction?' And what are you handling anyway? Care to fill me in?

And bloody Merlin! Harry, you didn't get me killed! I don't know what all went down in your time, but it wasn't your fault. You were actually fifteen then and dealing with things hardened aurors shouldn't have to deal with. I don't care what happened: It. Was. Not. Your. Fault!

As for Snape, how did you hear about the werewolf incident? I don't think I told you anything about that in this time anyway. That wasn't exactly how it went down. I didn't intentionally try to feed Snape to anyone, especially not Moony. Wait...was it Dumbledore who told you that? Why would he have told you that I actively tried to kill someone...no, don't answer that, I think I already know. He didn't want you to get close to me.

Merlin! I think I might just take your advice and dose myself on Polyjuice and leave to avoid that man.

Padfoot

X

X

X

Pads,

First of all, don't worry about the Order guards. I'm handling it...or rather, I'm probably going to get Percy to handle it for me.

For the werewolf thing, Remus told me about that in my third year at Hogwarts...or at least I think I remember it being my third year. You might want to talk to him about that. I'm not sure what's going on. You didn't tell Snape how to get past the Whomping Willow on a full moon in your fifth or sixth year?!

Harry

X

X

X

Harry,

Remy is still away on a mission, but something weird must be going on. By what I remember, which we all know is sketchy at best, Snape did try to go to the Whomping Willow once on a full moon, but not because I told him to. While my memory might be bad, I do know Snape wouldn't have trusted anything I told him when we were in school together. Why would he have listened to me back then? We weren't friends, and he was smart enough to know that if I told him to go somewhere, he should absolutely not go there, or at least not go without some serious back-up.

By what I remember, he overheard Peter and me planning how to get some snacks and stuff into the shack for Remus's transformation. He was testing out that ingenious listening charm he invented. Ask him to show that one to you at some point if he hasn't already. James ended up catching him snooping around and forced him back to safety before things got too dangerous, but it wasn't intentional. Merlin! We were stupid but not murderers! We did some pretty awful stuff to each other, but he was decidedly not innocent in that himself.

I need to talk to Remus... we need to talk to Remus. I'll let you know as soon as he's back.

Siri

X

X

X

Severus,

How do you feel about Italian food? I'd do unspeakable things for a good carbonara! Plus, I need to escape the house for a bit. Did Harry fill you in on his meeting with Dumbledore? I'm planning to be gone as much as possible until the next Order meeting so he'll hopefully cool down before we're in the same room together.

Also, do you remember that night back in fifth or sixth year with Remus when James headed you off on your way to the Shrieking Shack? Harry was told a very different tale than what I remember from that night. I need to talk to you. At this point, I don't know if I'm remembering it all wrong or what. Azkaban did some crazy things to my memory. Remus was the one that told Harry the story though, so maybe I'm the one that doesn't remember it right. Sev, did I try to kill you?! Please tell me that I didn't try to kill you when we were kids?! Please... just...I need to talk to you.

Sirius

X

X

X

Sirius,

I enjoy a good pasta. I have Harry's fake Occlumency lesson tomorrow evening, but I would be amenable to meeting after for a late dinner. Also, do not call me Sev on paper or otherwise.

Calm yourself, as far as I know, you did not actively try to murder me in cold blood when we were teenagers. I am uncertain what Hadrian was told, but I agree that we must talk about this...and about other matters concerning us. I will meet you at your manor tomorrow evening when I am finished.

Severus Snape

Percy Weasley pinched the bridge of his nose but held in his irritation, knowing it was more for the situation than at the teenager pestering him with questions. "Ron, why don't you go see if Ginny wants to go for a fly with you around the pitch or something?"

"It's already dark," Ron absently motioned towards a window as he followed his brother closely through the castle not even pausing in his stream of commentary. "Harry is off annoying or mothering Snape, whatever it is they actually do when they're together, Hermione is studying, and Neville is in a greenhouse doing something I don't even care to ask about. Besides, I want to get to know my big brother a little better and all since you're so *old* now."

"I'm not old," Percy grumbled, cracking his neck to relieve some of the tension that built up every time he was around someone who had been long dead for him while he tried to act normally around them now.

“You’re older than Bill,” Ron just reminded him with a shrug. “You’re the oldest Weasley brother now. That’s pretty old. So, you’re the one that has to handle the dating advice and everything now. Good job you’re bi and not gay, right?!”

Percy let out a sigh that was very close to a groan. “Yeah, good job that...Trouble with Hermione?” He guessed as he held back a tapestry for Ron to proceed him into a secret passage. He really didn’t want to be the one that dealt with dating advice, but it made his heart clench in pride that this Ron would come to him for advice regardless of what kind it was. He’d never been that brother, even when they were getting along in the future.

“Yeah, sort-of...there’s nothing wrong per-se, but I think she might be getting tired of me,” Ron stumbled a bit in the dimly lit passageway before Percy reached out and helped right him. Ron had such a growth spurt that year that he was constantly tripping over his own feet, still not used to the height yet. “Thanks...I think I need to step up my game or something. Should I maybe try to get more physical or buy her something or...”

Percy held up a hand to stop the rant that would probably never end without him stopping it. “First, why do you think she’s getting tired of you? Has she said something? The Hermione I knew would have told you if she was unhappy, and I doubt she has changed all that much in those regards.”

“Er...no, she hasn’t said anything, but we also haven’t changed much towards each other in our interactions from when we were just friends. Shouldn’t we be doing...I know, more?” His little brother turned questioning blue eye and a bright, embarrassed blush on him once they stepped out of the passageway into the second floor.

“You’re fifteen,” Percy gave him a look that he hoped didn’t come off as too paternalistic, but judging by Ron’s glare it probably was. “This is also both of your first real relationships. I think you should take this as slow as you both want. You don’t move faster than either partner is comfortable with. Don’t feel pressured into doing more, and for Morgana’s sake, please talk to Hermione and ask her what she wants before just assuming how she’s feeling.”

Ron grumbled but nodded. “Probably right...” he trailed off with a frown. “Hey...earlier you said ‘the Hermione you knew’ like you were friends and all. You didn’t ever...you know...with future Hermione, right? That’s just be too weird and gross!”

Percy cracked his neck again and looked off to where they were heading. "Of course not Ron," he lied smoothly with an assuring smile at his brother because, yes, just once, after Ron died and they were both grieving. Harry knew and never judged either of them, and he would take that information to his grave over this Ron or Hermione ever learning about it.

"We're here!" Percy quickly changed the subject as he opened the door to the second-floor girl's bathroom.

"Oh hell no!" Ron stepped back, eyes wide at the location he found himself in. "What do you need in the bloody chamber?! Plus, we don't have Harry. We can't get in anyway, see there, we should go!"

"Stop being a wimp. It's only a bathroom," Percy rolled his eyes and shoved his brother into the abandoned bathroom. "The snake is dead, dismembered, and currently being sold off by Hadrian Black in back alleys and shady storefronts whenever he gets some free time, which is very rare these days."

"Not good memories here, you prat," Ron grumbled at his brother who was pulling some kind of muggle electronic device out of his pocket. "What's that? I thought muggle eklectrikals didn't work here?"

"This is spelled to work around magic. It took quite a few owls back and forth with Dad before I figured out how to do it though," Percy smiled at the one thing he'd been able to connect with his father on in a very long time. He hit the play button on the recorder and hissing sounded out into the room from where they had recorded the sound from Harry's memory of opening the chamber.

"I'm absolutely not going down there," Ron looked down the hole that was gaping open in the room now, his face pale.

"You don't have to," Percy patted him on the back understandingly. "I didn't ask you to follow me around anyway. Why don't you just head off back to the Tower or join Hermione in the library. You could even have that conversation with her that we talked about."

“Harry might be back anyway...” Ron trailed off, looking longingly towards the door.

“Maybe...” Percy offered even though he knew that Snape was working on Harry’s knee that evening so it would probably be a while before he was done. “I’m just going down to grab an experiment I’ve been working on. I don’t need any help.”

That seemed to seal the deal for Ron who knew just enough about Percy and Harry’s interests at this point (as well as Sephie’s existence) to know he didn’t want to meet another of his brother’s experiments. “Right, well, have fun then! I’ll just go talk to Hermione then...” Ron was already out the door before finishing his sentence.

Percy laughed at his brother’s retreat but was also bone-deep saddened by the trauma that his brother, sister, and Harry had went through in the chamber. Ginny seemed to not remember most of it, and Ron had been trapped outside the chamber with Lockhart, but still, it was something that 11- and 12-year-olds should not have had to face.

One flotation charm, another recorded hiss, and Percy was in the chamber he’d been conducting experiments in for a month now. He had a few things going, some of which he should probably move to his office in the Department of Mysteries, but it was just the medium-sized crate in the corner that he needed this time in preparation for his trip with Harry that weekend. He wouldn’t get much free time the next day with a faculty meeting scheduled, so he was moving the crate to the Shrieking Shack now.

Harry had been warding and casting all kinds of spells on the shack before his ‘inner-circle’ meeting the next week, and it was officially safe enough and private enough now to be a safe meeting place and storage. They would need somewhere bigger and even more secure once their movement started in earnest, but the shack would do for now since they were both living at the school and close by.

Percy tapped the crate with his wand, releasing some of his magic. He smiled in satisfaction when a rustling and scratching sound met his ears. With another tap of his wand, the sounds abruptly stopped. “Perfect!” He grinned to himself and picked up the box. “You are just perfect if I do say so myself!”

“But Tuesday is Halloween or Samhain or whatever you want to call that accursed holiday,” Harry pouted as his partner walked into the Shrieking Shack to get something he said they needed for their trip.

“You said you wanted to hear the prophesy before the first inner-circle meeting,” Percy’s voice filtered back to him from inside. “It was the first day Davids could work out a time for a private viewing for you. You’re the one that wants this done off the books, so you have to take what you can get.”

“Fine, but when we’re attacked or eaten or flayed or whatever, I’m blaming you,” Harry continued to pout when Percy exited the shack holding a crate in his arms.

“Don’t all those things fall under the category of ‘attacked?’” Percy raised an amused eyebrow, shifting the weight of the box to one hip so he would have a free arm.

Harry just gave him an unamused death glare. “What’s in the box?” He said taking hold of Percy’s arm for him to apparate them to wherever they were going.

“You’ll see...” Percy said with a smirk. Percy loved messing with him, and Harry enjoyed it maybe a little too much himself.

“Well...take us wherever we’re going, won’t you?” Harry impatiently motioned for his partner to get a move on. “I have some business that’s going down today, and I’d love to see the fallout from it if this doesn’t take too long.”

“Should I be concerned?” Percy asked at the vague comment.

“Merlin, no, everyone is still alive...that I know of anyway,” he grumbled, clearly wishing that wasn’t the case.

“Riiight...” Percy wasn’t convinced he shouldn’t be concerned. “Anyway, I’ve never been where we’re going, so you’ll have to apparate us. Take us to Little Hangleton, please.”

Harry let out a deep sigh, really not liking where this trip seemed to be going, but did as he was told and apparated them as close as he could get them to the old Gaunt shack he was certain Percy was wanting them to visit.

“Ew,” Percy deadpanned with his first look at the rundown shack with a snake nailed to the door and the waves of clearly evil magic he could see emanating from the place.

Harry snorted in amusement at his massive understatement of a response. “So...I’m guessing you’re not planning on killing me for this experiment but do want to grab the ring horcrux, right? You got a plan for this or are we just hoping that whatever curse Dumbledore fell into we’re smarter than? As much as I hate the man...I have to admit, I’m not sure that’s the safest assumption.”

Harry was already casting detection and diagnostic spells at the shack while going into his concerned diatribe. Percy hung back and waited to see what his partner found, he could see the magic, but Harry was better at the wards and darker curses than he was. “We’re not here for the horcrux...or rather we are, but only tangentially. We’re here for the resurrection stone,” he explained. “If we’re testing this whole Master of Death thing, then I want you to have all three items in your possession first.”

“It’s safe until the door,” Harry lowered his wand to turn and inform Percy. “There are some deterrent spells, a nasty animation curse on that snake, and a few wards I can easily dismantle, but I don’t know what’s on the other side until we get past those.”

“No need,” Percy assured him with a wide smirk, putting the crate on the ground between them and opened the lid. “You take down the wards out here, and I’ll handle inside.”

Harry raised an eyebrow but looked into the crate just as Percy lifted out the monstrous creature inside and sat it on the ground. “Mate...I think you’ve gone backwards a few steps from Persephone,” he grimaced at the decaying inferius of what might have once been a kneazle now on the ground between them.

“This one has a different purpose than Persephone had,” Percy chuckled and flicked his wand, sending a shock of something like life back into the corpse. “This one, I command...”

Neville Longbottom rubbed his neck and cracked his back, a little sore from leaning over the venomous tentacula he'd been pruning. It had been a bit touch and go with the plant over the last couple weeks as it had been harmed in an accident with the second years in greenhouse 4, but Professor Sprout had let him nurse it back to health and he was quite proud of the progress he'd made with it. It had been exceptionally calming and a retreat for him now that everything seemed to be turned on its head with his new knowledge about Harry.

He'd never really been on the inside of what was going on before with his three housemates, and he'd both wished he was and been relieved he wasn't alternately over the years he'd known them. Now...well, he was terrified, but he also felt stronger than he ever had before. It was odd. He knew he was in danger, anyone who knew what Harry had done and the shape of his future plans were decidedly in danger, but he also felt needed and important. Harry certainly needed those around him, even if they were younger. Actually, he needed them the most because they were younger. Neville had made excuses for Harry, stepped on his foot to stop him talking, or reminded him about something he should remember so many times in classes and in the dorm that he was certain someone would have caught onto the 27-year-old masquerading as a 15-year-old if he, Ron, Hermione, and now Luna weren't looking out for him.

Neville was also doing quite well with his Occlumency practice, which was shocking in and of itself. He was the hold-up currently before Harry would really let them all into his secrets, but he'd started on it after the other two, and they assured him that he was making exceptional progress. It had given the teen more confidence than he'd ever had before when Percy Weasley had informed him in all seriousness that he was getting the information faster and better than he had when he'd first started learning. No one had told him he was good at something besides herbology before, and now Harry kept looking at him like he'd hung the moon and Percy kept glancing at him like he was slightly afraid of him, not that he understood *that* at all.

He was just about to leave the greenhouse when a loud pop sounded and a house elf bowed low before him, causing Neville to jump in surprised shock. “Maisy? What are you doing here? Is Gran ok?” He asked in concern, recognizing his grandmother's elf.

“You’s grandmother is fine, Master Longbottom,” the elf assured him as she handed over a letter in the fine parchment is grandmother always used.

Neville frowned as he took the letter. What was so pressing his gran couldn’t wait to send with a mail owl? “Mistress Longbottom didn’t wants the master to learn whats happening from the paper,” Maisy explained before popping out once again with a last bow.

Neville broke the seal on the letter in trepidation and pulled out the parchment to read. He read it through twice with a frown on his face before he really understood the information his gran had written him about. His frown deepened and he growled out a sharp, “Harry!” Before he turned and stalked angrily towards the castle looking for the Weasley twins. They would be able to find Harry. He better be in the castle or it would be even worse for him once Neville was able to track him down!

Chapter End Notes

Up next: The resurrection stone is a bit pissed off someone put a horcrux in it...and Remus returns to circumstances he's not expecting...

The Master of Death

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

While impressed with the inferius Percy had created in front of him, Harry still thought it was quite gross. When the (kneazle?) stood up on its hind legs and reached out little hands, Harry almost gagged when he realized it was in fact not a kneazle but a niffler. It was just so decomposed that those two very different animals had gotten confused in his mind with what little there was left.

“So...you’re awesome, but ew!” Harry remarked to his partner, not able to take his eyes from the train-wreck of a creature in front of them. “Is it possible you could have found something a little fresher? Or at least that had its insides on the inside.”

Percy just shrugged from the corner of his eye. “I could have killed a niffler and used the fresher corpse, but I found this one already dead in the forest after getting eaten by something. Mum always said not to waste what’s still usable. This will do even if it’s not pretty.”

Harry couldn’t help the unhinged laugh that broke through and finally drew his disbelieving eyes back to Percy. “Merlin! It’s amazing how your mum’s lessons all manifested in the oddest ways amongst you and your siblings. Between vampire Ron making sure I was bundled up in blankets with hot chocolate before he’d bite me to Charlie knitting baby dragons little fireproof jumpers, I just don’t know what you all are going to do next, and it always amazes me.”

The redhead just shrugged wryly with a smirk. “I might be a necromancer, but I’m still a Weasley,” he remarked.

Harry bent his knee a few times and jumped up and down some, testing that it was still feeling very good after Snape’s newest round of healing potions. Truly, it had never felt better since it had been injured. He then rolled his shoulder; it was still a little sore even though Snape had finally removed the stitches. Everything seemed fine, so there was no reason they couldn’t do this.

“You done stalling?” Percy asked with an amused raise of his eyebrow and a quick, playful tug at the end of Harry's braid.

“Excuse me if I’m not as fond as you are about playing around with magic I don’t understand,” Harry grumbled with a snort of amusement, getting flipped off by Percy as the only response.

Chuckling at his boyfriend, Harry raised his wand, and he promptly removed a few of the spells on the shack to make it easier on the niffler to get in. “Right, well, let’s do this then,” he finally turned to Percy and motioned for him to send the little beastie into the cursed house.

“Brill! Thanks love,” Percy flicked his aspen wood wand and the inferius shambled into the shack as fast as its little bone-legs could take it. Harry switched his ebony and dementor skin wand out for the elder wand that had been in his ankle holster, feeling it right in his gut that whatever else he needed a wand for must be done with the other hallow.

“You got the cloak on you, right?” Percy asked, catching what he was doing even as he was concentrating on commanding his creation.

“In my pocket,” Harry nodded, both intrigued and worried about what would happen when all three deathly hallows were once more reunited.

Some scratching and shuffling in the shadows later, and the niffler re-emerged from the shack carrying a dark box that was radiating all kinds of vileness from it that even Harry, who hadn't been trained by the Unspeakables, could see. Harry felt overcome by a sudden push on his magic as the stone in the box called to him with a desperate tinge to its magic pulse.

“Merlin!” Harry gasped, clutching his chest with one hand and the elder wand with his other and trying to take deep breaths to clear his head.

Five steps closer to them and the niffler finally succumbed to the dark magic it was carrying and crumbled into a pile of dust. “Bugger!” Percy swore with a frown. “I supposed it was too

much to ask that it would put the box in its carrier like I'd planned. I guess we'll have to do whatever we need to do here out in the open then instead of back in the chamber."

Percy immediately strengthened the wards Harry had already cast around them to keep muggles, wixen, or whatever from seeing what they were about to do. Harry just stood transfixed though, his eyes never leaving the box, the stone calling to him...asking for his help, for him to free it.

"It doesn't want to be a horcrux," Harry remarked in almost a whisper while Percy finished reinforcing the wards.

"What?" Percy looked at him with a surprised frown having heard what he had said. "Are you telling me that it *wants*? Like...it's sentient?"

Harry took a step closer to it. "I don't know...I guess it is as much as the wand is anyway. I've never felt anything from the cloak before, but the wand definitely has expressed stubbornness, amusement, a desire to be used...things like that. The stone...it's...pissed is the best I can describe it. It's angry that someone violated it by making it a horcrux."

Percy just nodded, absorbing this information and filing it in his mind to later add to his research notes. "Well I guess it...stop that!" He grabbed Harry's arm as he took another step forward. "It's still cursed and all," he reminded his boyfriend. "I'm not going to let you end up like Dumbledore."

Harry shrugged and turned to half-smirk at the man. "Eh, I probably won't die, right?"

Percy narrowed his eyes and scoffed. "This is not the way we're going to test that. I'm planning a controlled environment with a potion I can revive you from if our hypothesis is wrong. So, if anyone is going to kill you, it'll be me. You will *not* be touching that ring on my watch though."

Percy may have spoken too soon as even he felt the thrum and the magic wave that washed over them both. He expected to be compelled to open the box and touch the ring like Dumbledore had, but he only felt himself rooted to the spot unable to move at all. It seemed

the magic wasn't from Voldemort's spell...it was from the hallow, or at least that was his conclusion when Harry's eyes dilated to almost completely black, and he raised his wand automatically.

"I'm going to bring you back to life and kill you again myself if you go and get yourself cursed," he hissed in his anxiety, knowing Harry either couldn't hear him or couldn't respond through whatever influence he was currently under. Seeing a person, someone he loved, who could easily throw off an imperius curse step forward under the influence of death magic was causing Percy to panic from where he was magically restrained.

Harry took another step forward and turned to look back at Percy with those black eyes and a smirk on his face. "Don't worry, love...I think I know what I'm doing now," a voice deeper than Harry Potter's and strangely echo-y told him, but with a tinge that was still distinctly *Harry* underneath it all.

Percy gasped as Harry...or rather the Master of Death he realized, turned back and silently cast something that had the box float upwards and open, revealing the silver ring and too black stone within. With another flick of the elder wand, the box was banished, and the ring floated in mid-air on its own, a dark cloud of magic suddenly visible around it. Percy was very versed in dark curses at this point, but even he was taken aback and horrified by whatever magic Voldemort had attached to the ring. His Unspeakable training revealed the spell to be corrosive, almost cancerous, and singing with compulsion and seductive spells that wove a siren song around it.

Percy tried again to get to Harry, but he was still stuck, useless and meters away. "Don't touch it!" He warned once again, knowing it was useless.

The Master of Death just chuckled though. "My...aren't you just a nasty little parasite. Well, let's get rid of this annoyance..." A ball of fire suddenly consumed the ring and Percy gasped once more when the flames died out and the curse was no longer wrapped around the object.

"Morgana...what was that spell?" He asked in amazement and didn't even protest this time when Harry reached out and grabbed the ring out of the air.

Harry hummed in that echoing voice once more. "You, my dear, got yourself in a bit of a pickle, yes? Let's take of you now, shall we?"

Percy closed his eyes in shock when he felt the cry, the call for help. Harry had been right, the stone was in pain...and pissed off. He didn't know why he could feel it now, maybe because it was so close and finally free of the curse. It was clearly there though, and it was *not* happy with Voldemort at all.

The Master of Death narrowed his eyes and frowned at the stone. "You are mine!" He hissed in a tone that Percy would have said just bordered on Parseltongue if he wasn't certain Harry couldn't speak that anymore.

With a shriek, a dark cloud emerged from the stone and lashed out at Harry with dark and murderous tendrils. With another hissed spell that Percy didn't catch, Harry batted the soul of Voldemort away from him with his wand and flames once more consumed the dark cloud until they once more blinked out of existence, leaving Harry and Percy standing alone in the daylight, a too cheerful day for what they had witnessed. Harry slid the ring on his right middle finger before the magic holding Percy finally was released.

Uttering a sharp cry, Percy rushed forward to catch Harry who suddenly sank down to one knee. "Harry!" He threw his arms around his partner and held him tightly. "Harry! Are you ok? What did you do?"

Green eyes looked back up at Percy from where Harry let out a breath. "Merlin...that was a bit intense," Harry chuckled in his normal tone once more. "Er...so, you might be a little right about that whole Master of Death thing..."

Percy covered his eyeroll with the kiss he pulled Harry into, needing to reassure himself that Harry was actually Harry again. "I'm going to kill you," he breathed out between kisses, causing Harry to laugh again. "You are a stubborn idiot! I love you so much!"

"I love you too, Perce," Harry assured him, pulling Percy even closer to his body if that were possible.

Percy suddenly pulled back with a frown. "Wait...where did the soul go? Did it go back into Voldemort?"

Harry frowned at that too and looked at the stone on his finger. "Er...I think I sent it to Hell or the afterlife or whatever, but...I wasn't super in control...I just *knew* what I had to do and trusted the wand and the stone to handle it...though, I think it was actually the cloak that did something to the soul as strange as that all sounds."

"You just commanded a soul to the afterlife..." Percy trailed off gaping at him.

"Maybe?" Harry shrugged sheepishly.

Percy's look into Harry's eyes caused him to gasp in immediate arousal. Half of Harry's clothes were gone before he decided that he was absolutely not going to have sex on the ground in the middle of Little Hangleton even if they were behind wards.

"Sod it! I don't really need to be there when everything goes down anyway. They can handle it without me," he gasped again while Percy was now trying to remove his pants. It was really only out of perverse curiosity he'd wanted to be there when his plan was enacted anyway, and Percy like this was so much more important and enticing.

"Stop that for a second!" Harry smacked Percy's hand that was oh so very distractingly inside of his pants now. "I don't want to splinch us." He closed his eyes and with a pop, they were both apparated, safely thankfully, to Percy's bedroom in his flat off Diagon Alley for the rest of the day.

Harry was smiling broadly when he finally pushed open the portrait to Gryffindor Tower, well after curfew and when everyone should be asleep. He twisted the new ring on his finger and felt much lighter now that there seemed to be some way he could purge the souls from the diadem and locket horcruxes in his trunk...if he ever figured out how to use that power again from earlier. His very energetic day with Percy only contributing more to that lightness in his step.

“Harry Potter,” a cold voice stopped him in his tracks from over by the fireplace. Harry raised an eyebrow at the teenager sitting in the shadows of the flames and glaring at him like a villain straight out of a bond fic.

“Hey Nev, how long have you been practicing that whole glare and ominous tone and all?” Harry smiled at him and changed his course to walk over and crash onto the couch beside his friend. “It’s very impressive by the way. You need a bit of work on the glare though, it’s just not menacing enough. As head auror you had this glare that could make criminals just break down and cry sometimes...I’ll help you work on it if you want.”

Neville let out a huff of exasperation at the glamoured man in front of him. “I *told* you to leave Uncle Algie alone,” he said now in more of a resigned grunt than the cold tone from before. “And where have you been all day? The twins weren’t even able to find you.”

Harry put his feet up on the low coffee table and sank back into the comfortable cushions of the couch. He smiled, glad his plans had worked out, even if he hadn’t been able to see it happen. “I was getting rid of one of those things I’ve been avoiding telling you lot about until you were better at mind magic. I suppose you’re all good enough at it now to let you in on the secret, but let’s at least do it when you all are together so I don’t have to explain it multiple times. That’s been bloody frustrating having to explain who I really am all the time, so let’s not do that again.”

“So, are you saying you had nothing to do with this?” Neville waved the letter he’d received from his gran earlier, some of his remaining anger washing away in the unexpected praise from Harry that they were finally all proficient enough at Occlumency to be let in on the last of his secrets.

Harry took the letter and glanced through it with a smirk and a shrug. “You *told* me not to murder him, you didn’t tell me to leave him alone,” he clarified before handing the letter back. “And I told you that I was going to keep you safe, so I don’t see what the problem is here. He’s still alive.”

Neville opened his mouth to protest that he was perfectly safe before closing it again. Harry knew...*he* might not have told him, but his older self had, and any protests he made, Harry would know were a complete lie. He closed his eyes and breathed out, the last of his anger draining away and leaving something that was surprisingly very much like relief. He could go home for Christmas...he could go home for Christmas and his Uncle Algie wouldn’t be there...

Harry was giving him this knowing look that had absolutely no pity in it, it just spoke to the fact that he really did know and understand. Neville, for not the first time, questioned just what all Harry had been through with his muggle relatives who he refused to talk about. That look though had Neville finally letting go and just believing that maybe things could be better, that they *would* be better.

“So...forgiven?” Harry asked with this lost little boy look in his eyes that Neville had seen only a few times on his friend's face before and which always made him want to protect his roommate with every scrap of his being whether they were the same age or Harry was 27.

“Forgiven,” Neville immediately answered before reaching out and taking Harry’s hand to give it a little squeeze.

“How did you even find muggle explosives to frame him as a terrorist though anyway?” He asked. “And why the muggle police? Do you think the charges will stick?”

Harry laughed and squeezed Neville’s hand back before closing his eyes and relaxing more into the couch. “Well...I had all this C4, and Percy wouldn’t let me give it to his brothers like they wanted, so I had to do *something* with it,” he laughed.

“The muggles take these things much more seriously than we do, so it was easier to get him arrested in their world...I doubt the terrorism charges will stick, but possession of illegal explosives definitely will. By my research, the maximum jail time is 14 years for that, which is about what he would get in the wixen world for what he did to the pureblood heir of an ancient and noble house, but in a much nicer place than Azkaban unfortunately. The aurors have some kind of deal with the muggle police to keep convicted wixen in their prisons if I remember correctly from what Ron and future you told me when you were on the force.”

“Really? That long?” Neville frowned. Fourteen years seemed a little excessive even if it were the maximum, and he would probably get less.

“Attempted murder of someone in the peerage? Sometimes bigotry works in your favor,” Harry opened one eye to look at him. “Among everything else he did...Personally, I think he's getting off too easy, but you asked me to not kill him.”

“He wasn’t *trying* to kill me...” Neville trailed off because he knew he definitely would have died if his accidental magic hadn’t kicked in when he’d been dropped out of a window as a kid.

“Riiight,” Harry now rose both eyebrows at him in disbelief. “Anyway, now that Snape’s on team ‘Dark Lord Harry’ I’m going to make him give you a full physical. I know from future you that some of your clumsiness is directly related to past injuries, and if we treat it sooner rather than later, you’ll feel much better overall.”

Neville sputtered, wondering if it were possible to be mad at your future self for telling all your secrets. “I’m fine! I’ve seen Madam Pomfrey for different things in the past, and she’s never said anything.”

Harry just shook his head at him. “As much as I love Madam Pomfrey, she’s a medi-witch. She’s only trained to deal with scrapes, bruises, runny-noses, and the like. Snape though has had some actual healer training as part of his mastery, and until I can recruit a real healer to our side, he’s the best option we have.”

“But...it’s *Snape*! I know you like him, but he hates me!” Neville protested in a tone just shy of a whine. “He’d rather curse me than heal me!”

Harry just shrugged unconcernedly. “He hated me too, but we’re besties now, so who knows, it might work out.” Neville was just about to remind Harry of how much Snape would hate to hear he’d been referred to as anyone’s ‘bestie’ when he was cut off by the arrival of Fred and George Weasley from the staircase leading up to the dorms.

“Hey! You found him!” Fred remarked with a wide grin as George folded up their version of the Marauder’s Map and put it in his pocket.

Harry sat up to jab an accusing finger in their direction. “Oi! You two are supposed to be my minions now. How does that equate to helping an angry teenager find me?!”

With a glance to each other, Fred and George were suddenly dramatically bowing before Harry. “Oh, great and powerful Dark Lord!” Fred began.

“Forgive us for all we’ve done to bring your ire on us...” George added.

“All hail the Dark Lord!” They said together.

Harry chuckled, remembering this exact scene from his second year when everyone thought he was the Heir of Slytherin, and the twins had done basically the same thing. He looked over and shared an exasperated look with Neville. “Idiots,” he rolled his eyes.

With a quick change in tone, Harry had to bunch up as a twin squeezed in on either side of him on the couch and both slung an arm over his shoulders. “Sooo, where have you been?” George asked with a smirk.

“Yeah, doing nefarious dark lord-y stuff today?” Fred mirrored the smirk.

Harry just chuckled and leaned into their comfort. “Eh...for a bit. However, I spent most of the day finding out about *all* the little kinks your brother has though...”

“Ew! Child abuse!” They both clapped their hands over their ears in shock while Neville just shook his head and laughed at them, turning a bit pink around the ears himself.

“Oi, mate! We don’t want to hear anything about any of our siblings’ sex lives...” Fred assured him firmly.

“Though, I did always think Percy *would* be the freaky one...” George nodded contemplatively to even his own twin’s shock. “What? He was the quiet one!”

“You want to hear about freaky sex...” Harry gave them all a teasing look, loving that he was finally the one that could mess with them when they’d made him blush more as a teen than

anyone else had. “I dated Blaise Zabini for a hot minute until we both came to our senses. Anyway...”

“And I’m out!” Neville stood suddenly and escaped the situation like Fluffy was chasing him from the room even though the twins now looked very interested.

Remus Lupin was so very tired. He could feel it in his bones. It was well past the full moon, but it might as well be the day after with the way he felt. His traveling and meeting with the werewolves had actually gone surprisingly well now that Greyback was no longer in charge. The new leadership was still up in the air though, so he had very little definitive information to bring to the Order...actually, he had really not even mentioned the Order at all but had instead introduced the idea of a third side...one that was dark and very creature friendly. *That* he had much more positive news to tell Harry about.

It was just dawn on Halloween morning when he finally apparated to the stoop of Grimmauld Place and pushed open the front door, stifling a yawn. Moving as quietly as possible, Remus looked at the portrait of Walburga, expecting to see the usual curtain over her to keep her from screaming. Surprisingly, the curtain was open, and Walburga just raised a disapproving eyebrow at him before disappearing out of her portrait. He frowned...he didn’t know Walburga could leave her portrait...where did she go? Did she have another portrait?

Remus just shook his head. He was *much* too tired to worry about that right now. That was Future Remus’s problem, he decided as he stumbled up the narrow staircase towards his room. The house was much quieter now that Arthur and Molly had finally moved back into their home when the wards had been updated. If Sirius was asleep or the rare times he was out of the house, it was honestly too quiet for Remus when that happened. He’d spent most of his life completely alone, and the quiet now seemed to settle into his very soul and make him feel almost claustrophobic. He was scared that he wouldn’t be able to go back to living alone again. The silence was too much now.

Remus paused with a frown when noise hit his sensitive ears as soon as he stepped into the long hallway. Muffled sounds from Sirius’s room had him stepping forward slowly. It sounded...it sounded like Sirius must be having a nightmare based on the moans and little cries he heard. Remus sighed, normally his friend would put up a silencing ward around his room since he had almost nightly nightmares, but he must not have done it that evening since he had been alone in the house. With a wistful glance over to the door to his own bedroom,

Remus gave it up and decided he really should wake up Siri. He didn't want his friend to have to suffer through his nightmares alone if he could help in any way.

Remus strode down the hallway and opened the door to Sirius's room without knocking... since he should have been asleep. That was at least until Remus realized that he had been very, *very* wrong in his assumption about what those noises had meant. His mouth fell open and he gaped in shock at the sight of *way* too much skin he was seeing from the last two men he'd expect to ever see together on the bed.

"Er...sorry!" He blushed bright red and spun on his heel to escape as soon as Severus Snape and Sirius Black's eyes had caught him from their very compromising positions.

"Oh no you don't!" The door slammed shut and a ward went up right before Remus could make good on getting out of there and obliterating himself.

"You have some explaining to do, Mr. Wolf!" Sirius put his wand back on the end table with a glare at his friend.

Remus slowly turned back around and immediately looked up at the ceiling to avoid looking at way more than he ever had wanted to see of either man. At least Severus was attempting to cover up some with a sheet, but Sirius was now standing with his hands on his hips and no shame in the world that he was butt naked.

"I thought you were having a nightmare," he explained in a whine at apparently having crossed into an alternate universe when he'd entered the house.

"How do you get off on telling Harry that I tried to *kill* Sev when we were in school?!" Sirius glared at him as menacingly as a naked and very shagged-looking man could do.

Remus's eyes snapped down from the ceiling, taking in his angry friend, even Snape looked disappointed in him. "Erm...but...you did..." he frowned in confusion. "You told him to go to the shack on a full moon...Harry asked why Severus hated you so much...so I told him?"

“Lupin, that doesn’t even make sense,” Snape pinched the bridge of his nose, somehow still looking imposing and elegant with just a sheet across his lap. “If Sirius had told me the school was on fire, and I actually saw the flames, I still wouldn’t have believed him. Why would I willingly have gone anywhere he told me to go?”

Remus frowned, and then his frown fell even more. “But...huh?”

Sirius was now looking concerned at his friend. “Moony, who told you that I sent Sev to the shack? You were already there, so you didn’t see anything. How did you learn that he had been out on the school grounds that night?”

“James said he’d stopped Severus...”

“He did,” Snape cut in, now looking confused himself. “I had heard Sirius and Pettigrew talking about going to the shack, so I went to follow them. I overheard it though, that was the only reason I would think that going there was a good idea. Thankfully, Potter was running late and noticed where I was heading. Of course, I didn’t listen to him when he warned me away, so even he had to stun me and drag me into the school to get me out of danger.”

“The git,” Sirius smirked at Snape who rolled his eyes at a comment that he definitely would have made if Sirius hadn’t beaten him to it.

Remus must have been hit over the head at some point during his travels, he decided. There was no way this was happening. “Look, I can’t even deal with *this* right now,” he motioned to the two naked men before him. “Siri, put on some pants for the love of Merlin,” he picked up a pair of boxers that had to be Sirius’s since they were bright orange, and Snape wouldn’t have been caught dead in something bright orange.

Sirius rolled his eyes but picked up the pants and pulled them on. “I can’t believe I still got in bed with you when I saw those,” Snape grimaced at the orange pants in distaste like they were personally offending him.

“You did pull them off remarkably fast,” Siri smirked back at him unrepentantly.

Remus cleared his throat to get their attention. “Siri...what I remember of that night. I was in the hospital wing recovering and Dumbledore was there when I woke up...”

“Of course he was,” Sirius groaned and sat back down on the bed with Snape dejectedly.

Remus felt his brain melt when Snape then patted him on the back, not exactly comfortingly but definitely with familiarity. It was a familiarity that Remus had never expected to see between Snape and *anyone* let alone Sirius Black. He cleared his throat wondering if he was more shocked that apparently his friend and Snape were shacking up or that Dumbledore had screwed them over again...definitely that Siri and Snape were shacking up.

“Right, yeah, so Dumbledore told me that Sirius had tried to pull a prank on you, Severus. He said that he had told you to go to the shack on a full moon but that James had stopped you when he realized what Siri had done. Dumbledore said that he’d talked to you all and sworn everyone to secrecy, so I shouldn’t bring it up. James did mention it once though, so I assumed what I’d been told was the truth, especially since Severus seemed to hate us all even more after that.”

“Regardless of the circumstances, I was still justly angry that a werewolf was regularly traipsing across campus with just a few adolescent animagi to keep it in check,” Snape rolled his eyes at that. “And the headmaster did actually swear me to secrecy, and I am still not sure that there might not have been a compulsion charm he cast on me to get me to make the vow.”

“But *why*?” Sirius frowned at them both. “What was the point of telling Remy that I’d tried to kill you? I don’t see how that serve any purpose.”

Snape sighed deeply and shook his head, knowing how the Slytherins had always been treated by the headmaster and seeing a pattern. “Because you are a Black...I think he’s always assumed that you would eventually turn to the dark even if you were in Gryffindor. It was a way of sowing doubt in those who were closest to you. Potter would never have doubted you, but Lupin trusted the headmaster implicitly. If you ever did step over the line, he knew he’d have an ally in Lupin, and Lupin could easily convince Pettigrew and then Potter would be outnumbered.”

Sirius snorted humorlessly. "I'd say I proved him wrong, but apparently I'm serving the new Dark Lord...so..."

Remus was slowly shaking his head as he turned sickly pale while all the implications settled in his mind. "Siri...I'm so sorry. I never would have even considered that you would have been the one to betray James and Lily, but then there was always that thought about how you'd set Severus up...that maybe you had some darkness within, that maybe I could be wrong. It was the only reason I thought that maybe...maybe it was you. Merlin, his plan worked! I can't believe it!"

"Merlin's balls," Sirius groaned and flopped back on the bed, sprawling more on top of Snape than Remus wanted to see. "He's really screwed with all our lives, hasn't he? I wish Harry didn't want him alive currently for his plans," he pouted at the end.

"Oh, did he tell you, apparently I killed the headmaster the first time around," Snape smirked down at the ridiculous man, a self-satisfied look on his face. "Hadrian said I could do it again this time."

"Not if I call dibs first!" Sirius sat up and picked up his wand as if to send a message to Harry.

Remus just cleared his throat to remind them he was still in the room. "Erm, so, before I go get completely wasted about all this, or sleep, whatever comes first...either of you care to explain...*this*?" He motioned to the bed and their undressed state. "Sirius might not have tried to kill you, but don't you both hate each other?"

"Yes."

"No." Snape then Sirius answered him at the same time.

Remus just crossed his arms and waited while the two men seemed to be having a silent argument with their eyes. Sirius eventually rolled his eyes and grumbled before turning back to Remus. "We're trying to start over, and all that pent up obsession had to go somewhere, right?"

Remus looked disbelievingly at Severus. The potion master just shrugged and leaned back against the headboard. “He has a nice arse.”

Sirius and Remus look at each other before they both had to give in and laugh. “Merlin, Severus!” Remus laughed before he pulled out his wand and almost effortlessly broke the ward Sirius had put over the door. “I think I probably don’t want to know anyway. Just put the silencing ward back up over your door when I leave. Merlin knows I really don’t want to hear you two.”

“Sleep tight Moony!” Sirius called out teasingly just as Remus slammed the door closed behind him.

Remus sighed tiredly and finally made it to his room where he crashed face first onto his bed, still clothed and with his shoes on. He didn’t know if he wanted to laugh or cry. How could one man have messed with their lives so much without them even knowing about it? And what in the hell alternate reality had he walked into going on in his best friend’s room?! Maybe he should ask Dora what all had been going on while he was away. Obviously, he’d missed something. Yes, Dora would know...he thought just as he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: The prophesy...

The One With the Power to Overthrow

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Troll, basilisk, escaped fugitive, deadly tournament, blood quill, Greyback’s attack at Andromeda’s, Efa stabbing me, my storage unit being raided by aurors...”

“What are you doing?” Percy raised an amused eyebrow at his irritated partner who he had just found grumpily drinking Firewhiskey with Severus Snape in the Hog’s Head early on Halloween.

Snape rolled his eyes and sipped on what looked like gillywater while keeping an eye out for any stray students making their way into the pub who might be under the legal drinking age. He looked a bit tired in Percy's opinion, he hoped Snape was sleeping well. “Personally, I don’t know what he's doing, but he’s been insufferable since he sat down. It is 9am, Hadrian,” he added with a raised and judging eyebrow to the drink.

“It’s Halloween, *Severus*,” Hadrian just shot back and took another sip. He turned to look at Percy next. “I’m listing all the ways this horrible day is cursed...oh yeah, and my parents were murdered, and I was hit with a killing curse...twice!” Hadrian Black glared at them both while reaching for his second Firewhiskey he’d already ordered the same time as his first.

Snape had gone pale even as he was shoved over by Percy who slid into the booth beside him. “You’re being overly dramatic. More things, and worse things, have happened to you on other days besides this one,” he reminded the man dryly.

“Worse things?!” Snape’s carefully constructed stoic façade broke slightly as he reached over to steal Hadrian’s Firewhiskey out of his hand to replace his own gillywater. “When did you get hit with a second killing curse?!”

“I was drinking that,” Harry protested with very little feeling since he’d already waved at the ancient waiter who was bringing him another round. Once the waiter slid the tumbler of neat whiskey in front of him and left again, Harry took a sip and winced. “And I’d rather not talk about it if you don’t mind.”

“Especially since it was his third killing curse, just the second on Halloween,” Percy stole the second half of Hadrian’s egg and bacon sandwich and took a large bite.

“How did you survive?!!” Snape had resumed his stoic appearance even as his words were dripping in concern and shock.

Harry sighed deeply and leaned back in the booth closing his eyes. “I don’t want to talk about it...plus, this isn’t the place to be talking about such types of magic when anyone could hear.”

Snape nodded even as Percy cast a privacy ward around them. “We do need to fill him in on everything as well as all your teenage fan club soon since they’re all proficient at Occlumency now,” Percy reminded him.

“I believe Sirius has already explained to me part of what you are talking about,” the potion master frowned. “At least, the...*soul magic*...involved I suppose would explain you surviving the second killing curse, but not the first or third.”

“The first had very little to do with me and much more to do with Mum,” Harry opened his eyes and sighed. “The third is...”

“It’s embarrassing,” Percy smirked at Harry over his stolen sandwich. “That’s why he doesn’t want to talk about it.”

Harry rolled his eyes and continued to pick at the half of a sandwich he still had. “The magic isn’t embarrassing...it’s just something I don’t understand currently. Percy is getting way too much of a kick out of the circumstances involved though.”

“How would getting cursed be embarrassing?” Snape frowned. “I would get it if it was a different type of curse instead of that one...”

With a deep sigh, Harry figured he had to tell the story. “The aurors had this sting operation going on in Knockturn Alley, and it wasn’t even about me or anything I was involved in. I just happened to choose the wrong day to sell a few untraceable wands I had on hand,” Harry grumbled in irritation. If he was going to get killed, he’d at least like it to be about something he’d done! It was the principle of the matter!

“An auror tried to kill you with an unforgivable?” Snape was both shocked and very much not shocked all at the same time. He hated that he never left a conversation with his new friend without a headache.

Harry shrugged and Percy giggled (actually *giggled!*). Percy earned himself a glare for that. “I don’t actually know who hit me, but it was more than likely one of the non-aurors. I tend to view the whole lot as criminals at this point, myself included. Anyway, there were a lot of curses flying, and I ended up blasted through a glass storefront. *Clearly*, I assumed I hadn’t been hit with an avada kedavra since I was still alive, and I had plenty of cuts to obscure a small new curse scar. I never should have asked that redheaded ingrate to look at my body for that particular scar.”

Percy giggled again. “Hey, I’m not the one who took a killing curse to the ass.”

“Thigh, you git! Upper thigh, not ass!” Hadrian grumbled with a glare.

“Any rational individual calls that part of the body the ass,” Percy protested gleefully while Snape just sighed and motioned for the waiter to bring by another Firewhiskey that he was decidedly not going to share with Hadrian.

“It sounds like I need to have a chat with you and Sirius both about sharing information,” Harry ignored his partner to raise an eyebrow at the dark man in front of him. “When did you two become such good buds anyway? I’m not so sure I like this development.”

Snape growled and downed his whiskey. “Kindly never refer to me as a ‘bud’ to anyone ever again. And you seemed to be avoiding telling me about something that I actually did need to know. Sirius agreed that you should have told me already.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “I was avoiding telling you for your own sanity, clearly.”

Snape scoffed. “I am no fainting damsel for you to protect, Hadrian Black. While learning the despicable depths the Dark Lord descended to in his insanity was unpleasant, it answered many questions I had...and added a few more. I assume you are aware of how to deal with these *items* and how many there are?”

Now it was Harry and Percy’s turns to scoff. “I might not be the best at planning, but I can at least do something I’ve already done once before and better this time around.”

“I’m keeping him in line,” Percy added, getting an eyeroll from Harry.

Harry pouted at Snape. “He said I can’t kill Lucius or Pettigrew until after all the *items* are taken care of or it will tip our hand. I personally think I could stage an accident for one or the other of them well enough. Dobby even volunteered to put some poison into Lucy’s tea whenever I wanted.”

“It might bring Narcissa under suspicion,” Percy shook his head while Snape choked on the sip of gillywater he’d just taken.

“Fine! But I’m sure I could frame Fudge for it, even if you don’t agree,” Harry sighed and took another bite of his sandwich. “You ready to go?” He asked around the large bite, getting a disgusted grimace from the other two at the table.

“You plebian!” Snape continued the grimace. “Where are you two off to anyway? The meeting isn’t for another three hours.”

“Hadrian is going to embarrass me in front of my future boss, and I’m going to keep him from killing Dumbledore,” Percy rolled his eyes, but stood to leave.

Hadrian smirked but swallowed his bite and stood. “We’re off to hear that bloody prophesy to see just how much Dumbles has lied to me.”

Snape's eyes narrowed dangerously. "I expect a report at the meeting."

Hadrian raised an eyebrow at the command. "You do know that I'm the one in charge, right?"

Snape scoffed and leaned back to cross his arms. "Please, Longbottom is more in charge than you are."

Harry shrugged. "Eh, probably. Anyway, I'll see you soon! Oh, and you're giving Neville a full physical exam next week. Toodles!" Harry swiped his wand down to break the privacy ward before pulling Percy quickly away from an angry, sputtering potion master.

"You will give that man an aneurysm one of these days," Percy chuckled as they walked to the apparition point.

Harry snorted. "Nah, he'll go all Zen god eventually and just roll with it. He's dealt with more insanity in his life than me. I'm just a new oddity."

Percy shook his head and took Harry's arm to apparate them. "Oh, love, *no one* has dealt with your level of insanity before." They popped out of existence before Harry could even attempt to protest that.

Since it was a major holiday for the wixen world, the ministry was almost completely deserted when Harry and Percy expertly bypassed the check-in wizard and made their way down to the Department of Mysteries. "Do try to not mention breaking in your fifth year, destroying the Time Room, especially destroying the Prophecy Room, surviving a killing curse multiple times, any type of death magic, how much you could get on the black market for various items..."

"Merlin! I'll just be quiet then!" Harry protested all the restrictions he was being put under as the lift descended. "I'll have you know, I can be plenty charming when I want to be."

“Now, *that* I believe,” Percy smiled and pulled down the hood of his obscuring robes before giving Harry a little kiss.

“I don’t know if I find it hot or disturbing to kiss you when you’re wearing that,” Harry remarked dryly as the doors opened, starting to feel anxiety creeping into his veins.

“Just don’t go kissing any random unspeakables you aren’t sure are me,” Percy chuckled and led the way towards the round room with the revolving doors, also known as the lobby to those who worked there.

Percy raised his unspeakable mark and the doors spun around to stop at the one they were looking for. “That is so much easier than just trying them all while they’re also moving,” Harry smiled at the memory that was much less traumatic now that he had over a decade of separation from it.

Harry knew he was getting glared at to shut up about breaking into the department, even if he couldn’t see Percy’s face. Percy opened the door to where an Unspeakable was already waiting for them on the other side. “Unspeakable Davids, thank you for coming in on your holiday,” Percy said respectfully as he ushered his partner into the room full of glowing glass orbs.

“Not a problem at all, Unspeakable Smith. This is quite interesting, and I’m anxious to see just what the content of the prophecy might be,” the man said excitedly. He sounded a bit older to Harry with a deep voice, but there was absolutely nothing else he could gleam from the man from under his obscuring robes.

“Ten galleons that Dumbledore made the entire thing up, and it’s completely different,” Harry sighed, his tone dripping in resignation.

Percy put a hand on his shoulder. “I’ll take that. I think he just changed some of the words to meet his own ends and skew it in his favor.”

They both looked at Unspeakable Davids who chuckled and turned to lead them deeper into the rows of prophecies. “Well, knowing what I know about Albus Dumbledore, I’ll put my money on the prophecy being mostly what he said but it was longer, and he omitted parts of it. He very much likes to keep information to himself, like a niffler hoarding jewels.”

Harry couldn’t help the laugh that broke through his anxiety. He thought he just might like Percy’s future boss. “I notice none of us wanted to put any money on it being exactly correct.”

“Waste of good galleons,” Percy snorted as they rounded a corner and made their way down an aisle.

Harry glanced over all the many prophecies as they walked by them, wondering if anyone else’s life had been ruined by one of them like his had. He took a deep breath of the dusty air. “Unspeakable Davids...what is the ministry policy about people being here after hours? Like in the corridor outside of the Department of Mysteries.”

The hooded man turned, and Harry was sure he was being frowned at in concern even if he couldn’t see it. “Are you talking about Unspeakable Smith here? Someone who works in the department?”

“No, ministry employees but not ones who work for the Department of Mysteries,” he replied.

The man stood still as he weighed what he was being asked. “But why would they be right outside our department after hours if they don’t work here?”

“Dumbledore’s Order believes they are guarding the prophecy we are here to view from Voldemort,” Percy answered, knowing that Harry was trying to find a way to keep the Order from being attacked...more specifically his father.

The Unspeakable crossed his arms. “Only Voldemort himself could pick it up, and even he cannot remove it though.”

“I don’t think they know that,” Harry shrugged, wondering not for the first time where the Order was getting its information.

Unspeakable Davids hummed to himself before turning on his heel to continue leading them through the shelves of glass orbs. “I will speak to Supervisor Matthews,” he informed them. “She will want to look into this. That poses a security risk and is just frankly unprofessional. I would wager there will be a couple aurors stationed here until we can discourage their presence if my guess is correct.”

“Good,” Harry nodded firmly. “Voldy sends his snake to get the prophesy at some point, which, I know, stupid and wouldn’t work, but it attacks an Order member. We want to avoid that if at all possible.”

“I believe we can handle that,” Davids assured him as he stopped at a shelf containing a familiar glowing orb. “Here we are, boys. What are we actually expecting it to say, if you don’t mind my asking?”

Harry rubbed his neck and closed his eyes. It may have been years, but he still remembered the prophesy as if Dumbledore had just recently told him. “According to Dumbledore, it said:

‘The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies...’”

Unspeakable Davids slowly nodded at the recitation. “There is quite a lot of room for interpretation for that one. While it does seem to specifically apply to you, Mr. Potter, you yourself are not a Light wizard, clearly. I would also hazard a guess that Lord Voldemort is not Magic’s true Dark Lord since he brings chaos instead of balance.”

“The first bit must be right since Severus also heard it though. It’s the second bit that it’s possible was changed,” Harry sighed and reached out for the orb. It felt icy cold in his hand as he lifted it off the shelf.

“Unless he was confounded or something,” Percy added in.

Harry just scoffed. “The man is a master Occlumens, even at that time. I think the first bit is right. How do I go about listening to this then?”

“Just break it,” the Unspeakable informed him. “When it is finished playing, it will return unharmed to its shelf.”

“That’s a handy bit of magic,” Harry was impressed at however that worked, but promptly tossed the ball to the ground in a shatter of glass.

A silvery image of Professor Trelawney emerged from the orb, just as she had the first time, and opened her mouth with the raspy voice of a prophesy:

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark Lord will show himself as a pretender when he marks the child as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...The one with the power to vanquish the pretender will be born as the seventh month dies...”

Harry raised his eyebrow at the exact same prophesy barring just a couple words, but Trelawney continued before he could even make a comment.

“The rightful Dark Lord will rise...the marked child will overcome ...he will stand tall and save the Dark from destruction...He will bring understanding and peace...he will raise the rightful Lord of the Light to his side, his equal in birth and prophesy...together they will usurp the Lord of Manipulation, the breaker of balance...beware those who stand in the way of the Dark and the Light...beware those who stand against Magic...”

Harry and Percy shared a look before they both pulled ten galleons out of their pockets and handed them over to Unspeakable Davids. “Pleasure doing business with you,” the man

chuckled and shoved the money into his robes pocket. "I must admit...I quite like the sound of the second part of that prophesy."

"I don't even know what to say except 'why?'" Harry sighed and wished he'd brought some of the Firewhiskey from earlier with him. "Why would he cut that out? I get that I'm supposed to find the new Light Lord and we take over from Dumbledore, but would he really see himself as the Lord of Manipulation? I would have thought he would have assigned that role to someone else even if we all know it is clearly him."

"Albus Dumbledore may be ruthless, calculating, and highly manipulative, but he is decidedly not delusional about himself and his own actions. He knows very well what he is and what he is doing," Davids scoffed.

"You seem to know the headmaster very well," Percy crossed his arms and asked. Frankly, they knew nothing at all of Davids's life except that he seemed to be supportive of their goals.

"I was the Divination professor at Hogwarts before the woman you just saw," he waved his hand at the orb that was now whole and sitting on the shelf again.

"If you use what I just said to find my identity, you will receive no more help from my end," he warned. "Let's just say that Dumbledore was much more comfortable employing a prophet who would never remember their prophesies than a seer who was highly suspicious of him."

"Understood completely, and your secret is safe," Percy assured him vehemently. The man had helped them exponentially, the least they could do is not look up old professor records to find his real name. "Who do you think the Light Lord is? It's clearly not me, and most of the people we know are grey at best these days."

"Not everyone," Harry hummed with a calculating look on his face. He tapped at the plaque under the orb. "If I find out who the Light Lord is, will their name be added to the prophesy to be able to view it?"

Davids nodded. "The room works as Magic is spoken into the world. If, as the rightful Dark Lord in the prophesy, you say, 'The Light Lord is...I don't know...Minister Fudge or

whatever, and it actually does fit under the prophesy, then the name will be added to the plaque.”

“So, Dumbledore must have said ‘Harry Potter is the child of prophesy’ at some point then?” Percy asked as he tried to figure out how the magic must work to do that.

“Either him or Lord Voldemort. Either would have worked,” Davids agreed with him.

“This is fascinating!” Percy said, studying the plaque. "It's possible that question mark is in place of Dumbledore's name instead of questioning Harry's since someone would need to explicitly say his name and place in the prophesy."

Harry groaned loudly. “We have a meeting to get to. We can’t stay here forever while you geek out over some new magical theory you have.”

“Fine,” Percy grumbled but vowed to spend much more quality time with his coworker. It really was very interesting. “Do you have any theories about who it is though?”

“I think I know,” Harry hummed with a small nod and a concerned frown. “I don’t know if I should say it though and commit them. If more than one person fits the prophesy, I would hate to be the one that determined they had to fill the slot. That’s unfair. I would never wish being bound to a prophesy on anyone.”

Davids shook his head. “Someone will make the determination eventually. If you already have a name in mind, then they are the person. If you don’t say it now, it will eventually be said, whether you want it to or not. Magic will have her way in a prophesy that directly affects the balance between Light and Dark. If you say it now though, you can see if your theory is confirmed or not. If nothing changes on the plaque, then you are wrong and can look elsewhere.”

Deciding he would test the theory first, Harry studied the plaque that read:

S.P.T. to A.P.W.B.D.

Dark Lord and

(?)

Harry Potter

He figured he could easily make it a little more specific before committing another person to the chains that bound them all together. He chose his words carefully before saying, “The prophesy spoken by Sybil Trelawney to Albus Dumbledore concerned Tom Marvolo Riddle as the false dark lord, Harry Potter as the marked child and true dark lord, and Albus Dumbledore as the Lord of Manipulation.”

A brief flash of light had the three of them studying the changed plaque under the orb. It now read:

S.P.T. to A.P.W.B.D.

Tom Marvolo Riddle

Harry Potter and

Albus Dumbledore

“Well, it works,” Percy snorted. “That didn’t add the Light Lord on there though.”

Harry grumbled and shifted his feet. “The Light Lord is presumably someone we know since they are going to stand with us in all this. I raise them up, so they aren’t already in the fight. Lastly, we are equal in birth and prophesy...”

The two unspeakables just looked at him when he didn’t continue. “And...” Percy prodded impatiently.

Harry sighed and scrubbed at the silver bar through his eyebrow in frustration. "There was another person the original part of the prophesy could have applied to if Voldemort had picked them to go after that night instead of me. I think that's what it means. We are equal in birth and prophesy by both being able to take either side of the prophesy. I would guess if the other baby had been chosen instead of me, then I would be the one stepping in as the Light Lord and he would be the Dark..."

"Neville," Percy breathed out, in shock. "You think it's Neville..."

Harry nodded and looked at the plaque. "Neville Longbottom is the Lord of Light," he told it in almost a whisper. A flash of light later and there was one more name added to the bottom of the list, eliciting almost a whimper from Harry.

"Forgive me, Nev," he whispered into the silent room, feeling as if he had utterly broken his promise to protect his friend.

Percy just let out a little chuckle though, causing both men to glare at him. "Sorry, but you and I both know that Neville is bloody terrifying. I know he's only fifteen right now, but we give him a few years, and he would be the one I would choose to balance you out for the Light. Morgana knows I can't keep you in line, but he definitely can."

Harry snorted a chuckle. "Yeah, you just join in on my crazy schemes instead of trying to stop me."

"And make them better," Percy proudly added.

"You have both given me a month's worth of new research avenues!" Davids was almost clapping his hands in glee. "Now, off with you two! You have a meeting to get to, and I need to start in on my notes. Merlin, it's a good time to be alive and a researcher!"

"Bloody unspeakables," Harry gave them both a fond eyeroll before he and Percy did make good on leaving. "You had better not try to recruit Hermione after she graduates," he firmly told his partner. "I'd never get any of you to leave if she joined in."

Percy winced. “She’s already been asking way too many questions about those Time Vultures.”

“Merlin forbid!” Harry laughed as they waited for the lifts to take them back up to the Ministry so they could finally leave for the first inner circle meeting of ‘Dark Lord Harry’s Friends’ as Dobby was calling it anyway. It did sound much better than Death Eaters at least.

“Can I call ‘not it’ on telling Neville?” Harry pleaded when they were in the lift and Percy was finally able to lower his hood.

“You want *me* to be the one to tell him?” He raised an eyebrow warningly.

“You’re right, not a good plan either,” Harry grimaced. “I don’t want to though!”

“Suck it up. You’re a Gryffindor,” Percy just smirked at him.

“I hate you.”

“Love you too.”

Harry was jittery as he paced the Shrieking Shack. Many of his proposed supporters were already milling around and chatting while keeping their new Dark Lord under close observation. Sirius and Severus were chatting with Percy over to one side. Remus hadn’t been invited. Harry was planning on it eventually, but they just weren’t *quite* there yet. All the students except Fred and George who were covering for them were seated at the table and drinking tea where Winky had left quite a spread. Even if she was still refusing to join officially, she was in support and figured they could all use some tea and finger sandwiches. Dobby and Kreacher looked exceedingly awkward where they were craning their necks up to talk with the centaur Firenze, who had never been asked to teach at the castle this time

around since Umbridge wasn't there to fire Trelawney. However, Harry was most concerned with the little group that consisted of Efa, his banshee friend, Filius Flitwick, and his cousin, Ragnok. Harry was certain he was going to get stabbed again.

"Well, I think this is everyone for our first meeting," he nervously called them to order, motioning towards the table. There was even a mat on the floor for Firenze to sit at if he wanted to that Winky had the foresight to bring in. "There are other people we want to approach to join, so there may be more at our next meeting."

"I am surprised at the children in attendance," Efa glared at the teenagers like their presence was personally offending her. "They have no place in this business."

"Hey!" Ron protested even as Hermione put her hand on his arm to stop him.

"Unfortunately, they are already in the thick of it, and we cannot keep them out at this point. We will, however, keep them safe," Harry told everyone firmly, knowing that he might be lying when it came to Neville now. If it was the last thing he did, he promised to do his best to keep his friend safe and happy though.

"Should Harry Potter not be here as well? Are these not his friends?" Firenze motioned a hand over the students with a frown. "Is he firmly with the side of the headmaster? That could potentially cause problems."

"Erm...yeah...so..." Harry awkwardly scratched his neck and sat with everyone at the table. Only Firenze and Efa didn't know who he was, but he really didn't want to have to explain everything again either.

"He *is* Harry Potter. Time travel," Ragnok spoke for him very abruptly and pinning him with a glare. "Have you signed our contract, Mr. Potter?"

Harry took the thick ream of parchment out of his enlarged pocket. "Right, yeah, Ragnok is correct. I am Harry Potter, but please call me Hadrian Black outside of these meetings. Even when we expand, those outside of this little group will only know me by Hadrian Black. The Goblin Nation and the...yet unnamed united group of house elves...we need to get you guys

a name,” Harry frowned at Kreacher and Dobby. “Anyway, those groups gave me contracts with what they want out of this movement and terms for their support. Efa and Firenze, I know you both have some sway in your communities, so I’m willing to do the same for the banshees and centaurs as well.”

“That is how you knew me when we met,” Efa slowly nodded, her long, white hair flowing over her shoulder as the random dark wizard that inserted himself into her life now made much more sense.

“Yeah, sorry about that,” Harry just shrugged at her. “You stabbed me the first time we met though, so I at least approached a bit more cautiously this time.” The banshee just snorted in amusement and took one of the sandwiches off the tea tray.

“Is that the contract?” Ragnok asked as if a broken record.

With a sigh, Harry tossed it over to him. “It’s signed after that last round of changes. I think we’ll all be happy now.”

“Mr. Potter, or rather Black, what are the goals for this little movement of yours?” Firenze settled down onto his mat and crossed his arms in front of him sternly. “I only know of creature rights from Mr. Dobby, but nothing else. I assume the goblins asked for more delineation of your goals at least.”

Flitwick gave a little chuckle at the understatement of that remark. “We definitely did.”

“Balance,” Harry offered immediately. After hearing the prophecy, he actually felt like he had more direction now. He felt more solid and like Magic was pushing him in the direction he must follow. “We will bring balance to the Dark and the Light. We will eventually work with the Light hand-in-hand when Dumbledore is replaced by the true Lord of Light just as I will replace the current pretender of a dark lord.”

“Wait...there is a Light Lord?” Hermione asked with a raise of her eyebrow.

“Of course, there is,” Neville answered her lowly. “Magic is all about balance. Just like with plants, magic needs both light and darkness and nourishment from both sides. Dumbledore and You-Know-Who have been serving in those roles, but if Dumbledore is also not the true lord, then we need to find who it is to continue with that balance.”

“Well said, boy,” Efa raised her eyebrow in surprised admiration while Harry was dying inside at Neville saying they needed to find the light lord.

“Ok, so that is a new goal then,” Hermione nodded with a frown.

“What about muggleborns?” She asked next with a look on her face that said she might not want to know the answer. “And muggles too.”

“They *have* been the major point of contention between the current two lords,” Sirius agreed with her, but much less concerned about Harry’s answer. “You need a solid answer to that for your followers.”

Harry just nodded, not worried about the question at all. If they didn’t agree with him, he’d just obliviate them when they left and find a new person for his inner circle. “Muggleborns are wixen, plain and simple. All magicals, creature and wixen alike, are valuable and should be cherished. Our world is too small to not embrace our kind, no matter where they come from, the same for all magical creatures and even squibs.”

“Wait...squibs?” Sirius frowned at that part. “Erm, but they aren’t wixen.”

Harry just shook his head. “They are still wixen even if they can’t access their magic. They are an extremely valuable part of our society as people who can integrate and bridge the gap between the magical and muggle worlds. We are behind as a society if we don’t keep up to date with muggle advancements in technology and science. If we supported our squibs in their endeavors in the muggle work and to bring back this knowledge and not cut them off from us, they would bring so much more richness to our society and growth as people.”

Flitwick was nodding along as well as Hermione, though the rest of the group still looked a little skeptical. “And what of muggles?” Snape reminded him he hadn’t answered that question.

Harry shrugged. "I care nothing about the muggles."

"Harry James Potter!" Hermione indignantly called him out.

"Not what I meant, Hermione," he sighed and scrubbed a hand over the metal bar in his eyebrow. "I don't mean we should kill them. They are autonomous sentient human beings that deserve their own lives in their own society. Besides there are like a billion more of them than us."

"I would like to hear you explain what you did mean then?" Firenze prompted with a nod for him to continue. "The stars speak many warnings about the muggle world."

"I meant that our society should view muggles as people with rights, but that the Statue of Secrecy is there for very important reasons. Muggles have their own world, and frankly, they don't want to be a part of ours, and we don't particularly want to *only* be a part of theirs either. It's important that we learn from them, hence supporting muggleborns and squibs, but we should view widespread exposure as a real and dangerous threat to us," Harry explained.

"Muggles don't fit into my plans in much detail because I'm not *their* Dark Lord. We need some policy changes in how we deal with them, and we absolutely need to strengthen our approach to the Statue of Secrecy, I mean, look at the World Cup last year, but they have their own government and society. I'm here for you, I will serve you, and I don't plan on spending my whole life either speaking up for or against muggles. I serve Magic; I serve you," he finished with a look around the table and the odd collection of people assembled.

Efa cleared her throat. "Brill, now moving on, creature rights. Banshees can't currently work at the ministry. What are you going to do about that?"

Dobby slowly raised a hand too. "Er...it wasn't in the contract, but the house elveses, we were thinking it might be good to be classified as beings instead of just creatures...if that's ok..."

“Merlin! Of course, it is!” Harry huffed out, not realizing they had forgotten that important part in the contract. “Send the contract back, and I’ll write it in.”

“Wait, house elves aren’t even categorized as beings?!” Hermione’s curls almost stood up on end as the ire rose in her righteous fury.

“We’ll fix it, Hermione, as well as more jobs for banshees and centaurs, as well as protected hunting grounds for centaurs...Merlin, does anyone know a merperson we could get in touch with?” Harry sighed and started scribbling notes all across the parchment in front of him. “They need to be reclassified as well.”

“I can contact them,” Firenze offered.

“Wonderful!” Harry nodded as he continued to write. “Severus, we have got to kill off your boss before we can do any of this. Can I put you and Sirius on finding some weakness to exploit once we’re ready to take that step, you can loop in Remus if you want?”

“Which boss?” Severus just asked with a smirk and a knowing raise of his eyebrow.

Harry rolled his eyes at him. “We’ll start with the snake faced one and go from there.”

“I have some ideas. I can help them,” Percy volunteered, causing the group to look over at him for the first time.

“And just who are you, young necromancer?” Firenze narrowed his eyes to take in the man sitting several seats away from him.

“Excuse me...necromancer?” Snape asked, with wide, shocked eyes as he put down his teacup on the table.

“Great, yeah, forgot you didn’t know that yet,” Harry sighed and leaned back in his chair. He hoped they made it back before curfew, but it wasn’t looking promising.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: Halloween isn't over, and some interesting new followers just might want to be recruited...

Goddess Moon

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry was getting a headache. Besides the initial devolving into chaos that Percy's status as a necromancer brought to the group, mainly Snape's sputtering of disbelief and Efa's immense amount of questions, the meeting as a whole was surprisingly productive. Firenze was going to reach out to the merpeople, Dobby and Kreacher were going to revisit their contract to include changing the house elf classification legally, Efa was going to talk to the other banshees and work up a contract of their own, Sirius was going to sound out Remus about the werewolves, and the goblins were surprisingly amenable to finding something Harry could give them in exchange for the horcrux in the Lestrange vault. Harry had a feeling it was going to be the sword of Gryffindor, but he was fine with that. He'd rather break into Dumbledore's office than Gringotts any day. The teenagers were even given the task of trying to actively promote more inter-house unity. Less division could only mean good things for their goals, and teenagers with no job seemed very scary to Harry who knew intimately well how he would handle that situation.

No, Harry's headache was coming from Severus Snape holding him back after everyone parted for the night (thankfully before curfew). As much as he liked the man, Severus was never easy, especially after a very long day. "What did the prophesy say? Was it different from what I heard?" He asked, an unreadable expression on his face that Harry could only assume was pain or regret.

"No, it was the same," Harry sighed, giving Percy a little wave when he left, seeing that he wasn't needed to stay. "There was just more of it that you didn't hear...that I didn't even know about. It was in Dumbledore's best interests that the last bit didn't get out."

"Does it change your plans at all?" Snape crossed his arms and got straight to the point. "I do not know even as much as you originally did, but Albus told the Order it boiled down to being you and the Dark Lord at the end."

Harry grimaced. "Yeah, you're going to need to call him You-Know-Who or Tom or something now, at least in *our* meetings. It will get very confusing if you don't."

Snape did some cross between a wince and flinch, but he nodded, understanding even if it would be difficult to change years of ingrained habits...habits ingrained through much pain.

“As long as I am not required to call you ‘My Lord’ or something of the equivalent.”

“Ew! Definitely not!” Harry shuddered violently. “Look, you aren’t my servant or minion or anything like that, none of you are. You though, you’re my friend, Severus Snape. You serve who you would like to or no one at all. The prophesy made it clear that Tom isn’t the only imposter-lord currently in our society. There will be a new Light Lord rising with us. I plan on working with them and us having a partnership. Serve me, serve the Light, or just be Snape who is my friend. All options are open to you...well, except, please, *please*, don’t pick either of the current options that are ruining our society.”

Snape was completely dumbfounded. “Albus is a false lord? But...who...?”

“I can’t tell you that right now. It would be unfair if I didn’t talk to them first,” Harry sighed and sat back down at the table to rub his temples. He felt like he'd condemned Neville to something...good or bad, it didn't matter, he was in Fate's hands now.

“I came back in time to change it all, but I think...no, I’m pretty sure, this was part of Fate's plan all along. If I didn’t come back in time, the second part of the prophesy would never have come to pass. Everyone who had heard that part was dead, and I was never going back to the ministry to listen to it, thinking it was destroyed at the end of this year. A prophesy must be acknowledged and heard for it to come to pass. They are self-fulfilling, but that requires the participants to know what it is...at least that’s that Percy tried to explain to me, if I was understanding the lecture that almost put me to sleep.”

Snape crossed his arms and leaned against the wall of the shack with a thoughtful look on his face. “We will be a society not divided, one for balance...one that supports both the Light and the Dark...it is an image I have never tried to picture before.”

“Me neither,” Harry smiled at him, liking the thought though. “I’ll give you a heads up, our new Light Lord, is a badass that fried a dementor with fiendfyre in the middle of Azkaban and got away with it in my future. They also staged a rebellion from the middle of an occupied location during the war last time. All this is in the future, but even now, they have it in them. I think after the initial shock and everything, this will be an excellent partnership.”

Snape frowned, trying to figure out who this might be. “Clearly, we all know now it is not Percival Weasley since his is decidedly dark...him becoming a necromancer is frankly even

more shocking than Harry Potter becoming a Dark Lord.”

Harry nodded with a fond smirk. “Yep, to me too. I even knew he was working in soul magic and hadn’t guessed necromancy, but he’s quite good at it, not that I would expect anything besides perfection from whatever Percy decided to do. Sephie is just beautiful and the best little inferius ever.”

Snape choked in shock and his hand immediately went to the scratch on his other one. “Your naked cat-thing is an inferius?!!” He gasped out.

Harry opened his mouth to explain. “No, I am done...” Snape interrupted with a firm shake of his head before Harry could tell him any more. “I am going to sleep and will deal with all this in the morning. Until then, please ask your partner to refrain from bringing anything else back to life, and please, for the sake of my sanity, just take your chaotic self to bed as well. You will inform your Light Lord about their destiny, and once that is done, I expect you to write out word-for-word the prophecy for me to study. I do not trust your interpretation of whatever you heard, even if Percy was there to be more level-headed about it.”

“Sure, I just need to remove one or two of the stronger wards I placed around the shack before I leave so no one notices anything different about it, but I’m planning to head straight to bed after...I’m even planning on that bed being in Gryffindor Tower tonight, so I’m not even breaking school rules,” Harry assured him with a wide smile.

Snape snorted in what passed for amusement with the man before turning to leave. He paused just in the doorway to look back. “Did you mean it...you consider me a friend...?” He asked with a look in his dark eyes that was some mixture between desperately hopeful and deep pain.

Harry stood and crossed his arms with as firm a look on his face as possible. “Severus Snape, whether you like it or not, you’re my friend now and will always be. You can be as ornery and bitter as you want to be, but you should know by now, you can’t out-stubborn Harry Potter.”

Snape raised an eyebrow and actually laughed. It was just one laugh, but it was more than Harry had ever heard from the man in his life. “Merlin! You may have a point at that,” he shook his head before turning and leaving in a swirl of dark robes.

Well, Harry didn't know if Snape was happy about it or not, but he didn't seem mad at least. He stood there for a second longer before he shrugged and sighed. He hated Halloween, but at least this one was productive. However, Neville was definitely going to kill him once he learned the prophesy. Harry stepped outside and began un-weaving the more secure wards he'd placed around the building to protect the meeting and its participants. If he'd just let it go and never heard the rest of the prophesy, Neville would have been protected...but there would also have never been the possibility of real balance for magic in their society. A Dark society was still unbalanced and not equitable for its members just as a solely Light one was.

Taking a page out of Snape's book, Harry decided to just let it go for the evening. It was something he would deal with in the morning. Neville needed to know, but he could have one more night as a normal fifteen-year-old. Or...well, as normal as any of Harry's friends really were at this point.

When the last noticeable ward was removed, Harry turned and trudged towards the Forbidden Forest. He would need to call Dobby to take him back to the castle now with the passageways sealed, but it would be best to do that where no nosy, Hogsmeade residents could see. It wasn't common practice for house elves to transport wixen, and it would raise too many questions for the average person. Besides, it was nice night for a little walk.

Breathing in the cool, night air, Harry cleared his mind and organized his thoughts from the day. The cup was the most pressing goal to accomplish next, and he only needed to wait for a decision from Ragnok to handle that. Until then, he could take the diadem and the locket to the Chamber of Secrets and attempt to banish the soul bits as he had done with the ring. After that...it was a clear path to Nagini and Voldemort. The end of step two in his very loose plan when he came to the past was in sight and within his reach.

Walking into the treeline, Harry breathed out and watched as his breath fogged out in front of him. It was colder than he'd thought...it was actually significantly colder than just minutes before. Harry immediately had the elder wand in his hand and turned around in a circle. He was within the forest now and out of view of the village, and also unfortunately within the castle's anti-apparition wards. The cold settled into his bones, and he felt all happiness and joy leave his body as if it had never been there to begin with. He could hear screaming in his mind...no longer the screaming of his mother as she died...it was blonde hair and blood and pain...the screaming was his own, and Luna's...

Harry's first thought was to call Dobby and get the hell out of the forest, but his second...his second thought was the memory of a silver blade buried to the hilt in his friend's stomach, of when he held the small body of the elf as he died and the little grave by the sea. He couldn't call Dobby; he would die first before that happened again. And die he would...as much as Percy believed he couldn't die until he chose to (and which seemed to actually be true based on his nice lightning bolt scar on his arse) there was a pretty stark loophole there...a loophole the size of a dementor, one that could definitely still suck out his soul.

"Expecto patronum," Harry cast frantically, knowing it wouldn't work. Dying that first time, his soul hadn't returned able to cast something that was the epitome of Light magic. Not even a wisp of light emerged from his wand. There had to be some downside of being the Master of Death.

"Harrry Potterr," a rumbling rasp of a voice emerged from the shadows.

Darkness pulled at the edges of Harry's vision, but he didn't feel himself about to faint as he normally would. The screams were still there, but they were at the back of his mind, they weren't taking over. Cloaked shadows emerged from the trees...three of them. Two dementors flanked...*something*...what was that?...was that a dementor?

"Harrry Potterr...well met and blessings from the Goddess this night..." the raspy voice that sounded of fingernails on a chalkboard came from the creature in the middle of the two dementors.

As they came closer, Harry clutched at his wand more in fear and really looked at them. The creature in the middle *was* a dementor, but not like one he'd ever seen before. Honestly, he hadn't even realized dementors could talk, but it might only be this one who could. It seemed...older, more primal than the others. It did not have its hood pulled over its face, and it clearly had the mouth all dementors did, white, scaly, and cracked skin over its bald head with no nose (not even the slits Voldemort had), but this one had eyes...well, they were closed, but it looked like the dementor would have eyes if it...he?...they?...opened them.

"Why are you here? What do you want with me?" Harry ended up asking. Honestly, the dementor's greeting had been polite, unexpected, and not one he'd ever heard before. He didn't know how to respond to dementors who talked and seemed...well, not murderous within their first second of meeting him at least. It was also quite disconcerting that they

knew who he was even when he wasn't wearing his glamour as well. How did dementors see? Maybe they only felt souls and that was how they recognized him?

"Er...um...blessings to you too," he added on quickly, figuring he should at least try to be polite and not start anything since he was pretty much at their mercy without the ability to cast a patronus.

The odd dementor chuckled, causing a shudder to run up and down Harry's spine. "We mean you no harrrrm this night," the dementor tried to reassure him, holding its while, scaly hands out in a gesture of peace. "We are herrre to talk of a mutually beneficial opportunity."

Harry's silver-studded eyebrow rose in complete disbelief. "Don't you guys serve the ministry or maybe Voldemort at this point? You do realize I really hate both of them...not that I don't want to hear about this opportunity, but are you sure you have the right person?"

The two dementors on either side of their leader hissed, and Harry almost had a heart attack when he realized the hisses were actually what seemed to pass as amusement or something close to laughter for dementors. The leader raised its hand and they immediately stopped.

"I am Nox," the dementor informed him. It turned its still closed eyes on Harry as if it could see through the man to his soul. "I was firrrst, the beginning of my kind...we were crreated many centuries ago as serrrvants and protectors. Our creatorrr was...not *pleased* with his creation. He was horrified at the sight of his childrrren, at me. He bound me...us, to the stone used in the ritual we were formed from. My offspring are much less...developed than I am as a consequence of our enslavement and restriction of our magic. We serve those who hold our stone."

Harry's jaw had dropped open at some point during this explanation. He'd never known where dementors came from originally. It was common knowledge that they could multiply in mist, so that must be where Nox's offspring came from. But Nox, he was apparently *created*, by a wizard at some point if Harry was understanding his story correctly. The wizard had then turned on his creation and made it a slave when it scared him? How did that happen? He'd read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* during his mastery since he liked to read fiction when the intense studying got to be too much for him. In this story, it was as if Frankenstein had seen his monster, and instead of running like in the book had attacked it and subdued it in his horror at what he had done.

“I’m sorry,” Harry breathed out in sadness at what had been done to them. This didn’t seem to be the expected reply since the dementor cocked its head to one side as if he didn’t understand.

“Why?” The dementor finally asked since it didn’t seem to be able to figure out Harry’s meaning. “We arrre what we arrre. Why would Harry Potterrr be ‘sorry?’”

Harry decided that he might as well just go along with all this instead of trying to find a way out, it’s not like he had many options anyway, so he put his wand back in its holster and crossed his arms. “No one should have their freedom taken from them,” he said, believing that with every part of his being. “I was just expressing my anger at your creator for what he did. I’m guessing the ministry holds your stone now?”

“They do...” Nox glanced at the two dementors on either side of him, but they clearly would be no help in understanding Harry as they had less willpower and cognitive abilities than he seemed to.

Nox seemed to give up trying to figure the man out in front of him, and instead continued his explanation. “We werrre given an offerrr by the one who goes by Lorrdd Voldemort. He will obtain our stone if we will let his marked followers leave the prison.”

Harry had wondered all these years how Voldemort convinced the dementors to follow him. That would do it he supposed. However, if Voldemort were to get the stone, which he would have been able to get when he took over the ministry, then he could also command the dementors and they would be forced to serve him. “How can you do this if you must serve the ministry...actually, how are you even able to be here talking with me now?”

Nox gave that horrifying chuckle again. “We arrre instructed to let out our prisonerrrs for daily exercise and food. It is nothing for us to let those specific prisonerrrs all out at the same time and then be busy elsewhere. We are breaking no commands in these rrregards. As for Harry Potterrr, we were instructed to visit you over the summerrr...the order did not state we were unable to visit you again or that our duty was done when yourrr patronus chased off my children.”

Harry had to hold in a hysterical laugh. That sounded like house elf logic if he'd ever heard it. They had some very striking similarities there. "So, you're here to finish the job from this summer and take my soul now?" Harry hoped that's not what their 'opportunity' was about. This hadn't happened in his former timeline, so it had to be something else. Something he had changed by coming back in time.

"No, we are not," Nox stated firmly. "The Goddess speaks of a third option..." Nox vaguely motioned upwards. Harry followed the motion towards the moon and frowned. Did dementors worship the moon? Were they able to read the skies as centaurs did? It was so *very* confusing.

"I'm guessing I am your third option?" Harry asked, hoping this was going where he desperately wanted it to now.

"Yourrr ministry...they hurt my children," Nox placed a scaly hand on the dementor's shoulder to his right. "We do not eat souls naturally...we eat emotions, we can live on just the proximity of yourrr human feelings. Eating souls is too much magic, too much light; it kills us...I instrrructed my children to remove the extra soul in you when we werre ordered to the school because it was small, it was harming yourrr emotions. A full soul though...it is too much for one of my children. They arre so weak already being restricted to our island. When the ministry orderrrrs us to kill...they order us to die. The Goddess speaks to us, She warrns that Lord Voldemort will be no betterrr."

It was karma. Harry had shocked so many people since he and Percy came to the past, that it must be his turn now. How had he never known this?! Yes, he intentionally stayed as far away from dementors as possible in all timelines, but had *anyone* ever studied them? Did the ministry know what they were doing? Actually, yes, Harry was certain they did since they must have witnessed the dementor dying in some form or fashion after they performed a kiss. He could also completely believe that they didn't care.

"Er...so, the Goddess sent you to me?" He asked, needing some clarification.

"She says you are balance..." Nox simply explained. It both answered Harry's question and didn't.

“Riiight...so what do you want me to do?” He asked, really not knowing *what* he could actually do in this situation.

Nox held both hands out again, his closed eyes turned to the sky. “We ask for Harry Potterrr to steal our stone. You will be ourrr new masterrr.”

Yep, it was karma, he sighed. The dementors wanted him to break into the ministry, find a heavily guarded stone that he had no idea what it looked like, steal it, then be their new master? He thought things were looking better now that he didn’t need to break into Gringotts. He really hated Halloween. Also, there was no way in hell that he would be the ‘master’ of anyone. Even Kreacher was going to be freed just as soon as he could convince the little bastard that it was a viable option. Dobby was a big help to prove this in those regards.

It might be a bad idea, but... “Er, couldn’t I just give you the stone once I got it? Then you would no longer be slaves...” The cacophony of angry hisses stopped that thought suddenly.

“We cannot touch the stone, Harry Potterrr!” Nox vehemently informed him. “We would not survive!”

“Ok, alright, no giving you the stone!” Harry assured them, not liking the fact that the cold was once more rising, and he could hear the screams better in his mind.

“We’re going to have to figure out some kind of compromise though. I will not have the power of a Dark Lord and also command you all.” That was not a good idea at all. That kind of power...Harry refused to have it in his hands and his alone. It was also the reason he refused to be Minister of Magic once they overthrew the ministry. He had seen what that kind of power could do to a person, and he would have no part in it.

Nox seemed to accept that condition with an unseeing look up at the moon. “We accept your terms, the Goddess assurres us of yourrr intentions. We will trust Harry Potterrr.”

“Thank you,” he said, surprising himself with just how much he meant it. To be given that amount of trust, it was humbling. “How long did Voldemort give you? I assume I’ll need to

steal the stone before then.”

“You have until what you wixen call Christmas or Yule. We must frree the prisonerrrs that day if you have not succeeded. We will choose Lorrdd Voldemort over the ministry if those are ourrr only options,” Nox said as he and his children turned to leave.

“Can you at least tell me what this stone looks like?!” Harry called out to their retreating backs.

“Dementors cannot see as wixen can, Harry Potterrr,” Nox responded with that grating chuckle just as the group disappeared from sight.

“Bloody hell,” Harry sighed and sank down to the ground, his legs no longer able to hold him. He flopped completely down to where he was laying on the grass, a tree root painfully digging into his back. “Dobby!” He eventually called, resolving to head to Percy’s instead of the tower. He needed his partner and now.

“You are bloody cold!” Percy gasped when Harry slid under the covers in just his boxers and attacked his legs with his icy feet. Percy hadn’t been expecting his partner that evening, but he was welcome regardless...bloody cold feet and all.

“Fucking dementors,” Harry grumbled from where his cold nose was now uncomfortably pressed into Percy’s neck.

Percy pulled back to look at him in surprise. “What’s that supposed to mean?! Did you run into some dementors in the short time it took to get from the Shrieking Shack back to the castle?! Can I not leave you for thirty minutes and nothing happen?!”

“Er, probably not, and yep, they were looking for me, and guess what...they can talk, or at least one can. His name is Nox...their name?...its name?...I don’t know, I didn’t ask for pronouns.”

Percy was freaking out. He was at least trying to do it quietly though since, by the look of Harry, he'd already had his own freak-out earlier in the evening. "Right, ok...so the dementors were looking for you, found you, didn't kill you...what did they want?"

Harry sighed and leaned back to look at Percy better, even as he threw a leg over the other man, still trying to get closer and warmer. "Apparently, they are being held as slaves to the ministry and they want out. They have to serve someone though. Their goddess...maybe the moon?...somehow told them about me as a third option instead of the ministry or Voldemort. They want me to steal this stone from the ministry that will let me be their master. It's that or they will take Voldemort up on his offer."

Percy breathed out and tried to sift through the new information. "It would explain why they went directly back to the ministry when Voldemort was overthrown if this stone can just change hands like that. What do you know about the stone?"

Harry shrugged and sighed tiredly. "Nothing, not what it looks like, where it is, or even the size."

That was not good news at all, it could be a massive boulder, a tiny pebble, or even a part of something else it was built into. "What if you just kill Voldemort before they join him?" Percy asked. It *was* their original plan anyway.

"We could, but then the ministry still controls them, and they are very powerful. We plan to take on the ministry next," Harry said. It had always been a concern of his once they turned their attentions to the ministry, but this was the first time he had a glimmer of a solution to that problem.

"Well...looks like you're breaking into the ministry again...wouldn't be your fifth year without it," Percy gave him a wry grin. "My guess is that it's either in the DMLE or the Department of Mysteries."

Harry groaned and buried his face in the pillow. "Can't I delegate this to Neville?"

“He’s fifteen,” Percy softly reminded him as he pulled the tie out of Harry’s hair and started to undo the braid.

“Fine,” Harry grumbled from where his face was still in the pillow. “Sirius is really going to hate this... Scratch that, *everyone* is going to hate this.”

“Harry...” Percy frowned in worry as he combed out the long locks of hair. “This is a lot of power to command the dementors. Is that something you are ready for?”

Harry chuckled and turned his head to smile at his love. “Hell no! I’m not going to be their master. I already told them that. I’m giving that stone to people I can trust just as soon as I get my hands on it.”

Percy raised an eyebrow. Frankly, he didn’t trust anyone with that amount of power. “Who would that be?” He asked in concern. “You can’t just hand over that much power to anyone.”

Harry gave him that grin that usually had everyone but Percy terrified. “Well, I’ll need to talk to Head Elf Bipsy first, but I’m not going to turn over the fate of an entire race of beings to anyone who doesn’t intimately know what it’s like to have a master. Who else can be trusted with that except for the house elves?”

Percy’s hand stilled in Harry’s hair as he thought that through, a smile creeping onto his face. Sure...why the hell not? It wasn’t something they did the first time around at the very least. “Right, so add it to the plans. I’ll go in to the office tomorrow and ask some discreet questions around the department to see if it’s in the Department of Mysteries. That should narrow it down some anyway.”

“Brilliant! That’s why I love you!” Harry tackled the redhead into a kiss. He pulled back almost immediately. “I guess I’ll talk to Neville tomorrow, if I must,” he winced.

“I think you are more looking forward to breaking into the ministry than talking to your fifteen-year-old friend,” Percy just smirked at him.

Harry huffed. “It just takes so much *work* to deal with all the feelings-crap!”

Percy rolled his eyes before pulling back and snapping the elastic waistband of Harry’s boxers painfully. “Oi! I just had a very traumatic evening!” Harry protested the treatment even as a smile tugged at his lips.

“Hmm...well, it might be a good idea for me to study that new avada kedavra scar anyway,” Percy suggestively waggled his eyebrows. “Might save me the effort of having to brew a potion to kill you later to test out our Master of Death theories.”

“Percy, if you want to look at my arse, you just have to ask,” Harry assured him vehemently even as he shifted to bare said arse.

“Ha! You said it! It's on your ass, not thigh!” Percy accused, causing Harry to groan dramatically.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Neville and Harry play with some horcruxes to varying results...

The Dark Lord and the Light Lord

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Neville finished his last class on Wednesday which happened to be Muggle Studies (did muggles really invent something to control the temperature inside their homes?! Without having to charm the entire residence?!!) and was making his way towards the Great Hall for dinner. OWL year really was very busy and stressful! Plus, he was now a part of a whole government coup or something as well. He couldn't believe it was only the very beginning of November.

Neville paused just as he was about to walk by Harry who was standing in the corridor alone, a napping Sephie curled up at his feet, and looking out onto the grounds. He frowned down at the sleeping cat...how long had Harry been standing there for his cat to decide to take a nap? He detoured over to join his friend and see what he was looking at.

Coming level to the glamoured man, Neville looked out the window, but he didn't see anything. The students were all heading inside for dinner, and there wasn't anything remotely interesting he could see. "What are you looking at, Harry?" He asked, glancing over questioningly at the man beside him.

There was a pause...Harry didn't respond to him in any way. Neville's eyes widened when he realized that Harry's eyes were unfocused, and he wasn't moving any at all; he was almost frozen where he was standing. Neville would have guessed a stunner or a petrificus totalis, but Harry was breathing, if a bit shallowly. "Harry?" He asked again in concern.

Now really worried after no response once more, Neville wracked his brain for what might be happening. Ron and Hermione had mentioned that sometimes Harry would go catatonic like this when he'd seen something that made him disassociate or go into a flashback. What did they say they did to snap him out of it though? He thought Ron might have pinched their friend, or Hermione said something about rubbing his back and talking to him. Should he go get someone like Professor Weasley? He wasn't sure.

Finally, deciding that it would be worse to just leave Harry like this, he went with Hermione's approach first, then would pinch the man if that didn't work. "Hey, Harry, it's Neville..."

what's wrong? Where are you now?" He asked calmly as he tried rubbing soothing circles on his friend's back.

"You're in the past here at Hogwarts. We're all safe and alive. Ron and Hermione are waiting for you for dinner...erm, somehow you made friends with Professor Snape, you were planning to go visit your godfather this weekend...come back to me, please..."

It didn't take too long of this before Harry blinked and slightly shook his head. "Nev?" He asked a bit dazedly.

"Hey, we lost you there for a while. What happened? Where did you go?" Neville breathed out a deep sigh of relief. He really didn't want to have to try pinching or slapping a dark wizard who might be shocked enough to curse him.

Harry stirred and rubbed his hand over his face, pausing to touch where there was an invisible piercing in his eyebrow, then ran a hand over his ear, and the scars on his neck as well. "Sorry, Neville. How long have I been standing here?" His eyes also trailed down to the sleeping cat at his feet.

"Er...I don't know. I was on my way to dinner when I saw you; it's just gone 5pm," Neville looked around them, but no one was paying them any attention at all.

"Wow...er, so almost an hour," Harry breathed out in frustration. "Merlin! I thought I had gotten past this! I stopped just to look out the window and saw a student lying on the grass, probably enjoying the rare sunny day, but my mind ended up at the battle where there were bodies strewn across the grounds...I was stuck in that day and couldn't get back..."

"Hey," Neville started rubbing Harry's back again, not sure how to comfort his friend, but figuring it couldn't hurt. "You *are* getting better. Just because you're doing better, doesn't mean you're instantly fine and cured and all. Setbacks are expected, there is nothing wrong with having a bad day."

Harry turned his almost inhumanly green eyes on Neville and gave him a large, thankful smile. "Thanks, Nev. I'm so glad we're friends, even if I'm old and ornery and broken and all

now.”

“Me too, and you are absolutely not broken, Harry,” Neville gave him a sad smile, so very grateful his friend came back in time to save them from all the memories he held and they would now never know. “You’re a survivor.”

Harry shook himself and took in a deep breath. “Right, well...nothing to do but move forward, right?!” He scooped up a yawning Sephie and turned resolutely away from the Great Hall and towards Gryffindor Tower.

“Er...Harry, dinner is *that* way,” he motioned the other direction.

“Yes, but the Tower and the nasty little artifacts I need to get rid of are this way,” Harry grinned mischievously at him. “Want to help out? Someone has to take notes or Percy will have a hippogriff that I did this without him and didn’t even bother to write down my impressions or whatever.”

That made Neville frown, seeing the erratic and chaotic side of Harry emerging in the wake of his distress. “Shouldn’t you go get Professor Weasley then?”

Harry just shrugged and took a couple steps. “Nah, he’s off being all covert and sneaky at his other office, and I need to *do* something. Come on, Nev...it’ll be fun...if my plan doesn’t work, I’ll even teach you the fiendfyre spell. You’ll *love* it!”

Now that had Neville absolutely *very* concerned. When Harry got like this, he definitely needed supervision. Maybe he could agree to help out and grab Professor Snape or even Flitwick if they ran across them...yes, that sounded like a good plan. Go along with everything and grab a more responsible adult to babysit the not-quite-stable one currently on his hands.

“Ok, sure...you *do* have a plan though, right?”

“Brilliant! You’ll love it! Just make sure to bring some parchment and a quill so Percy doesn’t have a strop at me later!” Harry was already bounding towards the tower and filling Sephie in on the fact that they would need to change her jumper to one she could get dirty and that they would grab her favorite jingle ball to take with them. Neville had a bad feeling...

After changing the inferius cat into a lopsided jumper Harry had really not succeeded well on in knitting and grabbing a bag out of Harry’s trunk, Neville was once more leaving the tower with an overly excited dark wizard and heading back down the stairs, to where, he had no idea. They did in fact run into Professor Flitwick to Neville’s relief though.

“Ah, Mr. Longbottom, Mr. Potter...” Flitwick greeted them with a smile from where he was making his way down to dinner from his office. “I have a letter for you, Mr. Potter...I believe you were expecting it. I don’t know the contents, but I do hope you refrain from any dangerous stunts in its execution.”

“Awesome!” Harry took the letter excitedly and shoved it in his jeans pocket without reading it. “Whatever it is, it can’t be more dangerous than stealing their dragon and riding it out of the bank, though the new skylight was actually very nice in the end.”

Flitwick and Neville both stared at the man with wide eyes. “Excuse me, I think I need to make a quick floo call,” Flitwick turned on his heel and strode right back towards his office before Neville could stop him and pass off Harry to his more capable hands.

Harry just laughed and shook his head though before starting to walk again. “Really, they need to relocate that dragon anyway. It’s not humane, and the thing definitely didn’t look happy. I think I’ll work on getting it released if they don’t do something about it now...I’m guessing that floo call might end up getting it sent to a new home though regardless.” he remarked while Neville almost had to jog behind him to keep up with his fast pace.

“Where are we going?” Neville asked again, hoping to actually get an answer even though he hadn’t the last five times he’d asked.

“A safe place,” Harry answered yet again, turning assessing eyes on the teen. “Those trousers aren’t your best, are they? Would it be a big loss if they got a bit dirty?”

Neville looked at the old, slightly worn uniform trousers he’d put on for working in the greenhouses that morning with a frown. “Of course these aren’t my best! Why would you think...”

“I really know absolutely nothing about clothes,” Harry interrupted with a roll of his eyes just as he stopped and opened a door for his friend. “Right, after you.”

“This is a girls’ loo,” Neville gave him a disbelieving look and didn’t move to enter.

Harry just smirked and opened the door wider. “It’s also the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. I really hope it was something other than a girls’ loo back in the founder’s times or Salazar Slytherin had some very concerning problems someone should have addressed.”

Neville closed his eyes and steeled himself. “I should be at dinner and then revising for OWLs,” he almost groaned as he walked into the bathroom as if to his own funeral.

“Well, we’ll stop by the kitchens on the way back to the tower to get you food. I need to talk to Bipsy anyway. As for OWLs, you have plenty of time, and I’ll help you revise,” Harry offered, actually very nicely. “I’m definitely up to fifth year material in everything except for Divination. I’m still pants at that, but just predict Voldy will be offed, and a new dark lord will rise, and even if you fail, they’ll have to pass you retroactively when it comes true.”

Neville crossed his arms while Harry pulled out some kind of muggle electronic device. “That’s cheating...” he accused.

“Teenagers,” Harry snorted in amusement before playing hissing from the recorder and standing back for the sink to rise and the Chamber of Secrets to open.

“Bloody hell,” Neville stared in awe. “How do we get down there...?”

Harry was smiling way too large and standing way too close to him. "You'll love this part!" Harry exclaimed before Neville felt a swift shove, and he screamed as he zoomed down a slimy slide into the bowels of the school.

Percy sat in Supervisor Matthews's office trying to keep from getting distracted by the five cauldrons all bubbling away and the box on her desk that occasionally would disappear into a cloud of blue smoke, but it was very difficult. He wasn't sure how she got any work done in that environment. "Hmm, that is an odd request, but it does make sense with your area of research," she mused while running a hand around the red hem on the sleeve of her grey robe.

"If it's in our department, I think it would greatly enhance my studies into soul magic. If it's elsewhere in the ministry, then I think it's something we should request to study at the very least," he explained, trying not to let on just how important to him studying the dementor stone would be.

"Though I assume the information is probably from the future after your little accident, but how may I ask did you even learn of the stone? It's not something widely publicized or mentioned at all really," the woman asked while she now looked for a piece of parchment and a quill. Percy really hoped it was to give him permission to see and study the stone.

Well, she already gave him the out, so the lie was easy. "My future supervisor mentioned it when I discussed the possibility of studying if a dementor could move a soul from one human and place it in another. I had requested to study it in the future but was unable to before my sudden trip to the past," he explained. "I hadn't even learned where it was located at the time."

The woman nodded as if that made perfect sense. "Yes, not many have ever requested to study dementors since they are quite unpleasant to be around, so there is a whole field there open for you to make advancements in. I look forward to your findings. I have been quite happy with your work so far in your short time with us. However, Unspeakable Smith, you already have access to the dementor stone," she informed him with a flourish of her quill before handing the parchment over. "This will give you even more access since the aurors tend to be quite possessive of the Death Chamber, even if it is located in our department."

“The Death Chamber?” Percy raised an eyebrow under his obscuring hood...Harry was going to throw a fit. “Are you saying the arch containing the veil *is* the stone?”

With a chuckle and a shake of her hood, Supervisor Matthews stood to attend to one of the boiling cauldrons in her office. “Oh no dear, the arch is full of many types of magic and runes. The dementor stone is what binds it together and activates it though. It is the bottom, left-hand stone which is slightly darker than the others. I wish you luck in your research, do tell me before bringing a dementor into the office though. The Love Department will throw a fit, probably the Euphoria one too.”

Percy stood, stunned. It was absolutely *not* best-case-scenario for stealing the stone when it was embedded in a larger magical archway, in the middle of the Department of Mysteries, guarded by aurors, oh, and it might kill you. At least he could study it easily, but if it was stolen, he wondered if he would be the first one the aurors would look at now. Oh well, Harry was going to have to take over the ministry anyway. Hopefully he would do it before Percy was carted off to Azkaban.

Anyway, it was a long day with teaching all his classes, finishing up a project he had been working on before, then talking with his supervisor. He swung back by his office to collect his project. He was very proud of it, and it was some excellent magic if he did say so himself. It wasn't even bald.

Neville cast his third scourgify at the slime on his trousers while the now adult Harry tossed a little, pink jingle ball for Sephie to run off and chase in the chamber. “Have fun, girl! Teach those rats who's boss!”

“So, we're destroying something...care to tell me what?” Neville shook his head fondly at Harry who was now removing a locket and a jeweled crown-thing from his bag.

“You ever heard of horcruxes?” Harry asked, standing back up and turning around to look at Neville inquiringly.

He thought about it, but it didn't ring any bells in his memory. "No, not that I remember anyway."

"Good, we have to keep you on the Light side of it all," Harry gave him a chuckle and a grin that made Neville very nervous to know the meaning of why that was funny. "Anyway, it's really vile magic used to store a part of your soul in an object. It keeps the person from being killed completely, and it's how Voldemort anchored himself to this world. He made seven of the blasted things. I've destroyed three of them, we have these two, one I'm getting from the goblins, then Nagini is unfortunately one as well. It's what I didn't want to tell all of you about until you learned Occlumency. There's a bit more to it, but we should probably have that explanation with Ron and Hermione in the room."

Neville was pale at the explanation and implications of what Harry wasn't saying, but he was also very impressed that Harry had collected all but two of them, one of which the goblins planned to give him. "Ok..." he pulled the parchment and quill out of his pocket which Harry had insisted he bring along. "What am I taking notes about then?"

"Well, this ring," Harry tapped his wand to his hand and suddenly a silver ring with a black stone was visible to Neville's surprise. "This was one of them, and I accidentally removed it with some magic that I personally don't exactly understand. I'm going to try to do the same with the diadem and the locket. You're going to take notes for Percy since he's studying the magic to help me understand it all better."

Neville was certain that Percy would still be upset he wasn't with them no matter how good of notes he took, but Harry was clearly set on doing something to snap himself out of his mood he'd fallen into earlier, so he'd take the best notes he could at least. "All right, we'll start with your wand then...that isn't your usual wand. Is this one special for the type of magic?" Neville asked, trying to note everything down he saw. He supposed he could always give the memory to Percy though as well.

"It actually is, good eye mate!" Harry grinned at him. "Currently, I have three wands on me. First is my normal holly and phoenix feather wand for Harry Potter. I think it might be a little miffed at me right now since I went all suddenly Dark on it. The second is my Hadrian Black wand that's ebony wood and dementor skin...probably shouldn't tell the dementors that, I met an envoy for them yesterday, and they seemed like nice blokes, creepy but nice..."

"What the hell...?" Neville's quill paused. "Dementors talk? And are sentient?"

“One of them at least,” Harry shrugged. “I’ll figure that all out later. This wand though I only use for the really dark stuff...no need to write down what it is...Percy knows.”

“Ok,” Neville didn’t like the sound of that, and was not going to question it further. “Are you going to cast a spell?”

“Nope,” Harry plopped down right in the muck on the floor between the two objects and crossed his legs. “I’m going to meditate and open my Occlumency shields and try to access the magic I used before. You are just going to be quiet and write down anything you see.”

Harry closed his eyes, and after a few minutes, Neville gave up on anything major happening and transfigured a candy wrapper from his pocket into a little lop-sided stool, so he didn’t have to sit in the muck himself. He watched Sephie knock the pink ball from one end of the chamber to the other, running after it and pouncing every few meters. Harry just sat there calmly, breathing in and out.

Neville was about to speak up and ask if they could just go get dinner if this wasn’t going to work when the shadows around Harry seemed to get darker. It was almost like a cloak settled over his shoulders, or maybe one actually did. Neville frantically jotted down his impressions as the chamber got a little colder, a little darker, and Harry seemed to have a dark aura now that exuded power. Suddenly it stopped...

Harry coughed and everything in the chamber returned to what it looked like moments before. “Well, shit...that didn’t quite do it,” Harry sighed and opened his eyes. “Any thoughts, Nev?”

Neville shook his head, still a little stunned. “Er...I don’t even know what you just did. Everything got a bit darker, colder, and you looked a bit scarier, but then it stopped. Was something else supposed to happen?”

Harry tapped the pale wand on his arm as he thought. “I think I was getting close. I’m trying to access some magic that’s in me but that I don’t know how to use. I have the wand and the ring...the cloak is in my pocket...”

Neville nodded suddenly. "It looked like a cloak was materializing around you. Is there some cloak that goes with the other two items? Maybe you should put it on?"

The smile Harry gave him was so brilliant that Neville felt like he'd just won the House Cup or something instead of just having a thought. "There is definitely a cloak...wonderful idea, Nev!"

Harry pulled an old cloak out of his pocket and actually scourgified around himself this time before putting it on, not wanting to get any slime on it. It seemed to be an invisibility cloak since the edges of Harry blurred, but he didn't pull it closed, so the man didn't disappear completely. Neville frowned...he remembered from a story...there was a wand, a black stone, and an invisibility cloak...

"Er, Harry? Have you been reading some children's stories recently?" He asked with a very concerned frown. "There's a quite famous wand, stone, and cloak from a story Gran read me as a kid..."

"Yeah...don't think too much on it; it'll give you a headache. But it seems Beedle the Bard wasn't completely just making things up," the dark wizard rolled his eyes with a sheepish grin. "Right...so I'm going to try this again. This is quite a bit of death magic I'm messing with, so stay back away from me even if something odd starts to happen," he warned.

Neville stared in awe and fear when Harry closed his eyes once more to meditate. A hiss and a squeak almost gave him a heart attack when Sephie caught a rat somewhere off in the chamber behind him. "Merlin!" He breathed out and tried to calm his racing heart.

Just as before, the chamber slowly got a little colder, the darkness grew, and Harry's aura took on the powerful dark halo. This time, Neville noted that the darkness seemed more solid and deeper somehow. Harry's eyes shot open, causing Neville to jump and gasp, the green of Harry's eyes had almost completely disappeared into black.

"Harry?" He couldn't help asking in fear.

Not paying him any mind, Harry reached a hand out over both horcruxes leaving the wand in his lap, he took in a breath that felt as if all the air from the chamber were being pulled away.

Neville gasped as a dark cloud emerged both from the diadem and the locket, screaming in anger and pain. A deep echoing voice emerged from the man's body, "Begone, you do not belong here!" He commanded. With a flick of his wrists, both dark clouds disappeared with one more echoing scream into the room.

"Harry!" Neville jumped up with the man fell back onto the ground prone. He paused in his rush over, remembering that he wasn't supposed to come up to his friend. "Harry, are you...? Are you ok?"

"I need a drink," Harry groaned and raised a hand to give Neville a little wave and reassure him that he was still alive. "Merlin, that was worse than the first time...you ok, Nev?"

"Am *I* ok?!" Neville rushed over now and grabbed onto his friend to help him sit up again, not being able to stop the nervous and hysterical laughter that broke free. "What the hell did you just do?!"

"Not really sure," Harry shrugged and gave him a little smirk, his green eyes back and sparkling. "I think I banished the souls to the afterlife though. Did you get some good notes?"

Neville winced and glanced over to the parchment he hadn't written anything on since Harry mentioned that he might possibly be the mythical Master of Death. "Er...I should probably just give Professor Weasley my memory."

"That'll work," Harry dismissed it and rolled his neck, getting a satisfying crack. "We can do that after food, a stiff drink, and a shower though. Merlin, I think my ears are popped." He opened and closed his mouth a few times, trying to get them to pop back.

His mood quickly shifting from concern to anger, Neville smacked him harshly in the shoulder, fury in his eyes. "Don't you *do* that to me Harry Potter! You don't just throw out there that you're going to be using death magic all nonchalantly and expect people to just be ok with all that! That's not cool!"

Harry frowned up at his friend and blinked a couple times. He supposed he had spent so much time with Percy that he just assumed everyone else would nerd out over new types of

magic the same as his partner did. Death magic was a bit concerning overall though he guessed to people who didn't regularly deal with necromancy.

"I'm sorry, Neville," he finally said emphatically. "I really didn't even consider you would be concerned. I'm ok though, I promise. The horcruxes are gone now too. We only have two left, then we can take out Voldemort."

Neville put his hands on his hips and narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "What is this 'we'? Why am I getting the impression there is something you're not telling me? Why am I here with you now? Normally you would do something crazy like this on your own or grab Professors Snape or Weasley. Why me and why now?"

"Yeah...you might want to take a seat for this explanation," Harry motioned to the rickety stool Neville had transfigured, giving him a sad look.

Neville absolutely did not like the sound of that, but he did step back and sit down once more on the shaky chair. He took in a deep steadying breath. "Right, Harry...just tell me what it is, does it have anything to do with Gran or Uncle Algie or something?"

"No, definitely not," Harry crossed his legs and pulled the invisibility cloak off his shoulders to fold back up and put in his pocket. "This has to do with you and me and something that happened before either of us were born."

"So, Voldemort related...I promise, I can handle it, or at least I'll try..."

Harry gave him a fond smile. "There was a prophecy made before we were born. Voldemort only ever heard the first couple lines of it, and that's why he came after me as a baby. The problem is, it applied to you as well, it could have been either of us."

Neville blanched. "Is that why they went after Mum and Dad?"

Harry nodded slowly, confirming his fears. “The problem is that by choosing me, he made the first part of the prophesy apply to me and him, and that is the only part of the prophesy I had ever heard up until yesterday when Percy and I went to the Department of Mysteries to hear it fully. It turns out there was a second part...the child not chosen by Voldemort fell into the second part of the prophesy...it was always going to be you and me, but which of us was going to be the Dark Lord...and which was going to be the Light Lord was determined when Voldemort decided to kill me on October 31st all those years ago.”

Neville was certain he hadn't heard that right. He opened his mouth, closed it, frowned, and opened it again. “Er...excuse me? Did you just insinuate that I'm taking over from Dumbledore as the Light Lord? I'm pretty sure you heard that wrong, mate.”

Harry just shook his head and sighed. “No...I'll show you the memory and even take you to the ministry if you want to hear the original. Dumbledore is not the rightful Light Lord just as Voldemort isn't the rightful Dark Lord. The prophesy boils down to us stepping up to fix the balance of magic and defeating both of them. It doesn't say anything specifically about killing Dumbledore, so it's possible we just discredit him or something, but yeah...you're going to take over from him.”

Neville was shaking his head firmly. “No, Harry, that's not me. You know I'm not good at magic! I'm pants with Charms and blow up my cauldron in Potions all the time! I'm no lord of magic! I'm not even a passable wizard!”

Harry scoffed darkly. “No one is allowed to speak of Neville Longbottom that way, not even Neville Longbottom,” he warned. “You are one of the best men I know...”

“Seriously, Harry. You *have* to know you got this wrong! Even if some adult version of me was a badass or something, I'm not him. I'm not going to go through the same things as him. I don't think I can *be* him!” He pleaded.

Harry was already firmly shaking his head though. “I'm not asking you to be. I don't *want* you to be. I want you to be you. You are a powerful wizard, Nev, you just don't know it yet.”

“First of all,” Harry raised a finger to stop Neville's disagreement. “You are using the wrong wand. We can fix that easily, and it'll help you a lot. Second, your problem is confidence not talent. That's something we can work on too. And thirdly,” Harry gave him a stern glare.

“There is no one else in existence who can balance me out the way you do. Ron and Hermione won’t stand up to me, Percy just happily goes along with it all, the twins are not exactly reliable, I’m never going to trust Remus like I do you, Sirius is likely to run off on his own crazy schemes like I am, Luna isn’t the best at connecting with humans, and Snape is decidedly a dark wizard. There is no one else I trust. That’s it...you’re it.”

“But...I can’t...” Neville’s eyes darted around, looking for another argument. “I’m only fifteen...” he finally said, knowing that Harry had already dealt with so much even by the time he was actually fifteen though.

Harry’s eyes turned sad again. “I know...it’s a lot to ask. I’m not asking you to lead an army though or anything. I will be the one that kills Voldemort, and I will be the one doing most of the work to overturn the ministry and Dumbledore. I would never ask that of you. I’m only asking you to be there, by my side, giving your opinions and speaking for those of the Light. I need you to tell me when I’m not taking other people into account, when I’m being bigoted myself, when I’m overstepping my place...*you* Neville Longbottom, you are the one that can do that. You’ve already done that for me many times since first year, just keep being you and stand at my side...do you think you could do that?”

“But...people will look up to me as some kind of leader...?” Neville protested once more with wide eyes.

“Yeah, they will...” Harry finally stood and reached out a hand to pull Neville up too. “I got you though...you don’t have to do it alone...”

Slowly, Neville reached out his hand and took Harry’s. “You’ll teach me what I need to know?”

“Course! Well, not a whole lot of Light magic, you’ll have to work on that on your own, but you can do it. I’ll help you find what you need to get started though,” Harry grinned at him.

Neville sighed; this is not where he saw his life going. Just a couple hours ago he was more worried about OWLs than anything else. “You are not allowed to tell the twins any of this until at least the summer when they are very far away from me though, Harry Potter!” He warned, causing Harry to laugh as he went off to scoop up Sephie from wherever she was off stalking another rat.

Snape put the cork into a vial of a healing potion he had brewed to help with the continued healing process for Harry's knee when a knock sounded at the door to his chambers, setting off his alert wards. He quickly put the cauldron of wolfsbane for Lupin into stasis and strode out of his lab and into his sitting room and across to the door into the castle. Taking a steeling breath for whatever this human interaction was going to bring, he opened the door.

"Yes?" Snape raised a questioning eyebrow at the redheaded professor grinning at him and holding a large crow balanced on his fist which was giving Snape an imperious glare.

"Hey! Can I come in?" Percy Weasley asked brightly.

"You *and* the bird?" Snape's eyebrow impossibly went up even higher.

"Yes, me and Deimos would both like to come in if you don't mind, please," the man just gave him a chuckle and a self-satisfied smile.

Now very curious, Snape stepped back and held the door open wider. "To what do I owe this pleasure?" He asked without his usual sarcasm.

After removing his glamour, Percy picked up a fork off the plate of Snape's dinner he'd eaten in his chambers that night and transfigured it into a perch for the bird which he promptly placed on it. "I come bearing gifts...meet Deimos, your new messenger bird."

Snape crossed his arms and glared right back at the bird who was glaring at him. "I already have an owl."

"An owl that I'm sure is just wonderful," Percy's smile was so wide that Snape was sure he could count the man's teeth. What was with Harry and Percy both and their insistence on throwing him off-balance. "However, you're the only member of Harry's inner circle who is

with us, in the Order, and a Death Eater. The kinds of messages you have to send could easily get yourself killed if they fell into the wrong hands.”

“Asphodel is a highly intelligent owl. He has yet to ever mis-deliver a letter,” the potion master assured him, still feeling like the crow was judging him and finding him wanting.

Percy was nodding though and plopped down into the armchair, making himself at home. “Keep him for non-important or Hogwarts related business, but Deimos is impervious to all types of magic. He can’t be tracked, cursed, confounded, and frankly, most lethal spells will have little to no effect on him as well.”

Ok...now Snape needed to sit down. He sank into the couch and placed a hand over his face. “Please tell me there isn’t an inferius crow taking up space in my personal chambers right now,” he asked or pleaded one, he wasn’t sure.

“He’s just beautiful, isn’t he?” Percy turned to coo at the bird. “He didn’t even lose his feathers like Persephone lost her fur. More importantly though, he’s going to keep you safe. Just like Harry’s cat, he will be more vicious than a normal animal of his species, but he’s intelligent enough to only use that against enemies, unlike a normal mindless inferius. Your letters will be safe from Dumbledore, Tom, and even those scandalous love notes to Sirius will be safe from Harry intercepting one.”

Percy just laughed when Snape’s eyes widened in shock. “Oh please, Harry is oblivious and has no idea, but I both saw how you two looked at each other at the meeting yesterday and have heard just how many nights you have been spending at Grimmauld from Harry’s portrait spy there.”

“So, his spy is a portrait,” Snape raised his eyebrow, getting a clue as to how Harry was getting his information. “I assure you, there are no *love* notes being exchanged.” He almost gagged on the word.

Percy just shrugged and summoned Snape’s bottle of firewhiskey from the kitchen. “Sure, whatever you say. Just be warned that if Harry ever does learn of what’s going on, he’ll try to figure out some way to get godchildren out of you two.”

Snape sneered deeply. “That is decidedly *not* going to happen.”

Percy shrugged and poured them both glasses. “He’s doing pretty good at setting up Remus and Tonks again to get his future/past godson, and I hear he’s been talking up his wonderful godparent qualities to my brother and Hermione as well.”

Snape had to take a large sip at that. “You and he could adopt if he wants children so badly.”

Percy was firmly shaking his head and downed his whiskey. “No, we would not make good parents. I can assure you, no one in their right mind would allow us to adopt anyone regardless. We aren’t exactly the most sane or mentally healthy of individuals. We will be very content as uncles and godparents.”

“True,” Snape nodded and leaned back on the couch, looking at the bird who was grooming itself. “I believe those sentiments would apply to Sirius Black and myself as well.”

“So...there *is* something going on there?” Percy laughed at him over the rim of his glass.

Snape rolled his eyes and stole the bottle of whiskey before Percy could reach for it again. “You are as bad as your partner. Both of you have a problem, and I will not be supplying either of you alcohol.”

Percy laughed and downed the last of his drink. “Maybe...so, can Deimos stay?”

“He can’t be tracked?” Snape couldn’t believe he was actually considering this, but sending messages had always been a necessary danger in his life.

“Not tracked, confounded, misdirected, and he’s dead, so it’s pretty hard to kill him...”

Snape slowly nodded. “I suppose I can give him a chance...on a trial basis.”

“Great! Keep him in your chambers though or he might try to eat the owls in the owlery. Bye!” Percy smirked at him, leaving behind a sneering Snape as he hurried out of the man’s chambers and off to see how Harry’s discussion went with Neville.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Fawkes the phoenix and the sword of Gryffindor...

Heist #1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It had been a couple weeks since Harry had figured out how to get rid of the horcruxes they already had, and since Neville had been let in on his new role in their little coup of the wixen world. However, Harry was still temporarily stumped on how to fulfill the goblins' request in order to get the last horcrux (besides Nagini that is). All this was very temporary though because Harry *was* going to figure this out, and he *was* going to kill Tom *before* he broke his followers out of Azkaban. And, in addition to all this, he still had to figure out how to break into the Department of Mysteries yet again to get the dementors on his side...all before winter break.

So, the new plan was:

Step one: break into Dumbledore's office (figure out Fawkes situation), steal the sword of Gryffindor, pass it off to the goblins and destroy the cup horcrux.

Step two: break into the Department of Mysteries and steal a small stone that is cemented (probably magically) into a death arch that is heavily guarded...attempt to not implicate Percy in this at all costs.

Step three: convince dementors to kill off Bellatrix Lestrange to make Neville happy (right? That would make him happy, right?)

Step four: convince house elves and dementors to get along and coexist in some form of symbiosis.

Step five: Kill off old Tom and Nagini...preferably taking out Pettigrew and Lucius Malfoy in the process.

That was as far as he'd gotten in his attempt at planning. The whole taking over the ministry and booting out Dumbledore thing was a problem for another day. Future Harry could figure

that out, probably with a lot of help from the Circle of Epically Awesome Minions (the twin's suggestion for their name...it was a work in progress since the goblins and the centaurs were never going to agree to that).

It all made Harry's brain hurt when he thought about all the little things that needed to get done as well as those big things. For instance, he still needed to clear Sirius's name; he needed to check in on the Lupin/Tonks godson progress; the Department of Mysteries was currently stepping up their security so the Order hadn't been able to get in recently, but he still needed to make sure they didn't find another way; he needed to discuss the dementor situation with the house elves (which he had been putting off); he needed to make friends with Narcissa again; he needed to review the new banshee-support contract; the merpeople wanted a meeting, so he had to figure out how to do that when he couldn't breathe underwater or speak Mermish...and he was quite certain he was forgetting something else, probably vitally important.

Currently, Harry was camped out in Percy's sitting room while he was on a free period and Percy was teaching his second year Gryffindor/Ravenclaw class. He had many different pieces of parchment and books spread around him, and half his hair had already been pulled out of its braid in his frustration. Right, so one step at a time...he pulled his miniature picture of Walburga Black out of his pocket. He needed help.

"How's it goin', evil bigot?" He smiled at the angry portrait who sneered in answer.

"Is there something you need, insufferable moron?" She responded back with barely restrained ire.

Aw, Harry knew she loved him. He just smiled more broadly. "So, what do we know about phoenix magic? Are they like familiars or are they more sentient? Also, how close to fiendfyre is their fire? It might not kill me, but I don't particularly *want* to survive anything close to fiendfyre."

The portrait was definitely trying to set him on fire just from her glare. "Why would I, the Matron of the Ancient and Noble House of Black...a *Dark* house, know any fucking thing about a Light bird?!"

“Language, Wally-kins!” Harry smirked at her, getting an even sharper glare if that were possible. He could actually almost feel this one. “Well...that’s a bust. There is another Order meeting this evening though. I expect a report immediately following it, especially as concerns their new plans to guard the prophesy and get around the Unspeakables patrolling the corridor now.”

“Yes, my lord,” she ground out begrudgingly before vacating the miniature portrait.

Harry sighed, well, he’d need to ask his other supporters then. He’d looked through every book in the Hogwarts library on light creatures, but unsurprisingly, there just wasn’t that much information on phoenixes...he assumed Dumbledore had seen to this a long time ago. The despot was all for censorship of knowledge that benefited him. Fawkes really was Harry’s only barrier to breaking into the office currently. The wards were child’s play for him now. While they were impressive, the main defense the office had was that it was *inside* of the school, so the wards were mainly focused on keeping teenage pranksters out, not a dark wizard who was paranoid enough to have extensively studied warding in his free time while living in a nonsensically and ludicrously warded ancient manor home.

Snape and Percy were both teaching currently, so the next easiest supporters to find were the house elves. He really didn’t want to have to tramp through the Forbidden Forest to find a centaur, but that was next if the house elves couldn’t help. “Kreacher! Dobby! Winky!” Harry called out and waited on the three answering cracks of apparition.

“What does the Dark Master...” Kreacher trailed off with a glower at the two other elves who had similarly opened their mouths to ask what Harry wanted. “What’s they doing here?”

“We’s not needs the Kreacher-elf,” Dobby glared back. Merlin, they were in some kind of argument, Harry sighed deeply. He really didn’t want to get in the middle of whatever was going on.

“You two’s get it together and act your age!” Winky sternly ordered them, her hands on her hips. “You’s being ridiculous!”

“I really, *really* don’t want to know,” Harry said emphatically to them all. By all the messages he had to deliver for them since he’d started back at Hogwarts, he was fairly certain there was

some kind of love triangle-thing going on here, but he absolutely didn't know who liked who and which of them were fighting over the other...and he *really* didn't want to know.

"You's keep Harry-Master out of this!" Winky poked fingers at both of the other elves before turning a mothering smile onto Harry. "Now...how can's Winky and those two idiots help you, Harry-Master?"

"Er...yeah, so what do you all know about phoenixes?" He asked, sharing a look with the two other men who had been thoroughly chastised. "I need to break into the headmaster's office and steal the sword of Gryffindor to return it to the goblins...hey, you all wouldn't be able to just grab it for me, could you?"

"Kreacher's not a Hogwarts elf, so he cannot access the headmaster's office," Kreacher answered with a glower at not being able to help.

Winky and Dobby were also shaking their heads. "Winky and Dobby are still technically Hogwarts elveses, so we can access the office, but we's can't remove anything for anyone besides the headmaster," Dobby similarly looked sad at not being able to help.

"Right then, so Fawkes...what do we know about him?" Harry asked with a kind smile to show them it was no problem at all. "Personally, I would like to convince him to join us if he could be persuaded, but what do you know about his bond with Dumbledore? Is that something that's even possible?"

The elves looked between each other before Winky seemed to be the one decided on to talk. "Well, Fawkes is a familiar, so he's have a bond with Headmaster Dumblydore...we's don't think he could leave unless the bond was broken. We's don't know how willing he would be to breaks the bond either..."

"Dobby thinks Fawkes-Phoenix might be persuaded," Dobby cut in excitedly with a jump and clap of his hands. "Dobby hears Dumblydore complaining that Fawkes-Phoenix should support him more and be less obstinate, or somethings like that, when Dobby cleans in the office."

“Excellent!” Harry clapped his hands excitedly. He’d love to give Neville a phoenix familiar right from under Dumbledore’s nose if at all possible. “So, do you happen to know how to break a familiar bond?”

“Kreacher knows,” the ancient elf spoke up to the relief of the other two elves who didn’t seem to know. Dobby even gave the elf a sappy look, which was in direct opposition to the earlier arguing...nope, Harry wasn’t going to try to figure it out. He *didn’t* want to know!

“Familiars bond with a wizard for a reason, usually food, shelter, comfort, or somethings like that,” Kreacher explained, crossing his arms over his little toga that looked shockingly newer and cleaner than just the month before. “You’s have to prove to the familiar that the wizard isn’t holding up their sides of the bargain. So, you’s need to know why Fawkes bonded with Dumblydore.”

Harry grumbled and leaned dejectedly back against the couch behind him. “Ok...so, I need to break into the office, ask a bird that doesn’t speak English why it bonded with its master, then convince it Dumbledore is full of shite...you know, that might actually not be that hard,” Harry sat up again, looking much less dejected now. Dumbledore was full of it in all ways, so he just had to be persuasive enough...while also not being set on fire.

“Alright you three!” Harry grinned at the group broadly. “You are all wonderful, beautiful, and excellent house elves, so whatever’s going on, I’m sure you can work it out. Please tell Bipsy I’ve signed the new contract and need to talk to her soon about an opportunity for you all. I’ll come down to the kitchens just as soon as I make nice with the goblins.”

“Don’t you worries, Harry-Master,” Winky patted his hand, and it sounded less like a reassurance to Harry and more of a threat to Dobby and Kreacher in his opinion. “You just calls us if you needs us!”

With that, all three elves popped out of Percy’s sitting room, leaving Harry alone to his plotting. Now...he just needed something to keep Fawkes from setting him on fire...or maybe just a distraction, something to get the phoenix to pause and listen to him. He had an idea, but he was a little concerned...

As soon as classes ended, Harry ducked the twins who were trying to sell him on why he should obtain napalm for them from his contacts and headed down to the dungeons to his favorite dungeon bat's rooms. "Snaape! I miss you so much!" He dramatically exclaimed as he plopped into the student chair in Snape's office where the man had been doing some lesson planning.

"You saw me yesterday in class, dunderhead," Snape raised a questioning eyebrow, suspicious now that Harry needed something from him. He went ahead and warded his own door since Harry always insisted on it so he could drop his glamour at least.

Now looking like Hadrian Black, the man beamed at his friend. "Yes, but I had to pretend to hate you and not ask about your day or if you wanted to grab a pint at the pub this weekend. So, it doesn't count."

"The pub with the good fish and chips?" Snape raised an interested eyebrow at that. The dingy little place between Diagon and Knockturn Alleys had really been growing on him with Sirius and Hadrian's insistence on patronizing it.

"Where else?" Harry smirked back at him. "Now...I do have a favor to ask..."

"Of course, you do," Snape sighed and set down his quill, it was more of a fond sigh than anything else though. "What can I do to help, my lord?"

There was a collective wince in the room. "Yeah, no, don't do that! Not even jokingly."

"I realized it was awful and a mistake as it was coming out of my mouth," Snape looked like he might gag. "In all seriousness though, what do you need?"

Harry glanced over to Deimos on his perch in the corner who was painstakingly preening his feathers. "Er, could I possibly borrow Deimos this weekend?"

Snape's eyebrows went up sharply. "Yes, of course, you may borrow him any time. Keep him if you want!"

"What? No! He's your pet. I'd never do that!" Harry insisted unnecessarily judging by Snape's horrified glance over to his chambers' intruder. "However...er, I can't *really* promise he won't be set on fire...I'd do my absolute best to keep him safe and happy though!"

"Merlin, please set him on fire!" Snape emphatically leaned forward to whisper to Harry so that the bird-inferius might not hear.

"Idiot!" A dry voice croaked from the corner.

Harry looked around in shock. "Er...Snape...did your bird just call you an idiot?"

Snape grumbled obscenities under his breath. "Shut up bird!" He sneered back.

"Apparently crows can speak like parrots can," he informed Harry who had never known that. "Out of all the things I have said in the two weeks he's been here, that is apparently the one word he's picked up and which he uses incessantly."

"Oh, this is brilliant!" Harry grinned between them in delight. "Percy is going to love to hear this!"

Snape sighed dramatically. "Invite him to the pub then. I'll update him on all things dead-animal in my life. He had better keep any future experiments to himself though."

Harry shrugged unconcernedly. Percy did what he wanted to do, and Harry had no desire to put any restrictions on that beyond being safe, even if zombie animals were involved. Well... as long as dead relatives didn't start popping up, there was a line, and even as the Master of Death, Harry didn't think that was the best idea.

“Right well, there is an Order meeting tonight, will you give this to Sirius for me? He'll know what it's for,” Harry handed over a vial to Snape.

Snape frowned at the contents. “Is this a hair? What is Black going to do with this? What scheme are you two working on?”

“No scheme,” Harry sighed and replaced his glamour to leave the office. “There is a Wizengamot meeting this weekend. It's the best time for me to break into Dumbledore's office to steal the sword since he'll be gone. However, I need to start attending the stupid meetings and vote on things. Since I can't be in two places at once, Sirius is going to Polyjuice as me to attend the meeting.”

“You would trust Sirius Black to sit in a Wizengamot session for you?” The potion master asked incredulously. “That seems ill-advised.”

Harry just shrugged though. “I'd prefer you or Percy to do it, but Sirius is actually a part of the family, so the magic of the court will allow him to sit in as my proxy. Also, Remus claims that apparently losing all your loved ones and being mercilessly tortured-trauma and Azkaban-trauma has led to some similar mannerisms between us. Whatever though, as long as he doesn't shag anyone in my body I don't care, I just need him to make Dumbledore think I'm there.”

Snape shuddered deeply at that with a grimace to Harry's confusion. “I assume Deimos is part of your break-in plan?”

“Yeah, he's going to be there to distract Fawkes and help protect me from getting set on fire, hopefully at least,” Harry shrugged and turned to go. “Pub night after the Wizengamot meeting and the heist! Tell Sirius!”

“Idiot!” Deimos called out after him.

“I don’t understand...how can a person have two souls inside of them?” Hermione asked in confusion from where she was sitting next to Ron on the couch in the comfortable sitting room that looked suspiciously like the Burrow and which Percy had turned the Room of Requirement into. “Wasn’t that the reason that young Harry and Percy were wiped out when you came back in time?”

“Yes, but horcruxes are a way around that. It’s part of what makes the magic so vile,” Harry was finally explaining to Ron, Hermione, Neville, and the twins everything about the horcruxes, most importantly that he used to be one and the other ones Voldemort had made.

“But it doesn’t make sense to use a living thing...”

“Because it will eventually die,” the twins each added in.

“Well, it was not exactly intentional,” Percy took up the explanation, putting an arm around Harry where they were sitting on an expanded love seat.

“He also had the other objects which weren’t alive,” Neville said quietly, having witnessed the destruction of two parts of the soul. He still shuddered when he thought of it.

“And why did Neville get to go with you to destroy them...no offense, mate,” Ron asked with a glower at Harry and a little wince over at Neville.

“None taken. I tried to get out of it,” Neville huffed.

Harry smiled at all his friends with love in his eyes. “Well, you don’t like going down into the Chamber of Secrets, Ron. Plus, Nev hadn’t been before.”

Ron thought about it a second before he nodded. “That’s true...”

“How do you get one out of a living person though?” Fred asked with a worried frown.

“Yeah, you said the one in little Harry was destroyed when he ceased to exist, but how did you get it out of you?” George added on.

“And what does this have to do with you hating Dumbledore so much?” Hermione finally asked the question that had led to them all needing to learn Occlumency...well, that and just the fact that horcruxes existed, but still.

Percy had pulled Harry just a little closer and squeezed his shoulders to nonverbally tell him that he would handle this so Harry didn't have to. “Dumbledore knows,” he told them with a dangerous glower. “He has...or at least he has suspected, since Harry's second year and the Chamber incident.”

“It's possible he knew before,” Harry added quietly on. “No one knows where baby Harry was between the time Voldemort killed my parents and I was found on my relatives' doorstep with the milk bottles. It's possible the headmaster did some kind of diagnostic scan or health-check and learned about it then. That would explain quite a lot.”

“Regardless,” Percy closed his eyes and filed that new grievance away to be dealt with later...preferably when he murdered Dumbledore and fed his body to a lake of inferi. “Anyway...that bastard knows that the only way for anyone...besides Harry who now has some extra abilities, for anyone else though to destroy a horcrux means that you must destroy the container it is in. Harry would have to die for the horcrux to be destroyed.”

“Merlin! Dumbledore knows that now?! Bloody hell!” Ron stood to his feet in indignation. “He's just raising Harry to die at the right time? That's...that's...”

“Inexcusable,” Hermione supplied with a glower.

“I was thinking fucking psychotic,” Neville corrected, causing everyone to look at him and his uncharacteristic use of foul language. “What? He's the headmaster of a school, not a general in an army. It's children's lives he's playing with, not adults who signed up to fight.”

“So, you still have the horcrux in you?” Fred asked in clarification, not wanting it to be true.

Harry and Percy both were shaking their heads though. “No, Dumbledore’s plan worked,” Harry sighed. “As much as I hate the man, his plan did actually work. He raised me to be suicidal enough that I calmly walked to my death...I don’t think he’d planned on me accidentally becoming the Master of Death though. He had actually done his best to make sure I *wouldn’t* be able to get the elder wand. He had no way of knowing I would disarm Draco Malfoy right before the last battle. And please, don’t ask about that right now...I still don’t understand.”

“And that’s why you all needed to learn Occlumency, and also why we don’t trust the headmaster,” Percy finished.

“Well, that and he lied about the prophesy to me,” Harry added on with a shrug. Neville cleared his throat, clearly indicating he didn’t want Harry to fill them all in on the next bit.

Harry rolled his eyes at Neville but respected his wishes. “There was a prophesy made before I was born that says I’ll be the one with the power to kill Voldy, that’s why he needs me alive currently. Anyway, the part he didn’t tell me said that Dumbledore is also a false Light Lord, and someone will also overthrow him...not me at least this time, or at least not alone.”

“Now, you see...napalm would be just the perfect ingredient for Dumbledore...” George began.

“No!” Percy insisted.

‘We’ll talk later’ Harry mouthed at them with a smirk where Percy couldn’t see.

Hermione tugged her boyfriend back down onto the couch with her. “So, how do you plan to get the cup from the goblins? I heard you talking to them about something you needed at the bank at the end of our meeting in Hogsmead.”

“They want the sword of Gryffindor in exchange,” he told her. “Technically they *do* own it anyway, so I’m really just giving it back to the rightful owners.”

“According to them,” Neville snorted. “The see ownership very differently than wixen do.”

“I’d bloody give them the fountain from the middle of the ministry if that was what they asked for,” Harry informed him. “I just really don’t want to have to rob the bank again. It took me *years* of reparations to get unrestricted access to my vaults again. It was bloody annoying!”

“Now I need to hear *that* story!” Ron leaned forward with a grin.

“It was quite good,” Harry grinned back. “It consisted of some liberal uses of Polyjuice, Unforgiveables, and the three of us stealing a dragon...”

“I don’t think I want to know,” Hermione was already shaking her head.

“Suit yourself...”

“Yeah, we want to hear all about this!” The twins disagreed with her.

Percy checked his watch though. “It’ll have to wait. I have to go put in an appearance with Minister Fudge at the Wizengamot meeting shortly, and Harry has to go break into the headmaster’s office and steal the sword.”

“Need any help?” Both twins asked Harry in unison and with identical smirks on their faces.

“Actually, yes...” Harry said slowly. “Would one of you take Sephie and go to Hagrid’s with her? The rest of you need to go to McGonagall and tell her that I’ve lost my cat and ask if she has any ideas for how to find her. That will give me an alibi, since I’ll be supposedly out

looking for my cat, and it will hopefully get McGonagall somewhere not easily reachable if my plan goes sideways.”

“Hmm, we might even be able to get her to turn into a cat to help look...” Hermione mused, already planning the best way to keep the Deputy Headmistress occupied.

“Brilliant! We’ll I’m off to grab Snape’s bird and pull a heist!” Harry grinned and jumped up.

Percy grabbed onto the back of his robes to stop him. “You keep Deimos safe, you hear? That was some of the best necromantic work I’ve done so far. I’m not even sure yet how I got him to keep his feathers.”

“I’ll do my best!” Harry kissed him on the lips quickly. “And you try to not have to use more than one unforgiveable on the minister if you can avoid it. Call Snape to help with clean-up if you can’t avoid it though since I’ll be occupied.”

“I’ll try, no promises,” Percy assured him while the teenagers all protested in shock.

Harry grinned toothily at the gargoyle guarding Dumbledore’s office with a regal crow balancing on his shoulder. “Idiot!” the crow remarked.

“I agree, Deimos, very astute,” Harry laughed and waved the elder wand over the gargoyle. To get past the gargoyle, one only needed the password. It was the wards on the actual office door that were going to be more complex.

“Right, so...what sweets do you think the headmaster is into these days? Lemon drops...cockroach clusters...Bertie Botts Every Flavor Beans...licorice wands...blood pops...”

The gargoyle stood aside. “Really? Blood pops? Those are just gross! That man has no taste, but we already knew that, didn’t we, Deimos?” Harry asked the bird as they walked in.

“Idiot!” Deimos agreed, or at least that was what Harry interpreted it as.

With a flick of Harry’s wand, the moving staircase stood still. Harry slowly walked up, disabling the wards as he went. There was an intruder alert ward, a dark artifact ward that probably wouldn’t have let Deimos pass but which was so weak that pretty much anything less than an inferius wouldn’t have triggered it, a ward keyed to eye of newt (a common ingredient in many of Zonko’s pranks), an oculus ward to show the room’s occupant an image of who was coming up the stairs, and a last ward to bar entry for anyone who hadn’t been approved by the headmaster after passing the rest of the wards. This was probably the most secure of all the wards, but also not a pain to remove for Harry. Putting them back up was going to be the larger issue, but he made a quick note of all of them on a piece of parchment before he opened the door to enter the office.

Harry removed his glamour and stepped inside. He would rather the break-in be traced back to Hadrian Black than Harry Potter if he had missed something. Hadrian was going to shortly make a nuisance of himself anyway, plus he had an excellent alibi since Sirius was currently pretending to be him at the Wizengamot meeting. Harry though, needed to stay below Dumbledore’s radar since the headmaster knew all his weaknesses (namely Ron, Hermione, Luna, and Neville...the twins could handle themselves).

“You’re up Deimos,” Harry whispered to the bird as the cracked open the door. With a loud *caw!* the inferius bird swooped into the office, flying right by the fake-sleeping portraits, and drawing all their attention.

“Really, I never!”

“How did that get in!”

“Where is Dumbledore?!” The portraits were all exclaiming.

None of them noticed the wizard who stepped in and quickly shot sleeping hexes at each and every one of them while they were watching the bird cause chaos. Once the portraits could not identify him, Harry stepped fully into the office, taking in the rich furnishings, the little, silver instruments to track those within Hogwarts wards, the Sorting Hat on its shelf, and Fawkes...who was angrily screeching at the crow who was now circling the golden perch he was sitting on.

“Now, now, Deimos...let’s calm down a bit while we have a little chat with Fawkes. Hello, Fawkes,” Harry crossed his arms and stared at the bird with a smirk while Deimos swooped down and settled once more onto Harry’s shoulder that was liberally covered in cushioning and protection charms.

Fawkes squawked out indignantly, not very musically either if Harry could offer a criticism. “We met several weeks back. I’m Hadrian Black,” he told the bird who looked ready to jump off his perch to attack at any point now.

“I am not here to cause you any harm to take anything that belongs to Dumbledore or Hogwarts.” It really was true...the sword belonged to the goblins by their view of ownership. The sword belonged to Harry by the wixen view of ownership since his magic had called it from the hat.

Fawkes definitely looked suspicious and unbelieving at that. “I’m taking the sword of Gryffindor,” he told the bird plainly. “I own it...I am Harry Potter.”

Now this Fawkes seemed to know, or at least the mockery of an eyeroll he tried to do seemed to convey that information. It seemed that phoenixes could be added to the list of people who could see through the glamour. He’d have to make a note of that to tell Percy. He was very happy the bird couldn’t speak English though.

“Right, so, yeah...I’m a dark wizard, you’re a light creature, I get we don’t exactly get along,” he sighed out at the injustice of that. “There isn’t any real reason why we can’t get along though. I get that you would only bond to a light wixen, but what even was it that led you to bond to Dumbledore? Has he been upholding his side of that agreement?”

Fawkes gave a little indignant squawk at that. Harry really wasn’t sure if it was agreement or disagreement. Merlin, it was difficult to talk to a bird who couldn’t talk back. “Idiot!”

Deimos said.

“Not the time, Deimos,” Harry chuckled. One of the birds could talk, but it really wasn’t any more helpful.

“Right, so Fawkes, you can’t agree with how much danger Dumbledore has allowed the students to be in here at the school,” Harry tried a new tactic. “He should have known something was wrong with Quirrell, the school should have been shut down at the first petrification my second year...thank you for the save again there, the school have been closed again the first time Sirius broke in my third year and dementors should never have been close to the grounds, the Triwizard Tournament had been cancelled decades ago for a reason, and I never should have been made to compete...that isn’t even mentioning Fluffy, the acromantulas, the blast-ended skrewts, the fact somehow Dumbledore didn’t catch that Moody was a fake...and I’m probably missing something...”

This time the squawk definitely sounded like agreement. “You also must know he’s not really the Light Lord, he’s the Lord of Manipulation...” ok, Fawkes definitely knew this, the bird was now agitatedly flying around the office.

“I take it you’ve heard the prophecy...” Harry raised an eyebrow when Fawkes set fire to a one of the armchairs. “Aguamenti!” He cast to put out the fire.

“Well...do you want to leave him?” Harry asked seriously, ignoring the smoking armchair now.

Fawkes heavily landed back on his perch and sang a distressed note into the room. “You can’t leave him...but he’s broken his agreement, hasn’t he? He hasn’t protected the students, he’s not the Light Lord, he asks you to do things you don’t agree with...surely, something of that breaks whatever familiar bond you have.”

Fawkes sang another distressed note and looked around the room as if to find something to communicate to Harry though. He hopped off the perch and landed over by the hearth. The bird set the wood on fire in the fireplace, he then put it out with two separate waves of magic, after looking at Harry as if trying to make him understand, Fawkes knocked over the shovel and poker and things used to tend the fire.

“Ok...I got this...hold on...Merlin, I was never good at charades,” Harry wracked his brain while Deimos was now pulling pieces of Harry’s hair out of his braid in some kind of attempt to groom him. “Right, so we have the fire...setting it and putting it out...we are caring for the fire...you don’t do that though, we have house elves that do that...house elves set the fires in the castle and tend them...are you saying a phoenix needs a bond like house elves do?”

Fawkes sang a triumphant overture of music into the room. “Awesome! Great! But house elves *can* be free...but they still need to serve someone...so if you leave Dumbledore, you need someone to serve...I’m guessing someone with strong, Light magic?”

Fawkes trilled another musical agreement. “Merlin, I’m getting good at this!” Harry congratulated himself, ignoring the annoying inferius on his shoulder.

“Right, well, good news! I know the real Light Lord. It’s Neville Longbottom. I can just take you to him and get you set up with a new bond!”

“Oh, don’t look at me like that! I’m clearly from the future, and I can assure you he’s plenty powerful and will make an excellent leader,” Harry answered the disbelieving look he was getting from the bird.

Fawkes trilled something that sounded like resignation. “That’s the spirit!” Harry laughed, now bypassing the bird to rummage through the cluttered office to find the sword.

Harry turned around at an insistent squawk. “Ah! Thanks!” Fawkes was definitely calling him an idiot while pointing his beak at the sword hanging on the wall behind his perch. “I was getting there you know.”

“Idiot!” Deimos added in.

“Merlin, there’s two of you,” Harry sighed as he checked for wards around the sword and disabled more than what was on the office surprisingly. There was even a nasty curse

embedded in that had Harry raising an eyebrow in surprise. What if the Weasley twins had actually gotten into the office and tried to take the sword as a prank? That just wasn't right!

Harry finally took down the sword and opened the moleskin pouch like the one that Hagrid would give him in the future. It was so useful that Harry had promptly bought one in this timeline for himself. The sword slid into the wizard-space, and he sealed it back up.

"Right, so come on. I have another shoulder for you to ride on. Let's get you to Neville!" Harry grinned at Fawkes and cast a few protection charms on his other shoulder.

"Hey, Deimos...neither one of us got set on fire! Percy and Snape will be so happy," He laughed at the inferius who was now in a staring contest with the firebird over Harry's head. Fawkes broke their eye contact to glance down with a look that clearly stated there was plenty of time for him to set Harry and the other bird on fire.

"Yeah, yeah, you two be good while I set everything back to rights and put the wards back up," Harry laughed. He summoned Fawkes's perch into his moleskin pouch with the sword and left the portraits asleep. They would eventually awake when the spell wore off. He was also just going to leave the ruined armchair as it was, maybe that would explain Fawkes's absence at least a little. Now he just had to replace the wards and sneak a phoenix into Gryffindor Tower. No problem at all!

Chapter End Notes

Up next: Pub night...

A/N: Ideas for names for Harry's followers (ahem, minions)?

Pub Night

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sirius Black was having an excellent day. He'd been outside of his haunted house of a home the entire day. Yes, he'd been Polyjuiced the whole time, but it was a small price to pay. He didn't even mind that he'd had to sit through an extremely boring Wizengamot session. Most of the discussion and voting had no importance and was only bureaucratic nonsense; however, Elphias Doge (aka, Dumbledore's puppet) proposed updates to werewolf registration that Sirius enthusiastically and (in his opinion) eloquently spoke against, getting even some of the neutral parties to agree with him since Harry (or rather Hadrian) was supposed to be neutral currently himself.

And that had caused quite the stir as well when Sirius strode confidently into the Wizengamot chambers wearing his godson's face (or brother or son or whatever the adoption ritual had made him) and claimed his right to be there. Surprisingly, most of Hadrian's tattoos had also appeared when he had taken the Polyjuice, the magical blood runic ones had at least, so this obviously dark wizard in fine robes walked into the room, claiming the long-unused Black Family seat, and more importantly declaring it as part of the neutral faction.

While Hadrian was very clearly dark, he had insisted Sirius choose neutral for their seat since he was planning to speak for his followers who weren't all dark (like the house elves) as well until Dumbledore could be overthrown. Sirius had no clue what his godson's plans were for that, or who would fill the Light vacuum it would cause, but he was just happy to have a part to play currently.

He had loved the constipated look on Dumbledore's face as well as the uproar from all sides, Light and Dark. Lucius Malfoy looked like he was ready to stage a coup, claiming he should be voting his wife's family seat instead of some unknown cousin, and Dumbledore looked like he was almost ready to agree and make hell freeze over by siding with a Malfoy of all people before he thought better of it. Clearly, the old coot still thought he had some sway with Sirius who could talk to his cousin and convince him to get in line.

Sirius just smirked at them all as he pretended to be his chaotic relative and even mentioned in passing to Amelia Bones just how much he missed his poor cousin Sirius that he just couldn't believe did something so terrible to his friends and that he had wanted to see his trial transcripts but was shocked to not be able to find any...could she possibly do anything to help? Sirius was cackling in his head the entire time.

With his next dose of Polyjuice, Sirius became the blond muggle man he had summoned a clump of hairs from in the park (enough to make the man jump in shock and look for whatever bird might have attacked his head). He had thought the man was quite fit, but Severus always gave him a disgruntled frown when they met up outside Grimmauld Place and he had to be someone else. Maybe the man just didn't like blonds. Well, he was definitely picking someone who *wasn't* blond once he ran out of these hairs since he quite liked whatever he had going with the potion master, even if he didn't know what it was, and would rather not be a turn-off if at all possible. He had gone twelve years without a bedmate and didn't miss his solitude for one second. If Severus didn't have to live at the castle most of the week, he'd even try to convince him to stay more full-time if that wouldn't freak the man out and cause him to run.

With a quick spell to change the look of his dress robes slightly, Sirius sauntered into the dingy pub he was meeting up with his...er...well Severus, whatever he was, and his godson and Harry's partner. It sounded more like a double date than anything else, but he was fairly positive Harry didn't know he was seeing Severus in whatever way they were seeing each other. Actually, it looked like Severus was the first to arrive thankfully.

With a wide grin towards the man he was very happy to see, something that he wouldn't have thought possible months before, Sirius hurried over the booth Snape was sitting in and stepped through the privacy ward he had already placed around it. "Hey! So...when did you finish the animagus transformation?" Sirius smirked at his...whatever who frowned at him over the mug of mead he had already ordered.

"Excuse me?" Snape sneered in surprise. "First of all, you know the rules...I caught you and someone else in our seventh year in a very compromising position in greenhouse 4...who was it and what did I curse you with? Then...you will explain your question from earlier."

Sirius rolled his eyes. "Snape, I've worn this face multiple times already, you know who I am..."

"Answer the question, Black," Snape equally rolled his eyes and growled back. "We are at war, if you have neglected to remember."

Sirius grimaced. “It was Frank Longbottom, and it’s a bad question because multiple people know about it, Remus for one, Madam Pomfrey probably put the pieces together, she most likely told Sprout, Frank definitely told Alice when they got together since she made fun of me a few times for that curse...”

“I am clearly not concerned if you are Lupin, Pomfrey, or Sprout, and neither Frank nor Alice Longbottom are currently in any position to impersonate you,” Snape reminded him. “What was the curse?”

Sirius just grimaced at him and motioned for the waiter to bring him a mead as well. “You just get some sick pleasure out of me saying that you turned my dick purple...for *3 months* Snape! Did you even know it wouldn’t wear off for 3 whole months?! That just wasn’t right!”

Snape shrugged and smirked. “I honestly thought it would last longer...pity.”

“You are evil, and I love it,” Sirius said as he took the drink from the waiter who hurried by. He missed Snape’s wide-eyed look of shock at his off-hand comment since it was gone as soon as Sirius turned back. “As for the animagus thing, it was really just a joke. What’s up with the new bird anyway? A crow shows up yesterday inviting me to the pub and calls me an idiot, so I really did think you must have decided to become an animagus there for a minute.”

“Deimos,” Snape almost growled with a sneer. “Percy gave him to me. That bloody bird is a menace.”

“What happened to Asphodel? I’d almost gotten your owl to stop pecking me, and now I have to start all over again with the crow,” Sirius asked with a pout.

“Asphodel is fine, but apparently Deimos cannot be cursed, tracked, and is very hard to kill. Weasley decided he was better for my own security,” Snape explained with an exasperated eyeroll. While it was true, it was still grating to have others trying to take care of him...and quite nice too, but he was never going to admit it on pain of torture.

“So, I’m Weasley again now?” Percy asked with a smirk, having shown up behind Snape at the beginning of his rant and stepped into their privacy bubble. “I think Deimos is lovely. I don’t understand your problem with him.”

Sirius scooted over in the booth for Percy to join him on his side since Snape was currently glaring at the man. “How did you make him un-trackable and un-curseable? That sounds like some next-level Unspeakable shit I didn’t know was possible,” Sirius asked with a grin at the two of them, just happy to be a part of a group again, even if it was this odd mix of time-travelers and dark lords.

“Inferi are notoriously hard for magic to latch onto because of the magic holding them together,” Snape explained with a sigh. “It’s mainly irritating since the bird only knows the one word that he uses all the time and keeps bringing dead rodents with him back into my chambers. He left a mouse on my pillow a couple days ago.”

“Severus, he probably just thought you would like a snack, or some potion ingredients,” Percy was clearly trying to hold in a laugh at the man. “It was very kind of him.”

Sirius coughed into his drink at the implication that the crow he had given owl treats to the day before was some kind of magical, zombie-crow. “Merlin...that’d work...” he trailed off, trying not to think about his godson’s partner being a necromancer...really, he was trying. Frankly, it was even a little more disconcerting than Harry being the Dark Lord...not that he was used that that either though.

Percy turned to Sirius and pinned him with an intense, searching stare. “Sirius, do you have any strong, foundational prejudices against inferi? Like...if they aren’t trying to eat your face off that is.”

Sirius just put down his drink and shared a very concerned look with Severus. “Er...it isn’t trying to eat my face off? Erm...why are you asking?”

Percy tapped his finger against the table a couple times in thought before shrugging and pulling a hair tie off his wrist to pull back his long, red hair into a ponytail since he wasn’t wearing his glamour. “Just a thought...nothing important.”

“Merlin’s balls, I’m hungry! Has anyone ordered food yet?!” Hadrian Black crashed into the booth beside Snape, making everyone jump in surprise. “Whiskey please, just bring a bottle!” He called outside of their privacy ward to the waiter who gave him a smile and a nod since Hadrian tended to be a great tipper and order quite a lot of alcohol, making him a favorite at the bar.

“You’re sharing that, right?” Percy raised an eyebrow at his partner while pulling him across the table for a quick kiss.

“Hmm, maybe...” Hadrian just smirked at him teasingly. “So, food? Fish and chips...maybe an app for the table?”

“I’d go for some nachos,” Sirius nodded at him.

“Brill! How did the Wizengamot session go? Er...someone did check he was actually Siri and not some rando, right?” Harry asked the rest of the table.

“In great detail,” Snape smirked and shared a look with a pouting Sirius that Harry really didn’t want to ask about, so he just shrugged and accepted it as a yes.

“The Wizengamot was fine...I stole away quite a lot of support from a werewolf registration bill,” Sirius finally informed him after the waiter dropped off the bottle of whiskey and they ordered food. “I also dropped some hints for Amy to check out my...Sirius’s trial transcripts that she won’t be able to find. And as per your instructions, I didn’t shag anyone, rob any banks, commit you to any social engagements at the ministry, or talk to Arthur Weasley in any form or fashion.”

“Interesting list,” Percy chuckled. “Did you even see my dad?”

“Nope,” Sirius firmly shook his head. “I know how to be a decent person. I would have waved at least if I did see him. I’m not going to get my godson’s future father-in-law mad at him. You ingrates just have no faith in me at all.”

Harry choked on his whiskey. He and Percy hadn't ever talked about weddings or anything like that... they didn't even talk about their relationship until they had to when they came back in time. Did Percy want to get married? Was he supposed to ask or was that Percy's job as the older partner? What if Percy *didn't* want to marry him? Did he, Harry, even want to get married?!

"Take a deep breath and finish the glass," Percy laughed in understanding and tilted Harry's glass of whiskey towards him.

Harry blinked at him a couple times before downing the entire glass in one go and pouring another. "Right...so..."

"Calm down, things are fine as they are," Percy assured him with a comforting squeeze to his hand. "I'll let you know if and when that isn't the case, deal?"

"Deal!" Harry assured him firmly with a smile and a breath of relief.

"Don't break my boyfriend," Percy then glared at the man beside him teasingly. "I don't even need my wand to make your kidneys decide you really need a round of kidney stones to make your life interesting."

"And you thought I was bad," Snape remarked with a smirk at the now pale man and leaned back, crossing his arms. "So, Hadrian...is there a reason you wanted us all here tonight or were you just out of alcohol and needed to restock."

Hadrian shrugged and immediately shoved a nacho in his mouth from the basket that had just been delivered. "Percy took all mine, and probably drank it..." Percy rolled his eyes but didn't contradict him. "But no, there actually was a reason, more just an update though if we're being honest."

"Maybe an update that explains why you are so hungry?" Percy prodded, clearly knowing that must have happened.

Hadrian just gave him a fond look though at reading him so well. “Yeah, black magic does tend to make me a bit hungry, but I got the last of the bits holding Tom to this earth...except for the snake, so we’re a go for as soon as we have a plan to invade Malfoy Manor or wherever he’s bumming off his minions currently.”

“Wait...you got them all?” Sirius’s mouth fell open. “The goblins gave you theirs?”

“Yep!” Hadrian popped the ‘p’ and grinned at them all around his next nacho. “Just took care of it. I think I about gave a Ragnok a stroke in his office when I did it there, but hey, I’d rather do it at the bank than have to sneak a cursed object into Hogwarts.”

“I can’t believe you banished one without me again!” Percy pouted. “Neville gave me his memory, but I don’t think I’m going to be able to convince Ragnok to give me his...that’s just not on, Harry.”

“Can I please clarify...” Snape raised a hand between them, his face wearing an expression of disbelief. “Does this mean...are you implying that there is nothing keeping the Dark... You-Know-Who alive anymore, besides his snake that is?”

“Yes,” Harry put his arm around Snape’s shoulders and gave him a little side hug that Snape immediately tried to squirm out of. “Fine, don’t let me hug you then...but let’s talk murder at least! So, Tom, Pettigrew, Lucius, and really whoever else is in the room at the time, but those are my top three, can we get them all together? Maybe in a meeting? Is there anyone we *shouldn’t* kill? Clearly baby Malfoy if he happens to be home, and definitely Cissa, we should probably get her out of there as soon as possible if we can...”

“Harry...one step at a time,” Percy stopped his rush of ideas to remind him. “Remember, you have one more step in planning before you are able to go after Tom. I’m assuming your break-in today of Dumbledore’s office went well if you got the cup from the bank, but remember you aren’t done.”

“You do seem shockingly unsinged,” Snape was trying to keep up with the conversation even as his mind was reeling at how close he was to finally being free. “I assume you convinced Fawkes to refrain from attacking you. What is this next step you must plan before destroying You-Know-Who? Can we help?”

Harry huffed, not wanting to deal with having to break into the ministry yet again. “This is more of an inconvenience that I will handle myself. Neither of you need to get involved. I have it completely under control.” It would be over his dead body before he would allow Sirius Black to break into the Department of Mysteries with him again, especially during his fifth year at Hogwarts...that was tempting fate way too much.

“Right...so I’m behind on the news being shut in at Grimmauld,” Sirius frowned in frustration at being out of the loop. “Why did Harry need to break into Dumbledore’s office, what did you steal, and how did you convince Fawkes to not try to burn you alive?”

“The goblins requested the sword of Godric Gryffindor since it is goblin-made in exchange for the object from Bellatrix Lestrange’s vault,” Percy explained for Harry.

“Which I even left with them after removing the soul-bit,” Harry grumbled. “Honestly, they got the better end of that deal...anyway, Fawkes was perfectly lovely. I just convinced him to defect and join our side. No big deal...Deimos didn’t even get to have fun besides distracting the portraits so I could put them to sleep.”

“Such a shame,” Snape drawled in sarcasm, pouring some of Harry’s whiskey into his empty glass.

Sirius did not believe Harry one bit. “Harry...how did *you* a dark lord convince a *phoenix*, one of the lightest creatures, to join your side? That seems against several laws of magic and common-sense.”

“It’s not like he’s *my* familiar,” Harry scoffed. “He agrees with my principles and all even if our magic isn’t compatible. Besides, it’s not like we’re the ‘Dark Side’ or anything. Our group isn’t completely dark what with the house elves and Sirius isn’t even a dark wizard surprisingly...plus, you know...the whole balance-thing...Dumbledore isn’t the Light Lord, and I might just know who the real one is to pass Fawkes off to...”

“We might need a name,” Percy winced at having to come up with anything relating to marketing. That was not something he was especially good at. “We can’t just walk up to people and be like ‘join our group’ and not have a way to explain what our group is.”

“Back up,” Sirius stopped them. Snape knew more than Sirius did and even he was hoping for much more information...like this person’s identity. “Harry, love, cousin, brother, son, whatever... I need you to start by explaining how Dumbledore isn’t the Light Lord and finish by explaining how you know who the real one is... and add in who that is at some point please.”

“Just pick a relationship and stick with it, Padfoot,” Harry rolled his eyes at his godfather. “I’m probably closest to being your brother magically. Now... Dumbledore is just pretending to be the Light Lord currently. He and I both know who it really is, but Dumbledore is banking on the fact that he believes, has ensured really, that Harry Potter will die in the confrontation with Vol...er, Tom,” he gave Snape an apologetic glance at his almost slip.

“He might not know,” Percy remarked since the prophesy didn’t specifically say it was Neville. Harry’s glare communicated that neither one of them believed that comment in the slightest.

“Anyway... the prophesy the Order is currently not able to guard since Percy’s coworkers are awesome makes it clear that I’m integral in turning this other person against Dumbledore. As long as I didn’t hear that part of the prophesy and was killed in the final confrontation with Tom, then it didn’t need to come to pass... fortunately for us, I heard the full prophesy and told that other bloke his part in all this just in case I’m killed... which is *probably* not going to happen,” Harry summed it up.

“Which will *not* happen,” Percy ordered as he stole the half-empty bottle of whiskey.

“Who is it?” Sirius asked again impatiently. “Did you know any of this?” He also turned to ask Snape.

“Only that it was a part of the prophesy, but I do not know who it is either,” Snape assured him.

“He doesn’t really want to come out as a leader in all this quite yet,” Harry said with a serious glare at them all to leave it be. “I agree with him. We’re going to keep him and his

identity safe until after Tom is handled, then we'll figure out a way to have him take a more active part in everything."

Sirius grumbled and ate some of his fish, not liking that, but not really able to argue. It wasn't his call if whoever this Light Lord was wanted to stay behind the scenes until Voldy was killed. He understood, but that seemed like a lot to put on his godson-brother. "Fine...so, what all is going on at Hogwarts besides breaking into the headmaster's office? How is your fake-Ravenclaw girlfriend doing? She seems to have to cover for you quite a lot."

Harry gave a sappy grin at them all. He really loved Luna. "Oh, she's great. We're able to actually be around each other now without my emotions overly affecting her. No one is really giving her a hard time about it once I had Ron curse Theodore Nott who was giving her a hard time one day. Her dormmates have stopped stealing her things and hiding them too...so, win-win so far. We'll stage a fake break-up whenever it isn't working in her favor though."

"Why did you have your friend curse the mini-Death Eater?" Sirius was confused. "You didn't want to curse him yourself?"

Harry looked at Snape like Sirius had gone crazy, but Snape didn't seem to understand either. "He's only fifteen," Harry finally explained as if to children. "That's just creepy for me to curse him and not really sporting...granted, I told Ron what curse to use and helped him cast it, but still...at least it came from another fifteen-year-old."

"I'm sure my brother was enthusiastic," Percy rolled his eyes and chuckled. "The teenagers are asking for dueling practice. We'll have to eventually start training them some since they are already involved in all this."

"Sure, we'll start this weekend," Harry answered unconcernedly as he looked at his watch and seemed to be doing some mental math. "It's a new moon, right?" He turned and asked Snape. He was certain he could trust the potions master to know what phase of the moon it was for his potions.

"Indeed," Snape answered, stealing a spare chip off Sirius's plate.

"Great! I'm off then," Harry scooted to leave the booth.

Percy grabbed the back of Harry's shirt to stop him. "Where are you going, Harry Potter?" He asked with an accusing look on his face.

"Huh? I already said..." Harry trailed off at the confused looks around the table.

"No, I do not believe you did," Snape answered for everyone else.

"Well, you all said I couldn't head off to murder Tom right now until I do my other annoying thing, so I told you, I need to get Narcissa away from that house with all the Death Eaters and her abusive bastard of a husband. Plus, I'm pretty sure she would have some grand ideas to help with that side-project I'm working on," Harry said as if they should have put his random comments together to equal that. "So...I'm off to kidnap Cissa! It's a new moon, so she should be at her new moon witches' circle-thing."

"You are going to kidnap Narcissa Malfoy," Snape sighed and nodded as if he really should have assumed that. "Great...well, good luck with that. Try to your shield your balls, that is where she will aim first."

"Yeah...she's great, isn't she?" Harry grinned at him.

"Wait, my cousin is in a witches' circle? Really? That seems odd. I didn't think she was the type," Sirius frowned, not having pegged the woman for that.

Harry just shrugged though with a grin. "It's like her book club or something, only it's more hexing your enemies and being one with nature instead of wine and trashy romance novels."

"I will absolutely *not* be helping," Snape dryly assured them all. "I know what happens at those rituals."

"What happens?" Percy asked in interest.

“I thought you studied rituals?” His partner frowned.

“Well, it’s not like witches’ circles would be in my specialization now, would it?” Percy just rolled his eyes at him. “What do they do at them?”

“I’ll go with you!” Sirius grinned widely, enough so they could almost see all his teeth in his borrowed face.

“No, you will not,” Snape glared at him causing Harry to raise an eyebrow in question at them both. “You will need to set up a room for her in Grimmauld. I assume that is where Hadrian will presume to stash her away if he is successful.”

“Fine,” Sirius playfully glared back at him. “I don’t see why Harry should have all the fun though.”

“I’m going too! If anyone’s kidnapping a Malfoy, then I’m going to be involved,” Percy protested stubbornly. “Now, will anyone tell me what a witches’ circle is?!”

“Oh love, why don’t I just show you…” Percy did not trust Harry’s smirk of a grin at all, but he stood anyway and said a little prayer to Morgana that he would survive the night.

“Does Harry just live in Ravenclaw now? Lovegood’s roommates must hate that,” Dean commented when he, Neville, Ron, and Seamus entered their dorm room after dinner.

“Better there than here,” Seamus grumbled under his breath, but everyone still heard and rolled their eyes at him. Ron was seriously debating using the new curse Harry had taught him on Seamus.

“He’s really taking OWLs seriously, so he’s probably in the library actually,” Neville commented to help cover for their friend. “His grades have been getting better.”

“Probably all Lovegood’s doing,” Dean snorted in amusement. “Merlin knows Ron hasn’t been a good influence all these years.”

“Oi! I resemble that remark,” Ron just grinned at him, not offended in the slightest.

“Er...Neville, why is the headmaster’s bird by your bed?” Seamus asked from where he was standing between his and Neville’s beds and staring at the golden perch where a preening phoenix was now glaring at them out of one fiery eye.

Neville froze and stared right back at the bird. He had absolutely no idea why Fawkes was in their dorm room, but it didn’t take Hermione to put together that Harry must have had something to do with this. “I don’t know, Seamus,” he finally said, stepping towards the bird and finally seeing a note waiting for him on the table beside his bed.

“Sup, Fawkes?” Ron just nodded at the bird in passing, used to the craziness that happened around them all the time at this point. “I’m going to take a quick shower before hanging out with ‘Mione...I’m hoping for some prime snogging time and want to smell decent.”

“Might try two showers then, mate!” Dean called after him, getting a rude hand gesture from the redhead in response.

Neville picked up the note and took in a steadying breath. “Do I even want to know?” He asked the bird who seemed to roll his eyes in exasperation. “Fine...but you know him, I’m sure this is just going to cause me a headache,” he whispered to Fawkes before opening the note.

Hey Nev! So, Fawkes needs a new master, someone with Light magic...preferably someone who is a lord of the Light if you catch my drift (yes, literally anyone could catch his drift, Neville snorted). Anyway, I convinced Fawkes that you were the man for the job. Just give

him a little pet, and he'll take care of the rest. I'm sure he'll be discrete with not outing you to Dumbles. Anyway, I left some owl treats by my bed that I'm sure he'll like. Don't wait up! See you tomorrow! xx HP

Neville jumped in surprise when the note immediately caught fire, he dropped it and stepped back as it burned to a small pile of ash. "Bloody prat!" Neville grumbled at the singed tips of his fingers.

Fawkes gave a little trill of agreement, pulling Neville's attention back to the bird. "You know I'm a teenager...I'm not leading an army or anything," he told the bird quietly, making sure that Seamus and Dean were distracted arguing over which discarded tie was theirs on the floor.

Fawkes did the little head roll again that Neville interpreted as an eyeroll. "Fine...so, he said to give you a pet and you'd take care of the rest?" He now tentatively reached out a hand. "Please don't set me on fire."

Fawkes almost begrudgingly presented a wing for Neville who laid a hand on the soft feather to give it a stroke. A rush of fire and magic filled the teen, a song building in his soul. "Merlin!" He gasped out, sinking to his knees. "What the hell was that?!!" Fawkes just gave a trill of triumph as if he were singing victory from his perch and causing even Ron to run dripping out of the shower and all the dorm inhabitants to look at him in surprised awe.

Albus Dumbledore was leisurely making his way up to the castle from the gates of the school. It hadn't been the best day at the Wizengamot, but he was certain he would recover. He had spent the day visiting his friends, or really those he manipulated into voting the way he wanted them to, and liberally buying them drinks. He was certain he had the Light firmly on his side with the new creature legislation bills already up for vote and any future ones he would suggest. It took extra work that he hadn't planned to do that day, but he could recover from this new complication Sirius Black's cousin had caused. Where that bastard had come from, Dumbledore vowed to find out. Sirius's explanation was way too simplistic. There were skeletons in that closet...there were skeletons in all the Black family's closets, and Hadrian would be no different. This was a temporary inconvenience only.

Remus Lupin had been the lucky deal clincher that had almost fallen into his lap. He had originally accepted the brat into the school because he knew the boy would have been raised to hate the creature he was, knowing his prejudiced father. Dumbledore knew that with a little kindness, he would have a dark creature who would support him for life, even against other creatures. It only helped him that when he thought he might have started to lose Lupin in his loyalty to Harry and Black, he had forgotten to take his potion one night and almost eaten three students and one teacher. Oh, that was the best example of any he could have invented, and it was actually true. If someone as fastidious as Remus Lupin could be a danger, then, well...it only stood to reason that *all* werewolves were dangers...

Once the dark creatures were firmly under his thumb, Dumbledore could see the clear path to the Light having sole rule over the wixen world in Britain. Britain was only just the beginning though with Dumbledore already having a foothold in the ICW, yes...there was just so much he could do. Once he forced the final confrontation between the Potter brat and Tom, Tom would destroy his horcrux and it was a simple curse for Dumbledore to stand as the victor, one who was in mourning over the sad little boy who had lost his life while the rest of the wixen society looked to Dumbledore to lead them out of these dark days.

Yes...he could not lose. He had planned for every eventuality... every eventuality except for this new Black relative, but it was no matter. Hadrian Black would fall just as Lupin had in his belief that Sirius could be evil, in Sirius believing Lupin was already turning from them, in James not knowing which friend to believe, and in Peter...poor Peter always on the outside who just needed to feel important, who needed to be shown what power really was... oh yes, this Hadrian was no better than any who came before him, Dumbledore would make sure of that.

With a smirk, the headmaster set one foot on the stone steps of the school, entering his domain, his kingdom. He moved forward before a gasp tore from his throat. It felt as if a chunk of his magic had been ripped from his chest as the headmaster crashed to the stone steps in pain. One loud cry and the elderly man passed out right there, stretched across the stairs with an arm stretched towards the castle.

It was a Hufflepuff who found the man after dinner and ran to get McGonagall, who called for Poppy Pomfrey. They rushed him to the infirmary, casting diagnostics and muttering in concern the entire way. "There isn't anything wrong with him!" Pomfrey gasped to McGonagall. "There had been a major drain on his magic, but I don't understand how or where!"

“Was he attacked?” McGonagall asked, shoving open the doors to the infirmary as she levitated the man onto a bed.

“Not that I can tell! I think all we can do is wait for him to wake on his own,” Pomfrey was shaking her head and continued casting more diagnostics.

Up in Gryffindor Tower, a firebird ruffled his feathers and gave a little chuckle of a chirp while three teenage humans fed him owl treats and told him how very pretty he was. Maybe this dark wizard Harry Potter had been right in his claims earlier that day. He hadn't believed the time-traveler, but life was looking quite pleasant currently. Yes, this Neville child, he would do, he would do nicely.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Narcissa Black-Malfoy...the Black family reunited...

Manifesting Peace

Chapter Notes

So, based on my loose outline, I'm guessing we have about 6 or 7 chapters left in this fic. I'm not sure you should believe me though since I originally thought the story was going to be 10 chapters tops. So, believe me or not, we'll see what happens.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“New moons don’t have very many rituals associated with them, it’s usually full moons or at least waxing moons,” Percy was rambling as if he was teaching one of his DADA classes while Harry expertly led them through a forest that Percy hoped was still in Britain at the very least. “That is partly because of the moon’s magic being less encompassing and powerful at that time, and more practically the lack of light to see by when performing a ritual.”

“Hmm,” Harry just hummed in understanding and took hold of Percy’s arm when he stumbled over a root in the extreme darkness.

“Which brings me to the question of how the bloody hell you’re able to see right now,” Percy grumbled and ended up just putting both hands on his partner’s shoulders to follow in his wake. “I get we can’t cast a lumos or they’ll know we’re approaching, but why aren’t you stumbling along like I am?!”

Harry laughed and helped Percy over a fallen log next, thankful that he had the foresight to cast silencing charms around them while they moved (rather crashed) through the forest. “First of all, this is a manifesting ritual, which is best held when the moon is hidden. Cissa’s coven meets up to chat, snack on ale and cakes, and then manifest safety and security for their families...sometimes also harm to their enemies when one of them feels especially slighted, which is most times.”

Percy nodded in understanding, so Harry continued, “They’re an odd, eclectic group of ladies that you wouldn’t expect to be friends outside of this circle. I was only invited along once when we were looking for Draco... Cissa had already realized my magic was pushing me to become a Dark Lord, and she wanted me to add my magic to boost the ritual to help find her son. Honestly, he was probably already dead by then. There is no way they were able to hold

anyone for long-term and not have an uprising, Draco would have led it himself if given the chance.”

“That’s true... this Draco I don’t see leading any uprisings, but future Draco... well, I’m not sure if I should mention this since he didn’t want you to know and I only heard about it from Ron, but Draco was the one who broke the wards on the manor you and Luna had been kept at... he let in Ron and Neville. He understood old manor wards from growing up at Malfoy manor and having to rebuild the wards after the war, and neither Ron nor Neville specialized in that. They couldn’t go through normal channels and get a ward breaker from the DMLE with what they planned to do once they got in,” Percy trailed off when Harry stopped and seemed to have to brace himself on a tree for a second as the memories and emotions hit him.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said anything...”

“No,” Harry shook his head firmly and breathed in deeply. “I didn’t know that... I honestly don’t know much of what was going on at the time, especially since I was in a coma. And I was not about to ask what happened beyond if they had been taken care of... the ones still living anyway. Merlin... I’m going to have to make friends with this prat of a younger Draco, aren’t I?” He grimaced at the end.

“Well, you *are* kidnapping his mother,” Percy kissed his temple, or maybe his cheek, he really couldn’t see.

Harry grumbled some more but was able to start walking again. “I suppose, he should be invited to Christmas since I’ll probably be murdering his father and killing the snake-faced bastard in his house too. Kreacher will be happy at least.”

Percy laughed. “Well, that’s just a larger celebration then. We could invite the whole inner circle. Now are you ever going to tell me how you can see right now? I can’t even see my hand in front of my face,” the older man gave his partner’s long braid a sharp tug to emphasize his question.

“Oi! I’d like to not go bald before I hit a century if possible,” he grumbled with an underlying tone of embarrassment at his next admission. “As for how I can see, I clearly have a night vision rune-set. Out of all these runes, of course I have something as practical as that...we

clearly all know how paranoid I am, and not only from that incident you so kindly just brought up that we will not talk about.”

Percy stopped and held onto Harry for a second before pulling him into his arms. “I’m sorry, love, I know,” after a quick kiss and nuzzle of Percy’s nose into Harry’s neck, he let go of a breathy laugh. “Morgana...now I know how you always seem to be able to see everything even when we don’t have a light on when making love. I just thought you must have been given a more powerful vision correcting potion than I was. Made me right jealous too.”

“You know I have to see...” Harry trailed off and pulled away some, but Percy didn’t let him get far.

“Hey...you have never had any complaints from me,” Percy assured him vehemently and cupped his love’s face between his hands, knowing he needed to change the subject since this was getting into dangerous territory for Harry. “I might get over my aversion to needles for that set of runes though if you wouldn’t mind a little tattoo session.”

“Really?!” Harry’s green eyes almost seemed to glow in the darkness as he lit up in excitement, his earlier embarrassment and haunted expression forgotten. “There are a few other useful blood magic spells I think you’d like if you’re serious about wanting some. I already have like three sets in mind I think you’d just *love*, and I could even put them somewhere not visible so you could keep them covered.”

“Let’s not go overboard,” Percy chuckled and released Harry to continue leading them forward. “I think we should start with one and see how that goes. It still seems unnecessarily painful to me and way too permanent as well. What if I don’t like it when I’m 150?”

He didn’t need to be able to see to know that Harry was giving him an incredulous look at that comment. “I’m not suggesting you get a tramp-stamp of a kneazle. It’s a useful spell to supplement your magic.”

Percy rolled his eyes and winced when he stepped on a branch with a loud crack. “Coming from the person with a tramp-stamp of a dragon...”

Harry didn't even bother correcting him and just laughed. "You love my tattoos, don't even try to say differently."

"Yeah, yeah...just how far into the forest *is* this thing? It's bloody cold out here," Percy couldn't help another little fond tug to the braid in front of him. "Are we just going to grab Lady Malfoy and run, or do you have a plan for once we get there? You do remember she's not going to have any idea who you are, right? She's also right handy with the curses if my memory serves."

"I'm Hadrian Black, the head of her family. It doesn't matter if she doesn't know I'm Harry Potter," Harry responded enigmatically. "Besides...I think they will be happy to see us..."

Harry stopped them suddenly at where Percy could just catch the shimmer of wards with his finely honed magic detecting sight. Percy raised an impressed eyebrow when Harry pulled out his ebony wand and gently coaxed the wards to let them enter. He didn't remove the wards or even lift them, but he requested access as a lord of the Dark to the ritual space.

"Well, you *are* useful sometimes," Percy teased his partner who rolled his eyes and pulled him through the magic barrier that granted them easy access now.

Percy stopped and blinked in embarrassed surprise a few times, registering just why Sirius had wanted to accompany them and also why Snape had shut that idea down quickly as he stared into the suddenly visible clearing in front of them. Harry leaned nonchalantly against a tree and smirked at him.

"So...what do you think of a witches circle?" He asked, motioning to the group of ladies slowly circling a well-established bonfire...naked as the day they were born.

Percy tried to wipe all emotion from his face as he sat down on a log beside Harry and clutched his wand to his side for whenever they were noticed and probably cursed. "Lady Malfoy is going to kill us," he dryly remarked, getting a soft chuckle from his partner who removed the silencing charm from around them.

“Sisters!” One of the women suddenly stopped circling, causing the rest to also abruptly stop. “The Dark Lord has stepped through our wards. He has deigned to attend our ritual!” While the woman’s words were respectful, the tone was fearful...clearly, they did not expect nor want Lord Voldemort anywhere near their circle.

Percy tried to look as nonthreatening as possible where he was sitting as the woman who must have cast the wards looked around for the one able to cross them. Suddenly five women were all staring at Hadrian Black who was still leaning against a tree and smirking, and Percy who really did wish he could turn invisible.

“You are not our lord,” Narcissa Malfoy spoke up from the group, her look a mix of fear, relief, and confusion. She stood tall and as regal as if she were fully robed and refusing them entrance to her manor.

Percy blushed deeply and with confusion as he recognized Mrs. Diggory, his neighbor at the Burrow, from the group. At least he didn’t recognize any of the others, but still...he didn’t think he could ever look his neighbor in the eye again. He didn’t know how or why in Morgana’s name Cedric Diggory’s mother would be in a ritual coven with Narcissa Malfoy of all people! As far as he knew, the Diggory were firmly Light, especially after Cedric’s death, but honestly...that had only been an assumption based on his own prejudice of the past. Now he clearly knew from his time with Harry, and his own life, that Voldemort did not equal Dark magic, and he was also aware that he and Harry were not the only ones who knew that.

“No, I am clearly not your snake-faced pretender,” Harry smiled at them more fully now. “Technically, I *am* your lord though as the rightful Dark Lord and as head of your house, Narcissa Black-Malfoy. I am not here to cause any trouble though... by all means, feel free to continue. I would like a few words with my cousin, but I can wait if you would like to finish.”

Narcissa crossed her arms, and the other women flanked her sides, their wands all appearing in their hands from somewhere...Percy didn’t know from where and was absolutely not going to ask. “You are Hadrian Black. I have heard you caused quite the stir in the Wizengamot meeting. You caused my husband quite the headache by declaring our house neutral,” she ended up with a little smirk on her face at that.

Harry laughed, still not having touched any of the three wands Percy knew he had on his person and instead just motioned dismissively. “Actually, that was our cousin Sirius who was Polyjuiced as me. I had other things to attend to that day, and he so wanted to leave the house... Sirius Black actually *is* innocent if that hasn’t gotten around yet. He was framed by Peter Pettigrew,” he said to the other women in a way that Percy knew he was trying to be reassuring, but which he mostly always failed at.

“My wards registered you as a master of the Dark and a lord over this ritual,” the first woman spoke up again from Narcissa’s left in a suspicious and questioning tone.

“Madam Parkinson, I have always heard you are an expert at wards. These were very well established,” Harry acknowledged her. “Ah, and Madam Diggory... I had heard you were a rune master. This ritual looks excellently done. I don’t recognize the rest of you on sight, but everything looks just perfect. I’d wager whatever you manifest here has much power. I am clearly not a witch, but I offer up some of my own power if you would like to continue.”

Percy slowly nodded as a memory came to him. Yes, Harry had mentioned Mrs. Diggory was a rune master at some point. He had said that he consulted with her a few times during his own studies. Percy was surprised he hadn’t put it together that she was a dark witch until now. He wondered if Amos knew... judging by the few lines of runes the woman had inked onto her skin in easily coverable places, Amos Diggory *must* know.

“What would you be asking the ritual to manifest for you?” Mrs. Diggory asked in suspicion now from Narcissa’s right. “We are a coven of the true Dark and seek balance in our world. We will not allow one in our midst who seeks to cause chaos.”

Harry had to laugh at that while Percy did his best to hold his in. “While I’ve been called quite chaotic personally, I only seek balance in our world between the Light and Dark. I’ll let you pick what exactly I manifest though. I am up for manifesting death to the pretender, Lord Voldemort, freedom for my cousin Sirius, or the health and safety for the true Light Lord, who is decidedly *not* Albus Dumbledore.”

The first woman, who Percy now knew was Pansy Parkinson’s mother, looked to the rest of the concerned group. “He *is* a Dark Lord. The wards would not lie in those regards...as for the true Dark Lord...”

“We are well aware that bastard who murdered my son is *not* our true lord,” Mrs. Diggory seethed angrily.

“Calm, Callista,” Narcissa put a hand on Mrs. Diggory’s shoulder before looking back over to Hadrian. “Who is your friend?” She eventually asked, motioning to Percy with narrowed eyes.

“Hi!” Percy gave them all a weak wave. “Don’t mind me. I’m just his partner...like romantically, not in business or anything. I’m just very interested in rituals,” he lamely trailed off, trying his best to only look at faces or feet.

“Percy Weasley?” Callista Diggory frowned in recognition of the young man. “My, you have grown. I thought you were younger... does your mother know you are associating with dark wizards?”

Literally everyone in the circle looked at Callista incredulously. “By the Goddess, yes, I know I’m a dark witch, but Molly Weasley is *not*, and I absolutely know not to talk to her about all this!” Callista rolled her eyes at them and waved a hand to indicate all of them and the ritual. “Molly has made her views extremely clear over the years, hence why I’ve never invited her.”

“She’s actually coming around a bit,” Percy smiled at her kindly. “Er...She doesn’t know yet, but I’m a dark wizard too. I’m not going to offer any magic up like Hadrian though since I have absolutely no idea how to do this ritual. I’m a necromancer, so my rituals involve quite a bit more dead things generally...”

“Oh my, a *necromancer*,” one of the women who had yet to speak exclaimed excitedly. Based on her look at him now, Percy was certain it was in his best interest to not make her acquaintance. He didn’t particularly want Harry to have to hex her.

“Right, so, I don’t actually have all night, are you going to take me up on my offer or are you all done?” Hadrian motioned to the fire and finally stood up from where he was leaning. “I do need to talk to my cousin, so if we could move this along some...”

“I clearly vote death to the pretender,” Callista spoke up quickly, assuming they were going to take this Dark Lord up on his offer of an extra magic boost to their ritual.

All the women looked to Narcissa to see how she would vote. With a shrug and a kind look at Callista, she nodded. “I *would* prefer him out of my house and away from my son.”

“Great!” Harry happily strode forward and one of his silver knives appeared in his hand from where Percy knew he kept them in magically obscured sheaths in his belt now, ever since Greyback. There was a quick slice of his palm that no one flinched at, and Harry’s blood was now sprinkled around the herbs lining the bonfire.

“Right, well, carry on...” Harry healed the cut and happily motioned for them to continue once he joined Percy on the log now.

“At least they’re gay,” one of women grumbled as they turned to continue.

“Unfortunately,” the one who was excited Percy was a necromancer added sadly.

“Do *not* tell them I’m not gay,” Percy hissed under his breath to Harry who just chuckled and leaned his head against the redhead’s shoulder to watch and wait.

“Hmm, I probably feel much less like a voyeur than you do right now,” he just cheekily added while the ritual continued. “At least we didn’t bring Siri. We definitely would have been hexed already. Why do you think Snape protested so quickly though? Kreacher could have gotten Cissa’s room ready for her.”

“Oh, Harry... I really do love you,” Percy shook his head and put an arm around his partner while they basked in the magic now flowing through the clearing.

“That wasn’t an answer...” Harry frowned with a huff of irritation.

“You didn’t tell me they would be naked,” Percy just responded with a smirk.

“How do I nicely convince my godson-brother’s partner that I really don’t want an inferius pet without hurting his feelings?” Sirius asked in all seriousness while he put the kettle on for tea for him, Snape, and Remus who just entered the kitchen at Grimmauld.

“I think I need more context for this conversation... Did Percy suggest making you an inferius pet?” Remus sat beside Snape at the table and gave him a little nod of greeting that was surprisingly returned.

“It was only a vague question about if Sirius was prejudiced against the type of magic,” Snape filled the man in. “However, knowing the man as I do now... you will most definitely be getting a pet. Deimos is annoying, but surprisingly useful if that helps any at all.”

“No, Snape, it really doesn’t,” Sirius leaned against the counter and glared at him.

A crack sounded in the kitchen signaling Kreacher’s arrival. “Kreacher must uses the best sheets. Kreacher is removing them from bad-master’s bed.” The elf disappeared in another crack before anyone could say anything or protest.

Snape wrinkled his nose. “I liked those sheets,” he sighed, causing everyone in the kitchen to look at him. “What? They have a higher thread count than the ones I have at Hogwarts.”

Remus slowly shook his head. “I’m still working hard to repress the knowledge that you two are shagging... why is Kreacher stealing your sheets, by the way?”

Sirius snorted in amusement before taking down mugs and starting to set up the tea things. “Harry is off kidnapping my cousin Cissa. Apparently, they are friends in the future, and he believes she shouldn’t have to stay in a house with You-Know-Who and her bastard husband... I’m not saying I disagree, but I also doubt she’ll come willingly.”

“She might,” Severus shrugged and accepted his mug of tea. “If Hadrian thinks to bring up Draco and his safety, I believe she could be persuaded.”

Remus looked stunned. “Are we expecting Lady Narcissa Malfoy to be moving in *here*, with us? You do realize this house is a dump, right? Kreacher has done a lot to fix things recently, but... Merlin, the Order meets here!”

“Yeah, yeah... have you ever attempted to stop Harry when he gets an idea in his head though?” Sirius rolled his eyes. “It's bloody impossible. We'll figure it out. Honestly, if he's right and she really does need saving from this situation, then I'm going to help my cousin over the Order. I've wanted them gone since we learned Dumbledore knew of Harry's abuse anyway.”

“If Hadrian has his way, the Order will no longer be needed soon regardless,” Severus's eyes flashed at that comment. He really hoped Hadrian had his way.

Remus held up a hand with a grimace. “I believe I am out of the loop. Is this intentional or can someone please fill me in? What all is happening? I thought Harry said I was needed for some of his plans.”

Remus decided he did not like the smirk he received from Sirius at that. “Oh, you are...” the animagus placed both elbows on the kitchen table and grinned at him. “Probably not in the way you expect though.”

“I believe it would be best if you were the one to ask Hadrian his plans,” Severus cut in before Sirius said anything Hadrian may not want him to say just yet. “He seems to be hesitant where you are concerned, and I do not understand why. He does seem to trust you though.”

Remus nodded, understanding a little more than Snape now how Harry viewed him. They were going to be family one day, he just needed to prove to Harry that he wanted that, and he did care. He was trying. “Thank you, Severus. I will do that. Are you staying the night, or are you heading back to Hogwarts... I'm just planning for if I should check that Sirius did in fact place silencing wards over his door before heading to bed,” he smirked at his friend.

“Oi! I was literally the only one in the house that night. How was I supposed to know you’d get home early?” Sirius rolled his eyes at the man.

“I will stay to greet Narcissa, but I must return to the school,” Severus ignored them to answer. “Besides, I am sure Kreacher will replace those sheets with the worst in the house now.”

Sirius grimaced. He had a point there. “You think I could come with you back to the castle?” He pouted. “I bet your sheets aren’t that bad.”

“I will not be sneaking a fugitive into the castle, no matter how many blowjobs you promise,” Severus glared at the man who was definitely about to start bartering.

Remus choked on his tea. “Merlin, I’m glad you two never got together while we were in school. You would have been insufferable.”

Both men turned to look at him, inscrutable looks on their faces. “Wait... you absolutely *hated* each other. There is no way! I *know* you never got together in school...”

They both just took sips of their tea and shared a look. “No! You’re messing with me! Absolutely not!” Remus protested vehemently.

“Define ‘together,’” Severus finally asked dryly over his mug.

“Define ‘school,’” Sirius added with a vicious smirk.

“That was quite the magic boost,” a now robed Narcissa Malfoy commented to her coven’s two intruders while the rest of her sisters cleaned up their ritual clearing.

“If our current Dark Lord does die soon, you may have a chance of recruiting Callista to your side. Is that what you wanted to speak to me about? You must know that I stand as neutral in all of this as being Lady Malfoy will allow me to stand. It is only my healer’s oaths that keep me from being forced to fully choose a side.” Merlin, she was thankful now that she had chosen that field to work in, even if her husband had never allowed her to fully practice.

Hadrian Black, the surprisingly young head of her family slowly nodded. “I am aware that you are unmarked, and I would like you to stand with me in what is to come, but no, I’m not asking you to join my side against your husband and his lord. I’m asking you to request safety and asylum for yourself and your son with the head of your family.”

Narcissa crossed her arms and her eyebrows shot up in surprise. “Excuse you? Are you asking me to leave my husband?” Narcissa had to repress an eyeroll at the snort she heard from behind her. It seemed one of her coven sisters was listening in, knowing them, they all were when they were close enough to hear.

The dark wizard in front of her nodded his head slowly, running a finger across a silver piercing in his eyebrow in what resembled an odd nervous habit. “I have information... which I will share with you where I got it from if you take me up on my offer, but I am aware that your household... maybe isn’t as happy as you would like others to believe.”

There was the clear snort from behind her again. “If you are going to listen anyway, just walk over here already,” she finally hissed in frustration to whichever sister was brazen enough to keep making their opinions known.

Of course, it was Callista Diggory who walked over, having listened in on what this new Dark Lord who wanted to kill her son’s murderer would have to say. “Well, if I’m invited,” the short, brunette woman who joined their coven just shortly after Narcissa had made a show of pulling a stray leaf from her hair and standing as tall as her small frame would allow beside her friend who she could only acknowledge in this one clearing out in an obscure forest hidden in the countryside.

Percy Weasley chuckled from beside his partner, and wasn’t that even more of a shock this evening than a new Dark Lord had been? Just how had one of the Weasley offspring joined

the Dark and chosen necromancy of all things? “Mrs. Diggory,” he smiled at the woman Narcissa was reminded again was a neighbor of the young man’s parents.

“Percy,” she nodded at him, with another small frown on her face, the same as she had looked at the man earlier with.

Narcissa didn’t like that frown. “What is wrong, Callista?” She asked, hoping to hear more information about the two men who were trying to throw her carefully constructed life that resembled more of a house of cards than anything else into disarray.

“Percival Weasley is, I believe, nineteen-years-old... If I am remembering correctly,” Callista finally responded as she looked at the Weasley boy in the dim light cast from their bonfire.

Narcissa’s eyebrows went up once more. The young man in front of her was decidedly *not* nineteen. He had to be... possibly in his thirties or at the very least late twenties. Wixen tended to age similarly to muggles until their forties when they didn’t age much at all until they were well past a century, so he should look significantly younger than this man in front of her.

“Are you sure that man is Percival Weasley?” She asked next, the man in question shifting uncomfortably until Hadrian Black stilled him with a hand on his arm.

Callista nodded with an intense look. “I haven’t seen him in a couple years, since... since before my Cedric’s sixth year, but yes, if he is not Percival, then he must be Charles, and Charles was shorter...”

“Personally, I think he looks more like Bill at this point, but he has the muscle that Charlie has, thanks to our regular exercises we like to do together,” Hadrian answered with a grin. “We both used to run, but my knee has been dodgy in recent years, so we picked up lifting instead.”

The man who should be Percy Weasley dug an elbow in his partner’s side. “You weren’t supposed to say anything until she decided if she was going to come with us or not,” he whispered quietly, but Narcissa was still able to hear since the rest of her sisters were now

quietly chatting on the other side of the clearing, giving them privacy now that Callista had joined to provide Narcissa with any protection she might need.

“I had forgotten Mrs. Diggory was a part of the group,” Hadrian answered back with an apologetic smile. “Or rather I forgot how well she knew you when you were a teenager.”

Percy grimaced while Narcissa just waited to see where this was going to go. She could feel the family magic on Hadrian, so she knew he wasn’t lying to her about being the head of her family. Piper Parkinson’s wards were some of the best as well. If she said a dark lord was granted access, then that was decidedly true as well. These two were not all they seemed though, even if Hadrian Black was head of her family and a dark lord.

“She’s Cedric’s mother, she has a right to know,” Hadrian finally responded, turning pleading eyes on his partner where they seemed to have an entire conversation in that look. She hadn’t seen a couple able to do that before... it made her heart ache slightly at something she had never been allowed to have.

The man who might be Percy huffed and rolled his eyes. “Fine, but I’m at least putting a silencing ward around us. There’s no need for the rest of the coven to all be filled in.”

“I will agree to that,” Narcissa caught herself saying, she wasn’t sure why, but she wanted to believe there was another dark lord out there, one who was Magic’s true Dark Lord, who would provide another side, and option for those who could not bring themselves to follow Voldemort or Dumbledore.

With a flick of his wand, Narcissa felt a strong ward rise around them from the redhead. His magic was powerful, and she found herself wondering his place in all this now because if he was this powerful... what about his partner, the dark lord?

“Right! Thanks, love!” Hadrian Black seemed a little lost in a fond smile at his partner.

“We’re waiting,” Callista gave an impatient wave of her hand. Narcissa knew she needed to get home. Callista’s husband, Amos, didn’t like her attending these meetings, especially after what had happened to their son. Thankfully, he didn’t know that Narcissa was a member of

the coven, or he may have tried to keep his wife from attending... not that it would do much good in Narcissa's opinion. Callista was as strong willed as they come, and much more powerful than Amos Diggory.

"Well, I *am* actually Percy Weasley," the redhead assured them. "I'm just thirty-two...I think...birthdays are a bit hard to calculate with time-travel and all."

Both women looked at each other incredulously. "That's impossible," Callista finally answered for them. "The longest one can go back in time is days... longer than that would have devastating consequences."

"Like your younger self being erased from existence?" Hadrian winced. "Yeah, that happened. I should have read the fine print on the ritual a little better...I still would have done it, but it would have been nice to have been prepared."

"So, you are claiming to have come back in time as well," Narcissa studied the man, trying to see if she could determine what he would look like younger, but she couldn't place anyone he would look like. He must really be Hadrian Black, and his younger counterpart has not joined the family yet.

Hadrian just nodded in response. "Things get out of hand very quickly from here. We came back in time to stop it before it gets bad. The balance of Magic is so thrown into chaos, it was not fixable in our time. We had to come back to save the people we lost and stop what is coming."

Hadrian turned next to Callista. "We couldn't come back any further in time, or I would have tried to save Cedric. I still see his eyes and have nightmares of his death in my dreams most nights. If I could have saved him, I would have done everything in my power."

Something was itching at Narcissa's mind. It was just out of her grasp, but from what he said...she knew who this was, but who? It was Callista who figured it out first based on the gasp and the hand suddenly grasping Narcissa's arm. "Harry Potter..." she breathed out. "You are Harry Potter..."

In some great whirlwind of irony, suddenly everything made sense to Narcissa. If Sirius Black had died and left everything to his godson, he would be head of the family. If Harry Potter fought in a war as a child, what he had seen and gone through, that could have led him to Dark magic. Harry Potter had already lost so much and stood to lose even more before this all ended. Harry Potter was friends with the Weasleys. Harry Potter was also her son's age and, while definitely not friends, would be in a position to know her family or what was going on with her family at some point in a possible future.

"Fucking hell..." she sighed, causing everyone to shoot surprised looks in her direction. "Well, what happened to my family? Did Lucius finally get us killed?"

Harry just chuckled. "I miss you when you leave the pureblood aristocrat behind and speak plainly. We were friends in the future. You saved my life actually during the final battle with Voldemort. Your family lived, Lucius went to prison, and Draco was able to finish his education, start up an apothecary, and he was engaged to marry Astoria Greengrass..."

"Was?" Narcissa's eyebrow shot up at the sad look now on the young man's face. There was more to this story.

"The Light won," Harry gave her another sad look while Percy put an arm around his shoulders. "Dark magic was in the process of being eradicated in our time. First on the list of those to do away with were marked Death Eaters who were not sentenced to prison."

Narcissa snorted, feeling Callista's hand tighten on her arm. "My son will never be marked. I have made my stance clear... not until he is of-age at the very least when I no longer have a say."

"This next summer," Harry shook his head in disagreement, bringing Narcissa's entire world down in a crash. "Voldemort does not give your family a choice, he marks Draco when he is sixteen and tasks him with an impossible mission, one he is not capable of doing, one which breaks him... he makes it out in the end, but he is never able to come out from the shadow of that time, not before he's taken from you." Narcissa's mind was full of horrible scenarios, of images she had been telling herself would not happen, of things that were now certain to happen in the very near future.

"Cissa... he's the head of your family, right? He's a dark lord. Do you think," Callista was rubbing circles on her back now and shooting pleading looks at Harry. "Do you think we should maybe listen? Cedric liked Harry, and Harry brought my son's body back to us so we

could preserve it in our family crypt. He didn't need to do that; it would have been safer if he hadn't. I know I've been hoping, honestly, we've all been hoping, for the Light to win because we know the alternative, but... what if there is another option?"

Narcissa took in a deep breath, closed her eyes, and nodded her head. She opened her eyes to see a huge smile and shining green eyes look at her as if she had hung the moon. "I suppose I am unable to return to the manor to pack a bag or collect my possessions?"

"It's too dangerous," Percy Weasley answered quickly. "Draco is safe at school, and as a faculty member, I will ensure that he stays that way until break when he can join you. You are the one in danger now though."

"Voldemort is an expert Legilimens. You can't return to the manor," Harry added sadly. "I have an amazing house elf who can buy you whatever you need though, and Sirius is there... which might not be the best selling point, but he has enough Polyjuice that he can run errands as well."

Narcissa nodded once more as Percy Weasley removed his silencing ward. "Well, sisters!" She called to the rest of her coven. "It seems I am getting a divorce." The resulting cheer was highly inappropriate, and she really shouldn't be smiling at it at all.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: Planning a heist...and trying to play nice with a blond prat...

House Elf Politics

Chapter Notes

Sorry this has taken me a while. I've had some difficulties planning the heist, and this chapter ended up not even getting to it. Not a whole lot happens in this chapter but it gets us to the good stuff and has some nice character development. I'll be quicker with the next chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“So... I take it the Dark Lord is the one in the wrong as to your true loyalties?” Narcissa Malfoy, soon to be Black, leveled an assessing glare at Severus Snape.

“Indeed... though, to be fair, Dumbledore is also wrong it seems,” he answered her simply, followed closely by a smirk which Narcissa reflected right back at him.

“Riiight...” Hadrian drawled, now thinking he might have created a situation that would lead to more chaos than even he was able to handle. With a quick ‘fuck it’ in his head, he shook it off. “Kreacher!” He called out.

A crack sounded throughout the room promptly, but it wasn't Kreacher who appeared. “How’s can Dobby serves his master and his mistress this beautiful evening?” The former Malfoy elf vibrated in intense excitement.

Narcissa’s smirk melted into a surprised fond look at the elf. “Oh, Dobby... I was so worried about you! I didn’t know where you had gotten to after you were freed.”

“I’s serve the Master Dark Lord now!” Dobby proudly grinned at her.

“Er... mate... does Kreacher know you’re here?” Hadrian asked with a surreptitious and fearful glance around the room. “You know how he gets and all...” Harry didn’t want the elf to curse him or anything, which was entirely possible.

Dobby just scoffed and snapped his fingers for a tea tray to appear, what Harry had originally been calling Kreacher for anyway. “Kreacher said Dobby was allowed to take care of Mistress Narcissa just this one time. Dobby won a bet against Kreacher, and I want to see my Mistress Cissy, so I ask for this.”

“What was the bet over?” Sirius Black asked from where he was lounging on the couch beside Snape and almost leaning on the man.

“That’s between Dobby, Kreacher, and Winky,” Dobby chuckled and began serving the tea all around. “Dobby won though, that’s all that matters.”

“Well, it is very good to see you, regardless,” Narcissa gratefully accepted her tea and looked around at the assembled group of Snape, Sirius, Lupin, Percy, and Harry. “Now, would anyone care to fill me in on your plans? I assume you mean to take out the current Dark Lord, but what of the ministry and Dumbledore?”

“Oh, so you assume Hadrian actually makes plans...there lies your problem,” Snape drawled with a smirk over to Harry who just rolled his eyes at the man.

“I have plans...”

“Do tell...” Percy cut in with a playful nudge to Harry’s shoulder who he was sitting beside.

Harry just scoffed at him. He *knew* the plans. “As you well know... we have that thing we need to do in the next week or two...”

“Which is?” Lupin prodded from where he was leaning against the fireplace in the corner.

“Not your concern at this time,” Percy answered for Harry while he loaded a plate down with biscuits since he knew Harry would be stealing his.

“Yeah, well, then we take out old Tom, then the way is clear to take out Dumbledore and overthrow the ministry,” Harry finished with a shrug as if it were all that simple.

Narcissa raised a disbelieving eyebrow. “Just ‘do the thing’ is not a plan. Please tell me you have more specifics than that.”

“I’m surprised he even has that much,” Snape drawled but with a fond look to Hadrian.

“There are more specifics, but the next step is one I have to do first, and one I need to do alone...” Hadrian began.

“No, the master will not be alone,” Dobby interrupted from where he was just setting the teapot back on the tray. “Bipsy requires Master Dark Lord to take either Dobby, Kreacher, or Winky with him. Winky would prefer not to go, so Master should pick either Dobby or Kreacher.”

Harry frowned at the elf. “Bipsy wants one of you to go with me? Why?”

“Who is Bipsy?” Lupin asked, trying to follow this odd exchange and coming up lost.

“She’s the leader of the house elves,” Harry waved him off. “I don’t understand why she would want you to go though. That’s unnecessary danger to you. I can take care of this by myself.”

Dobby just put his hands on his little hips and glared Harry down. “You’ve asked the house elves to help, so we’re going to help. You’ve made it very clear in the contract you had us sign that you aren’t allowed to dictate our decisions, so... this is what you’ve got Master.”

“Fine, fine... whatever,” Harry huffed before Dobby summarily popped out of the room. There was no way on Merlin’s green earth that he was going to let Dobby or Kreacher

anywhere near the Death Veil though, so they could all piss off in those regards. He'd figure it all out later he supposed.

"Anyway," Percy broke into the tense stand-off. "Dumbledore isn't actually Harry's problem. The Light Lord will be responsible for him, though I know Harry plans on being there every step of the way."

"Wait... you *told* Cissa?!" Sirius cut in with a shocked expression. "You *told* her who you really are?!"

Harry and Percy just exchanged a look. "Well... Percy wasn't wearing his glamour, and I forgot about Mrs. Diggory being part of the coven, and she knows Percy really well."

"I would have figured it out eventually," Narcissa drawled, unconcerned and with a dismissive wave of her aristocratic hand. "It was the only way I would have left Lucius. I only stayed with that man to keep Draco safe, so the only way Harry was going to convince me to step away was to show me Draco was in *more* danger with Lucius in his life. I had assumed my bastard husband would protect his son... I should have realized how wrong I was before now."

"Well, at least we're all pretty much caught up with all the secrets now," Harry nodded in agreement, glad he didn't have to remember who knew what anymore. He knew the woman well enough that he had gone into that clearing in the woods with the very real expectation of having to tell her he was from the future to convince her to leave. "So, our lovely Light Lord, who will remain anonymous for just a little longer, will need help, but he's got Dumbledore supposedly. As for the ministry, I'm fairly positive Percy already has Minister Fudge under an imperius curse just because of how annoying he is."

"I have no clue what you are talking about," Percy calmly sipped his tea.

"Merlin..." Lupin breathed out and had to set down his teacup on the mantel in his shock. Narcissa and Snape just nodded along though, agreeing that was the absolutely best way to handle Fudge.

“So, you will eventually set yourself up as minister to support the Dark then,” Narcissa finished what she guessed were his plans.

“Hell. No.,” Harry winced and said firmly to everyone’s shock except for Percy and Sirius who knew the plan. “First of all, I’m here to bring balance, so neither me nor the Light Lord should be in power over the other. Besides, I’d make a shit minister because you know I’d never sit in on any meetings or fill out any paperwork.” Percy snorted in amused agreement and tried to cover it by sipping on his tea.

“Mr. Weasley then?” Narcissa asked with a glance between them.

“I may or may not have the current minister under a highly illegal control curse because of how insufferable he is,” Percy deadpanned. “What in that scenario would make you believe I would be suited to be a bureaucrat?”

“We’re setting up Remus as minister anyway. He’s the best option all around as both a Light wizard and a Dark creature as well as being patient enough to not curse people willy-nilly,” Harry said, stealing another biscuit off Percy’s plate.

Remus full-out choked on his tea and turned red. “What in bloody Godric Gryffindor’s name did you just say?!!”

“Huh... I thought Sirius would have told you already...” Harry just glanced over to his godfather who smirked back at him. “Well, er... congratulations, you’re the next Minister for Magic!”

“No... nope...” Remus set his teacup firmly down on the mantel and shook his head. “No... I’m not dealing with this. You’re all bloody insane. Dora is getting off work soon, and we’re getting a late dinner. I’m going to sound her out to see if she would be willing to break from Dumbledore. You,” he pointed at Sirius. “You will convince him he’s bloody insane.”

“Aw, Remy, I think you’d make a wonderful minister,” Sirius disagreed with a pout.

Remus turned disbelieving eyes on the entire party who all seemed to be giving him assessing looks like they agreed with Harry as well. Harry... well, he was getting this huge smile and a look that was probably more feral than anything Moony could pull off. It was very creepy and highly disconcerting. He'd ask about it, but then he'd be late for his date... er, *dinner*, with Dora, and he absolutely was not going to let that happen.

"Bloody hell..." He grumbled and just turned on his heel and strode out of the room with purpose, slamming the front door behind him and only getting a token protesting wail from Walburga.

"Well... *that's* promising," Harry turned his grin on Percy and widened it even more in self-satisfaction at a plan going so well.

Percy snorted and slapped Harry's hand which was going for another biscuit. "At this rate you may have a couple godchildren before you even get to Teddy."

Harry shrugged, unconcerned. "As long as Teddy is one of them. I'll love them all."

"I really don't want to know," Snape shared a look with Narcissa who had already realized in this very short amount of time that Hadrian was best had in very small doses or one tended to feel like they were on a bad drugs trip.

Harry just sighed dramatically. "Well... I should probably get back to the school or someone's going to start checking to see if Luna's pregnant."

This comment had Sirius choking on his tea this time. "Godric, pup... are you sure your friend is fine with pretending to be your fake girlfriend?"

"Oh, she loves it," Percy answered for Harry with a chuckle. "You should see her at breakfast. She has some new and ridiculous pet name for him every morning. I would imagine whatever stories she's telling on her end are much more ridiculous and scandalous than anything Harry has said."

Harry just nodded solemnly and in full agreement. "I'll have absolutely the most skanky reputation imaginable by the time Luna is done with me and yet she'll somehow look like a noble maiden, I don't know how, but she will most definitely pull it off. I love it! It'll be a good send off for old Harry when he decides to eventually transfer to Durmstrang or something. Being 15 is sooo tiresome. I think I'm reaching the end of my being able to fake it."

"Well... that actually answers several of my questions," Narcissa just chuckled.

"I'm off! Take care of Narcissa, Sirius. You two don't kill each other," Harry pointed between Sirius and Snape, getting twin smirks he just shrugged off before leaving.

"*That* has to be pathological," Percy remarked once Harry had left the building with a pointed look after him. "He seems to see and understand things two steps before I do, but for some reason cannot understand the two of you are shagging."

"Even *I* figured that out, and I've only been here half an hour," Narcissa sipped her tea and turned bright, grey eyes on the two men who looked a little embarrassed. "Should I ask my cousin or my son's godfather what their intentions are with the other? I'm not exactly sure who I should be giving this shovel talk to."

"He's just using me for my smoking hot body," Sirius rolled his eyes and smirked at the woman though there was a hit of something strained underneath the joke.

Snape frowned deeply. "That's ridiculous. Your bony body could stand several more meals a day before being classified as *hot*," he remarked, the frown deepening even further as if he was actually finally asking himself *why* he was with Sirius and was disconcerted at the answer.

Sirius just turned large, now hopeful, puppy dog eyes on the man. "Well... I was starved for 12 years in prison... but, what are you saying? Wait... I don't understand... you're *not* just using me? Because... I mean, that's fine... er, either way..."

“Yep, that’s now my cue to leave!” Percy abruptly stood up and hurried out. He absolutely did not want to hang around for a feelings-talk between the two men. He hoped Narcissa could mediate at least a little if she didn’t escape quickly as well. This was either going to end up with the house being blown up... or rather, either outcome to this conversation may still leave Grimmauld in shambles knowing those two men.

It was about midnight when Dobby dropped Harry off in the kitchens back at Hogwarts. All in all, he thought that was actually pretty good. It was much less scandalous than sneaking back into Gryffindor tower at 2am at the very least, or so he told himself. “Hi everyone! Sorry for dropping in so late,” he remarked to the house elves who worked the night shift in the kitchen.

“Master Harry,” Bipsy the elderly matron elf with a ruffled white apron wiped flour off her hands and strode over.

“Hi Mistress Bipsy!” Harry grinned at her. “I don’t think you’d be on night shift. Is everything going all right?”

She just waved his concern off with a wrinkled hand. “We had an elf come down with a cold. I’m just filling in this evening. Did Dobby tell you about my request that you take along a house elf when you free the dementors?” She asked in her surprisingly perfect English which always shocked Harry when she spoke to him in it since she changed it to the normal elf dialect whenever she spoke to one of the elves she supervised. It seemed she could turn it off and on in a blink.

“Yes, I’m not sure that’s safe though,” he protested. “I don’t want any of you in danger.”

The woman gave him a very motherly glare that had him closing his mouth with a click. “Now, child, I would come along myself, but I am 178 years old and not as spry as I used to be,” she continued her glare. “Now, you take one of those young ones that serve you for both protection and to be there to take the dementors on to their new home. I don’t particularly like being in charge of another species, but it’s not like we are incapable of being nannies, so we will do our absolute best.”

Harry didn't know what to protest first. Kreacher was definitely not young, though he looked significantly younger now that he was taking better care of himself than when Harry first met him. Although... honestly, he had no clue how old any of the three were. Finally, he decided on: "Erm, Mistress Bipsy... I'm not asking you to be the dementors' nanny. Erm, they need someone like a master to hold their stone. You don't need to order them around, but they need the protection of a master to keep from being exploited by anyone in search of power."

Bipsy just raised a disbelieving eyebrow at him. "You want us to look after the dementors, protect them, keep them from hurting themselves or others, give them space to grow and learn to care for themselves... what of this does not sound like we will be their nursemaids?"

Harry opened and closed his mouth several times before giving up and sighing. "Please just don't tell Nox that. A laughing dementor is quite terrifying."

The elf chuckled and patted Harry's hand while he reapplied his glamour to leave the kitchens. "We'll take good care of them. We already have a nice place set up. We house elves have a castle we run out in Wales near Caerleon. Even I do not know the full story, but previous owners left it in our care and have never returned. The elves who run it are all free at this point since it has been so long since it was inhabited and the magic of the castle is strong enough that they do not need bonds with wixen. They can work in shifts to keep the dementors from negatively affecting them."

"That sounds wonderful," Harry smiled at her. "By holding their stone, their natural aura shouldn't affect you anyway, but it's nice to know the elves are free and can choose to leave if it does become a problem."

"Master Harry," Bipsy stopped him once more before he left with a frown. "I'm not sure if this is important or not, but I was told earlier this evening that the headmaster collapsed and was taken to the infirmary. The infirmary elf informed me it was from a sudden and massive drain to his magic."

Harry's eyes widened as what must have happened sank in. "Oh, shit...Neville! I have to go. Thank you, Bipsy!" He gave her a little hug before rushing out the door.

The elderly elf shook her head fondly, especially when the door was thrown open once more and the Dark Lord shoved his head back into the kitchen with a confused look. "Sir?"

“Mistress Bipsy... you said Caerleon?” He asked, his shock distracting him from the concern of just moments before.

“Yes, sir,” she nodded with a smile, knowing he had put the pieces together.

“Er... yeah, so... would Merlin himself happen to have been the past owner? Are you actually saying that house elves currently own *bloody Camelot?!!*” His wide, green eyes questioned. “How does no one know this?!!”

“Master Harry... you were on your way somewhere?” She prompted him with a knowing smile.

“Bloody hell, Neville!” He exclaimed once more before rushing back out of the kitchens and to Gryffindor Tower.

“I don’t understand, Harry,” Neville sleepily shook his head from where he, Harry, and Fawkes were currently hidden behind the curtains on Neville’s bed with wards blanketing the heavy tapestries around them. Neville was still mostly asleep from when Harry had jumped into bed with him and insisted Fawkes join them before casting every ward he knew it seemed.

“I didn’t realize that a phoenix familiar shares power with their master,” Harry glared at the bird as if Fawkes could have explained that when they didn’t even speak the same language. Considering how very unrepentant Fawkes looked, he probably didn’t even try though.

“But... I mean, yeah, there was a rush of power when we bonded, but I don’t feel any different now,” Neville frowned, not following why Harry was so concerned.

Harry sighed and massaged his temples, adding even more things to his to-do list now. “Nev, you’re young, powerful...”

He glared at Neville when he scoffed at that. “You *are* powerful, just untrained. Dumbledore is old and has been bonded to Fawkes for decades. Apparently, he was using more of Fawkes’s power than his own, probably to keep his own in high reserves in case it was needed in an emergency. Fawkes was supplying more of his day-to-day power at this point. Which had to really suck for you, I’m sorry for what you put up with with that bastard,” Harry added to Fawkes who gave a disgruntled squawk of agreement.

“So... Dumbledore isn’t powerful anymore?” Neville frowned at his new familiar, not knowing what this meant for him. Was he more powerful now?

Harry was already shaking his head. “No, Dumbledore is still very powerful and shouldn’t be underestimated. He just hasn’t been using his own power as much as a normal wizard would who couldn’t power-share, so he collapsed when the bond was broken. Once he taps into his own power-reserves, he’ll still be very powerful, but significantly less-so than earlier today, thankfully.”

Neville was starting to fully wake up as this sank in. “Crap... that means he knows Fawkes left him... he knows about me.”

Harry nodded in resignation. “Yes, he definitely knows. It’s safe to assume he knows you are the Light Lord now as well. You can’t go home for the winter holidays, and you can’t stay in the castle then either. You have to come stay with me... and now Draco too. Merlin, this is going to be a fiasco. He can’t outright attack you with all the other professors and students around, but over the holidays you are more vulnerable with less people around you. Don’t ever go alone to his office for any reason, either come get me, Percy, or Severus to go with you if he asks for a meeting. Go ahead and tell everyone you are going to Longbottom Manor for the holiday though, but we’ll get you and your Gran over to my house instead. I’m so sorry, Neville. I didn’t mean for him to find out so soon!”

“Hey, Harry, it’s fine,” Neville reached over and squeezed his friend’s hand comfortingly. “We figured he already knew since he heard the prophesy. I was only safe in that I didn’t pose a threat to him. I still don’t if we’re being honest, phoenix or no phoenix. I can barely even hold my wand.”

Harry winced. “That’s only because your uncle is a bastard who almost scared the magic out of you... which, we should probably find out if Dumbledore had any hand in that. It makes bloody evil sense. It would fit the pattern of what he did to me. Also, you have a wand that just doesn’t work well for you. That will be the absolute first thing we fix over break, by the way.”

“Wait, why is Malfoy spending Christmas at your house?” Neville frowned when that piece of information finally sank in.

“His mum is leaving his dad... I hope it’s not my job to tell him... Merlin, I think it might be my job to tell him as his new head of the family,” Harry groaned when he realized that yes, he was going to have to talk to the twit.

Neville rolled his eyes. “If you had a hand in this, which I’m guessing you did, then yeah, you should probably talk to him before kidnapping him off the train for break.”

“Fiiine,” he huffed in irritation.

“Hey, how are you both settling in now?” Harry asked both Neville and Fawkes now.

Fawkes nodded with a pleased chirp and Neville shrugged. “The guys all seemed good with it. Fawkes is a much better roommate than Scabbers at least, or even Trevor who I seem to have lost again. I was going to talk to them in the morning about not telling people that Fawkes moved in, but I guess that doesn’t really matter anymore if Dumbledore knows. We might need to loop Ron in on who I am... I think he’s starting to figure things out. He gave me this knowing look before he headed out for his date with Hermione earlier.”

“Whenever you are ready,” Harry patted his knee with a smile before starting to take down the wards to head to bed.

“Hey, Harry... would you mind writing to Gran as Lord Black to invite her over?” Neville asked in thought, planning for how to make all this happen. “I’m not sure how I can convince her to leave the manor for break. Our house is under the fidelus, as it has been my whole life, but Dumbledore knows the secret, so I think you’re right and we can’t stay.”

“Sure thing,” Harry assured him. “I’ll even pop over for a visit if it will help.”

Neville narrowed his eyes. “You aren’t going to get Gran arrested too, are you?”

Harry scoffed. “Please, she’s much too strict and demanding with you, but she does really love you. I’ll play nice and be all charming and everything.”

“Uh huh... you might want to bring Professor Weasley with you,” Neville chuckled and turned to flop back down on his mattress once Fawkes flew back over to his perch.

“I’m so much more charming than Percy! You take that back!” Harry playfully grumbled, but finally jumped into his own bed to get some much needed rest.

“I have been told to pass along the message that you owe her a favor and you absolutely already know what that favor is,” Narcissa Malfoy dryly told Hadrian Black as she handed over the clear vial with a single brown hair in it.

“Yeah, yeah... I’m already going to kill Voldemort. I’m going as fast as I absolutely can,” Harry huffed as he took the vial.

“I’m coming with you,” Sirius Black sat down at the kitchen table in Grimmauld Place where Narcissa and Harry were already seated on a Saturday afternoon.

Narcissa had been living there for a week and they had been getting along extremely well. Narcissa had been owling her sister Andromeda and reconnecting, she even invited her and her family to Christmas. It was like the Black family were finally together and getting along for the first time ever... except for Bellatrix and she was a lost cause and thankfully still in Azkaban. Whatever this plan was that Harry was set on doing quickly was an irritation neither of them could shake though since he refused to tell them what it was.

“Sirius, I will stun you, tie you up, hang you from the ceiling, and have Kreacher guard you before I let you anywhere near the Department of Mysteries with me,” Harry leaned forward and told him in a tone that was so ominous it was dripping with shadows.

“Godric, Harry... dramatic much,” Sirius crossed his arms and tried to glare down his godson/brother.

“No, I think the situation could stand for even more drama. I will absolutely *not* let you anywhere near the place you *died* this year in my first timeline,” Harry said, looking much more like a dark lord than he ever had before.

“Wait, the Department of Mysteries?” Narcissa frowned while Sirius sputtered in surprise that somehow he had died in the ministry of all places. “How is Amos Diggory’s hair going to help you get into there? Can’t your Weasley just let you in anyway? He *is* an Unspeakable, isn’t he?”

“Yes, but I need Percy to keep his job. Having an Unspeakable on our side has already proved invaluable,” he explained. “Percy will be conveniently in a meeting with Minister Fudge doing his other job while I pull this off and have an impenetrable alibi.”

“But, why Amos Diggory?” She reiterated the question.

“Apparently, the department has been having some issues with some rabbits they were using for testing. The poor rabbits were hit with so many different potions and spells that they asked for someone from the Department for the Regulation of Magical Creatures to stop by and see what could be done to corral them. Percy thankfully intercepted the request, so I’ll just have to catch a few fire-breathing bunnies while I’m there,” Harry shrugged in unconcern.

“Did you say fire-breathing bunnies?” Sirius gaped next.

“Merlin only knows how that happened since they started in the Love department before escaping to Euphoria... apparently they just started turning up in odd places after that.”

“So, you’re going alone, and just going to stroll in there in the middle of the day?” Sirius asked next in disbelief.

“Kreacher is going with the master,” Kreacher informed them when he just seemed to show up out of nowhere by the pantry. “Dobby was sad to lose to Kreacher, but Kreacher won and will be going with Master Dark Lord.”

Harry crossed his arms and looked at the elf seriously. “You realize that whoever goes with me will also be heading to meet with our newest supporters after, right? Are you prepared for that? I don’t want you in any situation that makes you uncomfortable.”

Kreacher scoffed and went to put the kettle on. “Better Kreacher than Winky or that idiot Dobby.”

“Do I want to know?” Sirius asked, looking between them.

“No,” Kreacher answered for Harry with a sneer to the man he still really didn’t like.

“Yeah, well, as for the time of day... last time I broke in after hours and it really didn’t go over well, and now it really doesn’t matter,” Harry sighed with a little anxiety under his tone. “Thanks to me and Percy getting the Unspeakable to up their security, it’s going to be just as bad any time of the day now. At least the Order aren’t able to get in, and I doubt Nagini will be able to get in either. So, middle of the day, late at night, it’s going to be bad regardless. I’m counting on the fact that none of the Unspeakables really care about departments other than their own and that aurors are the ones guarding the particular one I’m going to instead of the Unspeakables. I can much more easily predict the spells and strategies of aurors than people who regularly play with obscure magic.”

“Do try not to get Amos arrested, dear,” Narcissa smirked at him. “He’s an idiot but not a bad man, and Callista does love him even if I don’t understand it.”

“Right, well, Kreacher, you ready?” Harry stood and began taking flasks of potion out of his pockets and setting them on the table.

“Now?” Kreacher frowned just as he poured the water from the kettle into a teapot.

“Might as well. Better do it earlier so it doesn't look strange that Amos is hanging around the ministry late. It's odd enough that it's a Saturday, but people do regularly pop in on Saturdays,” he smiled at the elf. “Here, Siri, I finished a new batch of Polyjuice for you, and I only need a couple doses so the rest are yours. If I'm there for more than two hours, Percy is going to need to break me out of prison anyway. I'm sure Nox will help.”

“Nox?” Sirius seemed extremely concerned.

“Huh? Oh, we have some new supporters. I have to get this thing from the Unspeakables for them though... that's the whole purpose of this trip. Once they are with us, then we're all set to go after dear old Voldy though,” Harry took back one of the vials and unstoppered it to drop Amos Diggory's hair into.

“Master Percy is in his meeting?” Kreacher checked, drying his hand on a tea towel before going through the knife drawer to pick the sharpest one to take with him.

“Yeah, all day too. I don't see how he does it, teaching teenagers all week, then in meetings with Fudge on weekends, and still having time to bring dead critters back to life,” Harry gave a sappy smile at the thoughts of his Percy. “My nerd really is the best.”

“Dear, before you leave,” Narcissa stopped him with a hand to his arm. “Have you seen how Draco has been doing? I owled him, but he hasn't responded. His father must have spun some sob story about what happened, and I'm not sure which of us he will believe. My dragon isn't the most skilled at discernment.”

Harry winced. He still hadn't talked to Draco. He was hoping Narcissa's letter would take care of everything so that he didn't have to do it. “He seemed preoccupied during our

quidditch game early this morning. I caught the snitch in fifteen minutes, and I'm not sure he was even looking. I doubt things are going very well for him in Slytherin house currently..."

Harry's knee was still killing him after the game, but it was so much better after Snape's treatments, and it was nice that the game had ended so soon, especially since he could sneak out during the celebrations and handle his little break-in.

"The poor dear," Narcissa sighed worriedly. "He does so love quidditch."

"I'll talk to him, Cissa. If I'm not in prison somewhere, I promise I'll talk to him tomorrow," Harry assured her. "And hey, worst-case scenario, I'll just kidnap him off the train after break and you can explain everything in person."

"Harry, please, let me come with you..." Sirius tried again.

"I swear, Siri, if I see you at the ministry today, I'll turn you into the aurors myself," Harry gave him a death glare. "I'd rather break you out of Azkaban than have you dead."

Sirius huffed but knew that Hadrian could take care of himself and had quite literally already done this once before to an extent. "Fine... well, stay safe and let me know as soon as you are out of the ministry. Send a patronus or something."

Harry sneered. "I can't cast one, remember. Bloody death magic holding me together! Anyway, just I'll send Kreacher back or something to fill you in on how it went. I got this. Stop worrying so much, you're worse than Molly Weasley. Come on Kreacher, grab some fire-proof gloves if you have any."

Kreacher did grab a pair of gloves out of a drawer and trotted happily behind Harry as they left to apparate outside of the house. "Wait... what death magic?!!" Sirius called after them in shock, not getting an answer.

Amos Diggory and an invisible house elf confidently stepped off the lifts into the dimly lit and cavernous Department of Mysteries. “I hear you have a cute, little bunny problem,” Harry smirked at who he very quickly learned was Unspeakable Davids.

Though he couldn’t see the Unspeakable’s face, it was obvious the man was giving him a glare as he crossed his arms. “Dark Lord Black... I honestly don’t care why you are here as long as you do plan on rounding up the fire-breathing rabbits from the prophecy room. Whatever else, I really don’t want to know. If I even see one rabbit after you leave though, I’ll have very loose lips.”

“Merlin, you’re bloody scary and never invited to poker night,” Harry/Amos took a step back in surprise that the man recognized him.

“Every. Single. Rabbit,” the man reminded him with a poke of his finger.

“Sure, yeah, definitely... er, where is the breakroom? You have any carrots or anything in there?” He looked around, now getting much more serious about finding those rabbits.

“Don’t you touch my yogurt,” Davids ordered as he spun on his heel to take the Polyjuiced man and his invisible companion to the room with all the snacks.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Heist #2...

Dementor Relocation Project

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Here bunny, bunny, bunnies...” Harry called tentatively into the new office as he carefully opened the door while carrying a large, conjured burlap bag in one hand and a celery stick and his wand in the other.

Thankfully for this current escapade, one of the Unspeakables working over the weekend had brought celery sticks and hummus as part of their lunch. Hopefully that person was forgiving of their lunch being commandeered for the good of the team. Well, the celery anyway... Harry was not going to mention that Kreacher had grabbed a spoon and decided to make off with the hummus as well. The little elf deserved a snack for helping with this ridiculous mission.

Harry hefted the bag already carrying three stunned rabbits and walked into the dimly lit room more. He'd learned extremely quickly that accio-ing the rabbits was the absolute worst idea possible when a rabbit flew towards him breathing a steady stream of fire across the room and at his face. His eyebrows were still a bit singed after that experience.

“I have yummy celery,” he called hopefully as he looked around in the dark corners for any movement.

He was interested to find that this room was most certainly Percy's new office. It was dripping with the feel of soul magic as well as there being rune stones and herbs neatly organized on the tables which Harry associated with the very little he knew of necromancy. It also didn't hurt that there was a dead rabbit in stasis in one corner. Harry wondered if Davids would expect him to get that one too. After some thought, he was certain Percy meant to keep that particular rabbit and do some experiments on it, so he'd leave it. Someone needed to study the mutant bunnies at the very least.

Honestly, he really wasn't sure what to do with the rabbits once he and Kreacher collected them all. It wasn't the rabbits' fault that they'd been hit with so many experimental spells and potions from the frustrated Unspeakables trying to catch them that they'd turned into something slightly horrifying. Harry thought they were actually quite cute personally, but he

tended to like angry, dangerous things. Maybe he'd spent too much time with Hagrid over the years...

A rustle sounded from the corner of the room behind a large cauldron. Harry immediately spun around and shot a stunner without even looking. A tiny thump sounded, and Harry smiled in triumph.

"Kreacher, if that's you, I'm terribly sorry," he rushed over, thankfully finding a stunned rabbit and not a murderously angry house elf. He deposited the stunned rabbit with the others in his bag.

"Kreacher heard his name," Kreacher opened the office door and stuck his head in questioningly. He was also carrying a conjured bag and a celery stick but with a wooden spoon in that hand instead of a wand.

"How many are you at now?" Harry stood up after checking that the rabbits in his bag seemed to be fine and not in any distress. "I've got four."

"Six, Master Dark Lord," the elf gave him a dangerous smirk. "You's losing, Master."

"Are you whacking them with that spoon?" Harry frowned deeply at the wooden spoon. "We don't want to kill them..."

Kreacher looked at him very disbelievingly. "They's *fire-breathing*," he said as if talking to a very small child.

"Well, that's not *their* fault," Harry just scoffed back and quickly stole the wooden spoon and placed it on Percy's work bench. "Do we even know how many are left?"

Kreacher shrugged. "Kreacher assumes the yogurt obsessed seer Unspeakable will comes get us when we's done."

Harry just shrugged too. "I don't know how his magic works or if his Sight is that specific... oh well, we can just accio randomly when we think we're done and duck and cover after."

"You's need another dose of potion soon," Kreacher reminded the Amos-looking Harry.

"Cheers, mate," Harry smiled and followed him out of the room. "I'll take it in a bit. I'm heading to the Time room. Do you want to take the Hall of Prophecy, or do you want me to do that one? Davids seemed to think a lot of the bunnies had congregated there."

"Kreacher has got it," the elf immediately headed in the direction he assumed the room to be in. "Kreacher clearly is more capable than the Master."

"Ha, ha," Harry drawled fondly at the elf and wandered off, really hoping no Time Vultures were working over the weekend.

There were twenty-three rabbits between the two sacks when Harry and Kreacher finally met back up in the circular room the department was built around. Thankfully, Davids had known how to turn off the feature of the room which made the doors spin or it would have taken them much too long and Harry would most definitely have run out of Polyjuice. Kreacher was still crowing tauntingly that he had fifteen rabbits to Harry's eight. Davids had been right that most of them were in the Hall of Prophecies for some reason.

"Is that all of them?" Davids strolled towards where they were bickering with each other from the breakroom. Harry was surprised he was starting to be able to recognize the disguised man just from his voice and mannerisms and he didn't even know him that well. He would probably need to extend a more formal invitation to the seer to join their little coup at this rate... though, he was pretty sure the man would just scoff and feign wanting to stay out of things while always being right in the middle regardless.

"We've done every room except for the Death Chamber which we saved for last," Harry informed him, smoothing Amos Diggory's hair down which seemed to like to frizz more than

his own.

The Unspeakable was already shaking his hooded head. “Instinctually, they would not have wondered in there. They would have been able to sense the Veil and its danger. Did any of my coworkers give you problems?”

Harry and Kreacher both shook their heads. “I’m Amos Diggory,” Harry responded for his part. “Everyone was either too uncomfortable to talk to me since we just lost Cedric, or they were more focused on telling me how sorry they were for my loss instead of asking difficult questions.”

“Kreacher is a house elf. Even when I’s not invisible, I’s invisible to wixen,” the elf sagely informed them.

“That sucks,” Harry grunted wryly, knowing that would change very soon with his new administration, and the fact that the house elves were going to be in charge of the dementors. “Well, they’ll learn eventually with you guys and Bipsy in charge anyway.”

“Is Master going to do a final check?” Kreacher asked, excitement shining in his eyes at Harry most likely being set on fire again. Harry thought he should probably be more concerned that his elf was so excited that he was going to summon an animal shooting fire at his face, but he understood, he thought it would be quite exciting himself.

“Sure, might as well,” he gave them a dangerous smirk. Davids pulled a non-descript wand from his sleeve and cast a shield around himself. Kreacher shrugged and moved to stand behind Davids to just use the wizard as a shield.

“Accio living rabbits,” Harry called out very specifically since he didn’t want to accidentally get Percy’s project. A squeak sounded from somewhere over by the lifts and suddenly a stream of fire was coming directly towards Harry’s face.

Harry hit the ground and immediately cast a nonverbal stupefy over his head, hitting the flying rabbit directly on its stomach. “Success!” He crowed loudly and then grunted when he had to stand on his bum knee again. The Polyjuice really must be wearing off if his knee was

starting to protest again. Merlin, but it was embarrassing that Amos Diggory, who was solidly much older than him, had better joints than the 27-year-old Harry.

“Kreacher...er, how about just dropping these off in the basement of Grimmauld really quick? We have a good week before the next full moon to do something with them before Remus will need the space. I’ll give it some thought for how to take care of them,” Harry handed his sack over to the elf.

Kreacher grumbled something under his breath about killing the nuisances which Harry firmly ignored. “Please leave them some nice snacks and water too before returning!” He called with a smile when Kreacher popped away, still grumbling.

“Our department greatly appreciates your help in this matter,” Davids dryly said as he dispelled his shield and waited in expectant suspicion for Harry to reveal his real purpose in coming to the Department of Mysteries since it was clearly not for their rabbit issue.

“No problem at all, it was fun,” Harry bounced on his toes and grinned. “Now, I’ll just pop my head in the Veil room and make sure it’s clear to be extra sure, and then I’ll be on my way.”

Davids crossed his arms and was most definitely frowning even if Harry couldn’t see his face. “Right, I have three questions before I decide if I’m leaving you to whatever this is or if I’m interfering.”

Harry was absolutely not going to voice his opinion that he would unfortunately need to attack and incapacitate the man if he planned to keep him from his mission. The Unspeakable would know that already, and Harry was certain he was well aware he couldn’t win against the dark lord even if he was a seer. He really would hate to do anything violent against the man who was starting to be a good friend to Percy though.

“Well, let’s have those questions,” Harry said with a kind smile instead of these thoughts. He was certain he could talk the man around regardless. He seemed to be an ally, even if reluctantly.

“First... how probable is it that you will get Amos Diggory arrested for this stunt?” Davids held up a finger. “My friend does not deserve that on top of everything else he and his family are going through.”

“Highly unlikely,” Harry rolled his eyes and pulled a vial of potion from a pocket to negate the last effects of the Polyjuice. He took the potion and Hadrian Black appeared with a grimace and a shake in the middle of the room.

“Amos has left the building,” he smirked. “Your friend is perfectly safe. Besides, I have his wife keeping him busy in Diagon Alley today with lots of witnesses on the off chance that someone will try to pin anything on him. I’m not going to let Mr. Diggory get into any trouble.”

“Wonderful...now two,” he held up a second finger. “Will you be using violent or deadly force against the innocent aurors currently guarding the Veil for any reason? I will not have you attacking people under my care, no matter how loosely connected they are to the department.”

Harry’s smile fell a little and he winced. “That is not the plan,” he responded. He didn’t want to hurt anyone, especially since they were just assigned guard duty and not Death Eaters or anything, but he desperately needed that stone. If they were using deadly force, he would respond in kind whether intentionally or instinctually.

“I promise that I will do my best to not use anything more harmful than stunners and shields, but if they are throwing killing curses at me, I don’t know that I can keep from doing more than that,” Harry tried to explain.

Davids scoffed. “I realize your time is different from ours currently, but aurors do not go around throwing killing curses at people. They are banned from using dark magic, including the Unforgivables, even against Death Eaters.”

“That sounds a bit stupid if the Death Eater is trying to kill them... whatever, it helps me at least.” Harry raised a disbelieving eyebrow at Davids’ assessment of the situation but let it pass. That was very much not his experience with aurors in any timeline. He was fairly certain the avada kedavra scar on his arse came from one of the aurors in that raid instead of a Death Eater, but he couldn’t prove that for certain.

“What’s your third question?”

“How necessary is this... whatever it is you are doing?” He asked after a moment of thought, and his tone went much more serious. “Whatever this mission is, does the fate of the war or our society rest on it? Is there another way?”

Harry was slowly shaking his head. “I wouldn’t have thought this was necessary only months ago, but now... yes. I have information I didn’t then, and if I don’t do this, we will either lose the war against Voldemort, against the ministry, or there will be a major problem down the line even if it’s after I’m dead and gone. This is absolutely necessary and should have been handled centuries ago instead of now. This is righting both an injustice and protecting our people.”

While Davids was thinking, Kreacher popped back into the room with a grumble about ungrateful rabbitses. “The chamber is warded against house elf apparition as well as wixen,” the elf informed Harry with a side-eye towards Davids.

“Uh huh,” Harry raised an eyebrow at the elf. “So, you tried to go in there without me is what I’m hearing.”

Kreacher rolled his eyes and scoffed. “Master is so melodramatic. Kreacher was just checking.”

“Well, I guess I will leave it to you then,” Davids finally gave a decided nod and turned to leave, trusting that Harry knew what he was talking about and had thought out the implications of what he was doing. “I believe I will go sort through some of older prophecies, maybe do a spot of dusting... well away from here. Do be safe and try to restrain your more volatile instincts.”

“That I can do!” Harry beamed at him. “Thank you! I’ll send biscuits with Per...er, Smith for you!”

“Make them shortbread,” Davids called back as he disappeared into the door leading to the Hall of Prophecies and the thousands of glass orbs.

“Well, let’s do this!” Harry turned to Kreacher and pulled a packet of dark powder from his robes’ pocket. Thanks to a bit of help from Harry and his black-market contacts, the Weasley twins were able to invent their darkness powder much earlier than in the first timeline. He had gotten them started on several of their more useful creations already that he thought he might need against Voldemort or Dumbledore. Kreacher snapped his fingers and his eyes glowed for a second, spelling himself to be able to see through the darkness the same as Harry’s runes would help him.

“This or this? Which is best?” Kreacher asked, holding up a chisel in one hand and a crowbar in the other. Where he got them from, Harry had absolutely no clue, he hadn’t conjured them and it’s not like they would fit in his little toga.

Deciding he would question the elf about his stealthy ways later, Harry looked at both in consideration. “How about you take the chisel, and I’ll take the crowbar. I doubt we’ll be able to spell something this magical out of the arch. It’ll probably need to be the muggle way of digging it out.”

After taking the crowbar in his hand holding the darkness powder as well, Harry stepped forward to open the door to the Death Chamber. “Try not to kill or seriously maim anyone,” he added over his shoulder to Kreacher. “Davids will have a hippogriff if we do, and I’m trying to keep him on my good side.”

Kreacher grumbled and rolled his eyes but did nod. Harry turned back and tossed in the twins’ invention inside and smiled as he heard the surprised shouts on the other side of the door. “Right, we’re off!”

So... the plan was to throw in the instant darkness powder, stun the aurors, find the stone, chisel the stone out of the arch, and run out before the powder dissipated. That was the plan anyway. That is definitely not what happened.

Harry and Kreacher ran in after the darkness descended, but the aurors were not stumbling around disoriented, they were wildly throwing stunners and hexes of their own out into the room from where they had banded together in one corner. “Bloody hell!” Harry gasped and he rolled under a stunner that would most definitely have hit him if he had any worse reflexes.

“Stupify!” He cast, and it was immediately blocked by the red robed aurors. The aurors were more capable than he had hoped, but he still believed he and Kreacher were up to the task.

There were three aurors in the room, one very tall man, one a bit on the heavier and more muscular side, and one who was average besides her very blonde hair. It was definitely more people than Harry had been expecting; because why did they need three people to guard a stone archway? It was possible his luck was so bad that he’d gotten there just at a shift change though. Yeah...that was most definitely the reason. Potter luck strikes again.

Kreacher was already sneaking over to the archway crouched low to the ground and under the spell fire. He worked his way over to the one small stone which was slighter darker than all the other ones around it. Hopefully, that was the right one, if not, they were screwed. Harry decided it might be best for him to just cover Kreacher from the wild curses coming from where the aurors were throwing them into the room, standing side by side so they didn’t accidentally hit each other. He dropped the crowbar and quickly changed his strategy.

“Cruxes maxima!” Harry cast, quickly to raise a protection ward around Kreacher who was chipping away with his chisel.

“Ah!” Harry couldn’t help the little scream as he was hit with a very familiar curse in the lower part of his arm while he was momentarily distracted by protecting the house elf and had unfortunately given his position away by speaking.

“Bloody, fucking, aurors...” he growled lowly while moving so they couldn’t find him again.

Harry was now trying to figure out which one of the aurors had thrown that spell. By the angle, it had to have been the tall man...which could definitely have been the auror from the future that hit him with that same bloody curse. If he hadn’t promised Davids he was going to try not to use violent spells, that one would have found himself in St. Mungo’s. It was the

same bone-breaking curse his knee had been hit with that had just painfully shattered part of Harry's left arm.

A tap of his wand to a set of pain numbing runes, had Harry momentarily able to think past the blinding pain, but it wouldn't last for long. He swore that when Remus took over the ministry, he was going to very *nicely* recommend that auror in particular be fired and put under immediate investigation, especially if he was already using such violent curses that were worse than many of the 'dark' ones Harry had been hit with in his time.

"Vespera forte," he made a pushing motion with his wand and the line of aurors were hit with a powerful push of wind that knocked them over even with their shields raised and scattered them. If they couldn't find each other, then they couldn't throw curses around wildly without putting their comrades in danger. He had to disorient them for the darkness to work to his advantage.

"Stupify!" He tried again, this time actually catching the muscular auror who stayed on the ground now in a heap.

"Diffindo!" The blonde woman cast towards his voice and Harry had to shield himself, wishing there was actually some cover in the room instead of it being completely empty besides the archway and Veil which was tantalizingly and insistently whispering to Harry just like the first time he'd been in the room. Harry ignored the Veil's beckoning and mentally told Death, sorry, no offense but bugger off. Percy had ordered him to stay alive until he had died first, until then, Death could piss off since Harry had to choose to leave this life of his own volition.

"Petrificus totalis!" Harry cast next with an exasperated huff at annoying Unspeakables since he was having to stay with mostly first- and second-year spells to keep from doing any lasting harm. This was almost embarrassing. If there was a dark lord convention somewhere, he would most definitely be laughed out of it.

Harry's spell was blocked by the annoying and very morally concerning taller auror who cast back his standard bone-shattering spell. Merlin, Harry was throwing stunners, and this guy could easily kill him if that spell hit his head or chest! Without a second thought, Harry cast several more layers to Kreacher's protection ward while trying to move around so that they couldn't find him by his voice. Kreacher was clearly working as fast as he could, but it was

slow going chipping away at the stones around the precious one they were attempting to steal.

“Diffindo!” Harry threw back at the auror in angry frustration when even the man’s partner had yelled out a warning at the entrail boiling curse he’d just used and which Harry had easily deflected, but still... that just wasn’t cool in the slightest.

“Bloody, Merlin, chill dude! I’m not a damn troll trying to take off your head or anything,” Harry actually yelled at the man, getting a small fearful chuckle from the woman who did throw at stunner at his voice though as well.

“Death Eater scum! Avada kedavra!” The tall auror growled as he cast the jet of sickly green light towards where Harry had spoken.

Unfortunately, Harry had moved after he’d spoken, and the two aurors that were still conscious had been moving quite a lot themselves after they had been pushed out of their formation. Therefore, now the jet of green light was headed straight towards the blonde auror whose eyes widened in fear as the light swirled towards her. Not thinking about it besides with an inner curse and litany of swear words, Harry flung himself back and into the green light just before it hit the other auror.

“Merlin! No, no, no!” the woman rushed over to where Harry had hit the floor in a painful heap, his broken arm held tightly to one side as he lay still as death.

“Got it!” Kreacher stood up from where he was at the arch, now holding the small, black stone in one hand when his eyes found Harry’s form with the auror crying over it while the darkness held around them in the room.

“You bastard!” The woman screamed at her partner. “That curse was going to hit me, your partner, and the bloody perp saved my life! What have you done?!”

“No,” the other auror breathed out, his furious expression falling into one of stunned disbelief.

Kreacher growled an inhuman roar of pain, causing both aurors to look up into darkness in shock, not having realized there were two people in the room with them since Kreacher hadn't been casting anything. "How dare you!" Kreacher stormed towards the auror, his chisel raised where he suddenly stabbed the man in the side.

"Stop!" Harry coughed and held out his right hand, magically pushing Kreacher away from the now bleeding man.

"You're under arrest!" The bleeding auror tried even as he held a hand to his side now, pain lacing his features.

The blonde auror didn't seem to know what to do. She had seen the shadowy man get hit with a killing curse, and he was still alive. This was completely unheard of... well, except for that one time fourteen years ago... what was happening here?!

"Fawkes!" Harry called desperately, hoping to freaking Merlin that phoenixes could get in and out of the room when neither he nor Kreacher could.

Kreacher ran over to where Harry was trying to pick himself up painfully, with eyes wide in shock and concern. Nothing happened... Harry held Kreacher's hand now as he promptly cast another stunner at both aurors, finally knocking them both out, and probably saving the bleeding auror's life since he couldn't bleed out now before help arrived... not that he really cared about that at the moment.

"Master... you's was hit with a killing curse!" Kreacher was petting Harry's hair now in a kind of awe.

"Fawkes! You featherbrain!" Harry called out in pain as he tried to ignore the over-wrought house elf. "What did I do in second year to get him to come to me... er..."

Wait, didn't he say something nice about Dumbledore or something? Show loyalty or whatever? "Neville is the best wizard in all Britain, he's the only Light Lord, he's the only

person with any sense that I know, he can get a devil's snare to worship the ground he walks on, he's super sexy with his knit jumpers and all..."

Fawkes finally appeared in a blaze of flames and with a song that sounded more like a laugh than music. "Finally! Can you get me and Kreacher out of here? Take us to Snape!" Harry pleaded with the bird who was welcome to laugh at him all he wanted as long as he got them out of the bloody Ministry of Magic.

Fawkes hopped onto Harry's chest while Harry held onto Kreacher, and all three of them were gone in a blast of flames, leaving three stunned aurors and an empty stone archway with nothing particularly special about it at all now except for the small hole where a dark stone used to reside.

Harry groaned loudly from what he surprisingly recognized as the floor of his godfather's bedroom at Grimmauld Place. "I said to take me to Snape not Sirius!" He collapsed back on the floor and growled at the bird still on his chest.

"Harry?" Sirius's voice sounded from the bed before a mess of black hair leaned over the side of the bed to take in his abnormally pale godson and now crying house elf on his floor.

"Either Fawkes needs to get to crying all over me, or someone needs to get me Snape!" Harry let out a shuddering breath as his pain numbing runes began to stop working and his arm and now side overwhelmed him. He didn't think he could stay conscious much longer at all.

"What happened?" The potion master suddenly appeared at Harry's other side with his wand drawn, his hair mussed, and wearing only a dark t-shirt and what appeared to be silk boxer shorts.

Harry looked up into Snape's concerned face and frowned. "Huh... I didn't see that one coming..." he trailed off with a sharp wince and intake of breath as the pain rolled over him. "Bloody Percy not telling me things..."

“Master Dark Lord was hit with a killing curse!” Kreacher wailed and held onto Harry’s uninjured arm too tightly.

“Bone-shattering curse, like my knee but the left arm,” Harry continued to ignore the elf to inform Snape. “Ignore the killing curse bit. There’s nothing you can do about that. I’m probably going to pass out soon, so someone give Kreacher a calming draught, take the stone he’s holding away from him and put it somewhere safe for now. And someone *please* get me some firewhiskey for when I wake back up!”

Snape was already casting at Harry’s arm while Sirius scurried off the bed to find Snape’s robes where he always kept several vials of potions in the pockets. “Fawkes, a few tears would be helpful if you would please,” Snape asked the bird kindly who turned his head over Harry’s arm where a pearly tear was gathering.

Harry’s vision started to black out as he watched the tear slide to the corner of the bird’s eye and shake there slightly. “Don’t tell Percy. He’ll get himself arrested going after the bastard who did this,” Harry muttered just as he lost the fight to stay conscious.

Harry woke up feeling like Buckbeak was sitting on his chest. “Ergh!” He groaned and cracked one eye open and frowned at everything being red around him.

“Wha...?” Harry blew out a breath and the red around him moved. It was hair. “Perce?” He mumbled, smiling slightly as the man who had been lying on the bed with him turned slightly to get his hair out of Harry’s face more and see him.

“Oh, love,” Percy scooted even closer to the injured man and his breath was hot where his lips were now against Harry’s neck.

“Where am I?” Harry finally got out painfully as he opened both eyes on a familiar room he had stayed in that summer. “Grimmauld?”

“You’ve only been out for a few hours. Do you remember what happened?” Percy asked from where he still seemed to be trying to physically crawl inside his partner while also attempting to not hurt him more.

Harry grunted as he woke up enough for the memories to settle. “Bloody hell, don’t tell Voldy... or Neville... or Dumbledore. That was so embarrassing. I’ll never live this down,” he groaned in frustration. “At least we got the stone. Where is it?”

“Table,” Percy simply stated, his eyes cutting back to the side table while he didn’t attempt to move at all. “Did you really get hit with another avada kedavra? Why was an auror casting that spell?”

“Huh? I don’t know...he seemed really angry,” Harry shifted to pull up the side of his pajama top which he really hoped Snape hadn’t put him in because that would just be the cherry on top of his embarrassment of the day. He found a bloody red lightning bolt cut there that was only slightly starting to scab over.

“Yep...aw, man...it messed up my werewolf!” Harry frowned at where it cut through his tattoo of Moony. Well, he’d just have to get that touched up later.

“I’m never letting you leave the house again,” Percy informed him in all seriousness.

Harry chuckled and winced. “Yeah, right, that’s not going to work...I have to go to Azkaban shortly, especially if I’ve been out for a few hours. At least we’ve fully confirmed your theories and all about my mortality or lack thereof.”

“Is he awake,” a soft voice drawled from the doorway in a tone Harry had yet to hear from the man in all the time he had known him. It seemed that Snape was actually really worried about him.

“Yeah, you have my whiskey?” Harry turned green, hopeful eyes up to Snape whose concerned look fell into a sneer while he cast a diagnostic charm at him.

“No alcohol for at least 24 hours with the potions I have you on. Between how quickly you got here, the potions, and Fawkes’s tears, your arm should heal fully unlike your knee did,” Snape informed him matter-of-factly.

“Thank you,” Harry gave him a grateful smile from where he was still being crushed on the bed by a redhead. “Where’s Siri?” He looked around the room expecting to see his godfather in a corner somewhere.

Snape gave a little huff of frustration. “He is currently Polyjuiced as you and running around the ministry to both give you an alibi as clearly not the one injured and to find out who the Salazar-forsaken auror was who did this to you. The elf was able to fill us in on most of your ill-advised attempt at a heist even through his hysteria. He is currently sleeping off a large dose of calming draught.”

“Do I need to obliviate anyone?” Percy sat up some in concern to ask them while he pulled his wand out of a pocket. “What all did the aurors see?”

“Too much, but no one will believe them,” Harry scoffed, knowing that they probably wouldn’t even attempt to tell anyone, or it would both implicate the male auror of using unnecessary force, and no one would believe them anyway. “I want them to remember so they know exactly why Remus is firing them shortly once we take over. Well, that bastard anyway, his partner seemed alright. Maybe we’ll keep her. I’ll make sure he is brought up on some kind of charges though! I’m definitely not the only one he’s attacked like this!”

“What did you need this for anyway? What is it?” Snape picked up the small, black stone with his eyes studying every minute detail of it.

“Ah... so I’ll tell you that just as soon as you fill me in on whatever you have going on with my godfather/brother,” Harry smirked at the man and reached up to take the stone from him. He was a little concerned about other people touching it. Magic that dark might have an ill-effect on people who held it too long.

Snape’s lips thinned as he glared at Harry. “That is none of your business.”

Harry shrugged with an evil gleam in his eyes. “My best friend is shagging my brother... someone needs a shovel-talk. And, since we met again in this time when you were hitting on

me, I'm thinking it should probably be you I talk to."

"I should have just stayed with Dumbledore," Snape closed his eyes and groaned.

"Right, so... have a seat, dear. Now, what are your intentions with Mr. Black?" Harry grinned at him while testing out his arm by rubbing Percy's back comfortingly.

Harry, Percy, Fawkes, Snape, and Dobby all found themselves just outside the gates to Azkaban prison not two hours later. Dobby had apparated himself and Harry while Fawkes dropped off Percy and Snape. Kreacher was still under the effects of a strong calming draught, so Dobby had needed to be called in to represent the house elves.

"You should not be standing... and none of us should be anywhere near this cursed place," Snape growled lowly for the tenth time since he'd realized he wouldn't be able to talk Harry out of this tip and had instead decided to invite himself along.

"I told you to stay at Grimmauld," Harry sighed and leaned on Percy more since Snape was right and he probably shouldn't be standing. "We need to get this taken care of, and I have to get back to the school before I'm missed."

"How's we going to get the dementors?" Dobby asked, his expression surprisingly not fearful of the situation at all. "If we's enter the gates, we will need to talks to the aurors."

"I doubt that will be a problem... don't you feel them?" Percy asked, so pale his freckles stood out sharply on his skin. "They are coming this way. They know we're here."

"Brilliant... I'd prefer to not have to move," Harry straightened up slightly so he didn't look quite as injured.

“Harrrry Potterrr,” a raspy voice greeted them before three dementors slowly floated down from the sky to right between them and the iron gates. “We have been waiting for you.”

“Hey Nox! How have you been?” Harry smiled at the middle dementor who lowered his hood, showing his pale features and closed eyes. Harry could physically feel the surprise and fear from all in his party even with the normal chilling effects of the dementors at a minimum.

“We have been waiting,” Nox replied with pursed lips as if he didn’t quite understand Harry’s question. “You have ourrr stone... Master.”

Harry scoffed but pulled the stone from his pocket and showed it to them, making all three dementors step back in fear. “Do not give us the stone!!” Nox ordered with a desperate tone to his screech.

“I’m not. I’m not, I promise,” Harry quickly put it back in his pocket and showed them his empty hands again placatingly. “Merlin, I’m not going to hurt you. I just wanted you to know for sure that I had it.”

“We can feel it. We know,” the dementor assured him firmly, but stepped forward once more. “You, Masterrr, and your friends are welcome to our prison...”

Harry scratched his neck and thought while Percy seemed to be trying valiantly to hold in a million questions. “Er... well, we have a new home set up for you, but we also don’t want a prison break to happen... Are there enough human guards here to keep the prisoners from getting out if you all were to leave?”

Nox and his two children shared a look and the dementor to the left floated off and back towards the prison. “My children will secure all the prisonerrrrs. The humans will eventually learn they need more of them on the island. Until then, the doors will all remain locked. Where are we going?”

“Oh, yeah, Dobby!” Harry smiled at the little elf who bounced up to him and gave the dementor a little cheeky bow. “The house elves are going to take care of you all. They have a castle over in Wales that’s been empty for a long time. They think you’ll like it there.”

Nox gave Dobby a little bow in return. “Yes, Master... what do you wish us to do now that we are yours?”

“Not mine!” Harry spoke up quickly, cutting Snape off who was most definitely about to ask what the dementor meant by them being Harry’s. “Bipsy will be your master. She and the house elves will look after you, make sure you have everything you need, and help you to become a little more self-sufficient. No one will be ordering you around though.”

“We do not underrrstand...” Nox looked over to his child who was clearly not helpful since he much less developed than Nox.

“Bipsy will fill you in as your new master,” Harry told him kindly, even going so far as to reach across and pat Nox’s cloaked arm, causing the dementor to breath in a breath of shock as well as make Snape look like he might pass out.

“I know it’s very different, and a lot to take in, but you are no longer slaves... what you want to do is up to you. If you need orders for a while until you get settled, tell Bipsy, she can help and give you some orders. Or, if you want to pick up painting or some such rot, she’ll help with that too,” Harry tried to explain.

“We do not underrrstand... but we will trust you, Masterrr,” Nox finally nodded his head in decision.

“Again, not your master,” Harry sighed and looked back to share an exasperated look with Percy.

“Hadrian...you know...” Snape started, but Harry glared at him until he closed his mouth.

“I refuse to be their master,” Harry coldly told the man who had most definitely been about to suggest they keep the dementors as a weapon. Fawkes gave a little trill of something that might pass for agreement with Harry.

“The Goddess speaks of your goodness,” Nox raised a pale hand to the sky. “We pray for yourrr success against the pretenderrr.”

“Thank you,” Harry said kindly. “Erm... I did have a quick request. You are welcome to say no, but if you could do me a little favor...”

Both Nox and the other dementor cocked their heads to the side. “You are holding our stone... the Masterrr only needs to ask.”

“Riiight,” Harry grimaced. “Erm, I was wondering if maybe you wouldn’t mind me popping into Bellatrix Lestrangle’s cell just for a little bit before we leave? Again, this is not an order or anything, I’m only asking.”

“Morgana, Harry... you are in no shape to be torturing that monster right now...” Percy spoke up to protest.

“The Masterrr can have the Lestrangle woman!” Nox firmly stated, wanting to be clear that Harry got what Harry wanted.

“He can’t even walk up the stairs currently,” Percy said to Nox this time. “Would you consent to it being me instead of Harry? Let me take care of this for you, love, while you recuperate,” he added on kindly to Harry at the end.

“Percy...” Snape opened his mouth with a frown, catching on to what they were talking about doing. “What you are asking...”

“I know what I’m asking, Snape,” Percy cut him off while still staring into Harry’s bright, green eyes.

“Dobby will takes the Master’s Percy,” Dobby spoke up. “If the dementorses will lets house elveses pop in?”

“Fine,” Harry gave Percy a short nod and a sharp look. “I trust you... just make it good, for Neville, and very, *very* final.”

“Of course,” Percy scoffed with a smile and placed a hand on Dobby. “Even a necromancer won’t have anything left to work with.”

Nox nodded and raised his hand once more before lowering it. “The elf may apparate in, but return shortly so I can rrrraise the wards once more.”

With a sharp crack, the Unspeakable and the house elf were suddenly gone. Fawkes gave a little trill and settled more on Snape’s shoulder where he had found himself a perch thankfully taller than Harry. “Well, you all packed? We need to head out soon,” Harry made conversation with the dementor while they waited impatiently.

“We arrre ready,” Nox stated firmly as a dark cloud slowly approached them from the prison as the dementors cleared out and came their way.

“Bipsy!” Harry called loudly and the ancient elf suddenly popped beside him, cleaning flour from her hands on her starched, white apron.

“Ah, Master Harry, and Master Nox... well met,” she smiled at the dementor and his oncoming children. “Are we all about ready for the relocation? We have you a very nice place set up.”

“They say they’re ready,” Harry handed the stone to Bipsy who plopped it right into her apron pocket with absolutely no ceremony. “Put that somewhere safe where you don’t have to carry it,” he warned her, still not sure of the effects still.

“Of course,” she scoffed at him fondly and patted his hand.

“Mistrress,” Nox bowed lowly to the elf. “We live to serve...”

“Excellent!” The woman reached over and patted the dementor’s sleeve next. “We’ll get along nicely then; us elves feel the same way. Now, do you all need beds or how do you sleep?”

Nox actually opened his eyes for the first time since Harry had met him. Harry didn’t even think the dementor *had* eyes or *could* open them, but pure white eyes studied the elf woman in front of him in wonder. “Dementorrrs do not sleep,” he finally coughed out before closing his eyes once more.

“Right, well... portkeys. Harry, dear, be a love and get on that for us, will you?” Bipsy turned and gave Harry a very motherly smile at the order.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Dumbledore makes waves...

Meeting with the Headmaster

Chapter Notes

I'm still thinking 4 or 5 chapters left. We're getting closer anyway.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Neville picked at his porridge over breakfast in the Great Hall. Nothing was different around him; everything was the same, but it also felt as if everything had been upended and changed in his life. He inwardly poked at the bright tether of magic within him that he knew led to Fawkes who was currently out hunting in the Forbidden Forest. He didn't yet know how he felt about having such a powerful familiar, but he was decidedly not looking anywhere near the headmaster who was eating his breakfast up at the head table. He also never planned to take magic away from the bird, that was just...something was very wrong with that and another reason he really, *really* was starting to hate the headmaster he used to admire.

Neville glanced over to where the newest, most eccentric, and very welcome addition to the Gryffindor table sat cutting up Harry's breakfast for him. What did Luna know that he didn't? What was wrong with Harry that she was taking care of him more than usual? After looking his friend over, Harry did look pretty rough even through the glamour. Still avoiding the headmaster's eyes, Neville looked up to the head table and saw both Professor Weasley and Professor Snape alternately looking over to the Gryffindor table in concern. Yes, Harry must have done something over the weekend. Neville was both very concerned and oddly excited that things were moving forward. Well...hopefully it was all good. It could really go either way with Harry, and Neville took a determined breath in deciding that he should probably step it up and check in on Harry's plans more often now as part of his new job. Merlin, Grindelwald might have been a more reasonable dark lord to work with than this version of Harry.

As stealthily as he could, Neville swiped Parvati's abandoned copy of the Daily Prophet and glanced through it. Nothing stood out as shocking. There was an attack in Kent, but that was most definitely Death Eaters and not Harry. There weren't any sightings of Sirius Black and no shocking deaths of high up ministry officials. Whatever Harry had done over the weekend must either not have come to light yet or was being covered up. Well... Harry would tell him eventually, or he'd tell Ron and Ron would tell him, either way. Ron had been spending much more time with Neville recently since Harry's attention was split and was frankly not the same Harry as he had been just the year before. It was the least lonely Neville had ever felt during his time at Hogwarts, and the most involved he'd ever felt in his life in what was going on around him.

“Hey Nev, what did you get for the correct soil to use with the venomous tentacula?” Ron asked from where he was both eating and trying to finish his Herbology homework that was due in a little over an hour. Thankfully they all had a free period before Herbology, or he would definitely be getting a Troll at the very least on that paper.

“Nothing with nitrogen in it, and that’s all I’m telling you,” Neville smirked at the redhead who groaned and dodged an elbow from his girlfriend at the same time.

With a shared grin at Hermione for all she had to put up with, Neville stood. “I’m going to head on down to the greenhouse now. I want to check in on the new mandrakes and maybe repot one or two of the chubbier ones.”

“See you there, Nev,” Hermione gave him a wave and Harry even looked up from where Luna was telling him a story about one of her expeditions to give him a tired smile.

Neville hoped light lords got to work in their gardens still. Herbology was definitely very Light magic, so it would make sense that he could keep it. Regardless, he was looking forward to their upcoming break because Harry had promised he would get him some books to read and there would be free time to study away from school and people who would question his new area of research into what it meant to be a lord of the Light. He wasn’t sure what he thought about Harry’s vehement mission to get him a new wand though. He didn’t think it would make that much difference, but Harry seemed to think it did, so maybe...he just hoped Harry wasn’t disappointed when he was still terrible at literally everything. Merlin...he was a horrible choice for a light lord! What was Fate or Magic or whoever thinking?

He was almost to the door out to the grounds when he heard a tiny voice clearing their throat. “Erm, hello...er, Neville, sir?” sounded behind him tentatively.

Neville turned and couldn’t help the smile at the tiny first or maybe second year Hufflepuff trying to get his attention. “Oh, hello. Can I help you?” He stooped down some to be more on the little girl’s level.

She turned a bright shade of pink as soon as Neville's attention was fully on her. "Oh, um, yeah, I mean no... Headmaster Dumbledore asked me to give you this," she shoved a small piece of parchment into his hand before scurrying off towards the dungeons.

Neville shook his head and wondered if he and his friends were ever that small. He definitely remembered being that shy around the older students, but he didn't think he was quite that tiny... Harry maybe had been since even eleven-year-old Neville had thought he was small. Regardless, the parchment was a concerning development though.

Straightening up, he opened the parchment with a frown. It was only a sentence asking for Neville to come to the headmaster's office before his first class to discuss his plans for the winter break. Right... this was not good at all. Harry had expressly told him to never go to the headmaster's office alone. That, and the headmaster had absolutely never asked to meet with Neville in his office in the five years he'd been at the school before.

He looked around, not sure what to do. He couldn't ask Harry to go with him because, as far as Dumbledore knew, Harry was another student and had no reason to accompany Neville. His mind spun through his options... McGonagall was the most reasonable choice since she was his head of house and would actually need to know about his plans for break. It would make sense for him to bring her to the meeting, and it could even be explained away as him being nervous... which he most decidedly *was* now anyway.

Making up his mind, Neville hurried over to where he knew the professors left the Great Hall after breakfast. Luck must have been with him because he was just in time to catch a glimpse of tartan robes turning the corner. With a burst of speed, he caught up to his head of house just turning into the Transfiguration corridor. "Professor!" He panted out. Merlin, maybe he should also get Harry or Percy to help him with some exercises to get him more in shape!

"Mr. Longbottom?" Professor McGonagall paused and turned to address the out-of-breath student with just a hint of distraction bleeding into her tone.

"Headmaster...er...Headmaster Dumbledore...he asked me to come to his office to talk about break," Neville finally got out as he caught his breath. "Could you please come with me?"

The woman frowned at him looking impatient and a little confused. “Mr. Longbottom, why would you need me to go with you to talk with the headmaster? He does not bite as you should know by now as a fifth year.”

Great, Gryffindors...suddenly he was irritated at his own house of bravery or some such rot. How did he explain this without giving away what he was or what Harry was or look ridiculous at the very least? This teacher was his head of house though, so he just had to be insistent.

“Please, ma’am, I would really appreciate it if you could come along. I’m not sure why we need to discuss my winter break plans since I’m planning to go home, but if it’s something to do with Gran or Uncle Algie’s trial or something, I would really like my head of house to be there,” he tried next, doing his best innocent impression for the woman.

McGonagall crossed her arms and scoffed at him, not in an unkind way but more as a disappointed older relative would. “Mr. Longbottom, you are fifteen years old, this is something you need to learn to handle on your own. I have a class this hour and cannot accompany you, but even if I could, this is a learning opportunity for you to step outside of your comfort zone and face your fears head on.”

Right, so now Neville was angry. Harry had always said that he really liked McGonagall but could never trust her, and Neville had never understood why, but now he was starting to understand what his friend meant. She had no time for anything or anyone outside of her duties or the small boxes she had placed each student into as who she had already pre-determined them to be. Neville had every right to request someone to go to this meeting with him, and even if it wasn’t life or death (which this most definitely was), it was McGonagall’s job to either go with him or reschedule the meeting with the headmaster to a time when she could. Neville had read *Hogwarts: A History* and he knew his rights.

“But Professor, I’m not scared. I am requesting my head of house to attend a meeting with the headmaster...”

“Mr. Longbottom, I really don’t have time for this,” the Transfiguration professor checked her watch and looked over to where a few students were already filtering into her classroom. “Go to your meeting, and report back to me later if there are any changes to your winter plans that I should be aware of. You will be fine. At the very least, take a lemon drop when he

offers as he always does. They are laced with a very mild calming draught and will make you feel better. Now, I know you can handle this... hurry along.”

With one last encouraging look, McGonagall turned on her heel and strode into her classroom. Neville just stared after her, disbelief lining his face. How could she just dismiss him like that? He'd never asked her for anything before. He'd never needed her for anything before. What was he going to do now? Dumbledore knew what he was and that Neville was also aware now too. He was most definitely either going to kill him on the spot or at least tell him he couldn't leave the castle for break so that he could stage an 'accident' when there were less people around.

Who else could he take with him? Snape knew what was going on with Harry even if he didn't know about Neville, but Snape was... well, Snape. Neville didn't find him terrifying anymore, but with their history, bringing him to this meeting would certainly out the man to Dumbledore as no longer loyal to the Order. That would be very bad for Harry's future plans.

Percy was the next most reasonable option, but he was the ministry representative at the school currently. What would that do for their cause to at least symbolically stand with the ministry? He wasn't sure...Neville wished he had Ron's skills with strategy. Would bringing Professor Weasley help or hurt him when standing up to Dumbledore? He really didn't know.

Not seeing any other options, Neville slowly made his way back towards the Great Hall and onwards to the DADA classroom. He hoped this was a free period for Percy now too. At the very least, he knew Percy would hear him out unlike McGonagall did, even if he currently had a class of students in front of him.

“Good morning, Mr. Longbottom,” Professor Flitwick stepped out from the professors' entrance to the Great Hall and gave the Gryffindor a large smile.

Neville smiled back and stopped in his tracks...Professor Flitwick also knew what was going on. He had completely forgotten his Charms professor. He was also a head of house as well, so slightly more reasonable for him to bring to this meeting than the random DADA professor. Granted, he also didn't know about Neville, but at least he had an idea that Dumbledore might be dangerous to anyone currently following Harry.

“Professor!” He turned and hurried to catch back up to the man. “Erm, could I talk with you privately for a second?”

“Well, of course,” Professor Flitwick immediately stepped into an adjacent alcove to where they had been standing and motioned Neville to follow him before throwing up a silencing ward so they couldn’t be overheard. “Now, how can I help you, Mr. Longbottom? Is this about class or about our friend Hadrian? I realize you and your friends have quite a lot on your shoulders this term. I am here to help if there is anything I can do.”

Already Flitwick was giving him more consideration than McGonagall had in their entire conversation. With a breath of relief, Neville smiled at his professor. “Sir, the headmaster has asked me to come to his office to discuss my winter break plans. Harry specifically told me to not go to his office alone though. Could you please come with me? I know you probably have a class right now, but Harry said it was really important.”

Flitwick frowned deeply. “I have a free period this block, so it is no inconvenience to accompany you,” he began in consideration. “However, I was led to believe you and your friends had learned Occlumency. Why would Hadrian be so concerned about you being alone with the headmaster? That seems an unnecessary precaution. It is possible my attending this meeting with you would cause you more problems than you going alone in that case.”

Neville was already vehemently shaking his head. “No, it’s not about Harry’s secrets this time,” he breathed out, realizing Flitwick was perfectly right in his understanding, but he didn’t know what was actually going on in this instance. “Harry didn’t tell everyone about me in the last meeting. He was trying to protect me, but the headmaster knows... and things have gotten more dangerous for *me* in particular recently.”

“Oh...” Flitwick absorbed that and seemed to be putting the pieces together.

“You are the true Light Lord,” the half-goblin’s dark eyes actually sparkled when he realized just what Harry had told them about the prophesy and what he had omitted at their last meeting. He suddenly chuckled and patted Neville on the arm. “Well, praise the goddess! I didn’t see it coming, but yes, you son *are* the perfect choice!”

“Really?” Neville raised a surprised eyebrow in disbelief. “I’m pretty sure someone messed up astronomically somewhere, personally. But, yeah, it’s apparently me, and Dumbledore

knows, and he knows that I know now too since Fawkes decided to leave him and bond with me this past weekend.”

Flitwick crossed his arms and looked up at the student with a fond but stern gaze. “You will be excellent, Mr. Longbottom, as we shall all see in time. While being a light lord does have to do with magic, it is even more to do with who you are as a person, and you are someone who has great potential in these regards. As for Albus... I don’t believe he would do anything to harm you, but I also understand Hadrian believes he will and that he has much more information than I do. I’m willing to trust him in this matter, and even if I didn’t, I would never make a student go to a meeting unaccompanied if they asked for my help. Come now, let’s not keep the headmaster waiting.”

Flitwick dispelled his ward and Neville just followed along behind the hurrying Charms professor stunned speechless. How very different this conversation had gone from the one with his own head of house. Yes, Flitwick was much more in the know than McGonagall, but still... he felt heard, and understood, and protected just in that very short conversation with the man. Not for the first time did he wonder about the differences between how the houses were run and what that meant for the students who attended Hogwarts.

Before he could recover, they were already standing in front of the stone gargoyle. “Hubba Bubba,” Flitwick rolled his eyes as he stated. “I don’t know where Albus gets all these different types of candies,” he added wryly. Neville shrugged, never having heard of this one before.

They rode the moving staircase slowly up to the office. “Don’t worry...he wouldn’t try anything with me there,” Flitwick patted the nervous student on the arm once more.

“I’m more concerned about if he’s gotten to Gran already or not,” Neville mumbled, but didn’t want to say anything else in case they were overheard.

The door opened for them when they reached the landing, and Neville and Flitwick stepped into the bright, colorful office. Neville had been in the office once before with his Gran before he had even started at Hogwarts, and really, it didn’t seem to have changed in the slightest besides the missing firebird. “Ah, Neville...and Filius?” Dumbledore seemed strongly taken aback when his gaze fell on the Charms professor who stepped into the office on the Gryffindor’s heels.

“Er, hi Headmaster,” Neville gave him a sheepish grin and little wave. “Erm, I ran into Professor Flitwick on my way here...”

“Ah, yes, the young man was concerned this meeting was to tell him that something bad had happened to his grandmother or with his uncle’s trial,” Flitwick did an excellent job of looking saddened and concerned while he explained away his presence. “I offered to accompany him for emotional support since Minerva is currently teaching her class.”

Neville watched Dumbledore’s brow furrow even more, not seeming able to figure out what their strategy was here with this move. Thankfully, he had absolutely no idea that Flitwick knew anything about the secretive third side of this war. Honestly, Neville was hopeful that Dumbledore hadn’t figured out the extent which Harry was involved in everything. Based on what Harry had told him from the prophecy, Dumbledore had to guess that Harry knew something since he was supposed to ‘raise’ the Light Lord to his side. What that meant was very ambiguous though, so *hopefully* Dumbledore thought they knew much less than they did.

“While that is very kind of you, Filius, I don’t believe it was necessary,” Dumbledore began, sitting at his desk again and motioning for the two of them to sit. “Augusta was in perfect health when I left her after tea yesterday.”

Neville strengthened his occlumency shields to hide his anger at that. They’d thought Dumbledore would be too weak to leave the castle so soon, but it seemed he had recovered faster than they had predicted. The nerve he had to go straight to his gran though! That was troubling and officially snatched the last threads of respect Neville still had for the man away.

“What is this about then...Headmaster?” Neville finally ground out as calmly as he was able.

“Ah, well my boy, dear Augusta and I got to talking and we determined that it just isn’t safe for you to leave the castle this break I’m afraid,” he began.

“I’m sorry, Albus, but why wouldn’t it be safe for Mr. Longbottom to leave for break?” Flitwick cut in, clearly starting to trust Harry’s intuition about the headmaster even more.

“Longbottom manor has been under the fidelus charm ever since what happened to my parents,” Neville added in, wondering just how the headmaster was going to spin this, and how in Merlin’s name he had convinced Augusta Longbottom.

“Yes, but with poor Algie’s trial going on in the muggle world, your gran will need to spend quite a lot of time away from the manor,” Dumbledore just nodded his head with his serenely twinkling eyes as if he wasn’t planning some kind of fatal ‘accident’ for the student across from him. “She doesn’t want you there alone over the holiday, and as many people know how close you are with dear Harry, it wouldn’t be safe for you away from your manor’s wards.”

Right, still not a good excuse in Neville's opinion. There had to have been some *influence* probably of the potions or charms variety to get his grandmother to agree to this farce. She would most definitely have left him in the manor alone before making him stay at the castle *alone* as well.

“At least here you will have Harry to keep you company,” Dumbledore continued.

At this Neville and Flitwick both raised disbelieving eyebrows. “Er, sir, Harry is going away for break. Actually, he invited me to go with him, so if Gran doesn’t think it best for me to go to the manor, I’ll just spend Christmas with Harry... in a house which I’m led to believe is also under the fidelus.”

“Ah, well, that sounds like it’s settled then!” Flitwick clapped his hands and made to stand.

“Not quite yet, Filius,” Dumbledore stopped him with a condescending smile. “I will need to speak to Mr. Potter next, but there are some influences at the house where he is planning to go that I do not believe are the best. I can’t in good conscience let either of you spend your break there.”

Now that was unexpected. Neville didn’t know how he was going to get out of this now. He frowned, trying to think of something. Next he looked to Flitwick with wide, pleading eyes.

“Headmaster Dumbledore,” Flitwick settled right back into his chair and steepled his hands together, turning a dangerous look on the elderly man the likes of which Neville had never seen from him before.

“Need I remind you that you are the headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry?” He began, choosing his words carefully. “You are neither Harry Potter nor Neville Longbottom’s guardian. Also, from my conversations with young Percival Weasley, it is my understanding that both Mr. Ron Weasley and Ms. Hermione Granger as well as Professor Weasley are all staying with Mr. Potter for this break as well. I will reach out to Madam Longbottom on behalf of Mr. Longbottom, but I do not understand your objections since you will have the entire Weasley family, including a professor of this school, residing with the boys. If there are any negative influences, do you not believe Arthur and Molly Weasley would be capable of handling them? If so, shouldn’t *all* the children be asked to remain at the school?”

Neville waited, watching with bated breath while Dumbledore’s face took on a pink tinge of anger. He couldn’t contradict anything Flitwick just said without exposing the Order (of which Flitwick was not a part). He also couldn’t say anything about Sirius Black since that would be admitting he knew where a known fugitive was hiding. Clearly, he was grasping for something, anything.

Suddenly the man’s face cleared. “Ah, yes, but the house in question is owned by Lord Hadrian Black,” Dumbledore finally settled on triumphantly, thinking he had found his trump card. “Lord Black is a dark wizard. Surely, Filius, you can see the need to protect Harry and Neville here from extended time with such a concerning influence. The Weasleys, especially young Percival, are biased since he is in a relationship with our DADA professor.”

Flitwick just stood suddenly and pulled Neville up with him to the student’s surprise. “Albus, really, I’m ashamed of you!” He scolded as if to a second-year student. “First of all, Dark magic is not illegal barring some very specific spells. Second, Lord Black is a respected peer of the realm who has been carrying on a correspondence through owl about the animagus transformation with Minerva for weeks now. She speaks very highly of him. And, lastly, Lord Black is a personal friend of my cousin, Lord Ragnok of the Goblin Nation. Now, if that is all your objections, I will go write my letter to Madam Longbottom, and we will get Mr. Longbottom here to class before he is late.”

Without waiting for the headmaster to come up with yet another argument, Flitwick pulled Neville to the door with surprising strength. The half-goblin was visibly fuming the entire

way down the staircase and back to the castle. “The nerve...” he grumbled before pulling Neville once more into an alcove and raising a privacy ward.

“Thank you, Professor!” Neville breathed out as soon as they couldn’t be heard by anyone. “Merlin, I don’t think I could have talked my way out of that on my own. Students don’t just stand up to the headmaster without some really dire consequences. You were brilliant!”

“Your grandmother has most likely been either confounded or given a form of a suggestion potion,” Flitwick suddenly stated agitatedly.

“I figured,” Neville sighed in agreement. “She wouldn’t have agreed to that otherwise. What are we going to do then since you said you would mail her? The headmaster must know she isn’t going to give permission even after you write her.”

The man had to think about it deeply. “Who is secret keeper for your manor? We need to get Hadrian or Severus over there to negate whatever the headmaster did to her.”

Neville’s face broke out into a wide grin. “Why Professor...that would be me. Gran was concerned with her age that if something happened to her the charm would fall, so she made me the secret keeper last year. Whoever you ask to go check on her, just send them to me and I’ll tell them exactly how to get there.”

“Thank the goddess,” Filius breathed out and grinned toothily back at the student. “Right, well, I’m off to chat with Severus then. I believe you have a class to get to?”

“Herbology,” Neville nodded, feeling relieved that the Ravenclaw professor had this in hand. “I’ll fill Harry in there too.”

“Excellent. I will see you in Charms,” Flitwick lowered his ward and patted Neville once more on the arm.

“We are lucky to have you...my Lord...” he left Neville with a quick but deep bow to the Gryffindor’s utter astonishment.

Harry was fuming at Dumbledore. He knew the man was going to do something like this, but to actually do something to Augusta Longbottom was just low. Yeah, he knew the headmaster was probably planning to kill Neville at some point, but he could understand that. Neville was going to overthrow him in the future, but Madam Longbottom was just an old lady who had lost her family. That was just cowardly.

Thankfully, Flitwick was on it. That man was efficient to the point of ruthlessness, and Harry absolutely loved it. He had sent a message to the man after Neville filled him in during Herbology using Percy’s owl Hermes. He explained that, in his opinion, Snape was definitely the better choice to go visit Augusta. Harry was excellent with Dark magic, but he wasn’t a diagnostician. It was either fill Madam Pomfrey in on what was going on or send Snape. Those were really the best options. Madam Pomfrey was probably someone to try to get to their side at some point, but he thought it best to take it slowly with her and feel out just how much she knew and how devoted she was or wasn’t to the headmaster first. Narcissa could have done it, but Augusta would probably be more willing to listen to one of her grandson’s professors than Narcissa Malfoy any day. So, yeah, Snape was the best option.

Speaking of Narcissa...Harry finally caught up to Draco Malfoy who was heading down to Potions, flanked on either side by Crabbe and Goyle. “Oi! Prat, we need to talk!” Harry got within shouting range and called out.

To Harry’s amusement, Draco turned, seemingly acknowledging he was the ‘prat’ in question, which was clearly true. “So, Scarhead, finally decided to stop ignoring me?” Draco crossed his arms and raised a blond eyebrow challengingly.

Crabbe and Goyle both took a step forward. “Call off your dogs, Malfoy. I’m not going to hex you or anything... I just have a message for you. We share a common head of the family currently...” he added with an insinuating look.

“You are not and will never be a part of House Malfoy...”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Hadrian Black, you idiot. My godfather is *Sirius Black*... ring a bell? You taunted me enough about him being out to kill me in very graphic ways all third year if you remember.”

Draco’s face fell as he finally seemed to realize the message must be from his mother in some way. “Crabbe, Goyle, go on to class.”

“But...” Goyle started.

“I can handle Potter on my own,” Malfoy just waved them off with a glare. The two didn’t look like they believed him, but they still turned and wondered on towards Potions. “Where are your normal Weasel and mudblood back-up?”

Harry breathed in a calming breath to remind himself that Malfoy was twelve years younger than him and that Narcissa would be mad at him for murdering her son. “Malfoy...I will let that slide just this one last time since you are currently going through a lot. Next time though, I know a spell which makes it feel like your brain is melting out your ears and which no healer can identify to fix.”

Malfoy discernibly turned paler. “But...that’s Dark magic...!”

“Duh,” Harry huffed out, then he quickly wondered if the teenagers still used ‘duh’ in 1995... yeah, he was pretty sure that was still a thing. “Anyway, I’m a member of the Black family now, something I’m embracing, and something you should consider doing too. Regardless, I have a message from your mother.”

“You’ve spoken to Mum? You lie, Potter!” Draco growled but still seemed unbalanced after hearing the Boy-Who-Lived might be studying Dark magic.

“Strike two,” Harry sneered at the boy who was once/would be his friend. “Never call me a liar, ever. Regardless, the message is that your father is an abusive bastard, that is why this whole divorce thing is happening. Your mother learned Lucius planned on letting the Dark Lord mark you this next summer, and that was the straw that broke the hippogriff’s back.

Anyway, stop believing the shite your father is telling you and answer a damn letter from your mum!”

With a growl at the frankly stunned Slytherin, Harry turned on his heel and strode off. Yeah, he could have been more considerate and empathetic and understanding or whatever those *feeling* words were which Hermione was always throwing his way, but he was already angry, and Draco was an absolute snobbish git. In the moment, he also firmly decided he was *not* going to tell Draco that he was staying at Grimmauld for the break and would just kidnap the idiot. If he told him, then he would go blab to his father or something, and Harry was only barely keeping himself from murdering Lucius as it was.

Well, hopefully something sank in, and the prat would owl his mother back. If not, well, it was only a couple more weeks until break. Harry strode into Potions and sent Snape a huge, angry glare. Once their eyes met, Harry lowered his occlumency walls just slightly and pushed an image of him hugging the man over to him. Snape sneered back, but his ears tinged pink slightly before he cleared his throat and took points from Gryffindor for Harry breathing or something.

Harry smirked as he plopped down beside Ron at their normal table. “I’ve been replaced by the dungeon bat, haven’t I?” Ron gave him a long-suffering look of acceptance.

“No one can *ever* replace Ronald Weasley,” Harry bumped shoulders with his friend and lit their cauldron. “Now, do you want to learn how to do this the right way this time?”

Ron huffed and rolled his eyes. “I think I liked you better when you were bollocks at Potions.”

“Eh, we’ll probably still get a Dreadful from Snape,” Harry shrugged unconcernedly before quietly explaining to Ron how to tell which ingredient would work best at which stage for the potion they were making.

The train ride back to London for winter break was much too quiet for Ron’s taste. Neville was concerned Dumbledore would try something at the last minute to get him to stay at the

castle, even though Snape had somehow gotten his grandmother to give permission for him to stay at Grimmauld. Apparently, Snape hadn't been able to figure out whatever Dumbledore had done to the woman but had instead just asked Neville's gran to sign a permission form for Neville to get a new dragon pox vaccination, which turned out to be a forged letter giving Neville permission. Whatever, it worked. It was just sad that his friend's grandmother would be spending Christmas alone and under some kind of mind control from the headmaster.

Hermione was quiet because she was reading a book. No surprise there, Ron snorted as he leaned more into her shoulder fondly. This book looked like it was on soul magic, so probably something his brother had passed along to her. Merlin, someone needed to monitor her reading some or Harry might have some competition for Dark Lord status soon. Oh well, his 'Mione could just take over the ministry or something. Harry didn't want to run the ministry anyway.

For his part, Harry was lost in his little world of trying to convince his naked cat to like the new bag he got her to ride around in. He was explaining it to her like she was a human and could understand what he was saying that it was too cold on her little paws to walk on the ground now and that he needed both hands free in case he had to kill someone or something like that. Ron loved his friends, but they were all just so very strange.

With Sephie finally deposited in the fleece lined bag comfortably, Harry turned large green eyes on Ron. "So, want to go over the plan again?"

"Nah, mate, I got it," Ron smiled at him. Really, it was very endearing how Harry thought he made plans when they were all something along the lines of grab Malfoy as soon as the train stops while holding the portkey. Sometimes Ron thought it was sad that he was being replaced by the hated dungeon bat as best friend, and sometimes he was happy Snape had to deal with this insanity on a more intense level than he did these days.

"Wouldn't it be better if someone besides Ron did this?" Hermione looked up over her book to ask. "He and Malfoy clearly don't get along. How is he even going to get close enough to grab him?"

"None of us get along with him historically," Neville answered her. "Luna might have been our best option, but she's not staying with us for break."

"Plus, Ron always has the excuse of starting a fight to do it," Harry shrugged, uncaring. "He only has to be touching the git."

"The aurors will be looking for him if he disappears from the train and doesn't return home with his father," Hermione reminded them next. "I know they can't find him at Grimmauld, but wouldn't it be best to do this less conspicuously?"

"Nah, Cissa just got full custody of Draco a couple days ago," Harry grinned widely at everyone. "Madam Parkinson is a solicitor that is apparently exceptionally talented and just as cut-throat. Lucius is planning his own kidnapping though according to Snape, so we're just doing it before he gets the chance. Madam Parkinson already has a press release ready and waiting to owl out to explain what's going on. As much as he's a spoiled brat right now, we can't let Draco go home to danger..."

Harry trailed off and his face fell as he scrunched up his nose. "I don't like that face," Ron remarked quickly in sudden fear. "What danger are you remembering Harry? What did you forget?"

"Huh? Oh, nothing important, just the bunnies," Harry's face cleared slightly. "I forgot the bunnies I left in the basement at Grimmauld. I'll have to ask Kreacher about them when we get back. I'm sure it's fine. He's very capable. Nothing to worry about."

Ron had no clue what bunnies Harry was talking about, but he was certain this was something he should definitely be worried about. Neither Neville nor Hermione seemed to believe him either, but they all went back to reading, looking out the window, or whatever else they were doing anyway. Neville pulled the morning edition of the Daily Prophet out of his bag, and for the longest the rustle of paper and the scratching of Sephie trying to fluff up her sleeping bag were the only sounds in the carriage.

"Just how fast do rabbits breed anyway?" Harry asked nonchalantly after a few minutes, and Ron was now completely certain this was going to bite them in the ass very painfully.

"Hey guys..." Neville interrupted with a frown at the paper. "Why would Azkaban be hiring a dozen new guards? Isn't that weird or concerning or something? Most of the guards there are dementors, right? Why would they need that many new humans to run the place?"

“Wow, that took a long time,” Harry reached over and plucked the paper from Neville’s hands. “Did it say anything about anyone escaping?”

“What?! No! That would have been first page!!” Neville looked like he was almost hyperventilating, and Ron was close to feeling the same way. He knew about the Death Eaters who were currently in Azkaban, and he knew they had broken out in Harry’s original timeline. Was that what was happening now? Did they not stop it?

“Did she escape?!!” Neville really was hyperventilating now. “Is she out?!”

Harry immediately put down the paper and wrapped both arms around Neville and made soft shushing noises. “It’s ok, no, Bellatrix didn’t escape. You’re absolutely right, it would have been first page if anyone did. The dementors left, that’s all I know. I was only surprised that it took so long to start hiring guards to replace them.”

“Why did the dementors leave?” Hermione had put down her book and was holding onto Ron’s hand with a death grip now.

“Because they wanted to,” Harry looked over Neville’s head at her. “Dementors have rights the same as anyone else, and they were in a shitty job with no benefits and crap pay...or well, no pay really. It’s their right to leave if they want to. However, Bellatrix is never going to hurt anyone ever again though, Nev. You have my promise on that. I swear, she can do no one any harm.”

“You can’t promise that, no one can,” Neville’s pale face leaned away from Harry, not seeming to get what he was saying.

Ron got it though. He understood completely and just nodded. “Nev, mate... think about it. Harry *swears* that Bellatrix can never hurt anyone *ever* again... and apparently, he’s weirdly friends with the dementors now...”

Hermione choked on air and pulled her book back up to bury herself in it. Harry just shook his head and patted Neville on the back. “In all honestly, I did absolutely nothing in this instance,” he chuckled. “But, yes, I have it on good authority that not even a necromancer could raise her from the dead at this point, so yeah, I can promise that you have nothing to fear from her ever again.”

“Bloody hell... stop telling me when my brother kills people. I already need a mind-healer with having you as a friend. Let’s not add onto it,” Ron protested indignantly.

“Does a person say thank you for something like that? Or bake biscuits or something?” Neville rubbed his neck and seemed completely at a loss.

“Seriously, just don’t mention it...” Harry told him meaningfully. “The train is stopping soon,” he remarked as the scenery changed to more urban instead of countryside.

“Right, I’m on it,” Ron stood and pulled the sock out of his pocket which was the portkey to Grimmauld. “Next time, Hermione or at least Percy makes the plan though. If I get punched for this, I’m returning the favor on you.”

“I’d expect nothing less,” Harry grinned as he held the door open for Ron to leave and go kidnap their blond houseguest.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: What happened to those rabbits...?

Winter Break

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Draco Malfoy was doing his best to remain looking calm and collected instead of the anxious panic he really felt while the Hogwarts Express pulled into King's Cross Station. He had received letters from both his mother and father over the past week informing him that he would be spending the break where they were currently living. He had never believed his parents of all people would ever get a divorce and didn't know how to handle being pulled between his two parental figures.

It's not that he believed his parents had a good marriage. Salazar knew their relationship was toxic at best, and if Harry Potter could be believed, abusive at the worst. Honestly, he found that he believed Potter... thinking back on his interactions with his father over the years, well, he would need to hear a good definition of what constituted abuse, but yeah... Lucius Malfoy was *probably* categorized as abusive. Draco just didn't think that there was anything that could or would be done in his lifetime. Divorce was really not common at all in the wixen world.

Regardless, Draco had never believed that his father would insist he be marked for the Dark Lord, especially before he was of-age. Between his mother's letter that confirmed what Potter had said were her motivations and his father's letter which had heavily insinuated that he would be given a 'great honor' when he returned to Malfoy Manor, well, Draco was suddenly very much hoping his mother got to him before his father did once the train stopped. He had revered the Dark Lord in theory when he was younger, but having actually met the man now... he was bloody terrified.

When the train stopped, Draco made a few veiled excuses so that his friends would leave and he could hang back in the compartment. Strategically, Draco didn't want to be in a mass of people when he stepped off the train. He wanted to be able to get a good look around him to better bypass whatever his father had planned and head quickly towards his mother. A press of people around a person left one open to side-along apparition or portkey.

At least neither of his parents had turned to the Light, so Draco was relieved he wouldn't have to deal with any Weasleys over the break, small mercies since Potter's Weasel had just entered his empty compartment and seemed to be heading his way. "I don't have time for whatever this is, Weasley," Draco brushed the redhead off as he turned to grab his trunk, knowing the Gryffindor idiots would never attack someone from behind. Turning away was

both dismissive and would deter Weasley from any head-on confrontation. “Don’t you have a sea of red to find out there on the platform?”

“Percy arranged for ministry cars for everyone this year,” Weasley daftly commented as if it weren’t exceptionally strange that he was hanging around in Draco’s compartment and chatting with him.

Draco just sighed and tugged his heavy trunk down. “I’m not in the mood for a fight right now. Can we just save the insults and blows until January? I’ll give you an extra black eye then for good measure.”

A dry laugh sounded much too close to Draco than he expected before strong arms wrapped tightly around him from behind. Freaking completely out, Draco struggled and fought and screamed out just as the world went black around him and the terrifying press of a portkey pulled him and his luggage from the empty train compartment.

“Was that a scream?” Ginny Weasley frowned in concern and asked Hermione who was helping her pull her trunk onto the platform.

“I’m sure it’s fine,” Hermione turned slightly pink and hummed suspiciously.

“Need a hand?” Harry smiled at them as he walked over and helped dislodge the trunk that had gotten stuck at an odd angle on the last step. “Well, no one ran out of the train like Fluffy was after them, so I’m guessing it all went to plan.”

“What’s Harry been planning this time?” Ginny groaned and shared an exasperated look with Hermione. “Is Ron a part of this? Shouldn’t he already be off the train?”

“Don’t worry about Ronny-kins,” Fred stepped up, eyes twinkling, and put an arm loosely around Harry’s shoulders.

“We caught a glimpse, and it all worked out,” George added, pulling Neville’s trunk with his own over to them and ignoring the Gryffindor’s protests that he had it handled.

“Doesn’t mean you aren’t going to get punched though,” Hermione added to Harry and motioning towards where Lucius Malfoy was standing close to where the other Slytherins had exited the train and looking very put-out.

“Ah, I’m sure I deserve it for something,” Harry smirked and shrugged before turning to make his way over to where Remus Lupin was standing beside Mad-Eye Moody and waiting for them.

Moody looked them over assessingly when the group finally pushed through the crowd. “Brat... I see you’re still alive. Get into any trouble this term?” He growled fondly at Harry who was still amused that the grizzled auror now liked him just because he was at the man’s same level of paranoia.

Harry looped an arm through Moody’s to the auror’s shock and disgruntlement even though he gamely allowed Harry to lead him towards the barrier and muggle London. It was highly probable the grizzled auror was just so shocked that the teen would even touch him that he hadn’t had the mental capacity to hex him yet. “Well, Moody-love, I made some new friends, got into a couple scuffles, hexed a few people who deserved it, and set up at least a couple of my friends in new relationships... possibly three if you count people who got together because of their shared exasperation and irritation at me.”

“If you ever call me ‘love’ again, I will stick a boggart in your bed with you and spell your bedroom door closed,” Moody darkly warned with a sneer while Lupin anxiously herded the large group through the barrier and towards where the ministry cars Percy had arranged for them were waiting.

Harry still hadn’t let go of the man and just smirked. “Kinky...” he winked at the man who growled once again. “So, who am I setting you up with now since I’m a certified matchmaker? You find McGonagall sexy or maybe Madam Hooch... she might not be straight though, but my gaydar has never been reliable at all to my utter embarrassment many times.”

“Potter, I will flay you alive...”

“We’re missing Ron!” Lupin suddenly realized and interrupted when they got to the cars.

“He’s fine; he got another ride. I’m sure he has already beaten us there,” Harry finally let go of Moody to pat Lupin’s arm soothingly before sliding into the backseat of the car.

Harry walked into Grimmauld Place first and immediately winced at the loud yelling that was happening between Draco Malfoy and Ron on the other side of the door. “It was uncalled for and highly inappropriate!” Draco screamed dramatically. “It was low and cowardly. You call yourself a Gryffindor!!”

“Would you have come with me if I told you I was taking you to your mum?!” Ron yelled back, face red and with his right hand grasping his left forearm where his jumper sleeve was rolled up for some reason.

“Where is Mother?!” Draco spun around angrily but also with concern. “Why are you anywhere near my mother?!”

“They have been at this for fifteen minutes,” Walburga informed them all dryly from her portrait where she was looking at the teens as if they were covered in sewage. “Narcissa stepped out to pick up some tea just before they arrived.”

“I am here,” Narcissa gracefully stepped into the entryway and gently pushed Ginny out of her way to step through the group. “Oh, Dragon... I thought it would take you longer to get here, or I would have waited.”

“Mother!” Draco took a step forward as if he were going to run to her before catching himself when he realized who all he was surrounded by and who were watching him.

Narcissa however continued to walk forward and wrapped her arms around her son, dropping the bag with the tea she had purchased on the floor. "I missed you, my love," Narcissa spoke into Draco's neck since he seemed to have had a growth spurt over the past term and was slightly taller than she was.

The rest of the packed entryway started to clear out while the students dragged their trunks up the stairs, Moody slunk off to hex something probably, and Remus led Neville away to the room he would be staying in. Harry stayed and smiled widely at Ron. "Everything alright, mate? Am I getting punched anywhere? Try to avoid the nose if you can."

Ron glared Draco before pulling his hand away from his arm where a small bloody mark appeared. "He bloody *bit* me! The git!"

"You deserved it, grabbing me from behind like that! You're lucky you didn't get cursed!" Draco finally pulled back from Narcissa to sneer at him once more.

"Well then, I guess we can call it even," Harry laughed brightly and tapped his neck where the wide patch of vampire scars were glamoured. "Kreacher!"

A loud pop sounded in the hallway. "Master," Kreacher bowed lowly with a sneer at everyone except for Harry. Harry raised a questioning eyebrow at the elf. Last he had been at Grimmauld, Kreacher had adored Narcissa, almost as much as Dobby did. He wondered what had happened there. That had to be a story, but it would have to wait for now.

"Kreacher," he started instead. "Remus is putting Neville in with Ron for the break. Would you please clear out the room Severus usually uses when he stays for me and Percy to stay in? I assume he will no longer be needing it. The twins said they would stay up in the attic and Draco can have their room. Could you check that the beds they transfigure are solid and won't disappear overnight?"

"Uncle Sev stays here?" Draco frowned deeply. "Why would Uncle Sev stay with Lord Black? And why doesn't he need his room anymore?"

“Yes, Master, welcome home, Master,” Kreacher ignored the blond with another bow. “Kreacher will put Master Harry and Master Percy in the master bedroom and the mischief twins in Master Potion Master’s old room. It is less drafty, and the bad master finally moved the hippogriff out to a forest last week. How else can Kreacher help?”

“Oh, that’s wonderful. Thank you. Erm...could you grab some Murtlap from my potion stores for Ron’s arm? Also, tea for Narcissa and Draco so they can catch up.”

“And Mr. Longbottom will join us for tea once he settles in,” Narcissa added from where she was still looking at her confused son fondly. “It has been a long time since we talked. I must hear about all that has happened since he was a child running around with dear Draco and Pansy.”

It still stunned Harry anytime someone mentioned how all the pureblood children knew each other and played together as toddlers, especially when it was Neville and the Slytherins. “Mother,” Draco grumbled but didn’t overly protest. Mainly he just looked embarrassed that she was showing him such affection in front of people.

“Yes, Master,” Kreacher bowed again, but this time with a glare towards Narcissa before he popped out.

“What happened there?” Harry raised an eyebrow at Narcissa and motioned to where the house elf had disappeared from.

“Just a slight misunderstanding, dear,” Narcissa smiled and led Draco towards the sitting room. “Nothing to worry about.”

“Wait... where is Lord Black? Where is he staying?” Draco asked his mother in confusion while she herded him into the room.

“Oh, dear...I’m not sure you will even see Lord Black this Yule,” she explained vaguely as she closed the door behind them.

Harry scoffed and rolled his eyes, he hadn't really planned to stay glamoured in his own home all break, but Moody, Ginny, Draco, the Weasley parents, and pretty much the entire Order didn't know Harry and Hadrian were the same person. Merlin, there were way too many people in his house! Oh well, it seemed that Hadrian Black would have to be scarce for the holiday. Coming up with a good excuse for Harry to be rooming with Percy seemed needed now. That was a problem for whenever someone actually questioned it though. Now, to find Kreacher and figure out what happened with Narcissa, where Buckbeak was now residing so he could go visit, and take care of those damn rabbits before Percy got home from the Department of Mysteries and realized that Harry had completely forgotten them in the basement.

"You don't happen to know what happened between Kreacher and Narcissa?" He asked Walburga. The portrait scoffed at him and actually turned around in her painting, refusing to answer. "Well, just be that way then," he flicked his fingers causing the curtains to pull closed over her and he walked towards the kitchen.

Everyone was finally settled, tea had been served all around to various groups in various rooms across the house, and Sirius had returned from a Wizengamot session where he had been pretending to be Hadrian before Harry was finally able to corner his elf in the kitchen where he was making dinner. "You should have seen it, Kreacher. Draco let out this high-pitched squeak when he saw the fugitive Sirius Black walk into the room and hug his mother! He really should have seen that one coming. He of all people should have known Sirius was innocent since Pettigrew was probably at his manor this past summer."

"Kreacher imagines Mistress Narcissa explained everything," Kreacher responded coldly before smacking Harry's hand with his wooden spoon when Harry started to pick up a knife to help him. "Master Dark Lord does not *chop* onions," Kreacher ordered him with a glare.

"I'm pretty sure house elves aren't supposed to assault dark lords either," Harry just smiled at him but leaned against the counter instead of helping now.

"Only when they's being annoying," the elf smirked back at him.

“Well, you might need a few more of those spoons for me then,” Harry crossed his arms. “So...are you going to tell me what happened between you and Narcissa? I thought you liked her? Did she do something to offend you or something? You know this is *your* home even more than it’s mine. I won’t have you made uncomfortable here, especially from any of my guests.”

Kreacher rolled his eyes at Harry’s reasoning about the house but had learned to just go with it instead of correcting the dark lord. He had helped with the contract between Harry and the house elves which provided a way to freedom for any elf who wanted it, but he still thought the whole thing was bloody ridiculous. “Kreacher is angry at the mistress, and she knows what she did. There is no need for the master to interfere. This is between Kreacher and Mistress Narcissa.”

Harry’s eyebrow raised almost as high as his hairline in his shock. “What the hell did Narcissa do that would make you angry at her?!”

Kreacher sneered at the beef he was braising in the large pan on the stove. “The mistress asked Dobby elf to do something. She’s had no right!”

“All this is because she asked Dobby to do something for her?” Harry asked in disbelief. The three elves seemed to have worked out some kind of strategy for helping out Harry and his cause amongst themselves which seemed to keep them from offending each other overly much. This was an odd and unexpected development.

“The mistress asks Dobby elf to takes the rabbits from the basement and deliver them to his old manor,” Kreacher turned angry eyes on Harry with a deep frown that was attempting to hide the concern that was clearly showing through.

“Ah, the rabbits!” Harry’s eyes opened further as he tried to put the pieces together. “I had forgotten about them! I’m so sorry I just left them here! So, they’re gone? She asked Dobby to take them to Malfoy Manor where the Death Eaters are? Isn’t that a good thing?”

Kreacher put down the tongs in his hand and turned off the stove so that he could properly cross his arms and glare at his master without burning the roast. Slowly, as if talking to a toddler, Kreacher explained, “The mistress asked *Dobby* to take fire-breathing rabbits to a

house infested with Death Eaters and the pretender Dark Lord. A house he was no longer in service to and not protected by his bond anymore....while carrying *fire-breathing* rabbits!”

Horror rose in Harry’s chest at the implications of that order. “Is Dobby alright? Was he injured? He wasn’t captured, was he?! Why didn’t any of you contact me?!”

Kreacher sniffed and turned the burner back on, returning to his task. “Dobby is uninjured now and did not check with Kreacher or Winky before attempting this fiasco. The free idiot should have refused the order, but he’s takes the rabbits just as giddy as can be and gets many burns all over himself for his troubles. Winky heals him though, and he has recovered.”

Harry sank down onto a bench, resolving to have a long talk with both Narcissa and Dobby about what constituted an acceptable order for her, and having better self-preservation for him. Though, Percy should probably be the one who talked to Dobby about self-preservation. That might be a little hypocritical for Harry to do. He tried to push the unwanted image of Dobby covered in burns out of his mind before he teared up or something.

“Merlin...If I call him to check on him later, would he be up to answering my call?”

“Dobby is healed,” Kreacher stated again thinly, not meeting Harry’s eyes.

Harry scrubbed a hand over the invisible piercing through his eyebrow, trying to collect himself. “Wait... I thought you and Dobby were fighting over Winky this whole time. Are you and Winky fighting over *Dobby*? Really? I didn’t see that one coming.”

Kreacher turned a glare on Harry that even the Master of Death felt to the bottom of his soul. “Right, I’m staying out of it. Forget I even brought it up. I don’t want to know,” he quickly reassured the elf.

Kreacher huffed and flipped the roast in the pan. “Well, as angry as Kreacher is... it is nice to no longer have to feed the rabbits. Master Wolf is sad they were gone before the full moon. He thoughts they might have tasted good. They are the pretender Dark Lord’s problem now.” Harry laughed loudly, and couldn’t stop himself laughing even when various members of the Order of the Phoenix started showing up for dinner and their scheduled meeting.

“Where is Hadrian this evening? Will he be joining us at all?” Albus Dumbledore asked the assembled group shortly before the teens would be kicked out of the kitchen for the Order’s meeting.

“I have not seen Lord Black since we arrived this afternoon,” Moody offered before shooting a stinging hex at Harry’s hand where he had been trying to steal the roll off the man’s plate just to mess with him.

“Hopefully he will show soon. Arthur and I want to thank him for letting us stay here over the holiday to better keep the children safe,” Molly added from where she and Kreacher were in a tense standoff over who was allowed to do the dishes. The Weasley parents had arrived for the meeting and were scheduled to stay for the rest of the break in the very last available guest room in the house.

“Mum, we’re not kids anymore,” Ron grumbled and turned slightly pink. He was sitting with Neville squished between himself and Hermione since Harry had told him to look out for their friend who was new to the house and didn’t know yet what was safe to touch and what wasn’t. Draco and Narcissa seemed to be trying to disappear into the wallpaper over where they were sitting by Severus and Sirius. Harry supposed that he would end up having to let Draco in on his confidence eventually some or it was going to be an exceptionally long two weeks living together.

Harry looked up and met Sirius’s eyes across the kitchen when they both felt the wards chime for an approved person crossing them. It seemed that Percy had finally made it back from his other two jobs at the ministry. It was the first time the Order was meeting in the house since Narcissa arrived, and Percy had never been in attendance either, so it was an odd evening all around. Harry was more than a little concerned how Dumbledore planned on handling their presence in the building. He really didn’t want to out himself as Hadrian, but if he had to stand up and expel everyone from his wards to protect his family, he absolutely would.

“Hey Mum, Dad, everyone,” Percy smiled at them all when he entered the room, looking tired but happy to finally get a break from his many responsibilities. Harry assumed he must have been working on his new inferius bunny since he also had a very thick aura of soul magic around him that Harry felt waft over him as the Master of Death.

“Percy! Sit, let me make you a plate,” Molly ushered her son over to right between Remus and Tonks, something that had Harry huff in irritation at. That relationship seemed to be going so well, but still, he wouldn’t be complacent when his godson’s future existence was on the line. Any reason to put those two together, Harry was going to take it.

“Hello again, Percival,” Dumbledore addressed the new person joining their group. “Where is your partner this evening? I would assume he would be here to welcome all his guests.”

Percy’s eyes imperceptibly caught Harry’s for a split-second. They hadn’t discussed how they were handling Hadrian over the break. Between the dementors, kidnapping Draco, his normal classes, and meeting with the Banshee Nation over the past two weeks, Harry had been busy. Percy had three jobs currently as well. It’s not like they had a lot of free time recently to do more than the bare minimum. Harry smiled and gave a little nod, hoping that Percy got the message that he would back-up whatever story his partner came up with.

“Oh, well... Hadrian won’t be around much over the holiday,” Percy served himself some mashed potatoes to cover up trying to invent a lie. “He’s been busy with Wizengamot things and also has a new project in an investment of his with a start-up company.”

Harry had to give it to his partner; that was almost completely the truth but skirting any sensitive areas. While Sirius was attending the Wizengamot meetings, Harry was handling all the research, correspondence, and most of the paperwork that went with the position. Sirius helped where he could, but Harry was the one who was planning a take-over of their government, so he had to deal with how everything worked out with his creature supporters and his plans for the war. Also, he had recently purchased the future Weasley Wizarding Wheezes storefront that the twins had occupied in the future to give to them as a graduation present since they would most definitely be graduating this time around if Harry and their mum had anything to say about it.

“The poor dear. He must sleep sometime though,” Molly sadly shook her head. “I noticed all the rooms are taken here, and Ron said Harry was rooming with you, Percy. Where is Hadrian going to stay? We really don’t want to put him out any.”

Percy chewed and swallowed, clearly uncomfortable with the large group’s attention all being on him. There were some side conversations going on throughout the room, but by and large, most everyone was listening in on the conversation since Lord Black was an unknown and

mysterious figure in their society. “Oh, he’s staying at my flat. He wanted the extra quiet, and I wanted to spend time with my family for Yule. I’m sure he’ll pop by some eventually though.”

“We have a pub night with him in a few days,” Sirius added in with a grin at Harry. Harry rolled his eyes. Well, it sounds like he had a pub night in a few days then.

“Do you think he would mind if I tagged along?” Arthur Weasley spoke up quietly to his son, looking like he expected to be refused. “I haven’t gotten to spend much time with my son’s partner since we met him.”

Harry saw Percy almost melt in his seat at his dad’s hopeful look. “Of course, Dad. Hadrian would love for you to come with us. We should invite Bill too.” As far as Harry knew, Percy hadn’t gotten to see his older (now younger) brother yet since they had come back in time. It would be good to see Bill again. It had been years since they saw him even in the future.

“Right well, eat up Percival,” Dumbledore clapped his hands together and stood. “We will need to ask you, our teenagers, and Madam Malfoy to step out temporarily for this next part.”

“Come Dragon,” Narcissa stood quickly, pulling Draco up behind her. She seemed more than ready to leave the overfilled room of Light supporters. “I will help you unpack, and you will tell me all about your classes.”

“We’re going to give Nev the tour!” George jumped up and pulled Fred to his feet as well.

“Can’t have our new resident touching any cursed objects, can we?” Fred agreed.

Normally, there would be much more protesting from the teenagers, the twins in particular since they were of-age, about attending the meeting. However, everyone who had any idea about what was going on at all wanted to get Neville as far from the headmaster as possible. Even if they didn’t know Neville was the new Light Lord, it was clear something was going on there between Neville and the headmaster. Based on the pointed looks, the man had clearly been testing the Gryffindor’s occlumency shields all evening so far. Harry winced in

empathetic concern and followed them, vowing to grab a headache potion for his friend from his personal stores.

“You did so good, Nev,” Harry put an arm around his friend’s shoulders when he felt the privacy ward Percy put around the library go up when all of them except for the Malfoys and Ginny, who was off having called the first shower, congregated there.

“I didn’t think my shields would hold,” Neville sighed as he took the pain potion Harry had summoned for him with a trembling hand. “It wasn’t constant, but any time he could catch my eye...it was like a troll’s club ramming my head.”

“Why was the headmaster trying to get into your head in particular?” Hermione asked with a frown. “He didn’t try me at all. What about you, Ron?”

“Nope, not once,” Ron shook his head, looking at Neville in concern.

Harry shared a look with Neville, not knowing how much he wanted to tell. Neville just cleared his throat and smiled kindly at Harry though. “I think it’s probably time to fill them in on me. It affects them too, so it’s only fair.”

“If you’re sure,” Harry put an arm around Neville’s shoulders in support for what he was about to do. “Get comfortable everyone, this will be a ride.”

“I’m guessing this has something to do with Dumbledore’s bird napping up in our room right now,” Ron chuckled and sat on the sofa across from his friends.

“Yeah...” Neville sighed and ran a hand over his face, not knowing where to start.

“We’re here for you Nev, no matter what. This should be the only time he’s in the house though thankfully,” Harry assured him, removing his glamour for a little break since they were behind a ward now. “You can rest now for two weeks before we have to deal with him again. We’ll even go to Diagon in a couple days and get your new wand, which should be

pretty fun and take your mind off things. I would say we could make a party of it, but it's probably best that everyone stays behind the wards as much as possible since I'm planning on starting to make more pointed moves on Voldemort now that all his horcruxes besides Nagini are gone."

"Would it be better for me to take him to the alley or for Hadrian Black? Neither one of us should be in too much danger currently from the Dark faction anyway unless Sirius has been making more waves in the Wizengamot than I know about," Percy removed his glamour as well and sat beside Harry and Neville on the couch.

"Yeah...I'm pretty sure Sirius has both the Light and Dark angry at me right now for our proposed creature legislation," Harry shrugged, uncaring. Sirius was doing what he asked him to and was frankly doing better than Harry thought he could if he were actually the one sitting in on Wizengamot sessions.

"We could take him!" Both twins volunteered, already wanting to get out of the house.

"You guys are on Draco-duty," Harry pointed at the twins. "Make sure he doesn't accidentally get himself cursed from any of my family's heirlooms, that he doesn't hear anything he isn't supposed to, and that he doesn't make Ginny mad since his murder would be pretty difficult to cover up with Narcissa living here too."

"Fine!" They both grouched and dramatically crashed into an armchair together.

"You owe us chocolate..."

"From Diagon. The good stuff," They informed him together.

"I can do that," Harry nodded. "And for Ron too," he added on when his friend opened his mouth to request sweets.

“Are you ready to tell them now, Nev, or do you want me or Harry to do it?” Percy smiled at the Light Lord curled up next to the Dark one.

Neville snorted. “I think I’ve learned enough to not trust Harry with explaining things. Guys...” he took in a deep breath as everyone waited patiently. “So, erm, I guess... well, I’m the new Light Lord supposedly...”

“Huh...” was the only response in the quiet room that came from Ron. “Well... I guess that makes sense with the whole phoenix thing... cool, can I serve you instead of Harry then? I don’t think I’ll ever quite get the hang of Dark magic?”

“Hey! You can’t just dump me like that! Traitor!” Harry fake pouted, but he knew very well that Ron would always be a Light wizard. Barring another vampire attack, Ron was probably going to always be solidly Light.

“All hail the Light Lord!” Both twins dramatically started bowing in their chair to Neville who turned bright red and sputtered in denial.

“You guys are Dark already,” Percy chuckled at them. “I think you’re solidly Harry’s.”

“Thank Merlin,” Neville sighed but still smiled at the twins.

“I’m not sure where I go yet,” Hermione commented speculatively. “Where did I lean in the future?”

“You’re more Grey than anything else, so it’s up to you. People like you help bring some of the balance Nev and I will be working for in our world,” Harry smiled at her fondly. “It’s perfectly fine if you never choose an alignment.”

Neville shifted uncomfortably. “So, none of you are mad or anything? I mean... it’s not like I’m actually good at magic or anything.”

Literally everyone was protesting at this point. “It’s just confidence, mate,” Ron was assuring him.

“You learned Occlumency really quickly,” Hermione added.

“Yeah, and you’re so good with Herbology,” George interrupted.

“Neville, if it’s literally the last thing I do... well, that and getting Teddy back, but yeah, if it’s literally the last thing I do, then I’m going to make you see just how brilliant you are!” Harry almost put Neville in a headlock with the side hug he was trying to give him. “Plus, when I take you to get your new wand, you’ll see that things come easier then.”

“It sounds like you’re planning on taking Neville yourself to Diagon. That’s fine by me,” Percy said, leaning back and crossing his legs in front of him to get more comfortable and deal with the logistics of the trip next. “Take Sephie with you then. I would send Babs with you since she’s more dangerous, but she’s still setting fire to things and scaring herself whenever she does. She also hasn’t learned the meaning of the word ‘no’ yet. Even if she’s small and not fire-breathing, Sephie is an inferius and is much harder and more dangerous than she looks.”

Harry’s nose scrunched. “Babs is the dead rabbit I saw in your office, right? I don’t like that name. We need a new one...something more distinguished.”

Percy shrugged uncaringly. “Davids named her, so you’ll have to take it up with him. He says thanks for the biscuits too, by the way.”

Harry pouted knowing that he would definitely not be disagreeing with Unspeakable Davids on anything. “Fine, she can keep her ridiculous name.”

“Oh, brother dear...”

“We desperately must hear about this inferius rabbit...”

“Who can apparently breathe fire...” the twins asked in rapt attention.

“Please, don’t ever let them get their hands on that rabbit!” Hermione groaned and dramatically buried her head in Ron’s shoulder at just the thought of the twins with access to something as destructive as a fire-breathing rabbit.

“Wait...am I missing something? Is this connected to the rabbits in the basement Harry was talking about?” Neville frowned and looked down as if he could see the rabbits under them.

“Oh, so no worries there. Apparently, Dobby moved them. Please don’t bring it up around Kreacher...it’s a thing,” Harry winced. He was not looking forward to having to give the woman he was slightly terrified of a talking to about that. Maybe he should hold off until Winky was around for back-up.

“Where did he take them?” Percy frowned in concern. Personally, he was all for letting Moony eat them during the full moon or tossing them in the lake of inferi. They had caused quite a lot of damage and chaos in the Department of Mysteries, and it was particularly baffling to the necromancer that they even kept their ability to breathe fire after death and resurrection. He hadn’t seen that coming at all. He blamed Unspeakable Park for that one. She tended to blow things up as much as Seamus Finnegan on a bad day, and that was a good day for the witch in the Love Department.

“Yeah...so, even though he’s no longer a Malfoy house elf, apparently Dobby still has access to the manor since he wasn’t specifically barred from the wards,” Harry grimaced. “So...the rabbits are currently Voldemort’s problem. Hopefully they are distracting enough that Old Voldy won’t notice the dementors are gone or that all of his horcruxes are destroyed until I can work out some plan of attack.”

Everyone stared off into space picturing fire-breathing rabbits hopping around Malfoy Manor and the Death Eaters chasing after them. “Bloody hell...” Ron voiced all their thoughts as one.

Hadrian Black walked into Grimmauld Place wearing his normal dragon hide boots, torn jeans, and magical band t-shirt that made up the casual wear part of the wardrobe he and Percy had bought when they first came back in time. Sirius had access to all his more professional robes, but just going to Diagon Alley with Neville was decidedly not a professional trip. Harry Potter was currently ‘studying’ in his bedroom and not to be disturbed under orders of Hermione, which no one was going to cross.

“You are the most ridiculous and shameful example of a Dark Lord to ever exist in our society,” Walburga Black sneered as she always did when Hadrian walked in wearing his normal clothes with his hair braided back and piercings visible to all.

“Why thank you, Wally, I really appreciate that,” Harry smirked and waved his hand to close her curtains before she could really start in on him.

“You’re here, great, I need another hair,” Sirius bounded from the kitchen into the entryway, already grasping at Harry’s braid.

“Hands off!” Harry fended off the animagus and retrieved his own hair from a wisp that had escaped the braid at his temple. “You’d have me bald before you’re done with me. Did Snape just finish a new batch of Polyjuice for you or something?”

“Yep! I got one for the Wizengamot with you and a Severus approved muggle for pub night tomorrow night,” Harry’s godfather/brother explained excitedly.

Harry rolled his eyes. “He really just doesn’t like you blond for some reason. You are both so very weird.”

“Oh, pup, you really don’t want me to start in on your relationship with the nerdy Weasley now do you?” Sirius smirked and gave Hadrian’s braid a quick tug before he bounded up the stairs to where Snape had a lab set up in the attic.

Harry rolled his eyes and made his way towards the stairs since he was fairly certain Neville would be in the library and studying the books Harry and Percy had got for him on the theory

behind Magic's Light and Dark Lords. He quickly bypassed the kitchen where it sounded like Molly Weasley was having some kind of argument with Narcissa Malfoy.

"This house just doesn't make any sense. And don't think I don't realize you two are keeping an eye on me. You are not subtle at all. You have to realize that I'm not planning on making off with the family jewels or anything...not that any seem to exist in this hovel," a voice drawled from the sitting room, causing Harry to pause and listen. "You know if you add a little more sulfur to that, it will be more controlled and less volatile."

"Cheer's mate!" A twin exclaimed. "We're not concerned about the valuables per se. We're concerned because most of those valuables want to eat you, and you don't know what has been cleaned out yet and we do."

"What do you mean that the house doesn't make sense?" The other twin asked.

Harry leaned in the doorway and took in the scene of the Weasley twins excitedly stirring a smoking cauldron, and Draco reading a book and chatting with them from an armchair where he was imperiously looking on at their progress. He was amazed that Draco Malfoy seemed to be having a relatively pleasant conversation with the Weasley twins over one of their experiments it seemed.

"Well, it's the people really. Uncle Sev is here for breakfast most mornings, but Potter told the elf he didn't need a room, and no one will explain it to me. Where is he staying?" Draco frowned and closed his book. "Plus, why is Lord Black never here when this is his house? Why is Dumbledore's Order here when the Black family, and supposedly Lord Black himself, are Dark wixen? And why is Longbottom here for the break instead of at his manor? Nothing makes sense and no one will explain anything to me!"

Since the twins seemed at a loss as to what to say, Harry decided it was probably best that he step in. "If you blow up my house, you'll have to deal with Kreacher, not me," Hadrian warned the twins who looked at him relieved for the save from their blond houseguest.

"Lord Black?!" Draco shot up to his feet, realizing who had just stepped into the room. His eyes widened as he took in the very unconventional look of this particular peer of the realm.

“Hadrian, please,” Harry smiled kindly at the Slytherin. “You must be Narcissa’s kid, Draco. Welcome to Black Manor, such as it is these days.”

“Thank you, sir, for protecting my mother,” Draco sputtered out before collecting himself and reapplying his perfect pureblood mask. “We are fortunate to have you as our Head of Family.”

“I believe it is I who is fortunate to have you. It's nice to have family again in the house,” Hadrian walked over and looked into the cauldron just to make sure the twins really weren’t going to blow up his house. It seemed to be a type of magical adhesive, so it must be an upcoming prank.

“Narcissa, Molly, and Severus are off limits,” he tapped the cauldron and told the twins warningly. “Sirius and Remus are fair game.”

“Our thoughts exactly!” Fred assured him with a vicious smirk.

“As for your questions,” Hadrian spun around, catching Draco off-guard who was just about to sit again and causing him to freeze bending slightly over. “I prefer quiet, and this is currently a madhouse, so I’m avoiding it. The Order is here because we Blacks know how to keep our enemies close and how to make them believe they are friends...” Draco stood fully at this and smirked delightedly at Hadrian now.

“Mr. Longbottom’s reasons for being here are his business, but he is just as welcome as you and the Weasleys are,” Hadrian continued. “And lastly, your uncle is shagging Sirius, or the other way around, I don’t know which, and I suggest not asking if you plan to keep your mental faculties intact.”

Draco sputtered in shock while Hadrian just smiled and strode back towards the door. “Dragon blood!” George called after him.

“If you go to Knockturn, we need dragon blood!” Fred finished. Harry just gave them a little wave behind himself to acknowledge he’d heard them and would get them what they wanted. Now, off to find their Light Lord and get him a new wand.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Lord Black's reception in Diagon Alley...

In This Together

Chapter Notes

As I'm sure you've realized, updates will be slow over the holidays. Family stuff and everything. Happy holidays to everyone during this season!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Right, so we’re basically in danger from everyone, so stay alert and save yourself if anything happens,” Harry informed Neville as soon as they apparated into Diagon Alley over by Gringotts.

“That’s so not comforting,” Neville felt very sick already. Suddenly, he’d rather just forget the whole wand-thing and go back to his books at Grimmauld and talking with Professor Lupin who was surprisingly knowledgeable about Light magic as well as Dark.

Harry just shrugged though and passed Sephie in her bag over to his friend. “I can’t be seen carrying Harry Potter’s cat, not that many people outside Hogwarts would know about Sephie anyway, but better you be seen with her than anyone associate Hadrian Black with Harry Potter at all.”

Neville settled the satchel across his shoulder that held the inferius and did feel just slightly comforted with Sephie butting her little head against his arm for rubs. “Right, so who all should be looking out for in particular...er...Hadrian? Lord Black?”

“Hadrian, please!” Harry grimaced and gave Neville a scandalized look. “I still don’t like Lord Black unless I’m trying to make a pureblood prat feel intimidated, then I add the ‘Most Ancient and Noble House’ bit.”

“You do know I most definitely fit into that category. I *am* Heir Longbottom,” Neville smirked at his slightly taller friend who had squared his shoulders as they set out into the alley and did look a little intimidating in a punk-rock-goth-artsy way.

“You, my dear, could never be a prat even with all the titles in the world,” Harry threw an arm around Neville and steered him more into the alley. “As for who to be wary of...well, for you that would be Dumbledore, of course, and Dedalus Diggle is quite the lackey for the headmaster, also any known Death Eaters since you’re very much associated with Harry Potter. You are probably on a list to kidnap on sight to be used against Harry...it was actually done once this year before with Sirius in the first timeline, and I would not like a repeat at all if we can avoid it.”

“At least you’re safe in all this,” the teen grumbled and held the inferius slightly closer to his side.

Harry scoffed dismissively but with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. “Yeah, no. Sirius has definitely made both sides of this war hate me already with our stance on creature rights, the return of Dark Magic rituals, and more acceptance for both squibs and muggleborns. Plus, I’m now harboring Narcissa Black-Malfoy. I’m sure that has made me even less likeable, especially to the Dark. I’m pretty sure Lucius and Voldy both want me dead at this point... maybe not as much as the other me, but definitely up there.”

“Great...why didn’t Percy bring me again?” Neville grumbled as they were now pushing their way in the rush of holiday shopping traffic towards Ollivander’s. Occasionally a wixen would stop and stare at Hadrian in the middle of their shopping before whispering to their companions. It seemed that Lord Hadrian Black was a much gossiped about new member of their society.

“I love Percy, dearly...” Harry began, ignoring those around them, and paused to look at Neville seriously. “However, he gets caught up in his own thoughts and is not the most observant. Also, if we do actually get kidnapped, he’s capable, but not the quickest at dueling or thinking outside the box. He’s better at protection and ritual magic instead of offensive... though, he’s clearly deliciously brutal when he does decide to use it.”

“Look, Nev, I’m sure we’ll be fine, but if anything happens, you throw Sephie at the danger and run, just like you did back in the dorm room when you figured out something was off about me. She’s immune to most magic, almost indestructible, and will cause quite the distraction for your escape,” Harry continued. “You leave me and head straight to Gringotts since you can’t apparate yet. The goblins will protect you as part of our treaty with them now. They’ll contact Filius or Severus to come get you and take you to safety. Don’t try to fight... you are brilliant, but a shit dueler currently. We *have* to sort that out soon.”

Neville nodded his head firmly and tried to look confident instead of scared. “Right, well, let’s get this bloody wand and get back to the wards.”

“And do a little Christmas shopping...” Harry grinned to Neville’s horror like they weren’t taking their lives into their hands just by being out. “What? I don’t have Percy anything yet!”

“I swear, you’re going to get me killed,” he grumbled.

“Eh, I might have already...we erased that history by coming back in time though,” Harry unhelpfully commented. “That version of you I would be taking to the wandmaker in Knockturn Alley though since he had crossed into much darker magics. You, on the other hand, are going to need a solidly Light wand, so it’s Ollivander’s for us.”

“I still don’t see why a new wand is that important,” Neville remarked under his breath even as he pushed open the door to the dimly lit wand shop he had never been in before unlike most students at Hogwarts and entered.

“Hello, hello,” an elderly man bustled around from behind a large worktable and wiped his hands on an apron as he made his way to them with a huge smile. “Well, Mr. Longbottom...I hadn’t expected to see you in here when you didn’t come by before your first year. Hmm... Aspen and unicorn hair was your mother’s wand and...alder wood and dragon heartstring for your father if I remember correctly. I supposed you are using one of theirs?”

“Er...Hello, erm, yes, I’m using my father’s,” Neville answered the overly excited man tentatively. “My friend here insists I need a wand that fits me better.”

“Well, then, I should be thanking your friend,” Mr. Ollivander grinned widely at Harry and shook the man’s hand quickly and enthusiastically. “You, son, must understand your magical theory then, better than Madam Longbottom anyway. Alder wood is very picky for who it will serve, really does need to choose the wielder. I say...do I have the pleasure of meeting our new Lord Black? I hear you’ve made quite the waves in the Wizengamot...now, what might *your* wand be made of? It’s not one of mine.”

Harry hadn’t been able to get a word in edgewise, but he didn’t seem to mind in Neville’s opinion since he was just giving the old man that fond far-away look he associated with

Harry being caught up in sad, but not terrible, memories of his past. “Erm, he’s a Dark wizard,” Neville answered for him while Harry collected himself.

Ollivander scoffed and rolled his eyes. “Well, of course, I could feel it when you walked in. Now, I know I don’t have any wands that would speak to you here, but that doesn’t mean I don’t have professional curiosity, especially if it is one of my competitors.”

Harry laughed and pulled his wand from his arm holster, making sure to choose the one he had bought in Knockturn and not either of his other ones. “It’s ebony wood with a core of dementor skin,” Harry handed the wand over even as Ollivander grimaced some when he took it. “Don’t worry, I checked and the dementor was dead before the skin was taken.”

It wasn’t much of a comfort now that the dementors were on his side, but Harry had talked to Nox about it when they were being relocated to what might possibly be *Camelot*, and the dementor didn’t seem too bothered. He seemed to be of the opinion that once one of his children died, naturally or because the ministry had made them consume a soul, it was preferable to them to still be useful in some way. It apparently honored them and the Goddess in death. Harry thought it was a bit gruesome, but at least it wasn’t the ‘Death Stick’ that was currently strapped to his leg.

Ollivander inspected the wand, and shivered again when he handed it back to Harry. “I’m sorry, son. I assure you that your wand is a very powerful and well-maintained wand. My magic is just not compatible with something quite as dark as what you have there.”

“No worries, I’m sure your wand would feel all wrong to me too,” Harry replaced the wand in his holster and smiled. “Nev here is very much a Light wizard though, so you can help him much more than me. We would like you to construct him a wand though instead of him testing the ones already made. We will pay extra for you to add the core of our choosing to the correct wood.”

“What? Why?” Neville frowned, not having heard about this. “Why can’t I just get a normal wand?”

In answer, Harry just reached into a pocket that was deeper than non-magically possible and pulled out a long red feather. “This is your wand core,” he handed the feather to Neville.

“My, my, my,” Ollivander looked like he’d just been gifted a winning lottery ticket at the sight of the phoenix feather. “Is that feather from dear Fawkes? I can’t believe it!”

“It is,” Harry told them both while Neville ran it through his fingers in awe.

“I explained to Fawkes what we were doing today, and he offered the tail feather for you,” Harry told the Light Lord. “He huffed about it a bit, of course, but he actually seemed honored to help.”

“Well, as long as it will work for you,” Ollivander remarked, cackling when a shimmer of magic fell from the feather currently in the Longbottom heir’s hands. “Well, I’ll be...I believe it will work just fine. You will join a very exclusive club of powerful wizards then, son. We have already seen that Mr. Potter is powerful, and You-Know-Who...well, his power is legendary, though terrible certainly.”

“What...I don’t understand...?” Neville looked questioningly up at Harry.

“Erm...well...I’m sure your friend Harry would have told you at some point,” Harry coughed and shifted uncomfortably. He really hadn’t thought to mention it to anyone. Merlin, he didn’t even think he had told Ron or Hermione in the past or future...

“Erm, yeah, so Fawkes has only given two other tail feathers to be used for wands. One is in Harry’s wand and the other is in...er, Voldemort’s,” he grimaced a bit at the end.

“Wait, I thought I needed a Light wand,” Neville frowned at both of them. “I thought a phoenix was Light? Why would my wand core be the same as You-Know-Who?”

Ollivander was already nodding though. “Well, your friend Mr. Potter is Light, of course, but You-Know-Who, the same as every child, had the potential to be Light or Dark when he stepped into my shop. At eleven, your core is never decided one way or another. Your wand will grow and change with you, so even a Light core like a phoenix feather will eventually become Dark with the wizard if it has been used while they made the transition within themselves. The important thing is that the wand chooses you at whatever stage in your education you are in when you seek it out. If You-Know-Who were to purchase a new wand

currently, no phoenix feather core would choose him. He would need a wand such as our Dark friend here has.”

Neville’s brow furrowed as he started to understand more. “My wand never chose me. It was my dad’s. Does that really make a big difference?”

“It will not gracefully grow with you then,” Ollivander held out a hand for the feather. “It will fight your progress since it has never bonded to your magical core, especially a wand made of alder wood.”

“Right...so, picking a wood. How do we do this?” Harry tried to move them along impatiently. While he was relatively certain they would be safe in Ollivander’s shop. Too many people had seen them walk down the alley to get there, and that gave people time to plan things. He wanted to be gone just as soon as the wandmaker could bond the feather to the correct wood.

“Follow me!” Ollivander happily bounded towards his office in the back while Neville passed off Sephie to Harry again to follow him.

It took a full hour to choose the correct wood and for Mr. Ollivander to bond the core to Neville’s new laurel wood wand. Laurel wood, though surprising, was also very much not surprising since it sought out those who were very honorable and who had the potential for great success and achievements in their lives. When Neville picked up his new wand, his face lit up in new understanding of his magic. For an instant, it felt as if all three men were in a forest with fresh, clean air, the sounds of birds chirping, and the sunlight streaming down on their faces.

Ollivander actually clapped his hands, and the elderly man even did a slight little jig right there in his shop. “Brilliant! Brilliant! You, Heir Longbottom, are destined for glory, there is no doubt about that!”

“So, not a wasted trip?” Harry grinned happily at his friend and handed the wandmaker money for the purchase while Neville still held the wand dazedly.

“Is it like this for everyone?” The teen finally gasped and looked up questioningly.

“It’s different for every person, but it always feels like coming home,” Ollivander explained while he helped Neville strap on the wand holster Harry had also bought for his friend to hold his old wand as a back-up. “It may have felt a little more dramatic for you since your wand has been fighting your magic for all these years. When you return to school, be careful with your power levels the first few spells you cast until you get used to a wand that isn’t fighting you.”

“Right, well, hate to purchase and run, but we need to get going,” Harry was impatient again as he handed the inferius back to Neville and distractedly waved back to Ollivander while they left the store. “I need a book on learning Mermish from a bookstore and want to stop in at Borgin and Burke’s for Percy’s gift, both in Knockturn. Then we’ll run to the potion shop near Percy’s flat for some ingredients I need. Do you want anything while we’re here?”

“Hmm...no...” Neville was still distractedly running his fingers over his new wand. Harry felt the paranoid tingle of his instincts on his back and immediately raised a shield around them both.

The spell slashed through his shield from off in a side alley and washed over him. Harry felt the familiar suggestion in his mind that everything was fine, and nothing was wrong, that good things awaited him if he would only follow some simple instructions. With a derisive scoff and roll of his eyes, Harry shrugged off the imperius curse. Even as a fourteen-year-old he’d known that good things absolutely did not await for him, and following instructions was a terrible idea regardless of who they were coming from.

Free of the spell, Harry turned and swore at the glassy stare of his friend beside him. “Bombarda!” Neville cast with his new wand, and Harry mentally cursed everyone he could think of in the time it took for him to be blasted into a wall and lose consciousness.

“Hadrian! Hadrian!” Cut into Harry’s pained fog as he tried desperately to regain consciousness. “Hadrian, wake up, please!”

“Bloody hell and Merlin’s fucking balls,” Harry swore as he painfully shifted in the chair he seemed to be tied tightly to. He reached out with his magic but couldn’t sense anyone else in the room with him and Neville.

“Oh, thank Merlin!” Neville breathed out in relief from where he was similarly tied to a wooden chair in the same cell in what was clearly a dungeon of an old manor home with Harry. “Lucius Malfoy, he got us I think. I thought you might have died there for a minute!”

Harry groaned and finally opened his eyes enough to look around and take some kind of stock of their surroundings. “We should have gotten kidnapped before we got your new wand. I think you might have actually killed me back there just a little bit...I hold no hard feelings though,” he assured his friend who had a black eye and some cuts but looked overall healthy.

“What? I don’t remember what happened?” Neville turned pale in horror at Harry’s comment.

“Imperius curse,” Harry frowned. They weren’t in Malfoy Manor; he knew those dungeons from being thrown in them during the war. He remembered the rabbits Dobby had let loose on the house and winced. It seemed Lucius and Voldy had been forced to relocate to a safer and less infested base of operations. “Someone had to have seen us taken from the alley. If the aurors are notified, then Tonks and Kingsley will know, and they’ll tell Sirius and Remus who will come looking. Where’s Sephie?”

“The bag is over there,” Neville motioned with a shoulder to a leather satchel on the other side of the bars. “I think she escaped. Do you mean that *I* was under the imperius?! What did I do?!”

Harry stopped breathing. The dungeon looked a little different with it being four or five years in the past, but he knew this dungeon...intimately well. They were in the dungeons underneath the abandoned Lestrangle Manor. They were going to die...they had already died...he lost her...he was powerless...there was no escape...they were dead...

Neville didn't know what was happening. Harry was no longer with him; he was lost in his own mind. It was worse than the day he'd found his friend frozen by the window at Hogwarts. Neville tried to wiggle his hands out of the ropes binding him to the chair. "Harry!" He finally called, trying to break into the panic that was radiating from every pore of his friend.

They had stepped outside of Ollivanders and only gone a few steps before Neville didn't remember anything. The next thing he remembered was already tied to the chair and a pale, aristocratic hand was backhanding him in the face. He thought the hit from Lucius Malfoy might have been in reaction to Sephie biting him before she escaped, based on the large bleeding wound on his other hand at least.

Neville wiggled some more. His new wand had been taken, but he could feel the holster with his old wand still strapped to his leg. He had also seen the Death Eater who was with Malfoy only take one wand from Harry. The other Death Eater was a balding, rat-faced man he didn't know. Regardless, they at least had a couple wands between them, if not more knowing Harry. They just had to get free enough to get to them.

"Hadrian Black, you're in the past...I'm Neville. I need you!" Neville tried again and got no response. "I don't know what set you off, but you have to come back to me! Ron and Hermione are fine. Sirius is alive and waiting for you at your house. Percy is here with you. Luna is alive and home with her dad for break..."

Harry stirred slightly at that, causing Neville to look around them to make sure they were still alone and take in a steadying breath. "Right...something to do with Luna then. We're in a dungeon...bloody hell, was this where you were held wasn't it?!"

The pieces fit together in a horrifying puzzle for Neville. How was he going to get through to Harry if he was reliving his absolute worst memory? "Luna is fine, Harry," he said in as loud of a whisper as he could in hopes that no one was listening in. "You came back in time to save her and all of us."

Harry slowly blinked and a tear ran down his cheek. Neville winced. Right, try something different. "Dark Lord Hadrian Black, as the Light Lord I need to you snap out of it and come back to me. I order you to get your shit together!"

Harry blinked another couple times and wheezed a cough as if his lungs were only just then working again. “Luna?” He asked, looking at Neville finally, his eyes clearing of the far-away look.

“She’s not here. She’s safe,” Neville reassured him. “We aren’t though, so you’re going to need to pull yourself together, because I’m bloody fifteen and not a contortionist able to reach the wand on my leg!”

“Neville,” Harry finally closed his eyes and breathed in and out a few steadying breaths. “Yeah, right...escaping. Lestrange Manor...We can’t go through the walls since we’re meters underground, also no windows. There are strong anti-apparition wards that will even keep out house elves who aren’t bound to the property. If we go through the door, there is a long staircase that leads up to hallway outside of the library and study. I can tear down the wards on the cell door from what I remember of them, especially if we have wands...mine are still strapped to my legs. The problem is that Voldy is probably set up in the study if his habits haven’t changed from when he was in Malfoy Manor. Everything was falling apart in the house when I am...was here in the future, but they may have been strengthening the wards and fixing things if they intend to stay here long-term.”

Neville was nodding along to all this hoping Harry was coming up with a plan. “I tried calling for Fawkes already. The wards must keep him out too. So, how do we get a wand. Our arms and legs are both tied, can you move around enough to get to yours?”

Harry gave a humorless chuckle and looked sadly at Neville. “I don’t need to. The elder wand comes to me when I want to kill, and there are so very many people I currently would like to kill in this manor. I can feel Voldy here, you said you saw Lucius...you didn’t happen to see a short, dumpy, balding, rat-like man, did you?”

Neville’s eyes widened further. “Er, yeah...he was the one that took your wand from your arm.”

“Brilliant!” Harry was suddenly free from his bonds in what looked like a painful flash of light and fire from behind him.

“I think I singed the hair off my arms,” the man frowned and pushed his charred sleeves up, now holding a pale-white wand in one hand.

With a flick of the wand, Neville’s bonds fell away too, and he retrieved his father’s wand from his leg. “No, take mine,” Harry pulled the other wand from the leg of his jeans. “It also has a feather from Fawkes and might work at least slightly better than your old one.”

Neville gave it a couple test waves and cast a lumos while Harry focused on the cell door that was more of a prison from its wards than from the iron bars. “It’s still not my new wand, but you’re right, it’s better than my dad’s. Any chance the Ministry will pick up on the Trace from it here?”

“None at all,” Harry glared at the bars and waved his wand in frustration. “I got this though. I broke through these wandless, more than half-dead, and desperate the first time around. I’m going to get you out of here Neville...I promise.”

Neville walked over and put a hand on Harry’s arm to get his attention. “Hey, I’m not Luna,” he reminded his friend with a sad smile. “I might be crap at dueling and only fifteen, but I’m supposedly some Light Lord, right? You get us through that door, and I’ll follow you. We’re ending this, you and me.”

Harry’s face softened and he rolled his shoulders back, working the pain from Neville’s over-powered bombarda out of his muscles some more. “You’re right. We got this...you and me. Also...if you happen to see a big snake, please try to kill her. You got her the first time at seventeen, so I’m thinking it might be poetic justice for you to kill her again, if you see an opportunity anyway. I suggest Sectumsempra or fiendfyre if you’re feeling adventurous. I don’t mind burning down this manor and everyone in it. I can probably get us out before we burn to death...theoretically anyway...”

Neville grimaced but held Harry’s wand tighter. “Big snake...kill the snake...got it,” he nodded firmly and tried not to have a heart attack while Harry went back to working on the wards.

“More tea, dear?” Molly Weasley hovered over Percy with the teapot and a hopeful look on her face.

“Yes, please. Thank you, Mum,” he smiled up at her, feeling the familiar twist in his stomach at his second chance with his family once more.

“So...you’re dating a *bloke*, and not just any bloke but a *Dark* wizard?” Bill’s eyebrows were comically raised over his teacup. “And somehow he’s convinced Mum and Dad to be ok with all this?”

Arthur Weasley nodded and answered for his son. “We’re more concerned about his age at this point. He’s 27, which is quite a lot older than Percy...we, know son, you don’t have a problem with it. As long as he’s treating you right, we aren’t overly concerned either.”

Percy shut his mouth as his dad answered his protest for him. “Dad...” he just sighed and rolled his eyes. “He treats me really good, and I him.”

Bill shook his head and took a biscuit off the plate in front of him. He had been surprised to hear that his parents and his younger brother had made up, and even more surprised when he was invited over for tea to catch up. He had never been very close with Percy who had always kept to himself more than any of his siblings. Frankly, he was closer even with Ginny than with Percy.

He studied his younger brother. Percy was different. He looked different...not overly much, but enough for it to be noticeable from last Bill saw him. He even acted and talked differently...it was as if he had much more confidence and also much more pain that was deeply hidden below everything. Overall, it was all an improvement since Percy seemed more open and happier in general. Something wasn’t right though; he just couldn’t place his finger on it.

“Well, as long as you make each other happy,” Bill frowned, trying to place just what was causing his skin to crawl as if there were danger around them in the heavily warded kitchen of an unplottable house under a fidelus charm.

“Hadrian has invited both of us to a pub night with Percy, Sirius, and Severus,” Arthur informed his son with a proud smile at being included. “I believe Sirius will be going under Polyjuice since Severus has been keeping him stocked with it.”

“Remus is coming too,” Percy reminded their dad. “You really should join, Bill. Sirius introduced us all to this little pub with excellent fish and chips over at the junction between Diagon and Knockturn Alleys.”

“I’ve been there...they have good mead,” Bill nodded, remembering the place the goblins liked to go sometimes after work. He’d never thought Percy, let alone his father, would ever be caught in a place that catered to the Dark like that particular pub.

Percy leaned forward to take a biscuit and made a little motion as if to push back hair that was much longer than what he had. Bill tracked the movement and caught just the slightest of magical ripples. He frowned even more deeply. Working as a curse-breaker, Bill had developed highly sensitive magical sight, and something was there...something so very well covered that his magical sight couldn’t even pick it up.

Bill set down his teacup and put his hands under the table. “How is it working at Hogwarts?” He asked his brother.

“It’s great! It’s a little weird being so close in age to my students though...” Percy began.

Bill wasn’t really listening though. He twisted around the bracelet on his wrist and fiddled with the rune stones beaded onto it. Pushing a little magic into the bracelet enhanced his magical sight to almost the level of the goblins, it was a gift from his goblin master to him when he finished his apprenticeship in curse breaking. The stones clicked into place beside each other, and Bill blinked before focusing on his brother.

Percy was wearing a glamour. It was one better than any Bill had ever seen before. He couldn’t see through it even with his rune bracelet, but he could see the shimmer of it around the man now. It covered almost all of the man in front of him. It made Bill consider if this even *was* his brother. If it was, why in Merlin’s name would he have a glamour over almost his entire body.

Something wasn't right, and he had to get this man away from his parents. Whoever this was, he had been let into headquarters...was that why he was pretending to be Percy Weasley. Did this have something to do with Hadrian Black. But no...Hadrian owned the house, if he was in on this, then there would be no need to impersonate Percy.

"Hey, Perce...I was wondering if I could talk with you in private before I leave," Bill put down his empty teacup, clearly indicating he was getting ready to leave. "I have a bureaucracy question about the ministry and how to get a cursed object checked out by the Unspeakables before I break the curse on it for Gringotts. Could we maybe talk in the study? It's a bit sensitive and bank business and all."

"Yeah sure!" Percy looked almost excited about the suggestion as he put down his mostly full teacup and stood.

"Stop by and see your old mum before pub night with the boys, right?" Molly Weasley gave Bill a hug before he followed the man pretending to be his brother out of the kitchen.

"If I can get off work early enough," he quickly assured his mother with a smile.

Bill already had his wand in his hand when he stepped into the empty study behind Percy and quickly set a ward on the door. Percy had a questioning eyebrow raised, but unlike his little brother would have, didn't protest the multi-layered and over-powered secrecy and privacy ward. "Unspeakables tend to be easy to convince to check anything interesting out. What kind of object is this?" Percy asked, getting to business.

"Who are you and what have you done with my brother?" Bill lowered his wand at Percy's chest and sneered at the man in front of him. "Is he still alive?"

Percy coughed in what almost passed for a laugh, causing Bill to look at him in confusion. "Sorry...that was just really dramatic," Percy actually did bark out a laugh that time and very unconcernedly crossed his arms and leaned up against a bookshelf. "What makes you think I'm not your brother?"

Bill's eyebrows shot up and he motioned with his wand. "Besides, that absolutely not being how Percy would react and the fact you are wearing a glamour over most of your body, there is no way you are my little brother."

"Merlin, Harry was absolutely right that experimental spells should not be used long term," Percy groaned but still didn't seem upset or concerned that he had a wand pointed at his chest. "Right, so I'm definitely Percy Weasley...but I'm not exactly your little brother."

"What does that mean?" Bill's hand tightened on his wand even more, causing a spark or two to escape the tip of it.

The man held up both his hands non-threateningly. "I'm going to reach into my sleeve and take out my wand," Percy said slowly. "I'm only going to use it to remove my glamour. Is that ok?"

"Do it slowly," Bill instructed, ready with an incapacitating spell on his lips at the slightest provocation.

Percy did just that. He took out his wand, and nonverbally removed the exceptional glamour around him. Bill stared...he stared some more as his brain tried to process. He was clearly looking at his brother, but this wasn't his brother. It was Percy, but this was *not* his Percy.

"Erm...I'm actually 31...or possibly 32 by now," his brother explained. "I *am* Percy though, I'm just your older brother now..."

"Time travel..." Bill put the pieces together with a surprised frown and slightly lowered his wand. "Hadrian Black?" He questioned, wondering how the boyfriend fit into all this.

"Hadrian James Potter-Black," Percy answered him with a smile and a little nod. "Harry Potter when he's wearing his glamour."

Bill's wand was all the way down at his side now in his complete confusion. "Wait...how did *Harry Potter* become a Dark wizard? Are you two really dating?!"

Percy rolled his eyes and scoffed good-humoredly. "Yeah, no one seems to consider that I might actually be a Dark wizard myself, thank you very much. And yes, we're bloody well in a relationship. We have been for over two years now. This whole time-travel thing was most definitely his hair-brained idea."

"Wait...what?" Bill asked as a bang then a crash then a screech from Walburga sounded from outside of the study.

Percy laughed and reapplied his glamour. "Tonks is here. You'll need to wait on my interrogation for a while," he said, removing the ridiculously solid ward Bill had placed on the door with little to no effort and with a nonverbal spell.

"But..." He really didn't even know what question he wanted to ask first.

It was too late to ask a question though when the door was thrown open and a disheveled auror with pink hair stumbled in. "Have you seen your boyfriend lately?" Tonks asked Percy with no preamble and more than a touch of concern.

Percy's face fell instantly. "Not since this morning when he stopped by to pick up Neville to go shopping in Diagon," he answered her. "Why? What happened?"

"Bollocks!" She swore and kicked the chair leg with her boots in frustration. "It's possible he and the Longbottom boy were kidnapped. We had a report coming in about the Longbottom heir using a blasting curse on Lord Black before apparating both of them away from the alley. No one really believed it, but I volunteered to check it out."

"Neville can't apparate yet," Percy was shaking his head, his freckles standing out starkly against his pale skin. "He had to be imperiused. Hadrian would have known if he wasn't really Neville, and he's immune to the imperius curse himself."

“Who would want to kidnap Lord Black though?” Tonks asked in confusion. “Longbottom, I can kind of understand with his connection to Harry, but Lord Black...?”

“It was probably my father,” a blond head leaned over from behind an armchair in the corner that was partially covered by a screen to keep the fumes from the twins’ latest experiment from ruining the study for everyone else. “It sounds like you’re going to have an even larger problem if he finds out who Hadrian really is though...”

“Draco Malfoy!” Percy glared dangerously at the teen. "You know better than to spy on people!"

“It’s not my fault no one thinks to check for magical signature dampening wards around armchairs which someone could be using to escape the Weasley twins who are following a person around like guard dogs,” Draco smirked at them all.

“Wait...what does he mean about who Hadrian really is?” Tonks’s hair turned blue in her confusion.

"Not important right now," Percy ran a hand through his hair and started pacing while he ran through scenarios and plans in his head.

“Lucius would take him to Voldemort,” Bill breathed out in realization.

“Probably already has,” Draco shrugged. “My father hangs onto the hem of the Dark Lord’s robes like a sniveling house elf these days. They won’t kill him right away though. My father will want to torture him into telling him where me and my mother are. I’m sure Longbottom will serve some purpose as well.”

“Right...I need to swing by a graveyard, someone call Severus. We’re going to need him to find out where they’re being kept,” Percy snapped and flung open the door to the study. “Send me a patronus, Bill, once you have a location. I’m going to go rescue my idiot of a partner.”

“Wait...a graveyard?” Bill called out his brother questioningly and more than a little concerned even as the front door to the townhouse slammed behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: Escape from Lestrange Manor...

So, the future has been erased, and it doesn't really matter anymore, but I've gotten some questions about the timeline so, this is what I'm working from for Harry and Percy's past/future:

1998: Voldemort killed, Harry attempts to finish Hogwarts and ends up dropping out for self-study

1999: Harry joins aurors and promptly asked to leave

- Starts mastery in Amsterdam

- kidnapped with Luna

- Percy joins Unspeakables

2001: Finishes mastery and moves back to England

- Teddy kidnapped

2003: Ron turned into vampire and leaves aurors

- Draco goes missing

2004: Ron disappears

2005: Hermione and Kreacher killed

- Late in the year Percy and Harry start dating

2007: Trip back in time

The End of Voldemort

Chapter Notes

New update on chapters left: I'm estimating three and an epilogue...possibly.

Warning: There's a bit of blood and gore in this one.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Percy Weasley dusted his hands off before casting a scourgify at his entire body to rid himself of all the dirt that had settled over him. He shook himself to get some of the tiredness out of his limbs next before reaching his magic out to test the aura of ambient magic around him. Yeah...it was really dark...the graveyard was reeking of dark magic as well as his person. Another few waves of his wand had everything *looking* the same as before he had arrived, but he guessed that even a Hogwarts student would be able to feel that something was off if they walked through the place, even if they couldn't tell *what* was wrong.

Well, there was nothing for it. Percy grumbled and rolled his eyes as he came to a plan he didn't particularly like. He raised his wand above his head to the sky. "Morsmordre," he cast with a smirk when the the dark mark appeared shimmering over the graveyard.

Well, that would at least cast blame elsewhere since someone was definitely going to notice that something had happened eventually. This tactic also had the advantage of distracting the aurors for a while away from what he had planned. It would take them a while as they tried to figure out just what the Death Eaters might have done in a random graveyard in the middle of nowhere. Knowing Harry, aurors would just get in the way of whatever his escape plans might be and probably get himself and Percy arrested at the end of it anyway, even if they managed to kill Voldemort.

A silvery sphinx galloped into the graveyard and circled Percy imperiously. "Snape says the Death Eaters have left Malfoy Manor for some reason. He has not been called recently, but his best guess is either the old Riddle Manor or the abandoned Lestrangle Manor for the new base of operations," Bill's voice informed him, with quite a lot of concern bleeding through in the tone. "Snape knows the location of Riddle Manor and just apparated out to check for us if anyone is there. However, no one knows where the old Lestrangle Manor is...not even Mrs. Malfoy. She says that it was under the fidelus in the last war, and Bellatrix was the secret keeper. Regardless, Rodolphus was a paranoid bastard, so she was never invited to her sister's home. She wouldn't know its location even if the charm was broken."

Percy sighed deeply. It was definitely going to be the abandoned Lestrangle Manor. That was the way Harry's luck ran. It would be the absolute most traumatic, the hardest wards to get through, but also his partner had broken out of there once before. There were some advantages to Harry's escape from the inside, but also many disadvantages to the outside rescue party trying to gain entry. Thankfully, the fidelus was most definitely broken since he had murdered Bellatrix. Also, thankfully, he *had* gotten the location of where Harry had been held out of his brother in the future. He had gone there once about a year after Harry escaped because he had to see where Harry had been held. They weren't in a relationship yet, but Percy already cared deeply for the other man. It might not have been love yet, but it was very close. He *had* to see where it had happened, even if he would never know exactly what had been done to Harry and Luna.

"Expecto patronum," he cast next, thinking of Harry as he always did to power the spell. His silvery crow patronus waited on his orders even as it flew away from the dark magic around it as much as possible. "Go to Bill," he told it and weighed what his message needed to be since his brother was probably in Grimmauld Place with some combination of Order members around him at this point.

"Tell him... Lestrangle Manor is located on the outskirts of Cardiff. That is most likely where Hadrian and Neville will be held since the wards are ridiculously strong even if the manor itself is crumbling. Riddle Manor never had strong wards set up there," he explained, wondering if Bill had ever been to Wales. He couldn't remember if his brother had. Maybe someone in the Order would be able to apparate him there if Bill hadn't been.

"Meet me by Twmpath Castle, and I can guide you the rest of the way," he decided as the closest landmark at least one of the Order members could reasonably be expected to have been to at some point, and it was secluded enough for them to meet by and not raise questions with the muggles. He didn't know how to tell Bill to be discrete in who he brought with him since he didn't know who all was in the room on the other end of his patronus at this point. Some things needed to be said though.

"Bill...I trust you to make sure none of the teenagers are able to join you. Tie up the twins if you have to. We need someone who is familiar with wards around old manor homes..." he paused. It had been Draco who broke the wards in the future, but the 15-year-old would not be able to do it yet as only a teenager. "Maybe Sirius or Narcissa...but if she doesn't want to be involved in this, don't push it. This isn't her fight."

The crow flew off and Percy turned to his small army with a smile. "I expect you all to stay hidden until needed," he instructed the group of inferi circling him with their blank and lifeless eyes while he picked up a handful of rocks to make into portkeys. "Stay inside the tree line. I'll summon you when the wards are broken."

Quickly, he passed out the portkeys, and his army popped away. With one last look around to make sure he hadn't missed anything, Percy turned on his heel, apparating away right before the first cracks of apparition signaling the aurors finally arriving to investigate the dark mark in the sky. They would have their work cut out for them with no evidence of what had taken place besides the heavy feel of death magic in the air.

Neville tried to keep his nerves in check, but his heart was racing and his hands were clammy. It had taken Harry the better part of an hour, but the wards over their little cell were finally down. The older man was panting with the exertion of the magic he'd had to use, but he still turned a large grin on his friend. "Right, Nev...that was the easy part," he chuckled before tapping the lock with his oddly white wand and opening the door with a simple nonverbal *alohamora* spell.

The teen gave a little nervous scoff at that pronouncement and rubbed the sweat from the palms of his hands before clutching at his borrowed wand more tightly. "How many Death Eaters do you think will be out there waiting for us?"

Harry stepped through the door and started walking over to the dark stairway in the corner of the room. "This seems more Lucius's vendetta than Voldy's. I would wager we've been captured to get Narcissa and Draco's location. Thankfully, that means Voldy probably won't have called the lot since he really has no clue who he has in his dungeon. My guess would be Lucius, Pettigrew, and probably whatever Death Eater he has who has any experience with magical construction or restoration. This place is in really bad condition. Regardless, assume every spell cast will be an Unforgiveable, and Voldy will always go for *avada kedavra* first if he doesn't have the advantage."

Neville nodded, making a mental note of that information, and followed on the heels of the dark wizard. "Then we just have a bloody giant snake and You-Know-Who himself to deal with. Right...no problems at all."

“Look on the bright side,” Harry turned slightly to look comfortingly at his friend. “There is absolutely no way that someone didn’t see you blast me into a wall in the middle of Diagon Alley. Someone’s going to be talking about the new supposed blood feud between Houses Longbottom and Black, and it’ll get back to Percy quickly with the way gossip spreads in our world. We won’t be alone for long if my baby’s got anything to say about it.”

That was *slightly* encouraging, Neville guessed. Counting on a rescue from the Order which was led by Dumbledore who wanted both of them dead though was probably asking for too much. He supposed that Percy Weasley would come regardless though, and maybe he would bring Sirius Black and Professor Snape. That wasn’t too terrible he guessed. Well, they just had to hope that they would be found before You-Know-Who decided to call for reinforcements, or just killed them both...

Percy frowned and crossed his arms at the small rescue party that met him beside the crumbling castle in Wales. He didn’t know what he was expecting, but he was definitely expecting more of a turn-out than this. “I suppose Heir Longbottom and Lord Black are not priorities to the Order,” he dryly commented, getting a wince from his brother and several other people.

“Clearly,” Snape matched the dry tone of his voice with a dangerous gleam in his eyes and handed a potion vial to the glamoured man with no further comment.

Percy looked at the vial questioningly before he recognized a pepper-up potion. Well, it seemed that Snape would be the least surprised of the group when an army of magical zombies decided to help them out in their rescue attempts. With a fond look at his new friend, he tossed back the potion, feeling much better after his recent massive magic drain. “Thanks,” he said simply.

“I don’t know what’s got into Albus,” Moody grumbled, his magical eyes circling around, clearly trying to figure out why Percy Weasley seemed to suddenly have a much darker aura than he’d ever seen around the young man before. “He was adamant there was no hope for a rescue attempt. I’ve never seen him so stubborn on the side of doing nothing. Even if they have already been killed, they still deserve for someone to at least try to find them. When I was an auror, we would never have left a man behind.”

Sirius let out a small growl of anger. “Personally, I expected nothing more from the man,” he added to Moody's surprise. “Bill and I are your best bets at getting through the wards of an old manor home, so I’ll be damned before listening to a word that old coot says about not going after my cousin and little Longbottom.”

“Right, so you’re the only ones who went against his order to stand down,” Percy nodded slowly, now understanding why the group was so small. With new eyes, he looked fondly on the collection of people who were willing to put Neville and Hadrian above their own lives, some of them not even knowing that Hadrian was really Harry. Sirius, Remus, and Severus he understood being there since they had pledged both Harry and Hadrian their loyalty. But Moody, Narcissa, Bill, and his father were less expected out of everyone.

“Well, clearly I’m not a member of this ridiculous Order and take orders from no one,” Narcissa scoffed and crossed her arms. “And you and I will be having words young man once this is over with. Saying this isn’t my fight! Those young men were kidnapped because Lord Black is protecting me. This is more my fight than these flaming peacock people’s.”

“My apologies,” Percy told her quickly in placation.

“Dora wanted to be here, but the aurors were called to a Death Eater disturbance back in England, and one of us needed to check it out at least,” Remus explained sadly, and Percy did an excellent job of not laughing at that particular situation he’d caused.

Arthur Weasley stepped forward and clapped a hand on Percy’s shoulder. “That’s your partner who is in danger,” he gave his son a profoundly sad look. “And a child the same age as Ron. Your mother and I agreed that Dumbledore was wrong in this instance, and we would support you and Neville. Molly is currently holding your younger siblings at wand-point to keep them from following us, or she would be here too.”

“At least the brat is shut up in his room studying and didn’t hear the message or this would be a shitshow,” Moody grumbled but had a small, fond look on his face for Harry who had somehow wormed his way into his cold, dusty heart.

“Right, so you’re the only one who knows how to get to my late sister’s manor...I find that makes me exceptionally giddy that Bellatrix must have finally succumbed to the wonderful

treatment of Azkaban for the fidelus to be broken,” Narcissa gave him a small, ferocious smile. “Well...make some portkeys or start side-along apparating us then.”

“Just how did you know where the manor is, boy?” Moody growled suspiciously while Percy began handing out the portkeys he’d already made for them to share between them when he’d made the ones for his inferi earlier.

“You’d be surprised what information you have access to when you are the Minister of Magic’s assistant,” Percy said in explanation before taking hold of Severus’s arm to side-along him since he had run out of already made portkeys.

“Right, wands at the ready. Activation word is ‘dunderhead,’” he told them before turning on his heel and apparating himself and Severus to just outside the dilapidated manor’s wards.

“Our dear Severus has provided us with a small vial of Veritaserum which you will use on the boy,” Voldemort ordered. “He must remain intact as a bargaining chip, or at least breathing. The younger Crabbe assures his father that Harry Potter would feel it necessary to save the Longbottom heir if he were captured. He will be put to good use for our plans.”

Harry and Neville shared a look from where they were listening to the conversation happening in what may have originally been a ballroom from the other side of a moldy, wooden door. It was just as they had suspected. The funny thing was that it would have worked too if it was Harry’s original fifth year and he really was fifteen. He would have gone after Neville in a heartbeat just like he had Sirius.

“What of the dark wizard, my lord?” Lucius Malfoy drawled in aristocratic tones. “He is the one hiding my wife and heir behind his wards. He has also been countering our proposed legislation in the Wizengamot annoyingly well. Surely, we do not need him *intact* for any reason?”

There was a pause only filled by a scraping noise which was mostly likely being made by Nagini’s scales moving across the stone of the floor. “I’m interested in this dark wizard who would dare to stand against his lord,” Voldemort began. “I’ll grant your vengeance, but we

will use Veritaserum on him first, and I will question him myself before you have your fun.”

“Thank you, my lord,” Lucius said, and by the muffled sound, he must be bowing low to the ground now. “What of my wife and heir when they are located?”

“Dear Narcissa has clearly lived past her usefulness...you agree,” Voldemort hissed in a statement rather than a question. “Your wife is a liability to our cause, and her disobedience must not be allowed to go unpunished. I believe she would serve best as an evening meal for Nagini now.”

“Of course, my lord, whatever you see as best” Lucius responded. Harry couldn’t see the man’s face, but the dry tone had him glaring at the door. Lucius didn’t make even a single protest or move to save his wife.

“Your heir...well, he is young, and I supposed can still be trained,” the snake-man said in a fake-contemplative tone. Clearly, he already knew what he wanted to do with Draco, but he was drawing it out as if to give the impression of allowing Lucius to have some input in the matter.

“Yes, my lord,” Lucius quickly agreed. “My wife spoiled the child, and clearly, I was not heavy-handed enough with him. If you allow him to live, I will rectify that mistake enthusiastically.”

Voldemort hummed in fake-consideration again, and Harry leaned closer to the door. He wasn’t holding off to hear what Tom’s plans were, they didn’t matter anymore after Harry killed him, but he was listening for movements other than Tom and Lucius to figure out how many and where the Death Eaters were in the room. “No, Lucius, clearly you cannot be trusted with raising the child anymore. You will give him to me,” Voldemort ordered with a vicious tone lacing his words. “Young Draco will learn to serve me and all my needs very well...yes, he will be mine, Lucius. You agree?”

Harry had to restrain himself from punching the wall or growling or something to give them away at the order that had Lucius Malfoy sputtering in the ballroom, but which he was also not protesting to Harry’s even more incensed anger. The depraved implications of the snake-man’s request seemed to suddenly hit Neville who involuntarily and loudly gasped out from behind Harry.

“My lord,” a simpering voice spoke up from much closer to them in the room and giving away Pettigrew’s location finally. “I believe I heard something outside the door.”

“Go to the right when you enter and stay behind me,” Harry ordered Neville quickly to keep himself between where he’d heard the room’s occupants to be standing and the teen. “Focus on the snake. Burn the place down if you must.”

“But...wait...” Neville protested in shock even as his words fell on deaf ears when Harry blasted the wooden doors apart and cast something that sent off a painfully loud bang and flash of light ahead of them in the room.

Harry was barely holding onto himself. The past and the present were dangerously blending together with Luna standing beside him one moment and Neville the next. In one reality, it was a group of desperate Death Eaters who had been torturing him, in the other, it was the man who had been hunting him his entire life and who had actually killed him once. Regardless, he was leaving this manor, and he would be walking out with the person standing beside him, and everyone else in the building would be dead.

Unfortunately, Harry’s estimate on the Death Eater numbers was slightly short. The shock of the concussion spell had given him time to process that Crabbe senior and McNair were also in the room with McNair too close to Neville for comfort. He processed it, but he didn’t have enough time to act before Pettigrew cast a blasting hex at them, being the closest to their position.

Harry raised a shield in one wand movement to block the curse and cast a Sectumsempra at McNair in his second breath the other direction. Neville ducked but was still hit with blood as the curse hit and took out the ministry’s executioner who had just turned his attention to them. The choice of cursing McNair over Pettigrew cost Harry the advantage over the animagus who immediately turned into a rat and scurried farther away from the intruders causing Harry to swear in frustration.

“Avada kedavra!” Voldemort cast at Harry with a growl, stepping to the side for Nagini to speed past him towards Neville.

“Wingardium Leviosa!” Neville had cast even before the fake dark lord was able to articulate his curse, believing Harry’s earlier advice, and sending McNair’s body between them and the man to absorb the killing curse.

“Nice!” Harry praised his friend before swiping his wand down and throwing Nagini away from them and towards a wall.

“Incumba!” Voldemort cushioned his snake’s impact. She dropped to the floor and seemed to be slightly stunned but unhurt.

“Crucio!” Lucius Malfoy yelled, the spell hitting Neville in the second it took for Harry’s spell to end.

Harry steeled himself to not go to his friend to help him. This wouldn’t kill him even as it broke Harry’s heart to hear his screams. “Expulso!” He cast at where Crabbe was sneaking up on them in the confusion.

“Protego Maximus!” Crabbe blocked the spell.

“Avada kedavra!” Harry immediately cast through the man’s shield, killing the Death Eater while he was still trying to block the first spell thrown at him.

“Well, look at you...you are on the wrong side of this war,” Voldemort chuckled at his fallen Death Eater and held out a hand to stop both Lucius and Nagini for a moment. “Why are you, a dark wizard, serving the Light instead of following me? Magic demands you serve your lord, why are you fighting against what is only natural for you?”

Harry scoffed and barely restrained himself from rolling his eyes even as he took a step to the right to be between Lucius Malfoy and where Neville was recovering on the floor now. Frankly, he was glad the man wanted to monologue a bit. He was bloody tired and about ready to pass out from the excessive amount of magic he’d used in taking down the wards

and since they'd entered the ballroom. Voldemort could always be counted on to give a long-winded speech for Harry to catch his breath.

"You are a fool, Tom Riddle," he said, causing the man to seethe at being called the name he had left behind. "You are no more Magic's Dark Lord than Lucius there is a garden gnome. *I* am Magic's Dark Lord, and I do *not* serve the Light, but I do absolutely support them as Magic and the balance of nature requires."

"Weak claims from a weak wizard," Voldemort hissed, raising his wand, his red eyes flashing in anger. "If you will not serve me, then you are no better than Dumbledore and his lackeys."

A wave of magic hit everyone in the room, causing them all to stumble slightly. Harry's lips turned up into a feral smile. "Why Tom...it seems your wards have fallen. I do so look forward to introducing you to my boyfriend."

Voldemort suddenly reached over to grab Lucius's arm, pressing his wand to the dark mark and calling the rest of the Death Eaters to him. Everyone in the room stopped in surprise when there was a loud yowl that sounded out from the corner of the room and a resounding squeak. Harry and Neville both looked over in enough time to see Sephie, who had been lurking around the manor the whole time, bite off what was clearly rat-Pettigrew's head.

Neville retched on the floor, and Harry smiled. "Good girl," he quipped before turning back and casting a slicing hex at Lucius that was unfortunately blocked.

"Fawkes!!" Neville recovered to pull himself up and cast a shield, blocking just as Nagini struck at them.

Outside the manor, it had taken Bill and Sirius working together to even figure out what wards were around Lestrage Manor. Once they figured out what the wards were, Moody and Narcissa were able to assist by each tackling a different ward, with Sirius and Bill, at the same time. By the end of it, Percy, Arthur, and Remus were called in to lend magic and fight the backlash of the ancient wards going on the offensive. For the life of him, Percy had no clue how Draco Malfoy had done this all by himself in the future. It was beyond impressive,

and he was invested now in making sure the Malfoy heir stayed on their side and even joined their little rebellion if possible.

They were all winded when the wards finally crashed down, revealing the decaying hulk of a dark, stone manor in front of them. After a breath, a green light flashed across the broken windows at one end of the house. “Morgana, he’s started without me,” Percy smirked as he quickly strode forwards.

Snape hissed and grabbed the mark on his arm. “We are about to have company!” He warned everyone in a growl. It didn’t take more than a few seconds before pops of apparition sounded on the bare lawn which seemed to quickly fill with black-robed and white-masked individuals.

Percy swore and grabbed the arm of the person standing closest to himself. He noted it was his father with a wince, but prayed to Magic herself that Arthur Weasley would stand with him. “Dad, you’re going to need to shield me. I won’t be able to cast anything or protect myself. I need you to stay back and watch my back for me. Can you do that?”

“What? Why?” Arthur asked, even as Moody laughed maniacally from beside them, firing off quite illegal curses at the surprised Death Eaters now on the defensive.

“Just do it, please,” he pleaded.

Arthur’s frown deepened but he gave his son a firm nod. “I will protect you with my life, Percy, always. You’re my son, and I trust you.”

Blinking the mistiness suddenly in his eyes away, Percy gave his father a little smile. “Focus on the Death Eaters! The inferi won’t hurt you!” He yelled at the others in their group before closing his eyes and raising his wand above his head, his aura pulling in the darkness around him.

“What the hell did he just say?!” Sirius Black almost squeaked as he rose from a dive he’d made to dodge a killing curse.

“Death Eaters bad, zombies good,” Severus Snape distractedly quipped before pushing Remus out of the way of a curse that would have definitely killed him and sent a Sectumsempra back which took out two Death Eaters simultaneously.

“Bloody hell, Percy!” Bill yelled over the shouts when over a dozen inferi shambled their way out of the nearby forest and flanked the Death Eaters from their other side.

“I think we need to have a long family meeting when this is over with,” Arthur Weasley gasped, but shielded a red stunner cast at them.

“I’ll say!” Moody laughed an unhinged chuckle before lifting one of the inferi with his wand and sending it directly at the Death Eater dueling Bill.

Harry and Neville both hit the floor to dodge a killing curse aimed at them from Lucius Malfoy. A loud musical screech sounded throughout the room as Fawkes swept in and right at Malfoy’s head, taking a chunk of white-blond hair with him in his talons. “Bloody bird!” Malfoy cast a stunner at Fawkes which was easily dodged.

Voldemort hissed at Nagini, and even though Harry could no longer understand Parseltongue, he was certain that it was an order to kill him and Neville. “Fawkes, the snake!” Neville yelled and cast what could have been intended to be a disarming spell at Lucius but which the wand movement was incorrect, and it instead hit him like a punch to the stomach.

With a screech, Fawkes swooped down in a ball of fire and latched onto to Voldemort’s snake lifting her into the air. Using the distraction, Harry immediately set into Voldemort, casting whatever he could think as quickly as possible from jelly-legs jinxes to blood boiling curses and anything in between to keep him distracted from protecting his snake.

Lucius recovered and cast a shouted, “Oppugnate!” Harry felt a sharp slice taken out of his side, causing his vision to blur for a second in the pain.

“Stupify!” Neville yelled at Lucius, almost catching him, but Voldemort blocked the spell with a hiss this time.

The ball of flame flared suddenly with a screech and the burnt husk of Nagini fell to the ground in a pile of ash where the phoenix once was. “No!” Neville yelled tearfully as a dark cloud emerged screaming from the snake’s body and vanished into the air.

Voldemort screamed in anger even as Harry now smiled at the evil man in front of him. “That was the last one, Tom,” Harry chuckled and stood, ignoring the blood soaking his shirt from his wound.

“You!” The inhuman man seethed. He didn’t seem to realize in his anger that Harry meant his last horcrux, but his anger knew no bounds regardless.

Harry’s eyes flashed greener and began to glow some as he raised the elder wand in his hand. **“I think it’s time you died now,”** the Master of Death spoke in his deep, echoing tones.

Voldemort’s mouth opened as shock replaced anger. “Who are you?”

“I am the Dark Lord,” Harry answered simply. He gave his wand a little twist as if wrapping a thread around it. He caught the tattered edges of Tom Riddle’s damaged soul and pulled. He pulled until the man coughed up a black cloud, retching his soul out of his body before disintegrating into a pile of dust on the ground.

“Stupify!” Neville cast at the gaping Malfoy staring at his dead lord, this time hitting him squarely in the chest and knocking out the last Death Eater.

While normally they probably would have tried to go help their own rescue party, Harry and Neville only had the strength to sit on the ground and wait to be ‘rescued’ in the middle of

the destroyed ballroom. Sephie sat on Harry's lap purring while Neville's shaking hands held a tiny, bald phoenix chick. "I think Lucius has your wand," Harry commented out of nowhere, petting Sephie with one hand and holding his ruined jacket to the wound in his side with his other.

Neville just stared dazedly in front of him though, breathing heavily. "Hey...we lived," Harry told him, trying to get him to focus back in on the room. "We lived and Voldemort is dead."

Neville slowly nodded and winced at a loud bang and a scream. "You think they're alright?"

"Yeah," Harry frowned at the door, wishing he could help. "I hope...I can't even cast a spell to heal my side though. We're no use to them right now." Neville just nodded and scratched Fawkes's head while the baby bird cooed at him.

Finally, a few minutes later, there was a large blast as the front door was blown in and Alastor Moody stormed into the ballroom, closely followed by a bleeding, angry, but very alive Severus Snape who looked ready to tear the manor down around himself. "About time..." Hadrian drawled tiredly from the floor where Neville now had his head resting on the older man's shoulder, not able to hold it up himself anymore.

"Pup!" Sirius ran in around the two men and skidded to his knees in front of Harry. "Are you ok? You're bleeding! What's injured?"

Behind him, Snape was frantically trying to roll up his left sleeve while still holding his wand trained on the room. "It's gone!!" He gasped in surprised relief, looking at his bare left arm. "It's gone."

To Harry's surprise, Bill Weasley strode in next, followed by a dust covered Narcissa, then Remus whose eyes were still flashing amber. "Is it over?" Remus asked, inspecting Severus's arm himself while the former Death Eater stood there stunned.

"It's over," Harry assured them with a small, tired smile.

Narcissa walked over and kicked her ex-husband's side. "He's only stunned," she said in clear disappointment.

"I don't care if you want to kill him, but you might want to check that Moody won't try to arrest you first," Harry shrugged and smiled at her.

Finally, Percy walked into the room, followed by a pale and tired Arthur Weasley. "Percy!" Hadrian breathed out in relief. He'd been so worried about his partner. "Are you ok?"

"Oh, love..." Percy hurried over and almost collapsed beside Harry. He was clearly in a similar state of magical exhaustion as Harry and Neville were, maybe even worse as his hands seemed to be shaking out strain instead of like Neville's who had been cursed.

"Right, Cissa, don't kill your husband. He'll be kissed by a dementor after a Veritaserum trial anyway," Sirius got down to business, seeming to decide to take charge. "Moody or Severus, one of you, obliviate the man of everything after he kidnapped my cousin and Neville."

"Why?" Moody asked with a frown while Severus just strode over to the man with a sneer on his face and did as he had been requested.

"Because, Dumbledore expects Harry Potter to kill Voldemort...*everyone* expects Harry Potter to kill Voldemort, and Hadrian Black would fall under immediate suspicion if it were him since he's a dark wizard. Harry can take the fame; Hadrian will only get infamy," Sirius said sternly as he took a vial of a golden liquid out of his pocket.

The fugitive downed the potion and grimaced in pain while he slowly changed before their eyes. All of a sudden, there were two Hadrian Blacks sitting on the floor of the room. "Your turn," Sirius passed over a vial to Hadrian.

Harry upstoppered the vial, wondering what Sirius had planned, and sniffed it. It was butterbeer. He frowned in confusion, trying to get his tired brain working. Percy leaned into him, his mouth by Harry's ear. "Take it and apply your glamour," he whispered. "Be Harry Potter and take the credit."

Then it finally clicked in his brain. With a smile, he knocked back the fake-Polyjuice potion while simultaneously casting his glamour. “The brat is going to kill you,” Moody growled in warning.

“Yes, but no one actually saw him today,” Bill added, a small, knowing smile tugging at his mouth that Percy mirrored and just confused Harry more since he didn’t know Bill had been brought into their secret. “He was shut up in his room all day. It’s highly likely that he slipped out without us knowing and went with his friend Neville to Diagon today and was kidnapped as well. Since no one checked in on him, there’s no one to say that it didn’t happen.”

“Except for Potter,” Moody scoffed.

“We shouldn’t pull Harry into this,” Arthur shook his head firmly, not liking the teen to have to shoulder the press for the death of Voldemort.

“Don’t worry about Harry,” Neville spoke up from where he was still trying his best to stay awake and follow along with the conversation. “He would want to protect Hadrian; you know that. Hadrian would be sent to Azkaban just for being a dark wizard. Actually, Hadrian cast the killing curse to save us, so yeah, he’s probably going to be kissed. Harry Potter though... he would be a hero, even if he cast the killing curse at Mr. Crabbe. I know Harry, you all know Harry, as much as he hates the fame, he would take it in a heartbeat to keep Hadrian safe, especially since Hadrian saved my life.”

Arthur slowly nodded, thinking over the likelihood of the ministry pardoning a dark wizard for doing anything, even if it was killing a murdering psychopath. “I don’t like this, but Albus did say there was a prophecy...and Harry wouldn’t want any innocent person to go to prison...”

“I’ll send a quick patronus to Harry and explain the situation and tell him to stay hidden. If he’s against this, he can send me a message back and we can come up with a different plan,” Remus quickly stepped out of the room, clearly not going to send a patronus to anyone but needing to keep up the ruse.

“Right, yes,” Harry nodded quickly. “Neville, can I please have my wand back?” He asked as he put the elder wand safely into his ankle holster.

“Oh, yeah,” Neville handed Harry Potter's holly wand over, understanding what Harry was asking. Neville hadn't cast anything questionable with his wand during the battle if it was checked by the aurors. “Someone grab my new wand for me from Mr. Malfoy's robes.”

“Pettigrew had my spare ebony wand. Does anyone see it?” Harry asked, getting everyone looking around the room and thankfully not questioning why he had three wands on his person. Honestly, Moody probably had just as many.

Remus stepped back into the room, figuring enough time had passed for his fake message. “Harry said, something along the lines of hell yes, use his name to keep Lord Black out of prison. He also says thank you for killing the bastard and please bring his cat back with you.”

“That I can do,” Harry petted Sephie's butt and wiped a little blood off her side from where it had splattered. “I'll make it up to him, I promise.”

“Let me take a look at your side while they all search for the wand,” Narcissa strode over and efficiently began healing the gash in Harry's now glamoured side.

Once Harry's ebony wand had been found over by a headless rat who was once more turned into Pettigrew to all their disgust, Harry cast an expelliarmus with his wand, planning to tell the aurors the story of how he had first defeated Voldemort, and Sirius cast several legal and defensive spells with the ebony wand. Neville was going to claim to have been wandless the whole time, and Percy just silently cast a commonly used Unspeakable spell that would erase all detectable spell history from his wand. He *was* on the Unspeakable payroll now, so it was something he could legally get away with.

After all this had been taken care of, Harry looked over the assembled little rescue party. “Alright, everyone, it's time to notify the aurors...anyone have a problem with the plan? Speak up now so we can handle it. Just remember, we're telling the truth only with the addition of Harry being with us and taking on my part in the battle.”

“And my son *not* having raised inferi to help us,” Arthur added sternly, stepping up beside his son and looking challengingly at Moody who was the most likely to disagree.

“Clearly,” Narcissa scoffed in agreement, still glaring at her husband like she really would like to kill him.

Moody just shrugged and chuckled. “That was an impressive feat of magic and right fun to fight with,” he smirked over at Percy. “Care to duel sometime?”

Percy chuckled back at him but nodded. “Sure, though I know you’ll win quickly enough to bruise my ego. Let’s just all agree that one of the Death Eaters was a necromancer and that’s where they all came from. I’m sure the aurors will be relieved to know where the corpses all went from the graveyard they’ve been investigating this evening.”

“Dumbledore is going to *hate* this!” Sirius crowed happily and shared a grin with Severus.

“Indeed,” the potion master’s eyes twinkled. He closed his eyes and breathed out, “I’m free...” before he cast a brilliantly shimmering doe patronus that he sent off to the auror department with an urgent message and their location.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: A meeting with Dumbledore...

Confused Aurors, Suspicious Moody, and Harry Fangirls Over Bill

Chapter Notes

This one kind of got away from me. I didn't get as far as I wanted in the story, but it just kept getting longer. It was a good stopping point at least.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Harry and Percy leaned heavily against each other out of sheer relief and exhaustion while the aurors who had finally arrived at Lestrange Manor began to start taking notes and investigating what had happened in the crumbling building. “Was Neville’s gran notified of his kidnapping?” young-looking Harry asked Arthur Weasley who was currently standing protectively over the lord of the Light like he was one of his own children, his fatherly instincts coming out probably since Neville was the only actual teen in the group.

“Albus said he would tell her when the news came in and we determined it wasn’t a hoax,” Arthur told him with a hardness around his eyes that clearly stated that he was now questioning whether man did or not. “I expected him to look more concerned that he was basically going to have tell Madam Longbottom that we had decided not to attempt to rescue her grandson. He looked concerned, but...I don’t know, there didn’t seem much empathy behind it if that makes sense.”

Percy huffed jadedly and just leaned more against his partner even as he reached out to pat Neville’s arm. “He probably did tell her, but it won’t matter...not right now anyway. We’ll get to her though. Don’t worry.”

“What’s that mean?” Arthur asked quietly since their group of Harry, Percy, Neville, Bill, Severus, polyjuiced Sirius, and Remus was trying their best to avoid the attention of the aurors until they absolutely had to start answering questions. This was greatly aided by Moody following the aurors around and barking orders and questioning their capabilities...generally being a loud nuisance.

Narcissa was currently escaping the investigation by working outside the manor as a healer for the Death Eaters who were still alive and needing medical attention. While she would

most definitely be questioned later, even aurors (or maybe especially aurors) took healer's vows seriously and had no problem with her lending a hand before they arrested the still-living Death Eaters. Though she may have been the one to attack many of the Death Eaters herself, in her role as healer, they all knew she was bound by Magic to lend any aid within her capabilities.

The group all huddled a little closer to Neville when he turned distressed eyes on them all. "My gran isn't quite in her right mind right now," Neville said quietly in answer, giving Arthur a sad look.

"I went to see her before the break to explain that Mr. Longbottom needed to leave the castle, and I found that she's under some kind of compulsion or potion," Severus leaned around Sirius to explain quietly to Arthur. "I couldn't break whatever it was without her noticing what I was doing, and that may have caused a violent reaction depending on if it was a compulsion or not. She does not even know Neville isn't at the school. I came up with a ruse for her to sign a permission form for him. If Dumbledore did tell her of her grandson's kidnapping, then she and Dumbledore both will be confused by the end of the conversation."

Sirius-Hadrian sneered. "That also means your cover is blown with Dumbledore now if she tells him you were the one to approach her," he informed the former-Death Eater beside him who winced slightly.

"Wait...cover?" Bill frowned.

"We absolutely can't talk about this here and now," Harry warned them all, rallying his strength to glare at everyone.

"Is this *Peter Pettigrew*?!! How was he still alive?!!" An auror suddenly and loudly exclaimed over by the headless corpse in shocked surprise. Harry looked over and smiled when he recognized the woman he had saved in the Department of Mysteries just a few weeks before. He sincerely hoped her partner was both not in the investigating group and also no longer her partner. He was a right piece of work, and Harry might just give himself away by cursing the bastard if he saw him. He was planning some major clean-up of the auror department once his group took over the ministry.

“Huh...it seems Sirius Black might not be quite as guilty as we all believed...” Moody remarked gruffly to the aurors and headed back over to the huddled group in the corner to the aurors’ relief.

“Still guilty of escaping prison,” Severus remarked with a very slight upturn of his lips at fake-Hadrian.

Sirius rolled his eyes at his...whatever Snape was to him. “I think time-served should cover that,” he said in an amused whisper.

“Right, hello everyone, I’m Head Auror Robalds,” an older man bluntly told the group when he strode over to them from the on-going investigation. “I know this was a traumatic experience all around, but we need to ask you all some questions and catalogue the spells cast from your wands to corroborate our findings from here at the scene for the future trials.”

“Someone noted the pile of ash that is what’s left of Voldemort, right?” Bill asked, pointing to the pile on the floor with an expression just challenging anyone to try to cover that up like the Triwizard Tournament. “His wand is beside it too, so it’s clearly him whether you believed Harry before now or not.”

“Yeah, whether anyone believes me that he returned last year or not, it should definitely be tested and probably sent to the Department of Mysteries,” Harry added with a slight personal huff at the realization that the wixen society as a whole still hadn’t admitted Voldemort’s return at this point in time yet. It had been his plan to end Voldemort before he was widely known as having returned, but it still sucked to not get his ‘told you so’ moment with the wixen world.

“Most of the aurors already believed you, Harry, because of the uptick in Death Eater activity. The remains have been catalogued and confirmed,” Kingsley Shacklebolt said kindly when he joined his supervisor with a little smile for the supposed teen.

Robalds scoffed and rolled his eyes with a low swear. “I told Fudge he was out of his Merlin-loving mind. Might want to get yourself a good solicitor sonny,” he added to Harry. “The Prophet will be trying to cover their arses after all they’ve put you through this year once this gets out. This is all unofficial advice and all, but you’re in a position to rake them over the

coals currently, if you so choose.”

Harry nodded, but he had much bigger plans. The Daily Prophet was a nuisance which could be dealt with later, but right now, Dumbledore and Fudge were the targets he was focused on. “Thank you, sir,” he said anyway and tried to give the man a shy and innocent smile which he hoped was successful.

“Kingsley, take notes for me. I’ll test their wands myself,” Robalds barked an order to the other auror before holding a hand out towards Moody with a stern and commanding look.

Moody shook his head and smirked broadly at the man, a look that was terrifying in itself but even more so since his magical eye whirled around at everyone. “I have a special dispensation from Amelia Bones herself after my *decades* of service to the corps, son,” he explained confidently to the man who must have been his replacement as head auror after his retirement. “My wand remains untouched. You can check with the head of the DMLE herself, but unless you have evidence proving I did something illegal, you have no right to my wand.”

Robalds narrowed his eyes, most especially at being call ‘son’ since he was up there in years himself, but this also didn’t seem to be surprising news to him. “I will do that, but until then, stay close Alastor,” he warned gruffly.

“I can’t very well leave the kids here with you lot since your very *capable* hands didn’t even follow-up on the kidnapping of two Wizengamot lords and the Boy-Who-Lived,” he crossed his arms with a disappointed and disgusted look for the entire auror corps. “I think that advice for Potter to obtain a solicitor is overdue personally.”

“Heir...I’m not a lord,” Neville’s voice shakily corrected from where he was still clutching the baby Fawkes to his chest.

“For now...” Moody growled darkly, causing Harry’s eyebrows to shoot up, questioning what Moody was thinking and planning now and wishing he could talk to him in private. Harry was starting to believe that a stiff breeze could push Moody to his side of this whole war and that he really only needed to be asked.

Robalds glared at the retired auror, but there was a slight touch of embarrassment under the glare that Harry caught. “Master Snape,” he held out his hand next to the potion master who

was ever so slightly standing protectively in front of Hadrian-Sirius since the aurors kept shooting both dark wizards suspicious looks. While his words were respectful, the auror's eyes looked disgusted at having to speak with the man, let alone take his wand.

For his part, Snape handed over his wand with absolutely no protests. Robalds touched his own wand to Snape's and silently cast a standard auror spell to determine known spells cast within a twenty-four-hour time frame. It was a spell which Harry knew quite intimately well since he protected his own wand against it religiously in the future. Aurors tended to stop him annoyingly often while he conducted his business in Knockturn Alley and elsewhere.

Robalds frowned and looked over to Shacklebolt from the parchment readout which was conjured in front of him. "None of the spells cast from this wand match known spells catalogued by the ministry except for the patronus charm, a few shield charms, and apparition...the other spells are all registered as unknown."

Everyone looked at Snape in surprise, but he just shrugged as if he were bored with the whole situation. "I'm a spell-crafter as a hobby of mine going back to my Hogwarts years," he dryly remarked. "You will find ample evidence of this with the Potions Guild since many of my adaptations and changes to spells commonly used when brewing are now used by many masters. If I can improve upon a shield charm or a stunner, then I will. There is nothing illegal about that."

Robalds frowned in suspicion, but Shacklebolt just gave Snape an impressed look from where he wrote down the few known spells which had appeared from the diagnostic before the parchment disappeared. "What were these spells you used then, and what did they do?" Robalds asked, tone very much saying he was certain the spells would be illegal if the ministry knew about them.

Snape crossed his arms and could have yawned with the bored look he was currently giving them. "Of course, I will be happy to explain them to you, as soon as my solicitor is in the room with us. I only legally must hand you my wand when asked. Anything beyond that, I will require my solicitor to attend...you see, there could be quite a large sum of money at stake when discussing unpublished spells. Surely, you see my side of this."

Sirius-Hadrian almost looked like he was going to have a seizure from trying to hold his laughter in at Snape's antics. He just handed his wand to the auror though and had to hold in another bout of amusement at the sheer disappointment on Robalds's face when the

diagnostic only showed legal and mostly Light spells from the ebony wand which had come from a clearly dark and unknown wizard.

“Most of the spell damage you see was friendly fire from the Death Eaters hitting each other. I’m quite adept at both dodging and shielding in such a way to cause a ricochet with spells, and none of them were duelers by trade,” Sirius-Hadrian explained to Robalds’s dismay. It was a good cover since the Death Eaters had clearly cast all the Unforgiveables possible from their own wands, so Crabbe’s death was explained easily then, and since Malfoy had cast some kind of slicing curse at Harry, that could explain McNair in a stretch.

Remus, Arthur, Bill, and Neville all went next with their spells easily being catalogued, but none of them were illegal or even Dark besides a couple from Bill’s wand which were not illegal even if slightly questionable. Neville got a look of compassion from both aurors when he explained that he’d been wandless for most of his kidnapping. Robalds turned to Percy next, saving Harry for last since they’d already told the man he had been the one to end Voldemort. With a smirk Percy handed his wand over since he was legally required to do so. Arthur visibly stiffened and tried not to look concerned.

“The spell history has been wiped from this wand,” Robalds turned his own wand towards Percy, clearly now moving from investigating to suspicion. “It is illegal to erase wand history during an auror investigation, Mr. Weasley. As Minister Fudge’s assistant and as a Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, you should know this very well.”

“My brother cast no illegal spells,” Bill lied blatantly with a hard look in his eyes. Harry was impressed at the man he always viewed as slightly more apathetic towards Percy than all his other siblings. If he hadn’t known Bill was lying through his teeth, he would have believed the man.

“Whether I did or did not cast anything illegal is not up for debate regardless,” Percy leaned up slightly from Harry’s side and used his teeth to help him remove the black, leather band from his left wrist.

“Legally, I’m actually *required* to wipe my wand history if it is confiscated by an auror.” Percy held his arm up, showing the Unspeakable mark to the aurors and eliciting a gasp from his father and a look of surprised understanding from both Moody and Bill who were the only ones who currently didn’t know what Percy’s real job was from their group.

“My department’s research is classified above your level Auror Robards,” Percy’s tone was one which left no room for argument. “While you are checking with Madam Bones for Moody, you are welcome to question the Head Unspeakable for me. They will vouch for the classified nature of my research and spell history.”

“Of course, Unspeakable Weasley,” Robards seemed almost constipated while being required to hand the redhead his wand back. Arthur Weasley was clearly pale but schooled his face to at least somewhat look like this wasn’t a complete surprise to him.

“Right, well...let’s get this over with,” Harry held up his holly wand and smiled innocently at the man.

“The last spell is the disarming charm,” Robards frowned and looked questioningly at Harry, not being able to believe that in the slightest.

“Voldemort cast the killing curse at me the same time I cast an expelliarmus. Our wands have twin cores and they connected when the spells hit,” Harry explained. It was slightly more far-fetched without the elder wand being involved, but it had happened before in Harry’s fourth year, which hopefully Ollivander would be able to corroborate as something possible between wands with twin cores. In a worst-case scenario, he figured he could get Neville to help him with a demonstration now that their wands had twin cores as well, but that was only worst-case scenario.

“When Voldemort broke the connection, his spell rebounded, and well...he kind-of killed himself really,” Harry vaguely motioned towards the pile of dust with a very convincing wince. “Thankfully Hadrian and Neville were here to hold off the Death Eaters and stun Mr. Malfoy while all this was going on or I’m sure I would have been hit with something in the back and be my own pile of dust or something. Fawkes was super helpful too taking out the bloody big snake who was trying to kill Nev.” Robards and Shacklebolt both turned their attention to the tiny bird they hadn’t spent much time or attention on yet before slowly nodding. Apparently, a phoenix helping them was a tick towards being less suspicious and more innocent in the aurors’ eyes.

“Now, you’ve checked all the wands and the boys have explained what happened to you. You have no legal reason to hold us for longer. Therefore, I’ll be taking this lot to see a healer now since you’re monopolizing Healer Malfoy for the scum outside,” Moody informed them, not

seeking any approval for his plan. “If you have any more questions, everyone here is either at Hogwarts or can be reached with an owl. Shacklebolt has our information.”

“You are certain none of you were bitten?” Shacklebolt asked in concern for what was probably the fifth time since the aurors had arrived and seen the bodies of the inferi scattered across the lawn.

“Moody confounded them almost instantly,” Bill spoke up with the story they had already told a few times to multiple people. Merlin, Harry was going to use Bill’s ability to lie to his advantage in the future if he could possibly convince the man to join him. “That’s why they turned on the Death Eaters. None of us were bitten or even attacked by them. The necromancer was not very skilled at his craft.”

“I don’t believe we need to keep them any longer then, do we?” Shacklebolt asked his supervisor.

“Alastor, we *will* be checking with Madam Bones about that special dispensation,” Robards warned, receiving an exasperated growl from Moody who was now trying to physically lift up both Harry and Percy from the floor.

“Tell her I said she still owes me ten galleons from our last poker game,” he said before turning on the spot and apparating Harry away to Grimmauld Place, leaving Percy and the rest to follow them.

“Oh Harry!!! They got you too?!! We didn’t even realize!” Hermione almost tackled the glamoured man to the ground when he was ushered in to the sitting room at Grimmauld Place by a surprisingly gentle Moody.

“We thought you were upstairs studying! We didn’t even check once the news came in about the kidnapping. None of the *adults* wanted you to hear about it and try to help, so they made us stay away from your room,” Hermione explained, working more disgust than Harry had heard from her before into the ‘adults’ and thankfully thinking on her feet fast enough to help with their lie (or rather truth) about his involvement.

“Merlin forbid! Harry was kidnapped too?!! And I didn’t notice?!!” Molly Weasley looked like she was about to pass out on the spot from where she had clearly been holding all the teenagers at wandpoint in the sitting room to keep them behind the safety of the wards.

“I’m fine, Hermione,” Harry said, his voice muffled from the copious amounts of curls currently in his face while Hermione crushed him in a hug. Clearly, she had known all along he had been kidnapped since she knew he was Hadrian, and her stress and anxiety was evident in her trembling arms.

“The Dark Lord is dead, Molly, and everyone else is coming in behind us. No casualties from our side, only minor injuries and severe magical exhaustion,” Moody reported to the woman who looked like she was about to start hexing people if she wasn’t given a full report immediately.

“You-Know-Who is dead?” Ginny almost squeaked the question from where she was crammed into the couch between her petulant-looking twin brothers.

“Only thing left is a pile of dust,” Bill strode into the room, almost physically carrying Percy who was leaning on his older (*younger*) brother in his exhaustion.

“Thank Merlin,” Draco Malfoy breathed out, seeming to drop a heavy weight from his shoulders. “What of my mother? Where is she?”

“She’s fine,” Harry assured him quickly with a small smile. “The aurors asked her to stay behind as a healer for the Death Eaters who were injured. There were quite a few suffering from inferi bites and needed treatment quickly before the infection spreads.”

“Harry!” Neville had just walked into the room with Arthur Weasley and suddenly stopped and turned pale, almost causing Sirius (who thankfully didn’t look like Hadrian anymore), Remus, and Snape to run into him. “We forgot!!”

Harry frowned, not following. “What did we forget?”

“Erm...” Neville glanced at the bag hanging from Harry’s shoulder that Sephie had just jumped out of to go curl up with Ron on the armchair. “Well, remember...I think Draco’s father might have been bitten by an inferius, and we didn’t tell anyone...would they think to check him since he wasn’t outside?”

“Bloody hell,” Harry dramatically just sat on top of a protesting Ron since all the chairs were taken and cuddled Sephie to his chest. “Anyone want to send Mrs. Malfoy a patronus? As much as I hate him, no offense Draco...”

“None taken,” Draco grimaced.

“Yeah, well, as much as I hate him, it’s probably not a good idea for the man to turn into an inferius in a holding cell somewhere, especially if he isn’t alone in it,” Harry continued. “It’s probably still early enough to get him treatment...maybe...”

“Not it...too tired to cast anything,” Percy weakly offered from where Bill deposited him on the couch after shoving his younger siblings off so Percy could lie down.

“Why were there inferi? What happened?” Molly looked so very confused at all of them, her husband especially.

“I’ll fill you in later, Molly,” Arthur wrapped his wife in his arms, thankful to have his family together and safe again. “The important thing is that it’s all over now and we are all safe.”

Snape sneered at them without much ire since it seemed to fall to him again to be messenger, but he still cast his second patronus of the night. “Narcissa...you may want to check your husband for inferi poisoning. It is possible he was bitten.”

“How long does it take before it’s untreatable for a healer?” Harry leaned back from Ron’s lap to ask Percy who really was trying to stay awake so that his glamour wouldn’t fall away and cause them even more problems they didn’t feel up to explaining currently.

“About two hours depending on magic use,” Percy shrugged. “He was probably using a lot of magic though so...”

Harry and Neville shared a look. It was most definitely well over two hours since Lucius had been bitten by the cat. “Maybe he was only scratched?” Neville offered weakly since he didn’t exactly see what had happened, only that there was blood.

“I’m sorry Draco,” Harry said with as much empathy as he could muster since he had been planning to kill the teen’s father anyway. With what Lucius and Voldemort’s plans had sounded like concerning Draco, he was frankly happy the man was most likely sentenced to a messy death as a zombie now. Still, it was a bad way to go, especially since the ministry would be forced to set him on fire. If asked, Harry was certain that Percy would refuse to heal the man as a necromancer even if he was able...which he most likely was able to do if his magic wasn’t so exhausted and if he even cared in the slightest.

Draco was pale and only nodded in acknowledgement. He looked torn in his emotions with a mixture of grief, horror, and relief all swirling together in his blue-grey eyes. Sirius walked over to the teen and put a hand on his shoulder. “Hey little cousin, come help me get some tea and biscuits for everyone. Kreacher won’t listen to me, but he’ll do it if you ask,” he said kindly. Draco followed his cousin out of the room and towards the kitchen as if he were in a daze.

“Where is Hadrian?” Molly finally asked in concern now that it was clear no one else would be entering the sitting room. “Percy, did something happen to your young man? Is he ok?”

“He’s fine, Mum. He’s back at my flat. I’ll check in on him later, but he will be more comfortable there to get some sleep,” Percy gave her a little comforting smile. “He doesn’t like crowds and needed some time alone to decompress after everything.”

Molly just nodded sharply. “Right, well, he’ll need food then. I’ll just go and pack him up some things for when he wakes up. Harry, could I use Hedwig to send a package to Hadrian? I don’t think Errol will be up for the trip.”

“Of course, Mrs. Weasley,” Harry said, now wondering how he was going to convince Hedwig to take the box of food to someone else, maybe Flitwick or Efa since he didn’t think Firenze or any of the house elves would appreciate it.

“Master Harry!!! What did you do this time?!!” A loud raspy voice yelled from the kitchen and headed their way.

“Godric’s sword! Someone hide me!” Harry’s eyes widened in fear. “Kreacher’s going to kill me before handing me off to Dobby to be flayed alive!”

“Winky!!” The raspy voice yelled again from right outside the sitting room this time.

“You’re dead, mate,” Ron chuckled from under where Harry was still crushing his legs. “Leave the cat to Nev in your will, not me.”

A loud crack sounded in the hallway at the same time as the front door was thrown open, causing Walburga to screech even though she’d been quite up until that moment. “Out of my way,” Dumbledore pushed past both of the house elves on a mission, almost knocking Winky over.

Harry shared a look with Kreacher who was most definitely going to murder the old man. “Kreacher,” Harry gave him a significant look to stop the bloodshed. “Please go to the kitchen and take Winky with you... she probably needs to get back to Hogwarts anyway or the head elf might ask questions...”

Kreacher’s eyes narrowed while Winky crossed her arms with a glare at him. Harry was certain they got the message to fill in Bipsy about what had happened, but he was still worried they might try to kill Dumbledore on their way out anyway. “Later,” he added, giving them another significant look.

“Fine!” Kreacher growled and turned on his heel angrily. “Come on Winky. Kreacher will make the bad master tell us everything.”

Harry felt a little bad for Sirius but had to focus his attention on the old man who looked a cross between murderous and what he seemed to be trying to pass off as concerned. “Hullo, Headmaster,” Harry simply addressed the man who looked ready to completely blow up.

“Tell me why, my boy, would you leave the house when you know how dangerous it is for you?” Dumbledore questioned, ignoring the rest of the assembled party in the sitting room.

Harry grimaced involuntarily at the ‘my boy,’ still something he had a visceral reaction to that he couldn’t stop. Moody’s magical eye spun around, and laser focused on him intensely. Harry frowned at the former auror and raised one questioning eyebrow. He was very confused, but Moody’s reactions were always more than a little odd, so it was something he could deal with later.

“Headmaster,” Harry began, looking as innocently as he possibly could while holding an inferius and sitting on Ron’s lap. Yeah, that might be a little weird, he figured Moody might have a point with the look there, but he was already sitting and comfortable...whatever....

“Really...I *hate* studying. Everyone knows this. I wouldn’t willingly shut myself in my room to study all day over break no matter what Hermione threatened me with. So clearly, I would have gone to Diagon Alley if the opportunity presented itself, and I wore my invisibility cloak, so it’s not like I was visible. If Nev hadn’t known I was there and been imperius’d, then I would have gotten away,” Harry grumbled, feeling like he might be playing up the oblivious teenager role a little too much when Molly Weasley gave him a devastated look at not having even thought to check on him.

“It was a good thing he was there too, he killed You-Know-Who,” Neville spoke up from the corner where Fawkes was suddenly hidden from sight. “We would have died without Harry.”

Dumbledore’s eyes hardened before turning back to Harry, that annoying paternalistic look on his face again. “I’m sorry, my boy, but I fear Voldemort is still with us and can return once more,” he informed them all solemnly. “A rebounding killing curse is not enough to end his existence permanently with the vile Dark Arts he had descended to.”

Severus closed his eyes with a small smile on his face, for once not burned from the use of the mad man’s name. “I am exceptionally happy to disagree with you this time, Albus,” Severus opened his eyes and rolled up his left sleeve to show his bare arm. “It is completely gone. As you well know, it never left when he was defeated fourteen years ago. He is truly dead this time, no matter what Dark Arts he practiced.”

“But that’s not possible...” Dumbledore trailed off, his face falling into confusion.

Moody cleared his throat and glared (a glare was really his normal expression though). “The aurors tested his remains. He was completely destroyed, Albus. We have Potter, Longbottom, and Lord Black to thank for bringing down the worst dark lord of our time while we sat around and resigned them to their fate and assumed their deaths.”

Dumbledore was clearly not happy with that but attempted to cover it with a twinkle and smile Harry’s direction. Harry didn’t think he would have even bought that look back in his first year though when he almost worshipped the man. Dumbledore was slipping. “Yes, well done Harry,” he stepped forward to probably put a hand on Harry’s shoulder, but Sephie hissed at him warningly, causing him to stop mid-step.

“Thank you, sir,” Harry smiled and patted his cat’s backside who immediately calmed down and began to purr.

Remus stepped forward. “Headmaster, we all need some medical care and sleep after what we went through, especially Harry and Neville. I think it’s best if we discuss things and debrief you on the battle later.” Percy smiled at Remus, clearly thankful that he was attempting to get rid of the man so he could hopefully get some sleep.

“Where is Hadrian?” Dumbledore ignored Remus while he catalogued everyone scattered throughout the room. “Why is he not here?”

“Hadrian was suffering from magical exhaustion like the rest of us,” Bill leaned a hip up against the couch Percy was on and crossed his arms. “He doesn’t have a room here currently since Harry is rooming with Percy, so he went back to Percy’s flat to get some sleep.”

“Really, Albus...I must insist you leave these boys to rest. They are dead on their feet and can answer all your questions after some rest and food,” Molly Weasley recovered from her shock to firmly lay down the boundary for the man. She could out-stubborn a mountain troll, and everyone knew that and loved her for it currently.

Dumbledore looked like he might protest for a second before he let out a breath and gave the woman a smile. “Of course, Molly...you are right as always. I do need to know which Death

Eater was the Necromancer though. The aurors will need to be informed for the trials, and that type of magic is the darkest possible. We must make sure the monster is tried and prosecuted for his crimes.”

“It all happened so fast,” Arthur Weasley began from where he still had his arm around Molly protectively. “I don’t believe any of us saw which Death Eater was controlling them. He must not have been very strong though since Moody was able to confound them quickly.”

“I broke many Death Eater wands today,” Moody snorted. “Unless you get one to confess, it’s probably best to assume they were one of the casualties since it will be nigh impossible to prove which of them did it.”

Thwarted again, Dumbledore gave a little sigh and straightened up. “Right, well, Mr. Longbottom, come along. Your grandmother is most worried about you, and we should get you home. It seems she believed you were at Hogwarts this entire time. Severus...you will come too...I have need to discuss some matters with you,” he added with a dangerous look over at his former spy.

“Neville and Snape aren’t going anywhere, sir. They are spending Yule here,” Harry shifted Sephie off his lap to have better access to his wand in case this was about to come to blows and/or curses.

“As much as it pains me, I must agree with Potter,” Snape drawled from the corner of the room. “I already cleared my leave for the break with Minerva, and I will be spending the entire time away from the castle this year.”

Moody cleared his throat once more in what was becoming a common occurrence for the man recently. “Yes, Albus, it’s best Lord Longbottom also stays here within the wards until school begins again.”

“Heir...” Dumbledore began correcting this time.

“Actually,” Moody interrupted. “I’ve known Augusta Longbottom since we were in school together, and she was actually the one standing up to bullies for me. There is no possible way she would have been kept away from her grandson as soon as the aurors were notified of his location. Something is exceptionally wrong if she has yet to send him a patronus, howler, or

shown up herself. If Augusta is in fact compromised in some way, it is Heir Longbottom's right and duty to take over as lord since the Longbottom title in particular is patrilinear in its succession, and Augusta is only holding it in trust for her grandson. Grimmauld is the safest place for the boy until Augusta can be thoroughly checked out by a healer. She cannot be trusted if she is acting this much out of character."

Dumbledore really might have a stroke he was turning so red. "Alastor, really, I was just with her..."

A loud crash sounded before Walburga screamed obscenities once more and the sitting room door flew open. "Remy!" A brown-haired auror stumbled into the room and directly into Remus. "I was so worried about you! I came as soon as they would let me leave the investigation. Are you ok? Was anyone injured? Is it true? Is he really dead?!!!"

"Dora, I'm fine, I swear," Remus held onto the frantic woman with a fond smile on his face. "He's gone; it's over; we made it..."

Harry couldn't help the little triumphant smirk he felt on his face while he calculated the math for getting Teddy back once more in his head. If Teddy had a sibling, that was perfectly fine in his opinion. Harry was already brainstorming campaign posters as well. "*Vote Wolf: He'll Guard Our Society.*" No that wasn't very good. Maybe... "*Vote Lupin for Minister: He's Dogged in His Fight for You.*" Oh well, he had plenty of time, and that was more Percy's thing than his anyway.

"Let's not get ahead of yourselves," Dumbledore warned. "I will go meet with Robalds and Amelia Bones to see what the investigation has turned up. I will return to talk with each of you and hear your side of the events as well. For now, keep this quiet so we don't spread any false hope until we are absolutely sure."

Dumbledore glared in Neville's direction wistfully once more before turning to leave, clearly not letting it go, but willing to lose the battle currently to win the war later. "Happy Christmas, sir," Neville called out to his back, and Harry wanted to both face palm at his friend's cheek and kiss the teen for finding his snarky side and embracing it.

"Too bad Madam Malfoy wasn't here to be told not to spread anything around," Fred snorted from where he had an elbow resting on Ginny's head to her ire.

“Yes, my brother, I hear from our dear Draco that she has quite the number of friends she keeps in touch with regularly,” George smirked evilly. “I’m sure they will love to hear the story over tea.”

Percy snorted a laugh before peeling himself up from the couch. “I’m going to sleep now. If anyone needs me, tough kittens; I’m unavailable until at least tomorrow.”

“I’m coming too,” Harry stood with Ron’s help pushing him up. “Kreacher!”

The grumpy elf popped into the room, already glaring dangerously at his master. “Would you please be a dear since I’m currently indisposed and shut down our wards to block Headmaster Dumbledore from returning...oh, go ahead and block Mundungus Fletcher while you’re at it, please.”

“With pleasure, Master Harry!” Kreacher smirked widely before popping out once more to tweak the wards around the house.

“Really, I don’t think it’s quite necessary...” Molly trailed off when Arthur put a hand on her shoulder.

“Maybe we have a quiet holiday for now. The ministry and Dumbledore can both owl us still. Harry is just requesting some privacy in his own home, or rather Lord Black’s, but I doubt he will mind. You-Know-Who is dead; the war is over; the headmaster can give us some time together as a family,” Arthur turned a small smile on the teen he believed to be Hadrian Black under Polyjuice.

“Come on Harry, I’ll help you up the stairs. Bill grab Perce,” Ron ordered his older brother while handing off Sephie to Hermione so that he could help Harry out.

“Mr. Longbottom, you will accompany me to my lab in the attic,” Snape stood from where he was leaning against the wall and pinned the teen with a kind but stern look. “You are clearly

in need of a nerve-blocking potion from exposure to the torture curse. Come along, and then you may rest.”

“Yes, sir,” Neville stood with a small, surprised look towards his professor while Molly looked at him with teary eyes now, not having noticed his shaking hands.

“Aw, shit, I didn’t get a chance to get my boyfriend a Christmas gift!” Harry loudly grumbled from the hallway.

“Language! I don’t care if you just killed a Dark Lord, Harry James Potter,” Molly rushed after him.

Neville sat down on the rickety stool in the attic as far away from the bubbling potions as humanly possible. He was certain that if he even breathed in their general direction that he would mess them up and incur Snape’s ire. Snape was not paying him any attention though as he rummaged around in a well-stocked potion cabinet.

Snape retrieved a handful of potions, taking one of them himself immediately. Judging by the steam pouring from his professor’s ears, he was certain it was a Pepper-Up potion. “Why are you helping me?” Neville couldn’t stop himself from asking when the man walked over to him. “Did Flitwick or Harry even tell you why I needed to leave the castle?”

Snape frowned and handed a sludgy-looking brown potion to the teen. “Take that immediately,” he ordered not unkindly. “And no, I was only told that it was imperative you leave. Once I ascertained that your grandmother was being controlled by someone, it was easy to assume the headmaster was to blame. Why he seems to have taken a sudden dislike to you, I cannot fathom though I have some guesses. Hadrian is quite tight-lipped about many things as you know.”

“Thank you, sir,” Neville grimaced at the horrible taste the potion left in his mouth even as the pain in his limbs slowly receded leaving them feeling weak but much less twitchy.

Snape nodded slowly before holding out a purple potion next. “While the torture curse is cruel and traumatic for everyone, I realize it is even worse for you with your family’s history. Take the Dreamless Sleep tonight and tomorrow night as well. You need your sleep to recover and should not be further tormented with nightmares.”

Neville took the potion and held back the tears pricking at his eyes. “I’m the Light Lord,” he finally said simply in explanation. “The headmaster knows this as well as Harry. I don’t know what this means yet, but it seems I have responsibilities now.”

Snape studied the teen with an assessing look that seemed to bore right through him. “That was actually one of my guesses...look, Mr. Longbottom...I hope you realize by this point in time that I was unable to treat you or Mr. Potter with any form of respect due to your part in the prophesy V-Voldemort knew and his inevitable return. Has Hadrian explained the prophesy to you?”

“Yes, but...he chose Harry, not me,” Neville frowned, not following. He knew the entire prophesy, but neither Voldemort nor Snape, unless Harry had told him, knew the rest of what it said.

Snape winced. “He didn’t know the full prophesy, and from what he did know, it could still apply to you even after he chose the Potters. I would be an ineffectual spy if word got back to the Dark Lord...*Voldemort*, that I was no longer his man.”

“Right...yes, of course,” Neville nodded, now understanding.

“Also, you are a terror at Potions,” Snape added, shocking Neville since it came across as almost teasing. “With you now stepping forward as the Light Lord, it is best you drop Potions next year. You will need extra defense training though, which I offer my services to tutor you in.”

“Oh...wow, thank you, Professor,” he gave the man he had once been terrified of a little smile and stood. “I will take you up on that.”

“Good choice...now, off to bed before Molly forcibly drags you there,” Snape ushered him out of the attic and back down the stairs.

Neville was already emotionally over-wrought by his kidnapping, but he was thrown even more for a loop from everything that had happened since then. He stood in the hallway where most of the bedrooms were with a frown. There was a hum of magic from almost every room signaling privacy wards. Snape had stepped into the one he shared with Sirius Black, and Neville wasn't even going to speculate why that ward was up.

Harry and Percy's room was understandable since their glamours fell in their sleep. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley's room even had a ward up though...he had a feeling there was a lot of explaining and probably some yelling going on currently in that one with Percy having outed himself as a necromancer earlier. The twins' ward crackled, and Neville was certain there was a party going on in their room for those who weren't magically exhausted, so he was decidedly avoiding it as well.

Just as he stepped up to the room he had been sharing with Ron, Narcissa Malfoy stepped out of Draco's room at the end of the hallway. The woman had a tired and grief-laden look on her face as she closed the door behind her. As soon as the door was closed, her entire countenance morphed into a wide and joyous grin. The woman gave him a little smirk before turning and heading upstairs to where her room was on the next level.

Neville looked at the door that led to sleep and the oblivion of Dreamless Sleep and sighed. Lucius Malfoy must not have made it. It was the only conclusion he could come too from Narcissa's two very different expressions, one for her son, and one for herself. With a tired grumble, he put the potion in his pocket and instead walked down to Draco's room and cracked open the door.

"Hey...how are you? Want some company?" Neville asked the blond teen who had his face buried in the pillow on his bed.

"From you, no!" Draco's muffled voice huffed from where he didn't even attempt to move.

Neville ignored him and stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. "Look Malfoy, I get that we've never had the best relationship, even when we were kids, but in this case...I actually understand what you're going through if you want to talk. I don't think you'll get that from many people in this house currently."

“Oh really,” Draco sat up with the sarcastic drawl, his tear-stained face glaring at Neville’s audacity. “You understand grieving a man who was willing to hand you over to a psychopath to raise his status in a cause you don’t even believe in?! Come on, Longbottom!”

“No, not exactly,” Neville ignored the death glare he was getting to walk over and sit on the very edge of Draco’s bed. “What do you know about my Uncle Algie?”

Malfoy’s glare fell infinitesimally as he thought over the question. “There was something about the muggle authorities and him in the paper, wasn’t there?”

Neville nodded awkwardly and pulled a leg up to get slightly more comfortable. Draco still looked posh and well put together sitting on his bed with a red-splotchy face and rumpled clothes. Neville didn’t know how he did it, and he was quite jealous of the feat. “Uncle Algie almost killed me several times when I was a kid, and I lived in constant fear of the man. Hadrian found this out...”

Draco scoffed and rolled his eyes. “I know Lord Black is Potter. A lot happened while you were kidnapped.”

Neville’s eyes widened in shock. “Right...so, Harry’s from the future and knew all this from future me then...”

“At least more honest,” Draco gave Neville what could pass for a small smile, and it encouraged him to continue.

“Yeah, so he set Algie up to get caught by the muggle police since I’d asked him to please not kill the man. Future reference, be really specific if you ask Harry to do anything,” he warned Draco who gave him an incredulous look.

“*Potter*? Really? I know he’s gotten into some Dark Arts, but he’s still *Potter*. There is no way he was going to actually kill your uncle,” he scoffed.

“Yeah, you never actually hung out with Harry because of you guy’s feud...you might have to check some assumptions you have about him. From what I know, he killed two people before he was thirteen, completely in self-defense, but yeah...since he’s been back, I know he killed the older Crabbe, McNair, Voldemort, and I have a good guess Greyback too,” Neville filled him in while Draco’s eyes widened more and more throughout.

“Salazar’s ghost...” Draco breathed out.

Neville just nodded and held himself back from patting the teen’s knee in solidarity. “Harry is an amazing friend to have, and thank the gods you’re on his side now.”

“Merlin...does Mother know?”

Neville laughed out right at that. “From what I have gathered, they were best friends in Harry’s future, so she probably knows some of it by now. Anyway, I understand conflicted feelings. I was abused for years by my uncle, but he also gave me really nice Christmas presents and could be very kind when he wanted to be...I want to just out-right hate him, but it’s hard to do...”

“Thanks Longbottom,” Draco said, genuine appreciation shining in his eyes.

“Neville, call me Neville...I’ve already been calling you Draco, so it’s only fair,” he smiled.

“Neville then...you know this means nothing for when we get back to school...”

Neville laughed and lay back on the bed, deciding he might as well be comfortable if they were going to have a nice chat and not start hexing each other.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Percy's side projects make another appearance...

Time to Choose

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The rest of the winter break went more smoothly than could be expected, mainly due to Dumbledore being shut out of the wards. The wards did not stop the massive influx of owls from the headmaster, the aurors, Madam Bones, the Daily Prophet, and finally Augusta Longbottom, though her letter was more concerning than welcome since it was mainly arguing for them to let Dumbledore into the wards.

Percy contacted Moody as soon as Augusta's letter was delivered, and the man sent along the paperwork needed for Neville to take over the Longbottom lordship. If his grandmother could not be seen by a healer currently, they needed to have a back-up plan for the Wizengamot. Thankfully there were no sessions being held over the holidays since Neville absolutely did not want to completely cut out his grandmother, especially since Algie's trial was currently happening in the muggle world at the moment.

After some pleading from Percy who was just really tired, Arthur and Molly agreed to hold off on the family meeting until after Yule when Charlie and Bill would be at the manor. Charlie ended up having to work the Christmas day shift at the dragon reserve, and Bill was spending the day with Fleur's family. Boxing Day was officially set aside for family only events and the meeting at the end. It was quite awkward with no one talking about Percy's job, his magic, what happened at the battle, and all the many things they had questions about, but it was worth it so he didn't have to go through the interrogation every single time a new family member arrived.

Christmas day ended up being all the Weasleys (besides Charlie and Bill), Sirius, Severus, Neville, Draco and Narcissa, Harry, and surprisingly Moody. Hermione had decided to go home to her parents several days before Christmas now that the danger was significantly less for everyone, and Bill even went with her to add some more wards to her parents' home since there were still some Death Eaters out there...and Dumbledore. Remus was invited to the Tonks' household to Harry's delight. And Moody had shown up around lunch time with a bowl of non-alcoholic punch grumbling that Harry had invited him, even if it he hadn't really believed the man would show.

Christmas was very low-key in general with no surprises except for the one odd present for Harry that no one in the house had sent him. The box was about medium in size and looked to be professionally wrapped. It looked especially nice beside the haphazardly wrapped

presents from the Weasleys. It only had Harry's name on the card, but it was written in beautiful calligraphy.

After a plethora of detection spells from Harry, Moody, and even Snape, it was deemed safe, and Harry opened it. First, he pulled out a bottle of elf-made wine which had many of the room's occupants looking jealous, especially since Harry grinned immediately and stowed it behind himself to absolutely not share. With the way Molly was looking at him, Harry knew she was going to try to confiscate it, but he was positive he was sneaky enough to get something past Molly Weasley if he hadn't been caught by all the aurors out for dark wizards in his time...maybe, she was actually a bit scary.

The second item seemed completely out-of-place with the wine and the perfect wrapping as well. It was the ugliest red and gold knitted scarf any of them had ever seen. The colored stripes were nowhere near even, one end was much wider than the other, and it was slightly longer than a normal scarf should be.

With a frown, Harry opened the card that was in the box with everything and raised a surprised eyebrow at the note written by two different people. The top script seemed to have been written by a toddler while the bottom was in that beautiful calligraphy once again. Harry's smile grew wider and wider while he read the note, culminating in an excited chuckle before he promptly wrapped the scarf around his neck and patted it as if it were the most beautiful piece of clothing he owned.

"Let me guess...from an admirer?" Percy asked with a smirk.

Harry ignored Ron who was trying to make a grab for the letter and just passed it to Percy. "Not exactly, but so much better."

"Did your boyfriend *attempt* to knit?" Ginny asked with a grimace at the scarf they all knew Harry was going to be wearing every day now based on how he was still patting it. "If he did, you might want to tell him to try a different hobby."

Percy laughed at the note himself before handing it back. Harry promptly set it on fire and banished the ashes. "No, it's just from a friend," he said, not getting much of a reaction at all from the group who were now very familiar with him burning all correspondence. He'd already burned the note from Luna that came with her gift as well.

Harry smiled fondly at the scarf again, the beginning of the note was from Nox who had only written "From Nox and children." The end of the note was from Bipsy and gave a detailed explanation of how the dementors were settling in at where Harry was firmly believing was the lost castle of Camelot. Apparently, they were doing great and the elves there were trying to get them to try new things and pick up new hobbies to see where their interests lay and what the children in particular were actually capable of doing.

Nox was attempting his hand at knitting and painting currently, so the scarf was his contribution to the present. Bipsy promised that he was getting better at it. He was much more coordinated than his children though, and they seemed best suited to help the elves with the fermentation process for the wine produced on the castle grounds. With their natural abilities to pull life from things, they had been able, after a lot of trial and error, to speed up the fermentation process almost threefold. Harry was giddy to learn that apparently all elf-made wine came from Camelot and was sold by the free elves there where the business was disguised as a shell company owned by a fake wizard. The Camelot elves probably had enough money to support the rest of the house elves in total if they ever decided they wanted to be free. It was an important anecdote to remember for later at least.

While there were questions and concerned looks for Percy from his parents, especially when his boyfriend never showed for Christmas, they respected his request to wait to get all their questions answered on Boxing Day. "Hadrian will come to Boxing Day, I promise," he told them when his mum gave him yet another sad look at him seeming to have been abandoned by his partner. "I know he's not a Weasley, but he really should be at the meeting. Is that ok?"

"Of course, dear," Molly patted him on the cheek before refilling his mug of tea with a small smile. "He is important to you, all of us can see that."

"I'm just sad the pub night never happened," Arthur Weasley gave a dramatic sigh and smiled from over where he was playing wizard's chess with one of the twins. "I haven't had a night out with the boys in ages."

"Have you ever?" Ron asked, getting a smack to his shoulder from Harry at his sheer incredulousness in the question.

“I’ll have you know, son, I *have* friends...it’s just hard to keep track and stay in touch when you have seven kids,” Arthur glared before stealing George’s bishop.

“Your father was quite popular when we were in Hogwarts,” Molly gave her husband an insinuating look that had him turn a little red and the rest of the family refusing to ask for her to expand on that.

“Well, that’s my cue. It’s time I should be going,” Moody stood from where he had been chatting with Severus over by the fire. “Brat...a word before I go?”

Harry shrugged and struggled out from under Sephie who had been sleeping on his lap. “Sure Moody-love.”

Moody scowled and dramatically rolled his magical eye before stepping into the entry hall to wait on Harry. “Hey, thanks for coming...” Harry began once they were alone, or well alone with just Walburga who was definitely listening.

Moody nodded in what was probably supposed to count as a thank you for inviting him. “Things are going to get crazy once you leave these wards and get back to school,” he warned the teen. “Everyone’s gonna want a piece of you.”

Harry scoffed. “Nothing new with that,” he jadedly remarked. He figured it couldn’t be worse than when he defeated Voldemort in the future since a lot of people hadn’t even believed he had returned this time around. Thankfully this time he was also planning to make good his escape and send ‘Harry Potter’ far away at some point.

Moody cleared his throat and nodded. “Yeah, well, you reach out if you need anything... same as with Lord Longbottom too. Something fishy’s going on with Albus there. You keep an eye on him.”

“No harm will come to Neville on my watch,” Harry vehemently swore.

Moody gave him an approving look before awkwardly patting his shoulder. Harry and him shared another awkward look before Moody cleared his throat. “Right well, pass along to Hadrian to reach out if he needs anything either...”

“Shouldn’t you ask Percy to do that?” Harry frowned, not knowing if he should just chalk this entire conversation up to Moody’s atrocious social skills or if the man knew something.

“Oh, I think you’ll be able to get the message to him perfectly fine,” Moody actually gave Harry a wink with his good eye before he turned and stormed out of the house and into London.

“Merlin,” Harry breathed out before turning to Walburga. “What do you think? You think he knows?”

Walburga scoffed and rolled her eyes. “I honestly do not understand how you can still be alive,” she remarked with a sneer before leaving her portrait entirely to hide out in her tiny portrait where Harry had it stowed in his trunk.

Harry huffed in irritation but brushed it all off. If Moody knew something, he’d tell him eventually. If he didn’t, Harry was probably going to fill him in at some point anyway. The retired auror had somehow become a part of his family, and he still wasn’t sure how that had happened. He’d started out just messing with the man, but somehow that seemed to be Moody’s love-language or something. Oh well, he was quite funny and good to have in a fight. Harry quite liked him.

It was very early on Boxing Day, and Percy was reveling in having his partner curled up with him in the large bed they had spelled together from the two twin beds someone (probably Kreacher) had placed in the room they were sharing. He always slept better with Harry, and it had been a struggle with how few nights Harry was able to sneak into his rooms while school was in session. Percy buried his face in the crease between Harry’s shoulder and neck where he’d been cuddled up to the man.

“Hmmm,” Harry mumbled, clearly with a smile on his face as he woke up. “So glad no one questioned us sharing a room...”

“Me too,” Percy said, his breath ghosting across Harry’s neck, getting a small shiver from the man. “It’s not too much longer before we don’t have to hide anymore. You can be Hadrian full-time.”

“Hmm,” Harry hummed again happily. “Hey Perce...I think I’m getting a new piercing. You know...a lot’s happened...”

Percy nodded his head in Harry’s neck but didn’t even look up. “I figured. You wanted to get the werewolf tattoo fixed anyway. You can do it at the same time. Where are you thinking to get this one?”

Harry snuggled down more and shrugged, kissing the top of Percy’s messy hair. “Any places you want to veto?”

Percy chuckled at his ridiculousness. “I don’t really care, but I’m not a big fan of the lip ones, kind-of weird for kissing. It’s your body though, so do what you want. You need it somewhere it’s not super odd for you to touch all the time since you know that’s what you’ll end up doing.”

Harry thought for a moment. “I’ll probably do ear again then. I still have some real estate there that’s open.”

Percy laughed and did finally raise his head to look in the brilliant green eyes staring lovingly at him. “Er, love...”

“Great, what did you do?” Harry huffed a laugh and scooted a bit further away to look at Percy’s face easier. “The endearments never come out unless you think you’ve done something wrong.”

The redhead glared at him, but it ended with a snorted laugh from them both. “Well, I haven’t done anything *yet*, but I think, no, I know that I want to try something you might not be too keen on.”

“Right,” Harry nodded and sat up to get to business. “I support all your nerdy adventures, and I’m not stopping now, so lay it on me. I assume it has to do with necromancy? You bringing a thestral or a unicorn back to life or something this time?”

Percy winced. “Well...I think I know enough now for a person...”

“Like inferi? Didn’t you already do that?” Harry frowned, trying to figure out what he was saying.

“No, like Sephie or Deimos. I think I can *actually* bring a person back to life, but I need your help. I think you will actually have to bring their soul back as the Master of Death, but I’m positive I can get the body set up for them now,” Percy rushed out his explanation, an excited gleam dancing in his eyes.

Harry was clearly weighing and thinking over Percy’s request even as he was grimacing slightly. “Look...I’m not saying no...” he rushed out when Percy’s face fell. “Look, I don’t know much about the afterlife or my powers, but the little I do know makes it clear that spirits might not always *want* to come back. When they do...well, you remember the lost love from the Beadle the Bard tales. She ended up just fading away in her desire to return.”

“So, you think it’s not worth trying,” Percy’s entire being fell from the excitement he’d held only moments before.

“Not necessarily,” Harry tried to salvage his partner’s good mood the best he could. “I’m saying that maybe I summon the spirit of whoever you want to bring back and we actually ask before trying to shove them into a body. If they don’t want to return, then it’d be cruel to make them, but if they agree...then you can have your fun playing around with dead things.”

Percy snorted. “Maybe don’t explain it that way to the spirit.”

“Course not. The Master of Death is nothing if not professional,” Harry made a show of trying to look professional even in his over-large t-shirt and messing bedhead. Percy couldn’t help laughing at him, getting Harry to smile once more. “Right, so who are you thinking? Preferably someone we didn’t want dead to begin with, right?”

Percy sat up and crossed his legs under him, his excitement infectious. “I have two options that I think are viable. I need preserved bodies because, remember the niffler, I can’t reverse the decay that’s already happened.”

“Or someone who just died,” Harry nodded, following along in understanding while also grimacing at the reminder of the disgusting niffler inferius. “Since that would be almost impossible to plan for, preserved bodies would be best. Who are the two?”

“Well...the lake with the inferi has a ridiculous amount of preservation charms on it. The inferi in the lake are very decayed since most of them had been dead long before they were turned, but we do know one that was instantly turned at his death...”

“Regulus,” Harry held in his groan. They had to make sure Sirius didn’t hear about this. If he did and Regulus didn’t want to return, it would break his heart. “We’re definitely not mentioning this to Sirius...”

Percy rolled his eyes. “I’m not an idiot. The second...well, it’s common for Dark families to preserve their dead just as a cultural thing...the Diggorys are a Light family, but *Callista* Diggory was a Greengrass before she got married...a Dark family. At the ritual out in the forest, remember, she mentioned they had preserved Cedric’s body in the family crypt...I bet you anything it’s the Greengrass family crypt.”

Harry’s jaw had dropped. “You think you can bring Cedric Diggory back to life?!” He breathed out in complete shock. It was...it was more than he could have hoped for. He’d hated they couldn’t go back far enough to save the teen, and his death still ate away at Harry’s waking and sleeping nightmares even thirteen years later.

Percy’s excited smile grew ever wider. “Yeah...if you summon his spirit and he wants to come back, then I think so. One of them has to want to come back, right? I’ll make sure to

walk them through all the side-effects and pros and cons of returning and all, but they would be alive...well, a very human-looking and acting inferius, but alive-ish."

Harry laughed. "Maybe don't say 'alive-ish' in your explanation to them."

"I've got to start on my notes!" Percy almost jumped out of bed before Harry pulled him right back in.

"Love...it's Boxing Day. I understand you are very excited for your new craft project and all, but we have lunch with your parents and a very tense family meeting we have to get through first. Can we hold off on raising the dead until the new year at least? They've kept this long and all, right?" Harry tried to reason with him calmly.

Percy huffed impatiently before flopping back on the bed. "Fine! If we must!"

"That's the spirit!" Harry lay on top of him before kissing him senseless. "How long do you think before someone tries to get past our wards?"

Percy laughed. "Sirius has been trying to take mine down for the last five minutes. I figured I'd give him ten more before letting him in to prove a point though."

Harry just nodded and promptly pulled his shirt off. "Right, so I'm hearing I have ten minutes...best get going then!"

Sirius got through the wards in just under six minutes, and regretted very much that he did. "I love you, Siri, but I got to be honest with you...I hate you a little bit right now," Harry grumbled petulantly, looking all of the teenager he was glamoured to be.

"No worries, pup. I hate myself a little bit right now," Sirius earnestly said from where he was following along behind the now dressed and presentable Harry and Percy towards the

kitchen.

Percy was sulking since his wards had been broken. “You shouldn’t have been able to get past my wards...especially not that last one!”

“Yeah...Harry finally convinced the house to let me into the library,” the older man explained. “Wizengamot meetings only go so far in staving off the boredom, so I’ve been doing some reading.”

“Merlin forbid!” Harry dramatically clutched his chest. “We can’t have the only Light wizard in this family going dark! You were our only diversity.”

Sirius gave the invisible braid of his godson a tug and smirked. “I’ll just have to marry Sev then and take his last name and defect from you lot.”

Harry glared fake-dangerously. “How *dare* you!”

“What? Can’t stand to lose me from the family?” Sirius laughed.

“No, I was *counting* on Sev joining the family. I’m not losing *him*!” He protested with fake hurt in his tone. “Besides, Mum sort-of named me after him, so I got dibs!”

“I think the one shagging him gets the dibs,” Sirius laughingly protested.

“He’s going to murder you both if he hears you calling him ‘Sev,’ so you won’t have to fight over him after that,” Percy warned as they made their way down the stairs.

They all paused outside the door when they heard raised voices. “I was only in Romania; it’s not like I was on Mars! Why has no one thought to tell me anything! I didn’t even know you all were talking with Percy again!” Charlie fumed from the kitchen.

Harry groaned. "It seems that family meeting is happening before lunch instead of after."

Sirius suddenly clapped a hand on both their shoulders. "Right, I'm taking Severus out for burgers. Have fun with that lot. Toodles!" He spun on his heel and almost ran off.

"Chill Charlie, it's not like anyone died," Ron's voice was heard next. It was decidedly *not* the right thing for him to say.

"They could have, and I wouldn't have even known they were in danger!! Bill, Percy, and Dad fought *Death Eaters*, and no one thought to send an owl!!" Charlie yelled next while Harry tentatively pushed open the door.

"Hey...sorry we missed breakfast," Harry said weakly as he shuffled into the room and hurried to sit beside Ron since he was the least likely to want to hex him when everything came out about the time travel and all.

"And *you!*" Charlie spun around, blue eyes flashing and taking up more space than his physical person would usually allow with just how animated and exuding life that he always was. He pointed a finger right at Percy's chest. "You didn't think to drop a line to your big brother at some point just let him know he wasn't the only queer person in this family?!"

"Wait...what?" Ron frowned and leaned forward.

"Yeah mate, that's not common knowledge," the twins threw in together.

Ginny shrugged with a smirk. "I knew."

"And Percy also knows I'm asexual and could have said, 'hey big bro just so you know, I have a boyfriend, wanna go with me to Pride somewhere this year?'" Charlie glared.

“Oh, that’s not even the tip of the iceberg,” Bill snorted very unhelpfully into his tea in the corner of the room by Arthur, clearly enjoying not being the focus of all the drama.

“Your Dad and I love you very much, dear,” Molly stopped in her bustling around fixing lunch to pat Charlie on the cheek, causing him to lose some of the frantic energy around himself.

“Thanks, Mum,” he blushed in response.

“Anyone else want to come out while we’re at it?” Arthur drawled and just seemed to not care in the slightest anymore now that Voldy was gone, and his family was safe. Nothing else really mattered.

“Still dating Hermione and like girls,” Ron pointedly said at his mother who had originally thought he was the one dating Harry.

The twins looked at each other with raised eyebrows. “Nah, we’re good,” they both said.

“For now anyway,” George added and smirked at the family, getting exasperated eyerolls all around.

“Is a Malfoy asking a person to Hogsmeade better or worse than coming out?” Ginny asked the room at large.

Everything got exceptionally quiet. “Huh…” Harry snorted out into the silence. What had he changed to make that even a possibility?! “I really didn’t see that one coming…”

“Looks like I must have tea with Narcissa now,” Molly put down the spatula she was holding to breathe out in pained resignation.

“Did you say yes at least?” Bill asked the most intelligent question of the lot.

“Have you *seen* Draco Malfoy?” Ginny smirked at him. “Of course, I said yes. I also told him if he acts like a prat for one second of the trip that he’ll know intimately why I’m feared widely for my bat-bogey hex.”

“Good girl!” Arthur laughed and smiled at her, giving his daughter a little prideful cheers with his teacup.

Harry frowned. He wondered what this meant for Draco and Astoria. Would they never get together now? He didn’t really see Ginny and Draco working for the long-term though. Actually, he was fairly certain Draco would experience that bat-bogey hex before they even left for school, let alone making it to through the Hogsmeade weekend. Also, what about Michael Corner...hadn’t Ginny been dating him at some point in fifth year? Oh well...it would all work out one way or another.

“Right,” Bill leaned forward impatiently just as Percy finally sat beside Harry on the bench at the table. “Percy’s a Dark wizard and raised an army of inferi...he also seems to have joined the Unspeakables...discuss amongst yourselves...”

“The hell?!!!” Charlie sank down and the table and just seemed stunned. “People...I was only in *Romania*!!”

“Well, it’s not like I really *told* anyone. Bill found me out, then the inferi gave me away to Dad...” Percy began.

“He told us,” the twins said together with a smirk and absolutely not helping at all.

“Eh, me too...though that was probably not super intentional,” Ron added, looking apologetically at Harry.

“And you all are just ok with this?!” Charlie looked to his parents, disbelief lining his face.

Arthur shrugged, really embracing his peace of not-caring currently. “Hadrian is visibly a dark wizard, so we’ve known about him for a while. He explained the balance of Magic to us in more depth than I’ve ever heard it before. So, we’re tentatively on board with Dark Magic not inherently being evil.”

Molly slammed the frying pan down onto the stove. “When did this all start...was it when you met Hadrian? Wait...where is Hadrian?”

Everyone looked around as if the man would suddenly appear. “Look...don’t worry about Hadrian,” Percy sighed and ran a hand over his face, already tired even though he’d just woken up. “Thanks Bill...really...”

“No problem, big bro...” Bill smirked evilly. “I always wanted a big brother, someone who could take all the responsibility while I got to goof off. Sounds right blissful to me.”

“Erm...?” Charlie summed up the feeling of everyone who didn’t know in that one noise.

“I’m an Unspeakable, Bill...don’t think I won’t use all my knowledge to get you back for this,” Percy warned while Harry and the twins looked like they were ready to pull out the popcorn to watch all the drama.

“What’s he mean, Percy?” Ginny asked for everyone else.

“Right, so don’t freak out,” Percy told them all as he pulled his wand from the holster on his arm. “As Dad may know, the Unspeakables do not hire right out of Hogwarts. I may be young for an Unspeakable, but it’s not like there was an exception made for me. I worked at the ministry for several years before they hired me...”

A collective gasp sounded around the kitchen when Percy removed his glamour. Everyone stared...that was until Molly Weasley smacked the back of Ron’s head. “And why aren’t you surprised, young man?!” She accused.

“Bloody hell, Mum!” Ron protested in shock.

“Language!” She retorted.

“Hadrian can’t keep a secret to save his life, so the time-travel thing came out really quick!” Ron grumbled, getting a glare from Harry for the comment.

“Oh, *time-travel*! Yes, that makes much more sense!” Arthur Weasley was now nodding to himself.

“What did you think it was?” Fred asked with a smirk and raise of his eyebrow.

“Well, it just wasn’t my first thought,” Arthur scoffed at him. “As far as I know, no one has even gone back further than a day or two and lived to tell about it.”

“Percival Ignatius Weasley!” Molly Weasley pinned him with a dangerous glare with her hands on her hips. “You know not to go messing with time! I don’t care what the Unspeakables had you doing, terrible things have happened to wixen who mess with time!!”

“But, Mum! It wasn’t even my plan,” Percy protested, sounding very much 19 instead of his 31 or 32 years. “It was Hadrian’s plan, and I couldn’t let him go alone!”

“So, you just follow your boyfriend on some ill-advised jaunt to the past, for what... funsies?!” Molly continued to fume. “That young man is a bad influence!”

“Hey!” George bellowed out angrily into the room, shocking the entire kitchen. “Don’t you dare, Mum...one of us *died*!”

Fred and George were now holding onto each other, that old, haunted look in their eyes they got every time they thought about what would have happened to them. “Me or Georgie,” Fred added. “One of us died just two years from now fighting against Voldemort.”

“Oh, loves,” Molly visibly deflated with a gasp, putting her hand over her mouth as moisture gathered in her eyes.

Ron cleared his throat. “Er, yeah...so I died too, Hermione as well, by the way...”

The moisture spilled over in Molly eyes and tears ran down her face. Arthur was speechless while Bill, Charlie, and Ginny all looked stunned at Percy. “What...what about you?” Molly finally asked Harry when she could talk again.

“Erm...” Harry frowned in consideration. “Well...sort-of, but not really. I mean, yeah I died, but it didn’t quite stick.”

“That doesn’t make any sense...” Bill seemed to be trying to figure out what Harry meant by that.

“Anyway...” Harry sighed and pulled his wand out. “It wasn’t actually *my* idea to come back in time. It was Hermione’s. I just figured out the ritual after her death. Also, in my defense, I tried to go without Percy, but I love him too much and am too selfish to keep him from joining me with he said he wanted to.”

With a quick tap of his wand, Harry’s glamour peeled away and left Hadrian Black sitting at the table with a sheepish smile on this face. “Er...yeah, so I’m Lord Hadrian James Potter-Black...Percy’s actually older than me you know, so still ok with me dating your son...?”

“Merlin’s balls!” Charlie breathed out in shock.

Molly and Arthur seemed to not be able to process what their eyes were telling them. Ginny though...Ginny was laughing. “So *that’s* why you wouldn’t introduce your boyfriend?!! You’re sleeping with a professor! This is rich! Does Luna know?!! Wait no, first I want to know who your tattoo artist is. That otter on your wrist is adorable!”

Harry raised an eyebrow at her and grinned. “Dean Thomas...clearly he hasn’t set up shop yet, but I did send him some art supplies as a Christmas present to hopefully push him in that direction again.”

“Ginevra Weasley! You will *not* be getting a tattoo!” Molly broke out of her surprise to order.

“Er, and yeah, Luna knows pretty much everything,” Harry assured Ginny quickly since that was actually very important.

Arthur Weasley stood from where he was sitting and strode purposefully over to Harry. He reached a hand out and Harry had to physically keep himself from flinching. Arthur just placed his hand on Harry’s shoulder though and looked him square in the eyes. “You came back in time to save my family...I know you must have other reasons too, but the twins and Ron...you came back to save them. You already saved Ginny in her first year. Harry, Hadrian, *whatever*...there is no way the Weasley family can ever repay you. Hell, if Percy doesn’t marry you, I’d probably be honor-bound to try to marry you off to one of the others,” he ended with a slight chuckle in the midst of the horror and grief still shining in his eyes.

“For the love of Godric, please never break up with him!” Bill firmly told his brother playfully but also with clear warning in his eyes.

“Yeah...I’m good with Percy...” Harry turned a truly afraid look to his smirking partner. “And er...I came back to save my godson too, and you know...our society. I’m kind of starting a third side in the war. We’ve taken out Voldemoron now, but Dumbledore and the ministry are still a problem since they are not seeking balance. Light and Dark must work together for a healthy society and for healthy Magic.”

“What does Neville have to do with any of this?” Ginny frowned in consideration. “We all clearly saw the ‘I’ll skin you alive’ look that the headmaster gave him last week.”

“Alright family, buckle up,” Percy put his elbows on the table and gave them all a serious look. “This is where you are going to have to decide where you stand. Do you stand with Dumbledore, or do you stand with Harry and Neville, because Harry is Magic’s true Dark Lord and Neville is Magic’s true Light Lord. It’s either us or Dumbledore and the ministry because we’re taking over.”

“Bloody hell...” Charlie breathed out again while the shocked silence stretched out amongst the group.

The rest of Boxing Day was tense. Harry made it clear that no one needed to make any decisions on the spot. Ginny was the only one that screamed a quick “hell yeah, I’m on your side!” while punching Percy’s shoulder with her fist. Everyone else seemed completely lost in thought.

Once the rest of the household joined the Weasleys later in the day, it was quite clear that Molly Weasley was going to attempt to feed and mother Neville to death now since she kept refilling his cups and plates with seconds and thirds, all looking sadly at him the whole time. Bill and Draco had a bit of a stare down over a chess board too before Bill ended up giving the teen a nod of approval and reminding Draco that it was the twins he had to worry about if he did anything to anger Ginny.

Just as everyone was heading to bed for the evening, Arthur stopped Harry and held him back in the sitting room. “Hey...you know you don’t have to decide anything right now,” Harry started with a frantic frown on his face.

Arthur just gave a little exasperated wave with his hand, dismissing his concerns. “I already told you that we support you. That was never in question. What I wanted to suggest though was that I go back to work tomorrow, and even though I’m not high up in the ministry, I’m friends with a lot of people in different departments. Most of these people will want to know about your kidnapping and what all happened. I was thinking that it might greatly help your cause if I made sure to mention during all these conversations how very confused I am that Dumbledore didn’t want to rescue you and Neville...that would really have to help, right?”

Harry raised a surprised eyebrow. “Er, wow, yeah...thank you!”

Arthur just smiled at him and patted him on the shoulder. “No problem at all. You know us ministry-types, we’re always socializing more than working anyway.”

“Oh,” Harry had a thought and smiled. “Could you also mention how confused you were to see Peter Pettigrew? We need to keep Fudge from pushing it under the rug again and get Sirius’s case reopened soon or he might go ballistic.”

Arthur just gave him a solemn nod and smirk. “Yes, I am very confused about a lot of things.”

“I’m sorry a lot of this was just thrown at you and Mrs. Weasley,” Harry sighed and ran a finger over the piercing in his eyebrow. “We tried our best to gradually slide you into it, but eventually we just had to have it out.”

“I understand, and I’m very proud of you and my son,” Arthur threw an arm around Harry’s shoulder and steered him towards the stairs. “I’m surprised though that Molly hasn’t tried yet to move you to separate rooms. I’m sure she’ll think of it tomorrow,” he ended with a wink.

Harry groaned and was decidedly *not* going to allow that to happen. He was 27 for Merlin’s sake! And he owned the house!

On the morning everyone was returning to Hogwarts, Harry joined Neville in the room he was sharing with Ron while they packed. “I’m worried about you,” he told his friend, concern dripping in his tone.

“*I’m* worried about me,” Neville just snorted back and rearranged his socks for the fifth time.

“We’ll stay close to him,” Ron assured them both. “We’ll make sure he’s never alone.”

Harry was already shaking his head though. “We won’t be able to be around him constantly with all our class schedules and how much he helps in the greenhouses. If Dumbledore asks him to his office again, we can’t just barge in with him. Filius and Severus teach during the day too, so they aren’t always an option.”

Ron snorted something very unflattering about McGonagall that would have had his girlfriend chiding him for vulgarity if Hermione had been there. “Yes, well, I love her, but she’s not helpful,” Harry rolled his eyes.

“So, what do I do?” Neville asked and slammed shut the lid of his trunk in frustration.

Harry just crossed his arms and nodded. “I’m going to share with you my secret to how I know what’s going on so well in his house.”

“I figured it was Kreacher,” Ron sat on the bed and looked at him in interest.

“Well, that too,” Harry pulled the small portrait from his pocket and opened it. “Hey Wally... I’m sending you with Neville for a while,” he told the woman.

A loud scoff was heard in the room. “I serve *you*, and only then out of protest. I don’t serve that Light imbecile!”

Harry’s look darkened and became extremely dangerous. “You serve me, and I’m ordering you to help Neville. Remember your oath, Walburga.”

There was a pained grunt from the portrait before a very seething, “Yes, master.”

“Great!” Harry’s look suddenly brightened like the difference between night and day. “Right, so Nev, you’re going to take Wally’s little portrait here with you, and if you are ever alone with Dumbledore, open the portrait and she can hear whatever is going on. There is always someone here at Grimmauld, so she can scream at them until they send me, Severus, or Filius a patronus to come rescue you if needed. This isn’t ideal, but while Fawkes is still a baby and can’t be much help...”

The baby phoenix gave a huff and a sad trill from the pillow on Neville's bed he was nested in. "Yes, I know you are irritated about it, but until you are grown up again, this will have to do for now," Harry smiled at the tiny chick.

A dry and grating voice interrupted, causing them all to jump out of their skin, "It is an old law, but you should be aware that portraits created with a blood magic bond are technically allowed to give testimony in trials before the Wizengamot."

"Merlin, Headmaster Black! I forgot to put up the ward around you! You can't just scare people like that!" Harry chided the acerbic looking man none of them had realized had snuck into his portrait while they were talking.

"Yeah, mate, it's not cool to eavesdrop," Ron frowned uncomfortably at the portrait he usually checked religiously before changing his clothes that it was empty.

"Hello, Phineas!" Walburga called from where she was trying to see him in Harry's hand. "It's been a long time."

"Wally," Headmaster Black said with disdain in his voice.

"Now don't you dare start that too!" She shrieked before Harry snapped the lip shut on her portrait once more.

"Right, so blood magic...is that a common thing for portraits? How does that help us? *Does* it help us? I was assuming you would be supporting Dumbledore," Harry crossed his arms and walked closer to the portrait to more easily set it on fire if this conversation didn't go the way he wanted it to.

Headmaster Black scoffed, but also looked off to the side with a little wince. "The headmasters' portraits are bound to serve the current headmaster, so we could not testify against him...however, an outside portrait could," he directed a sneer and glare towards Walburga's portrait.

Harry was nodding along. “I can definitely believe there was some blood magic that went into creating that harpy’s portrait.”

“All portraits which do not loop and retain the essence of their subjects and some intelligence *all* use blood magic,” Phineas informed them. “It is one of the main reasons all Dark magic cannot be banned. The entirety of the portraits would need to be removed from Hogwarts and most from the ministry and St. Mungo’s if that were to happen. Portraits bound to their subjects by blood magic also retain some very slight rights to existence as well, so it’s a legal mess not worth sorting out. Plus, the entire industry would cease to exist in our country.”

“Not to mention the hubris all the ministers have to want to be remembered well past their terms,” Neville agreed with a snort.

“Huh...” Harry nodded and handed the portrait to Neville who dropped it into his pocket with a disgusted look. “Well...I guess I can’t count you on our side, but can I at least count on you to not go narc to Dumbledore about us?”

“What is ‘narc?’” Headmaster Black looked at him as if he were a bug beneath his painted shoe.

“Can you obliviate a portrait?” Ron asked, getting a ‘no’ from both Harry and Phineas.

“What I *mean*,” Harry clarified. “Is that I’m currently Lord Black. I know you are bound to the headmaster, but as the head of your family, can I at least count on you to not purposefully tell him about what we talked about today?”

The bug under his shoe look didn’t change, but Headmaster Black gave him a nod, taking in the runes which covered Harry since he hadn’t been wearing his glamour. “I am tentatively hopeful the House of Black may be seeing a more positive future,” he said enigmatically. “Don’t screw this up, child!” With a sniff, the man strode right back out of his portrait.

“Right ray of sunshine that bloke,” Ron rolled his eyes and closed his trunk.

“So, same rules as before, but definitely make sure to open her portrait anywhere *near* Dumbledore now,” Harry smirked at Neville. “She’s a racist bigot but she’s bound to serve me, and actually does somewhat care about creatures and especially the rise of the Dark, so she’ll help you. You might have to listen to a string of slurs about your character, parentage, and magic though. Feel free to set her on fire if she goes too far. Fawkes will eventually grow up, and there is no love lost between me and Wally.”

“Anyone want to take bets on how long it takes before Nev here gets cornered? The twins have the odds set at a week, but I’m going in for two days,” Ron said, actually getting a laugh out of Neville and lightening the mood slightly.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Harry meets an old friend again...Sephie gets treats...

Finally...A Plan Is Made

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The elves had really outdone themselves. The first night back from winter break was not usually a feast for the students, but the spread laid out in the Great Hall was better than the welcome feast and the Halloween one combined. Harry loaded down his plate with treacle tart before dinner so that no one could steal it from him...he *did* take out Voldemort, so he deserved two slices of treacle tart if nothing else, right?

Hermione gave Harry an exasperated look but ended up just fondly shaking her head at him. “You do plan to eat *something* green first, right?”

Harry rolled his eyes but put some asparagus on his other plate with some chicken. “I’m just planning ahead is all,” he said with a wink and a smile.

“How’s the ear?” Ron asked him with a wide smirk, causing Harry to gently touch his new, invisible tragus piercing.

“Still sore, but not as much as it was earlier,” Harry assured him with a grin. “Think you might want to be a piercer after school?”

Ron snorted in amusement. “Mum might kill me, so no. However, it was pretty fun to shove a needle through your ear. It was very easy when imagined all the times you swore Malfoy or Snape were up to something in the past and almost got us all killed when they really weren’t.”

Harry laughed loudly, causing all the Gryffindors around them to give him funny looks. “Merlin! They really *were* our sixth year,” he said in a whisper so that only Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Ginny could hear him since he was sitting in the middle of the group. “It’s a shame I’ll be missing the year I was finally justified in all my insinuations that they were up to no good.”

“Malfoy better not be up to anything,” Ginny snorted darkly before giving a small smirk and wave to the blond Slytherin across the hall who looked exceptionally confused at her look and blushed before turning back to his conversation with Zabini.

“Stop playing with the Slytherins,” Ron playfully punched her shoulder. “Malfoy bites...”

“Ron does too,” Harry snorted a laugh, causing his best friend to turn bright red.

“I’m going to have to hunt down a coven of vampires and get myself turned just so that I can actually be on the inside of this inside joke you have on me,” Ron grumbled but with more amusement than any ire.

“Hey Harry,” Dean leaned around Neville to break into their conversation. “Hey, thanks for all the art supplies for Christmas. How did you know I want to be an artist?”

Harry beamed at his future tattoo artist. He had a couple ideas he was impatient to get inked on himself at some point. “Dean, I’ve seen your doodles in class. Those doodles are better than a lot of art I’ve seen for sale. You got a gift, mate,” Harry assured him vehemently.

Dean smiled even wider and looking proud of himself. “Thanks Harry...I’d love to do something with it after school, but there’s just no money in art unless you get into magical portraits, and I’m not as good with painting as drawing.”

Harry hummed and nodded as if he were really giving it some thought and not hoping for that exact question to be asked at some point. “You ever think about tattooing? I hear that it can be a steady income and could support your other art endeavors.”

“Really?” Dean frowned in consideration. “I’d never thought about that...I wonder what goes into getting into the field...”

“Hey, guys...Harry...” Seamus leaned around his still thoughtful friend.

“Please don’t start anything Seamus,” Ron sighed heavily. “I just started in on my mashed potatoes, and those are my favorite. Don’t ruin my mashed potatoes.”

“Merlin forbid anyone ruins your potatoes,” Hermione chuckled and gave Ron’s cheek a little kiss.

“I’m not starting anything,” Seamus assured them quickly. “Just...it’s all over the Prophet about your kidnapping and You-Know-Who...I mean, it’s not like there are any details in the paper...”

“And I’m not asking!” He assured the group quickly since they all were clearly about to tell him to shove off if he did. “It’s just...It’s clear you weren’t lying now, and I’m sorry I listened to my mum and the Prophet and the ministry and well, everyone besides the bloke I’ve been living with for five years and who I should know wouldn’t be lying about this...”

“Sure, no worries, mate,” Harry waved off the apology uncaringly as if he were bored. “Pass the rolls, will ya?”

“Wow, yeah, sure...” Seamus passed the rolls with a surprised look on his face before going back to his earlier conversation with Parvati and Dean.

“That’s it?” Ginny asked him with a disbelieving raise of her eyebrow. “He makes your life hell for the whole term, and you just let him off like that?”

Harry returned the look over where he was savoring his roll now. Once he swallowed he leaned in further so no one would hear. “Ginny...I’m 27. Seamus and I already had this fight 12 years ago, and I forgave him way back then. It actually took him less time this time to come around. So, it’s not a big deal to me, especially since I already forgave the prat over a decade ago. It’s not like we’re best friends or anything, and he grows up well, so I don’t want to completely lose him as a friend.”

Ginny just shook her head, still in disbelief. “I can’t believe I went over four months believing you were fifteen and our Harry.” Harry shrugged and grinned at her before catching

a charmed paper airplane that Luna had sent over to him from the Ravenclaw table.

“Luna, ok?” Neville asked when Harry frowned at the paper before setting it on fire.

“Oh yeah, just her dad wants to meet her boyfriend,” he grimaced before looking to the blonde girl with a pleading pout. Luna laughed and just shook her head at him before going back to her chocolate cake.

“You’re screwed, mate,” Ron laughed at him before the entire hall suddenly went silent when Dumbledore stood up from the head table and clapped his hands together for silence.

“Merlin, this is going to be bad,” Neville muttered nervously.

“Children,” Dumbledore began, raising his hands as if to embrace them all with his benevolent twinkle in his eyes. Harry scoffed and shoved more treacle tart into his mouth to keep from saying anything.

“I am sure you have heard much speculation over the events concerning Misters Longbottom and Potter this break. I must take this moment to clear up some of the rumor and confusion. It is true that Neville and Harry were kidnapped by Voldemort and the Death Eaters just before Christmas...”

Harry looked up to the head table and saw Percy share an exasperated look with Severus at the fact that Hadrian was pointedly left out of this story. Dumbledore was already continuing though through the gasps and whispers of the students. “Thankfully, your classmates were able to get away, aided by the Weasley family and some of your current and former professors...”

This time Filius Flitwick actually had to be restrained by Severus when he about stood up to protest. Filius had stopped by Grimmauld on New Year’s Eve and been filled in on what happened. Apparently, leaving out Narcissa, Hadrian, and Sirius was a little too much of revisionist history for the man, as well as classifying Moody as a former professor.

“Many Death Eaters were arrested in the aftermath of the rescue,” Dumbledore continued, ignoring the slight scuffle behind him that had many students looking between them all in confusion. “However, it has not been confirmed if Voldemort has truly been vanquished or not. I strongly warn you all to not get your hopes up and wait for this confirmation before spreading any more rumors or speculation. For now, his forces are decidedly diminished, but it is too early to celebrate any imagined end of this conflict just yet.”

“He’s not going to believe Voldy’s dead until he has all the horcruxes laid out in front of him, and I’m dead on the floor,” Harry lowly grumbled. Neville patted him on the back but couldn’t disagree with the comment either.

Dumbledore made some more announcements and ominous warnings that Harry was now purposefully not listening to since he really would rather enjoy his tart. “What are the plans for this term?” Neville asked him in a whisper. “I mean, I know it’s for me to stay alive and all, but we’re doing something about him, right?”

Hermione leaned forward. “I’ve been doing some legal research while I was home. If Sirius is cleared, he can take over guardianship of Harry, not that it really matters that much anymore, but Neville...if his gran is really under compulsions, there is nothing we can legally do to keep him from having to go home for the summer unless we can prove the compulsions, which she is probably compelled to keep us from doing.”

“Remus actually had an idea,” Harry told them in a whisper. “He mentioned it while we were getting ready to leave, but he was already feeling under the weather for the next full moon. I told him I’d stop by Grimmauld in a few days for him to explain once he’s recovering.”

“Might want to just enjoy your time here at the school since it’s your last term then too, right?” Hermione looked at him sadly.

“Wait, what? What does she mean your *last term*?” Ron sat down his fork to frantically whisper at his friend.

“Really, Ron...” Harry just looked at him with a ‘you’re an idiot’ look on his face. “I’m bollocks at pretending to be 15. You really want to have to cover for me for two more years?”

“I spend as much time making excuses for him as I do studying for Potions,” Neville wryly added in.

“Might have something to do with why you suck at Potions,” Harry shot back, getting a pea thrown at his face from his friend.

“Don’t worry, Nev,” Hermione assured them all. “If Professor Lupin’s plan doesn’t work out, then we’ll figure something out to keep you safe.”

“Yeah...right,” Neville sighed and distractedly looked up to the head table, catching the eye of the headmaster who gave him a smile that felt much more like a threat than anything else.

“With the dead snake gone and currently being sold off by the goblins, this place is really quite pleasant,” Harry remarked, getting a shocked and disbelieving look from his partner in return.

“Right, just add some curtains and a few doilies, and it’ll be as cozy as the Burrow,” Percy sarcastically shot back with a dramatic wave of his hand to encompass all of the dank and smelly Chamber of Secrets.

Harry laughed before transfiguring a rock into a floral sofa that did look remarkably like the one at the Burrow. “I’m not saying I want to live here, just that it’s quite calming since it’s so quiet with only the drips of water in the background. It’s a nice break from the chaos of sound the Gryffindor common room has been recently with everyone wanting to ask me questions,” Harry explained before plopping down on the sofa. He patted the seat beside him for Percy. “So, how do you want to do this?”

“Well, we don’t have any bodies here, so this is just a chat. You know better than I do about your powers and how to summon the dead,” Percy said as he sat down and put an arm around Harry. “So, how do *you* want to do this?”

Harry took the resurrection stone from his pocket and held it in his hand. The blacker than black stone just sat there, looking so innocent when it really was nowhere near that. “In that case, I’ll just summon them, you say your piece, and I’ll send them away again until you want to do your necromancer mojo stuff...sound like a plan?”

“Works for me,” Percy shrugged, but sat up expectantly and waited.

With a resigned sigh, Harry closed his eyes and turned the stone over three times, thinking of Cedric Diggory and Regulus Black. “*Where the hell are we? Am I in a sewer?!*” A voice asked suddenly with disgust, causing Harry to open his eyes and stare in almost disbelief that it had really worked, and the two spirits were in front of him.

“You must be Regulus?” Percy asked the spirit who had spoken. He was clearly Regulus since he looked like a healthier and younger version of Sirius Black almost exactly only slightly shorter and stockier.

“*You must be a Prewitt,*” Regulus stared down his nose at the redhead more questioningly than anything else.

“Weasley actually,” Percy shrugged and started taking notes frantically in the journal he always kept in his pocket.

Cedric was roaming around while Harry just stared at his former classmate, not being able to find his voice. “Cedric...” Harry finally breathed out, causing the Hufflepuff to pause in his exploration of the space to look at the man who had summoned them with curiosity.

“*Do I know you...*” He frowned at Harry in thought. “*You look like Percy Weasley,*” he turned to the other man. “*But you’re much older...how long have I been dead?*”

“I’m Harry Potter,” Harry finally coughed out, trying to push past the flashbacks almost overwhelming his mind.

“James Potter’s son?” Regulus now studied him with blatant curiosity. *“How did James Potter’s son go dark enough to become the Master of Death? I’ve seen you around my brother, but everyone was calling you Hadrian Black.”*

“I’m also the current Dark Lord,” Harry snorted in amusement. “It’s a long story, and time-travel is very much involved. You’ve been dead less than a year, Cedric. I spoke to your mum just a few weeks back, and your parents are doing as well as can be expected,” he added, causing the teen to sigh in relief.

Cedric seemed to be holding back tears as he looked at Harry more closely. *“I’ve been keeping an eye on my parents, so I know. That’s why I was so confused about you guys being older. Thank you for bringing my body back, Harry. I’m sorry I wasn’t able to protect you in the graveyard...”*

“Wait? What?” Harry stopped him in surprise. *“I’m sorry that I wasn’t able to protect you! Why would you even apologize for not looking after me? I’m the one responsible for your death. If I hadn’t insisted we take the cup together...”*

“Stop it!” Cedric put his hands on his hips and glared at Harry. *“You were fourteen since this whole time-travel thing clearly hadn’t happened yet. I was seventeen and a prefect. If anyone was supposed to protect the other, I should have been the one protecting you. Regardless, it was in no way your fault. It was Voldemort’s fault or whoever that dumpy Death Eater was who fired the curse!”*

“We’ve all been trying to tell him that for over a decade,” Percy looked up from his notes to smile at the teenaged spirit. “He never does listen though. Just so you know, Voldemort is dead, as well as Pettigrew who fired that curse.”

“Yeah, my cat ate him...long story,” Harry snorted at the disbelief in the look from both spirits.

“As amusing as all this is...and believe me, it very much is,” Regulus drawled with a chuckle. *“Why have we been summoned? And more particularly, why have the two of us been summoned in particular? I doubt I have anything in common with a recently deceased Hufflepuff.”*

“Right, down to business,” Harry clapped his hands and stood up from the transfigured sofa. “I’m the Master of Death, as you seem to know and all, but my partner here is a necromancer. He’s right brilliant and has got it in his head that he can bring you two back to life since both of your bodies are preserved for various reasons. So, I summoned you so that he can make his pitch. At least give him a listen please, or he’ll be stroppy for a week.”

“I’m never stroppy,” Percy protested just as a suddenly excited Cedric said, “*Yes! Please!*”

“Ok, easy sell on that one,” Harry snorted with a smile at the teen he hoped to one day call a friend.

“You need to hear me out first,” Percy told them both seriously, standing to pace in front of them in his excitement. “There are some major drawbacks you need to take into account before agreeing to anything.”

“I’m pretty sure I’m in regardless of those consequences,” Cedric assured them with an excited look.

Regulus didn’t look nearly as sold as Cedric was, but he crossed his arms and gave a little wave for Percy to continue and explain himself. Harry took in both spirits who seemed to be wearing the clothes they had died in if Cedric’s robes from the tournament were any indicator. They seemed healthy and didn’t look dead besides being faintly transparent though. Just as when he had summoned his parents, it didn’t overtly look like the afterlife was unpleasant or treating them poorly or anything. That was good to know for future reference at least, since he did plan to meet Death as an old friend one of these days...once Percy was already gone of course.

“You will have your mind and be you when you return, but you will also be a type of inferius, so also on some level still dead,” Percy was explaining to them. He was clearly trying to make it not sound like he was lecturing them, but the tone was still coming through as he got more into talking about his research.

“What does that mean?” Cedric’s excited look fell infinitesimally.

“Well, you will be you for all intents and purposes. You will age the same, look the same, live a relatively normal life,” Percy continued. “However, you will also be an inferius, so you won’t be able to father children, you will be immune to most magic and disease, really not much will be able to kill you except for fire as a normal inferius, and old age since your body will eventually decay as any person’s would...”

“Sounds pretty good so far,” Cedric remarked with a questioning look over to Regulus.

“Read the fine print, boy. There’s something else, isn’t there?” Regulus gave Percy a knowing look.

“Oi, you’re like two years older than me. Don’t boy, me!” Cedric glared at the dark-robed spirit.

“He’s not wrong,” Percy cut in before they could start arguing. “There is one more very major hitch in all this, and it’s something I will never be able to fix or change if you choose to do this. My magic will bring you back, but it will be your magic that holds you together. This means that most of your magic will be going to keeping you alive as you are. You won’t be a squib, but you will be significantly less powerful than you were. Possibly at about a third-year student’s level. Potions will be fine for you, same with Divination or Astronomy, but Charms and Transfiguration will be extremely draining for you. And...if that weren’t enough, that small spark of my magic will stay with you since I’m your necromancer...”

“Which means that if you die, we will die once again,” Regulus finished for him with a nod of understanding.

“Yes,” Percy agreed, thankful they were following his explanation. “I’ll try to live a long life, for my sake and yours, but you’ll forever be tied to me.”

Regulus was looking contemplative, but Cedric was already nodding. *“I don’t particularly like the whole magic being less thing, but the rest kind of washes out. I mean, no offense Percy, but if we’re indestructible, your humanness just kind-of makes us more human, more normal.”*

Harry couldn't help a snort of laughter at Cedric's conclusion. "Don't worry, Ced. I plan on keeping my partner around for as long as possible, so you'll have a very long life if I have anything to say about it."

"I miss my family and my friends," Cedric told them firmly, the hopeful look still on his face. "I'll come back a muggle if I get just one more year with them. No one I know is over here on my side. Unfortunately, or thankfully, I didn't lose any close relatives or friends to death back when I was alive."

Percy and Harry looked questioningly at Regulus who was shaking his head. *"I have been keeping an eye on my brother over the years, and I would like to see him again, but I'm happy where I am. I feel I am where I'm supposed to be."*

"That's fine, Regulus," Harry assured him quickly. "We didn't even mention this to your brother as a possibility, so he won't be let down or anything. You are free to make this decision for yourself and only yourself."

"I didn't finish..." Regulus took in a deep breath before giving them a smile with a look on his face that said the Black Madness held over even into death. *"I would, however, really like to temporarily come back to life to finish up some unfinished business of mine. If you are willing to bring me back for just a short time...well, I'd very much like to help take down an old goat and ensure my brother's name is cleared and that he is free once more."*

"Oh...wow...you have something on Dumbledore?" Harry was suddenly so very much more on board with bringing Regulus back to life.

Regulus smirked at the dark lord standing in front of him. *"Oh, Harry...I was the one who first told Dumbledore that Voldemort had made horcruxes..."*

"Bloody hell..." Percy breathed out while Harry just stood there stunned. "Well...right...we have work to do then."

Neville stood in the corridor outside of the headmaster's office, nervously holding a piece of parchment. Harry was going to have a hippogriff when he heard about this. Neville just hoped he would still be alive to see the baby hippogriff when it was birthed in anger. He looked at the letter one more time. If he handed this over to Harry, then he *knew* how Harry would handle it. While he wasn't necessarily against Harry handling it, he couldn't in good conscience turn it over to his friend without at least trying to handle the situation himself in a less violent way.

He sighed in resignation. He wondered who had won the pool. It had only been four days since they had returned from break, and he was about to meet with the headmaster. He didn't think anyone had bet that he'd go to the office of his own volition though. Neville tried to steel his nerves. He had faced down Voldemort and not pissed his pants; he could speak to the headmaster in the middle of the school where the wards would theoretically protect him.

"W-would you tell the headmaster that Neville Longbottom would like to speak with him?" He asked the gargoyle and waited.

It only took a couple seconds before the statue moved away and Neville was moving up the spiral staircase. He slipped a hand in his pocket and snapped open the covering over Walburga's portrait. He might be doing this behind Harry's back, but he wasn't stupid.

"Mister Longbottom," Dumbledore was standing in front of his desk with his arms crossed and smirk on his face then Neville stepped into the richly decorated office. "I assume this is about your uncle's trial?"

Neville caught Headmaster Black's portrait staring at him in concern out of the corner of his eye. "Yes, sir...I just got an owl from Gran."

"I hear celebrations are in order then," Dumbledore's smile was almost feral, and Neville decided he wasn't moving any further into the office than the two steps he had taken in from the door. "I assured Augusta that justice would be served. The muggles clearly had no evidence against Algernon."

“Sir, er...I have to ask, did you help him...erm, did you help him with the trial?” Neville asked, clasping his hands together to keep their shaking from being as obvious.

“Well, of course I did, my boy!” Dumbledore laughed loudly. “Algernon and I have been friends since we were in school together. He was such a small tyke then. I felt very protective of him.”

Neville felt a dread fall heavy in the pit of his stomach. Something he hadn't even considered...he wondered if Harry had even considered it...but with what Harry had gone through...what *he* had gone through...and if Dumbledore and Algie were friends...

“Headmaster...did you ask my uncle to kill me?” Neville asked, a wobble coming through in his voice.

Several portraits sucked in shocked breaths, and they were clearly all watching the interaction now. Dumbledore boomed a laugh out into the room. “Now why would I want him to do that?” the headmaster protested in good humor. “Why would I need him to kill you when making you afraid of your own magic was so very effective?”

“Albus!” A headmistress exclaimed while the other portraits protested before they were all magically silenced with a wave of the headmaster's hand.

“Let's be honest, son,” Dumbledore began with another twinkling but also threatening smile. “I don't know where you found out the information you know; I have my guesses, but they remain only guesses. However, even if you were to stand in front of the full Wizengamot tomorrow and declare yourself Magic's true Light Lord, no one would follow a fifth year who can't even hold his wand without it shaking.”

Neville had gone into this meeting hoping to bargain for his grandmother's will back. Anything to keep Algie from getting a hold on him once more. He'd been prepared to offer his neutrality in whatever was coming and promise to stay out of it if only his gran would be released. That was most assuredly *not* an option now though. It was clear that Dumbledore might hate him, but he most definitely was not afraid of him in the slightest. His heart sank lower than the dungeons.

“Why are you telling me this?” He asked, wondering if he would be allowed to leave the office alive even with the wards around the school that were supposed to protect. Were the wards even still there? Harry had almost been killed so many times. Maybe that was a question he should have asked before coming here alone.

Dumbledore just shrugged and leaned back against his desk. “Why wouldn’t I? You are underage, and because of that, for your own protection, neither Veritaserum nor your memories can be used in a trial. Besides, who would take *Albus Dumbledore*, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot to trial? You?...I don’t think so, not when you have two and a half more summers spent at Longbottom Manor before you reach your majority.”

Yes, it was very clear, Dumbledore saw him as harmless as a bowtruckle to himself and his reputation, especially now that Neville’s gran and Uncle Algie were there to hold over his head. “So, what? What do you want from me?” He asked in resignation.

“Nothing...I need absolutely nothing from the likes of you,” the smirk on the headmaster’s face was ugly and dark, and Neville felt like he was worthless, less than nothing.

“Excuse me! Oh, so sorry,” Filius Flitwick almost hit Neville in the back when he slung open the door to the headmaster’s office frantically. “Albus! The students, someone has set off fireworks in the Great Hall! The ghosts are trying to keep the students out, but some had already shown up for lunch. I’m afraid something will catch fire!”

“Mr. Longbottom and I were done anyway,” Dumbledore stood and quickly strode from the office hurriedly and looking very put-out.

Neville turned to leave as well, but Flitwick stopped him with a heavy hand grabbing his elbow and concern on his face. “Are you ok? Sirius’s patronus sounded frantic. He said that Headmaster Black told him you were in trouble.” They both looked up at the still silenced portraits and the one that was now empty of Phineas Nigellus Black.

Neville took stock of himself and couldn’t stop the sob that broke through suddenly. “Physically, yeah...” he gasped out, just holding out the letter to his Charms professor. “Mentally...maybe not. I can’t do it, Professor. I’m a joke. I don’t even deserve to be called a wizard, and I’m definitely *not* a Light Lord!”

Flitwick didn't seem to understand why the teen's uncle's freedom was so distressing, but he put the letter into his pocket to hand off to Harry. The shorter man stepped forward and wrapped his arms around the teen in a tight hug, causing Neville to cry even harder. "Shhh..." he soothed. "Now, Neville, you're coming with me to my office where I'll make tea, and you'll tell me what happened. I don't know if you realize this, but I've pledged my support to the Light, even if that means telling the Light Lord when he's being ridiculous and stuffing him with tea and biscuits until he feels better."

Neville chuckled slightly as he stepped back and wiped his eyes. "Don't you have to go help with the fireworks?"

Flitwick opened the door and led the Gryffindor down the stairway. He turned and smirked at the bottom of the stairs, "Now why would I do that? The Weasley twins seem to have them well in hand."

Hadrian Black apparated to the front door of Grimmauld Place, in his anger he was still holding a bag with a sleeping Sephie in it on his shoulder since he didn't want to take the time to return her to Gryffindor Tower. It's not like anyone in Grimmauld was going to question him having Harry's cat, and if they did, they were probably someone he should fill in on who he was and his plans anyway. He threw open the door, not even getting a sound from Walburga's portrait since she was still inhabiting the tiny portrait now located in his jeans pocket.

"Sirius! I need you!" Harry stormed into the kitchen and stopped with a frown at the odd group sitting to tea at the table. Sirius was just taking a sip of his tea with Moody sitting beside him and a very charred looking and smoky smelling Narcissa across from them.

"What happened to you?" He asked in concern at the burn marks and holes in the posh woman's robes.

Narcissa smirked at him, her eyes bright and shining and a look of pure joy on her face. "You left the bloody rabbits in Malfoy Manor," she informed him, causing Harry's face to fall in apology.

“Oh, Merlin...have they multiplied? How many are left? I’m so sorry!” He rushed out.

Narcissa was already waving him off though. “Leave it Hadrian, all is fine. I called in my coven, and we had an absolutely *wonderful* time this morning. Callista in particular wanted me to send along her regards for the hunting opportunity and also for Voldemort's death.”

Harry winced, now more for the rabbits than for Narcissa. “Riiiiight...well, I hope they didn’t burn anything important.”

“Just my ex-husband’s ancestors’ portraits,” Narcissa grinned much more evilly at that. Harry wondered just how many portraits were lost to fire-breathing rabbits and how many were spell-happy witches that really got the portraits.

“Hadrian, are you ok? You said you needed me?” Sirius asked, setting down his teacup and focusing Harry once more.

Harry spun back to him and Moody. “We have to call a Wizengamot trial immediately to emancipate Neville...and Harry too. I think we can actually, *legally*, take Dumbledore down with an emancipation trial.”

Sirius was slowly nodding while Moody was scratching his chin in thought. “There are some logistical difficulties with that...” Sirius began. “For Neville, he needs a person to call for the trial in order for it to go to the Wizengamot instead of Wixen Child Services. His parents and his gran can’t, we could maybe get Severus as a professor to call it, but that would more than likely go to Child Services as well...”

“I’ll call it,” Hadrian waved off those concerns. “I’m a member of the Wizengamot, and legally, it’s actually my responsibility to protect the Light Lord and him me, though since he’s underage, it’s more on me as the Dark Lord to ensure his safety.”

“Little Longbottom is the Light Lord?” Moody spoke up in surprise, clearly more for Neville than Hadrian. “You and Longbottom are Magic’s Balance?!”

“Actually, just calling this trial would call into question Dumbledore’s claims as the Light Lord,” Narcissa smiled, starting to see the plan forming. “Even if he didn’t get emancipation from it, he could still be officially registered as the Light Lord...which would probably help him get emancipation...”

“All this is well and good,” Sirius was now shaking his head, seeing a major flaw in these plans. “If you really want to get Dumbledore, you need Harry’s trial too. You could *technically* call the trial for Harry since he’s loosely connected to House Black and you are Lord Black, but Harry can’t testify...”

Harry shook his head impatiently. “No, it’ll be fine...”

“No,” Moody cut him off with a firm glare. “Sirius can’t be polyjuiced as Hadrian since he will need to be declared the Dark Lord while you also testify as Harry. You can’t be in two places at once, brat.”

Everyone stared at the man in shock. “You know...?” Harry just breathed out his mouth beginning to twitch up into a grin.

Moody scoffed and crossed his arms with a growl. “I admit, I should have figured it out way back when you hit us with an obscure and almost forgotten spell when we picked you up over the summer, but I’m ashamed it took me until I noticed how both Hadrian Black and Harry Potter wince whenever someone calls them ‘boy.’”

Harry did wince at that, proving the man’s point. “Right, but it’s just a wince...”

Moody snorted. “And Harry Potter suddenly is more paranoid than seasoned aurors when everyone swears he was a normal, if not slightly flaky, teenager just months before.”

“Apparently I’m pants at pretending to be fifteen,” Harry shrugged and plopped down at the table, putting Sephie’s bag in his lap when she stirred from her nap slightly.

“He makes a very good point though,” Narcissa reminded them. “Harry Potter cannot testify if we call an emancipation trial for him...”

“What if he didn’t have to?” A very tired-looking werewolf interrupted them from the doorway where he stepped in followed by a familiar older woman in a floral dress and with a large purse clutched to her side.

“Moony?” Sirius asked in surprise at the unknown person entering his home. "What...?"

“Isn’t the house under a fidelus?” Narcissa asked Harry quickly, wondering if the wards had come down.

“Yes, but I sent her the address,” Harry smiled and scooted down the bench quickly for the woman to join him at the table.

The woman clutched the large bag closer to her side and looked Harry up and down. “I got an owl months ago that told me to come here if I ever found myself in danger. It was in with some wonderful pictures...”

“Hi Mrs. Figg,” he smiled at the woman. “I’m Harry...there was a bit of a time-travel thing, and well...here I am now all older and all...”

“Harry?” Arabella Figg squinted at him.

After a moment her face cleared up and she smiled. “Harry, love...” she sat down beside him and took one of his hands in hers. “Your werewolf here came to see me this morning and asked if I’d stop by and help you out with something. Are you in danger?”

“Not really, but one of my friends is,” Harry said before opening his bag and pulling out Sephie who gave them a little irritated meow at being woken up. “This is Persephone, the cat I sent you pictures of. She’s my baby girl.”

“Well, aren’t you just the most adorable,” Mrs. Figg patted the cat and began pulling some treats for her out of her bag. Sephie immediately forgave them all and clearly decided this new person was her favorite.

Moody cleared his throat when it looked like they were about to completely lose the two to cat talk. “Lupin, I think you might need to explain.”

“You see...” Remus began with a Marauder-level smirk on his face. “Arabella here loves to take pictures of her cats...”

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Arabella gets to show off her cats...

Enter Amelia Bones...Badass

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Amelia Bones was having an exceptionally difficult day, or week, or rather year. While it was amazing that the Voldemort situation seemed to have miraculously been handled before it became a massive problem the likes of which they hadn't seen in fifteen years, she was exceptionally confused about what had actually happened and what to do with all the Death Eaters currently in her holding cells...and especially what to do about one decapitated Peter Pettigrew in the morgue. She was currently trying to find the trial transcripts for Sirius Black's original trial back fourteen years ago to figure out what in Merlin's name had happened, but she kept encountering more and more dead ends.

Clearly Alastor Moody had been involved in Voldemort's demise since she had been asked to vouch for his dispensation to keep his wand when questioned by aurors. That dispensation was probably a bad idea on her part years ago when he had retired, and she blamed it on sentimentalism for her old mentor, but what was done was done. She really needed to get him into the office to explain what had happened, and she needed Harry Potter, Neville Longbottom, and Lord Black at the very least if not the entire group. When owled, every last one of them had sent the information for Madam Parkinson's law firm and politely refused to attend any meetings without their solicitor in attendance. It was their right, and she didn't even blame them based on how the ministry and the Prophet had treated Potter over the past year, but also it was such a headache currently to get everything done when going through the correct channels to call in the involved parties, and representation would necessitate at least a partial gathering of the Wizengamot to facilitate it.

Amelia sighed and rubbed her temples, wondering if she should just go ahead and take a headache potion before pulling yet another dusty box of records to try to find *something* from Sirius's trial. "Er...Madam Bones, do you have a minute?" A voice caused her to look up in surprise and squint through her headache at one of the causes of it standing right there in her office.

"Lord Black? I thought you wanted legal representation before we met?" She frowned deeply while also looking behind the man to see where her secretary had run off to. It was her job to stop people from walking into the office without a bloody meeting.

Lord Black's eyes seemed to track where she was looking, and he gave her an apologetic smile. "Sorry, I believe your secretary must have gone to lunch. For the investigation into

what happened with my kidnapping, yes, I would like my solicitor to be here. However, today I only need to talk with you about some Wizengamot business quickly that is sort-of connected, but not really.”

Amelia sighed and gave up on heading out to her own lunch and motioned for the dark wizard to have a seat. The man was impeccably dressed in exquisitely tailored robes as he always was when appearing before the Wizengamot, but he seemed to have picked up another piercing, and possibly some non-runic tattoos she might just not have noticed before. Really, he was the oddest lord they had, even if he followed Wizengamot procedure to the letter, as she would expect any member of House Black to do. However, his legislation and views on the rights of creatures and squibs in particular was yet another headache he regularly caused her in attempting to get the old, prejudiced crowd to see some sense. She agreed with the man, but that didn’t mean he made her life easier, and that he didn’t seem to enjoy throwing their entire legal system for a loop.

“How can I help you then, Lord Black? We haven’t called any Wizengamot sessions yet, but I assume there will be several once we start in on the mess currently in the holding cells,” she tried to smile kindly and not groan at the man who sat in front of her and began pulling reams of parchment out of his pockets.

“As the head of House Black, I need to call a Wizengamot session for the immediate emancipation of Harry Potter and Lord Longbottom... also, here is the paperwork for Neville to take the Longbottom lordship over, pending a medical examination of his grandmother who is clearly under compulsions,” the man started laying the parchment out in separate piles on her desk.

Amelia blinked in confusion before taking in a long calming breath. Forget the Voldemort mess and Pettigrew, *this* was going to throw the entire ministry into chaos. “Excuse me?” Was the best she could get out as a question in her utter shock. “Emancipation? That’s... unheard of...”

“Well, emancipation would be the ideal outcome, but I’m also willing to take custody of both boys. I know Sirius would love custody of his godson once you find him innocent and all too, not that I know anything about my cousin or have seen him or even have an inkling of his whereabouts,” Lord Black gave her a too innocent smile with an amused twinkle in his green eyes that she didn’t believe for one second.

“Riiight,” she closed her eyes for a moment before opening her desk drawer and taking out the headache potion which she promptly downed. “Do you have any ideas about why I’m having a hell of a time finding your cousin’s trial transcripts? Might this person who you never talk to have mentioned who was in attendance at his trial?”

Lord Black snorted with a dark look. “What trial? Sirius Black was never tried for any crimes. He was sentenced to Azkaban for life on the basis of his exclamation after a great personal tragedy that it was all ‘his fault’ while he was in the middle of a nervous breakdown. You can look until Merlin and King Arthur return, but you’re never going to find any trial transcripts for Sirius.”

Amelia swore fluently in French while she summoned a bottle of firewhiskey that Auror Robaldis had given her as a Christmas present. “I do tend to have that effect on people,” Lord Black smirked at her and the whiskey as if they were sharing an inside joke which she really didn’t know.

With a glare at the lord, Amelia poured two glasses and levitated the second to the man before downing her own and pouring another. “I’m told it’s not a good idea to mix headache potions with alcohol, but feel free to ignore me on that,” Lord Black laughed charmingly even as Amelia would really like to throw him out of her office.

“Right, well, at least it seems I do not currently have an escaped fugitive on the loose, since Sirius Black cannot be considered a fugitive when he was unlawfully imprisoned to begin with!” She seethed, trying to figure out if there was anyone still at the ministry who would have been responsible for this. They had been hunting the man for over two years, and he wasn’t even a convicted criminal! Well, that was two years wasted of her life.

“Please pass along my warning to your cousin to stay hidden for a while longer until we can clear all this up legally and get the word out to the larger population for his own safety,” she said, calling the man on his blatant lie of before.

Lord Black shrugged. “Of course...if he needs to testify for himself or for the emancipation hearings, I would like his assured safety within the ministry and an oath to not subject him to any additional dementor exposure though.”

Amelia frowned at the knowing look she was getting. Did Lord Black know the dementors had abandoned their post. That was a very closely guarded secret, so how could he know? “I can make that happen,” she said instead of asking the question that she really didn’t want to know the answer to. “I assume Madam Parkinson will also be representing him?”

Lord Black nodded and leaned back, crossing his arms. He had an odd silver ring on his hand with a black stone in it. It looked like a lordship ring but was not one for House Black, which was very confusing. “I have a feeling we should just go ahead and put her on retainer at this point,” he said.

“Indeed,” she dryly remarked, putting on her monocle to look over the parchment now littering her desk. “As for calling the Wizengamot sessions, since Harry Potter is Sirius Black’s godson and you are head of the Black family, you have the right to insist the hearing take place in front of the Wizengamot instead of Wixen Child Services. However, Lord Longbottom...”

Amelia looked over the letter written by Severus Snape detailing an interaction he had with Augusta Longbottom before Hogwarts’ winter break and why compulsions or potions were suspected. There was an additional addendum at the bottom where Alastor Moody had added in his own personal concerns on the matter, which were clearly not evidence, but which Amelia trusted absolutely.

“Look...I believe you. If this is all true though, flushing Augusta’s system would be an easier solution than Lord Longbottom’s emancipation,” she began with a sigh and another sip of her whiskey. “However, this will need to be handled by Child Services anyway since Lord Longbottom, while taking over the lordship only requires this paperwork, cannot be declared a full *Wizengamot* lord until *after* his emancipation, and you have no legal rights to him.”

“Actually, I do,” Lord Black awkwardly rubbed the back of his neck and seemed nervous suddenly. Amelia raised an eyebrow wondering what new chaos was about to be unleashed. Thankfully, Lord Black was too young for Neville Longbottom to be his illegitimate child or something, but that was the only thing that came to mind for how they could be connected and give him any legal rights.

“I’m going to need a refill, aren’t I?” She smirked at him before pouring herself another whiskey and doing the same for the now laughing lord who also held out his empty glass.

“Undoubtably,” he smiled at her and sipped his drink. “Right, well, let’s just rip off the plaster, shall we? Neville Longbottom is Magic’s true Light Lord.”

Amelia choked on her whiskey and coughed. “Excuse me? No...you mean that he’s *a* light lord, or has the capability to become one, right? Even so, he’s only 15! Anyone can claim to be a light lord or dark lord if they fit the requirements, but claiming someone is Magic’s true Light or Dark Lord is a much more serious claim...*especially* if this person is only fifteen!”

Lord Black was already frustratingly nodding through her protests. “It’s true, and I would be willing to swear an oath to it. There’s a prophesy and all in the Department of Mysteries, and I know there *is* actually a test that can confirm this. I’m being deadly serious though. It’s also why he either must be granted emancipation or put into my care because I truly believe he is in danger from Dumbledore, and I can prove he is in danger at his home with his uncle. From history though, I’m sure you’re aware that neither light nor dark lords tend to like to share power, especially when one of them is Magic’s choice.”

Amelia was shaking her head as she continued to shuffle through the parchment that looked to only be the necessary legal forms to call a full Wizengamot session and financial statements to confirm the ability of Harry and Neville to support themselves if they were granted emancipation. The answers were not in the paperwork in front of her.

“But...shouldn’t it be Harry Potter...?” was the best she could come up with as a question. It would make sense. The teen had just destroyed Voldemort, so shouldn’t he be the Light Lord if for some reason Dumbledore wasn’t Magic’s choice?

Lord Black shook his head. “No, Harry fulfilled his prophesy in defeating Voldemort. Neville’s is just beginning as he steps up to take on his role in the aftermath.”

“But...you still don’t have any rights to call this session. You aren’t even a Light wizard, clearly,” she motioned at his runes with frustration in her tone.

“Honestly, Dumbledore would be the only one able to call the session as another light lord... or even Lord Voldemort,” she snorted and rolled her eyes at the end, thank Merlin he was gone.

“Ah...” Lord Black’s pierced eyebrow quirked, and he smirked at her. Merlin, she knew she should have just left for lunch instead of inviting the man to sit! He thankfully continued though. “You see, Madam Bones...Lord Voldemort was absolutely *not* Magic’s true Dark Lord. Since he was basically destroying the balance of our world, I really don’t even believe he could be called a little ‘d’ dark lord either.”

She frowned deeply as she went through what she remembered of dark and light lords. She had taken Magical Theory and Law as part of her apprenticeship for magical law and knew the theory behind balance, but dark wixen and dark magic had done so much to destroy everything she loved or cared about that she had come to believe the theory was just blatantly wrong. If, however, Voldemort wasn’t even a dark lord...

“No, he had a following...” she protested, not wanting to believe this at all.

Lord Black rolled his eyes. “Cult leaders and serial killers have followings as well. Just because a person claims something doesn’t mean it’s true...you of all people should know that Madam Bones.”

She huffed at the irritating man, Merlin he was definitely related to Sirius Black. “And what? *You’re* Magic’s true Dark Lord or something, so therefore you are required to look after the Light Lord...that’s a load of bullsh...” she trailed off at the look on the man’s face.

“Oh hell, you really are, aren’t you?” She breathed out in resignation, wondering if the entire society was doomed or if maybe she really shouldn’t have been mixing alcohol and headache potions.

“It’s not illegal to be the Dark Lord as ordained by Magic herself,” Lord Black gave her a kind smile. “I’ll also willingly submit to the test, as will Neville. I will however insist on caring for my counterpart while he is currently underage. If he can be emancipated, then he can take his rightful place on the Wizengamot and look after himself. However, if it is determined that he needs a guardian, that is actually my responsibility, and I will be happy to accept it.”

The infuriating man was actually right. Legally, he was well within his rights to claim to be the Dark Lord until tested, and if he passed, then yes, she was fairly sure that there was some kind of archaic law that stated that those who were deemed Magic’s Balance had a

responsibility to each other's safety. It had been centuries since anyone had passed the test to be Magic's Balance though, and there must always be two people, Dark and Light must both be represented, which is why Dumbledore had never been tested since Voldemort would need to be in attendance as well. Honestly, this was above her pay grade.

"Right, so we call a session to deal with all this. I'm assuming it'll take all day if not more than one day...I understand Lord Longbottom's need because of his grandmother, but I don't know anything about his uncle that you said was a danger to him. Do you have any evidence for that or for your claims that Dumbledore may wish him harm?" She started taking notes to plan out when they could do this, who would need to be in attendance (probably everyone), and how long it would all take.

"I do," Lord Black answered simply. "Lord Longbottom will give testimony, I have an eyewitness to a damning conversation, and also multiple people can testify as to Algernon's treatment of Neville over his lifetime. I highly recommend Algernon be tried under Veritaserum if you can find enough evidence to get approval from the Wizengamot for it. He was only recently released from muggle prison, so you may want to start looking there for legal cause to question him. I believe Neville's testimony should give you enough evidence in itself though."

This was starting to sound like a very distressing situation, and Amelia paled at what the testimony could bring to light judging by the hard look in Hadrian Black's eyes. "Are these accusations of abuse?" She asked clearly, not wanting there to be any misunderstanding on her part about what this case would dredge up.

"Yes," Lord Black gave her a stern look. "Attempted murder would not be a stretch either."

"Merlin," she breathed out and closed her eyes. She had to ask, she had to be prepared to know the right questions to ask at the hearing, but she didn't want to know. "Are we talking physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, or some combination of those?"

"Neville and I have talked in depth, and it is just physical and emotional...though I know *'just'* is not the correct word when talking of any types of abuse," the man looked like he wanted to kill someone, and Amelia was right there with him.

After breaking her quill, she picked up another one and continued to make notes. “So, your side will need to bring these witnesses and state your case, then the Wizengamot will need to question them. Augusta and Algernon will both need to be allowed to contest the charges and state their case...I’m thinking we could possibly still get through all this in a day though...”

“Madam Parkinson is still working on the case, but we will call at least three, maybe up to five witnesses if Augusta Longbottom can be seen to in time, and if Dumbledore disputes the claims as concerns him, then that may stretch you into another day,” the man warned, and she snorted because Albus would *definitely* be disputing everything knowing the old coot.

“Right, so Harry Potter...that is much easier since it is only restoring the rights of his godfather. However, for the amount of time Sirius Black spent in Azkaban, it may be difficult to fully restore his rights based on mental deterioration, but if you petition for his guardianship yourself, I see no problem besides the Light section not wanting a Dark Lord to have custody of a light wizard. You would have the most rights though after Sirius Black, besides his muggle relatives of course. If he no longer wishes to reside with them, then the Wizengamot will be favorable to a wixen taking over his guardianship. I don’t see a need for emancipation or even a lengthy hearing if he agrees to this...”

Lord Black scoffed and shook his head, stilling her quill in her planning. “Oh no...we insist on an emancipation hearing. There will be charges of abuse brought up as well for Harry Potter, and he will not be testifying due to emotional distress and the blatant inability of the ministry to look after his interests, even causing him additional harm. Because of this, charges will be leveled at the ministry itself in his case, especially Minister Fudge and Albus Dumbledore.”

Amelia’s second quill broke before she steadied herself and found a third one. “Who would abuse the Boy-Who-Lived?”

“The relatives he was left with,” Lord Black stated simply with a shrug. For some reason he seemed much less distressed about Harry Potter’s abuse than Neville Longbottom’s. It must not be nearly as bad. So, small mercies there at least. “Minister Fudge and Dumbledore will be charged with slander and child endangerment respectively.”

“Right, so types of abuse?” She paused in her writing, noting the man seemed a little paler now.

“Physical, emotional, and fairly severe neglect,” he informed her simply. “Since Harry refuses to testify, there will be photographic evidence shown, a healer’s diagnostic report, and testimony from others. For the charges against Fudge and Dumbledore, there will be testimony from the Daily Prophet, Gringotts, and we will show a history of child endangerment with testimony as well.”

While the man was saying all this matter-of-factly, it was shaking the foundations of Amelia’s reality. This could bring down their society as they knew it. It could take out the minister, the chief warlock and head of their school, and possibly even their largest newspaper judging by the amount of slander printed against Potter this past year alone.

“Any ideas for how much time I should schedule this for?” She asked, trying to keep her wits about her. Maybe she should just block off an entire week for the trials.

“I’m guessing we’ll probably need to call nine or ten people for our case,” he said in that same business-like tone that Amelia was beginning to think hid much more pain underneath it than he was trying to show. “Also, at least two or three of them will be underage. Ginny Weasley will need to testify and possibly either Hermione Granger or Ronald Weasley as well for the child endangerment charges. Ginny Weasley may want to add charges of her own to the list based on some new information my partner uncovered recently. I’ll suggest it to her.”

“Merlin...I’m blocking off an entire week. Clear your schedule when you get the summons,” she breathed out. “Have your solicitor send the relevant information along, and we’ll try to push this to before the Death Eater trials unless you need more time. We’re talking the Savior of the Wizarding World here and Longbottom is a peer of the realm, so this needs to be handled before any information leaks to the concerned parties or the press.”

Lord Black downed his drink and stood with a nod. “Get it scheduled for as soon as possible, we will be ready.”

“Lord Black!” She called out, stopping the man before he could leave. “Please try to convince Harry to testify. His word alone will be most influential.”

Lord Black shook his head though. “I fear Harry Potter has lost all trust he has ever had in the ministry after that trial he was put through a few months ago for something that should have been a small hearing and which should have been investigated as attempted murder by a

ministry official as well, but he isn't even pressing charges for that..."

Amelia felt all the blood drain from her face. Had the claim of dementors never been investigated? She knew that there hadn't been a trial scheduled, but she had passed the information to the aurors...would Fudge have pushed the information under the rug and stopped the investigation? Merlin, if that man had tried to cover up the attempted murder of the Boy-Who-Lived...!

"I understand..." she choked out with a nod before Lord Black strode out of her office in a whirl of dark robes. Suddenly, she needed to check in on her niece, just to make sure she was ok. Amelia pulled over a blank piece of parchment intent on writing Susan a nice letter and maybe even sending some biscuits along with it before getting back to her now even large mound of work.

"How did it go? You think there will be anything in the paper yet?" Neville asked, his eyes nervously glancing up to the ceiling of the Great Hall on Monday morning while they waited on the owl post to bring the Daily Prophet. If a full Wizengamot session had been called on his and Harry's behalf, there was no way that wouldn't leak to the papers before they had even been officially informed.

"I think Madam Bones will get this handled quickly. She wanted our stuff pushed through before the Death Eater trials. I actually really like Susan's aunt," Harry smiled at him from where he was putting syrup on his pancakes for breakfast. "Sirius always says nice things about her, but since he's been pretending to be me up until this point, I've never actually gotten to interact with the woman. I think he may have led her to believe I'm a bit irritating or something though."

"So, he did a good job pretending to be you," Ron smirked at him, getting a glare in return.

"Hey, don't worry, Nev," Harry reached across the table to pat his friend's arm. "I already have everything cleared with Flitwick for us to leave the school during the trial. He approved the paperwork as a head of house and just needs to pass it along to McGonagall once everything is announced since Dumbledore can't really legally handle it being a biased party and all."

“Professor McGonagall is going to be really angry that you went to Flitwick over your own head of house,” Hermione warned and joined Neville in looking up for the owls.

Harry shrugged and shared an exasperated look with Neville. “Yeah...but I trust Filius more,” he dryly remarked as a flurry of wings and feathers soared en masse into the Great Hall.

Everyone in their group made a mad grab for Hermione’s copy of the Daily Prophet, but Harry won out being the fastest and triumphantly pulled the string from around the paper to open it. He read the headlines and smirked broadly. “Nothing about our hearings,” he told Neville simply.

Neville sighed. “I figured something would have happened by now,” he grumbled. While he was nervous and terrified for the trials, he was even more anxious in the waiting. He just wanted them over with so he could move on with his life.

“Oh, I didn’t say *nothing* had happened,” Harry smirked even more broadly as his eyes scanned the first page.

“I did leave Madam Bones with a few breadcrumbs to follow. It seems she has been very busy...Merlin that woman is efficient, I only spoke to her three days ago,” Harry cleared his throat and read off the paper’s headline. “Albus Dumbledore brought up on charges of child endangerment after the arrest and questioning under Veritaserum of one Algernon Longbottom.”

The volume in the Great Hall rose exponentially while everyone discussed the paper. Dumbledore himself was holding his paper just inches from his face and was frantically reading it with all color having drained from his face. Harry caught Severus’s eyes and gave him a bit of a warning look. There was no telling what Dumbledore would do, and clearly the paper had printed the information before the aurors had even spoken to the man. Merlin, the ministry had a problem with leaks! Harry planned to have Remus fix that just as soon as he was minister. It was really embarrassing for their government!

As if on cue, the doors to the Great Hall opened to reveal Head Auror Robalds and Auror Shackbolt, both looking stressed, probably due to having to rush to Hogwarts once the

paper was printed. “What is the meaning of this?!!” Dumbledore stood and waved his paper, questioning the aurors now standing in his school.

“A bloody shame that we can’t arrest Rita Skeeter, that’s what it is,” Robalds grumbled under his breath, but as he was walking past the Gryffindor table at the time, Harry heard and had to cover a snort of laughter. He had plans for Skeeter...Madam Bones would probably be helpful with that too once he told her about her little bug problem.

“Headmaster Dumbledore,” Kingsley spoke up, ignoring his supervisor’s irritation. “We are here to request that you come with us to answer some questions. This is not an arrest currently.”

“I fail to see how I could be connected to any of this,” Dumbledore fumed at the men. Harry was suddenly reminded of his fiery exit from the castle in Harry’s original fifth year. Thankfully, he didn’t have Fawkes anymore to help facilitate that.

All the students were looking from Neville to the aurors to Dumbledore, with growing confusion and concern in their gazes. Neville looked like he was about ready to disappear under the table. Thankfully, Ron scooted over closer to their friend and put a supportive arm around his shoulder while Harry had his invisibility cloak in his pocket ready to throw over the Light Lord if it seemed to really become too much for him.

“That is why this is a request and not an arrest,” Robalds stepped up onto the dais and towards Dumbledore more. “Madam Longbottom has been taken to St. Mungo’s hospital and we are currently waiting on her test results as they pertain to her brother-in-law, Algernon’s, questioning. We assume we will have more questions to ask you after those are confirmed as well.”

“What is going on here, Albus?” Minerva McGonagall stood up beside the man. “Does this have anything to do with Neville?” She asked, her eyes cutting over to Neville who tried to sink more under the table.

“Lord Longbottom is connected, but this is a separate matter,” Robalds motioned to Kingsley who stepped off the dais to walk over to Harry and Neville.

Kingsley gave them both a sad smile before handing official, cream-colored envelopes to them. “Your solicitor and Lord Black have already been notified,” he remarked before nodding at them and returning to the head table.

Harry frowned and looked up to Percy who surreptitiously lifted another cream-colored envelope from off the staff table. Harry had redirected most of his official correspondence to Percy so that he wouldn’t be getting suspicious letters at the Gryffindor table. The goblins in particular didn’t seem to understand the meaning of ‘understated’ when it came to official correspondence, and he got quite a lot of it from Ragnok ever since Voldemort’s fall. Well, one thing that hadn’t leaked to the press at least. Skeeter was slacking.

“Two galleons that he bolts,” George leaned around Hermione to whisper to their group.

“Nah, three that he curses them,” Fred disagreed from beside him.

Harry snorted. “No, I’m in for five that he goes along with it. He thinks he’s untouchable. He thinks he can talk himself out of it.”

“But...U-Uncle Algie was questioned under Veritaserum...” Neville frowned while the aurors and Dumbledore seemed to be having a quiet argument at the head table.

“Ah, but Dumbledore won’t consent to be questioned under Veritaserum, and he’ll claim Algie misunderstood their conversation,” Harry explained in a whisper, knowing how good Dumbledore was at gaslighting everyone. “What he doesn’t know is that our solicitor has more than enough evidence to legally compel him to be questioned under Veritaserum.”

“Students, everyone,” Dumbledore straightened and addressed the assembled student body. “Apparently, there has been an unfortunate misunderstanding at the ministry. I will be gone for the morning straightening this out, but Professor McGonagall has everything well in hand here. Rest assured, I will be back with you all by dinner.”

Harry smirked at the twins who rolled their eyes and grumbled. “Just add the galleons to our tab,” Fred fondly gave him a smack to the back of his head.

“Wait...this is scheduled for *tomorrow*!” Neville gasped out, having opened the Wizengamot summons Kingsley had handed them and read it. “But...we’re not ready!”

Harry broke the seal on his and frowned. “We are ready, Nev, but I have one too...Merlin, Madam Parkinson is going to clear out half my vault with the amount of things I’m asking her to do. She has to stop my summons now too. I bloody told Amelia I wasn’t going to testify!”

“Shouldn’t you be preparing for a trial or something?” Severus Snape grumbled from where he was traipsing behind Hadrian Black through a large cemetery in Devon of all places. “I should be preparing for my part in the trial at least!”

Hadrian snorted and gave him a little grin. “You’re just explaining how Augusta was acting weird when you went to see her. What do you need to prepare for?”

“I could at least be curled up in my nice, warm bed and be getting actual sleep,” Snape shot back, having to skirt a headstone he’d almost stepped on in the dark. “What do we need from a graveyard in the middle of the night anyway? Are you planning a ritual or something?”

“Nah, just a spot of grave-robbing,” Hadrian off-handedly remarked before pausing to remove a crowbar from the bag he had slung over his back. “Do you think a pickaxe would be better?...Hmm, that would leave marks on the door though...”

Snape stopped and stubbornly crossed his arms before sighing and just pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration. He really should have assumed this, he supposed. What was the most fucked up thing Hadrian would drag him into a cemetery to do in the middle of the night, and that was definitely what they would be doing. Actually, this probably wasn't the most fucked up thing, so maybe he should be thanking his lucky stars it was only grave-robbing.

“Right, so first of all, magic is the solution to manual labor. There are plenty of spells you can use over a crowbar. Secondly, what the ever-loving fuck, Hadrian?!”

Hadrian laughed and turned around to contemplate the crypt in front of them. “Do you really want to try using spells around the Greengrass family crypt? I don’t know what wards they have up, but manual labor is usually the solution to being fried by old and proprietary family wards.”

Severus stepped forward and squinted in the dark. The crypt did say ‘Greengrass’ in flowing script above the intricately carved and imposing stone door. “While I appreciate you and your partner attempting to include me in bonding activities, robbing family crypts is where I draw the line. What do you even need from a crypt? Percy isn’t here, so it’s not inferi, not that I see a reason to need them either...”

“Stop being a spoilsport. This is going to be fun,” Hadrian protested with a grin before doing some diagnostics on the wards of the crypt. “I really only need you to keep an eye out for me anyway and let me know if anyone is coming.”

“Next time, bring your godfather or dunderhead boyfriend and leave me to my sleep,” Severus sighed, finding he was just going to have to give in. Hadrian really was impossible when he got like this. “At least tell me what you are stealing.”

“Cedric Diggory’s body,” Hadrian remarked before shoving the crowbar into the crack between the door and the frame with a grunt. “Percy is raising him and Regulus Black back to life. Regulus is going to testify against Dumbledore, so we had to move up our timeline some. Anyway, Percy has Reg’s body and is setting up for us in the cave where he died. We just got to grab Cedric, not get caught, and high tail it out of here without breaking the preservation charms on Ced’s body.”

Severus closed his eyes and breathed in a deep, calming breath. With a flick of his wand, he conjured a second crowbar and stepped forward. “Callista Diggory is going to murder you and Narcissa will help if this doesn’t work. You better hope Percy knows what he’s doing,” he grumbled before attacking the door with Hadrian.

“Oh please, my baby’s got this. If Percy says he can do it, then you better believe it’ll be awesome,” Hadrian assured him, though that really didn’t assuage Snape’s fears at all.

Harry was so very, *very* tired. This was probably nothing on Percy who had actually passed out after raising Cedric. Harry thanked Merlin that Snape had been there because he was the only one capable of transporting two new inferi who needed sleep and potions to build up their muscles again and one unconscious necromancer to Percy's flat after the tiring ritual. Harry had been right though, Percy was *amazing*! He was going to get the shag of his life once these trials were over and he'd had a chance to rest, or at least that was what Harry was mentally promising his partner vehemently.

Now though, Harry stood anxiously while McGonagall fussed over his and Neville's nice robes. Harry wasn't even testifying, so he wasn't sure why he had to dress up just to leave the school. Well, fine, he was actually testifying as Hadrian, but he had Wizengamot robes for that. The woman seemed to be over-compensating in the face of Harry and Neville having gone to Flitwick instead of her when they needed help.

"Now, you just be respectful of everyone, tell the truth, and everything should work out," she assured them, almost strangling Harry when she pulled his tie tighter. "Merlin...I can't believe what all is happening! And Albus had some part...? No, just mind your barrister and it will be fine..."

Harry loosened his tie as soon as she turned away to fuss over Neville's hair next. "Minerva, really, we must be getting along," Flitwick tried to soothe her while Snape just glared at them all from the doorway out of the castle.

"Do you have overnight bags? A second set of robes in case this goes into multiple days?" She asked them next.

"Yes, ma'am," Neville assured her while Harry tried to keep from snapping at the woman. It's not like she'd ever fussed over him before.

"They will be perfectly safe and cared for with Filius and Lord Black," Snape finally spoke up to hopefully get this moving along. "Do not forget the aurors will be here shortly to ask Ginevra Weasley, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger some questions and record them if they are needed for the trials."

"Of course not, Severus," she sniffed as if she had never forgotten anything in her life.

“Madam Parkinson’s associate will be along as well to sit in as their representation,” Snape added, steamrolling over her indignation. Narcissa and Harry both had insisted that no one talk to aurors without representation. Harry was never going to let his friends go through anything he had with the ministry if he could avoid it. Ginny in particular would probably be asked about letting the basilisk into the school while being possessed, and Harry wanted someone there to make sure it was noted that she was 11 and possessed, so it was in no possible way her fault.

“Severus, Percy, and I have all left assignments for our classes,” Flitwick spoke up to remind her next. “Please, give Madam Pince a heads up that the students will be in the library working and to assist them when needed.”

“Really, Filius, this isn’t my first day,” she said, now ushering them towards the door. “You tell Hadrian to look after my lions, and Albus...well, let’s just pray this all really is a misunderstanding...”

Harry snorted quietly but looped an arm through Neville’s. Once they were past the wards, he would remove his glamour and apparate his friend directly to the ministry. They just had to make it through Neville’s now much simpler trial, and then they could celebrate with some cake and lots of sleep before Harry’s insane trial started next. He should also probably give Sirius a heads up that his dead brother was currently bickering with a similarly dead Hufflepuff in Percy’s small flat over tea and biscuits too. Firewhiskey, yes, cake and firewhiskey was needed for that conversation.

Neville pulled at the starched collar of his nice, dress robes while he nervously waited beside Madam Parkinson, who was thankfully able to serve as their barrister as well as solicitor. They were seated at a table set up in the middle of what was probably the largest Wizengamot chamber in the ministry. “Now remember, we aren’t going to bring up the whole Light Lord information unless it becomes vitally necessary. Since your uncle was accused of terrorism by the muggles and legally required to be questioned under Veritaserum, you don’t need to prove any connection with Hadrian since Amelia is calling the trial for you as the head of the DMLE,” Madam Parkinson reminded him, giving the teen a small smile and a pat on the hand.

Neville nodded firmly. If he and Hadrian didn't have to out themselves just yet, he was all for that. Frankly, if they could wait until he graduated, then that would be ideal in Neville's opinion. He knew that Hadrian wasn't anxious to add more fame to his name since he was already trying to separate himself from Harry Potter, so if Madam Bones was willing to help them stay in the shadows just a little longer, then they were both supportive. Neville counted it lucky that Harry had gone for the terrorism charges for his uncle now, even if they didn't stick, since it made it legally possible for a Veritaserum questioning by the DMLE.

Percy Weasley in his glamour stepped into the room carrying a large stack of parchment and looking tired and more pale than usual. "All rise for the Wizengamot!" He called out to the few people in attendance that mainly included Neville, Madam Parkinson, Professors Snape and Flitwick, and a healer from St. Mungo's who was seeing to his grandmother. More people would be coming for Harry's trial, but thankfully, Neville's seemed to be fairly straight-forward after Algie's questioning.

Everyone stood as the robed figures streamed in, Hadrian gave Neville a small wave as he took his place in the group while Dumbledore and Fudge both glared at the teen from the dais. Amelia Bones placed her monocle on the desk in front of her when she sat down and gave Neville a little comforting smile. "Lord Longbottom, I'm sorry for the circumstances that have led to this trial today. I assure you, we will be as delicate about this as possible. Are you ready to begin?"

"Actually, can we wait just one moment!" Hadrian Black stood up from his seat and squeezed out from the other Wizengamot members, jostling many of them and making excuses and apologizing for stepping on their feet before he finally made it to the floor of the room.

Amelia Bones sighed and rubbed her temples before looking down at the man. Neville understood her expression very well. "What do you need, Lord Black?" She asked. While there was frustration in her tone, there was also fondness, which Neville appreciated. He had no clue what Harry was about to do, but whatever it was would be for a good reason.

"Oh nothing," Hadrian smiled and conjured a clear glass with his wand. "Just one second... accio Rita Skeeter!" He called loudly.

A tiny beetle zoomed out from under Madam Bones's desk, and Harry expertly caught it in the glass before clamping a hand over the open end. "Right...so here, you might want to do

something about this..." he said with a wrinkle of his nose in disgust. Neville noticed Percy trying to hold in laughter from where he was almost hiding behind Fudge.

"I have a feeling that it's highly illegal to listen in on closed Wizengamot sessions as well as not registering oneself as an animagus," Harry set the glass on the desk in front of Amelia, giving the bug a little flick of his finger on the other side of the glass before stepping away.

Madam Bones's face was red in anger when she cleared her throat. "Auror Tonks!" She called out, causing the metamorphagus auror to hurry forward from the back of the room. "Please take Ms. Skeeter here to a magical dampening cell for later questioning."

"Yes, ma'am," Tonks smirked and hurried off with the glass.

"Right...so, I'll just go sit back down then," Harry awkwardly chuckled before stepping on the feet of all the Wizengamot members once more to get back to his chair.

"Weatherby, start the minutes," Fudge ordered Percy impatiently before giving his gavel a rap on the desk. "We are gathered here today for the emancipation hearing for one Lord Neville Longbottom as well as charges against Albus Percival Wolfric Bryan Dumbledore in regards to child endangerment as concerns Lord Longbottom...In attendance for the trial are..."

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: The trials...and a family reunion...

The Trial

Chapter Summary

Last two chapters! We finally got there! I'll post both today, so hang on for the epilogue.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Neville's hearing was going exceptionally well...until it wasn't anymore.

Snape explained to the court the odd meeting he had with Augusta and why he was suspicious at its conclusion. The healer from St. Mungo's explained the compulsions they had found on Madam Longbottom. Unfortunately, they couldn't determine who had put them there. It seemed the spells would be able to be removed over time though and she and Neville could work on building their relationship back. Griphook represented Gringotts and testified that Neville had enough money in his trust fund from his parents to support himself over his final two years at Hogwarts. And Hadrian Black, Arthur Weasley, and even Alastor Moody all offered for Neville to stay at their houses over summer breaks if he would like.

Then, Algernon Longbottom's interview with the DMLE was reviewed for the Wizengamot. Harry was trying to send as many good vibes mentally to his friend as he possibly could while Madam Bones read the transcript that explicitly laid out all the near-death experiences Nev's Uncle Algie had put him through. The events of being almost drowned, thrown out of a window, and generally terrified during any restful moment he had as a child were not a surprise to Harry, or really any Gryffindor first-year who had heard Neville's story back four years before at their table in the Great Hall, and which they had projected testimony from interviews with both Ron and Hermione to support.

What Neville seemed to have not even processed enough to realize for himself was all the psychological torture he had been subjected to over the years. He was constantly being told he wasn't good enough, he was weak, he would never be worthy of his magic, and so on and so forth. It was heartbreaking. Harry could see the horror on many other members of the Wizengamot's faces while Neville just looked embarrassed and confused at hearing it all laid out in Madam Bones's dry recitation, things he hadn't realized weren't normal or acceptable.

Madam Bones actually gave a little dramatic pause, something that made Harry fully believe they were going to be friends one of these days, before she read the last part of Algie's testimony. "Can you tell me why you did these things to your nephew, Mr. Longbottom?" She read the auror's question.

"Well, I was asked to, wasn't I? Albus said it was important; it was for the greater good..." There was an uproar before Madam Bones had even finished Algie's response.

An elderly gentleman stood up who Harry was fairly certain he was supposed to know as probably one of his own supporters, but Sirius had cultivated those people for him over the past few months, so he just made sure to smile at him like he knew the man. "Madam Bones, was he asked to clarify if he meant Albus *Dumbledore*? We need to be specific here," the man insisted.

"Yes, Lord Ogden," Madam Bones silenced the hall to address the man who Harry now decided was his next new best friend if he was part of the family that made his favorite whiskey. "I was just getting to that, but he does."

"I object!" Dumbledore, of course, called out, looking less frightened than Harry wanted him to be. "The auror's question was to Algernon's *perception* of why he did it. He did not say specifically what he was told. I never *told* Algernon to do anything to his nephew. I may have asked if the boy was showing any signs of accidental magic as a child and possibly asked if he had been in any situation where it would manifest, but Algernon clearly misunderstood my questions to an alarming degree. I would never place any child in any danger. You all know me..."

Harry was seething and he could tell that Neville was barely holding it together. While Madam Bones tried to call the chaos to order once more, Harry caught Neville's eye and tried to give him as encouraging of a look as possible. The watery smile he got back suggested that at least the attempt was appreciated.

"Dumbledore should be questioned under Veritaserum!" Lord Ogden stood once more to proclaim. Yep, he was definitely going to be a friend and drinking buddy.

"Tiberius, sit down!" Minister Fudge banged his gavel against the desk, getting a death glare from Madam Bones in return for breaking some kind of Wizengamot procedure was Harry's

guess. “Albus cannot be questioned under Veritaserum unless there is a preponderance of evidence against him since he is the Chief Warlock of this body as well as the Supreme Mugwump of the ICW. He is privy to too much classified information.”

Ok, so now Harry was murderous. That’s why the old coot didn’t look concerned about the charges at all. Since it didn’t seem that Algie had remembered the exact words Dumbledore had said (which, to be honest, Dumbledore probably never explicitly said to hurt Neville anyway and only insinuated), they didn’t have enough evidence to prompt a warrant for Veritaserum.

Madam Parkinson sought out Harry’s eyes from where he was buried in amongst the rest of the robed lords and ladies. She raised a questioning eyebrow at him. Taking a deep breath, Harry looked at his friend. If they went their route and laid their cards on the table, then their safety would suddenly become much more tenuous. Harry had never been safe in his entire life, but Neville...actually, Neville was the same, he decided. If it wasn’t his uncle, it was Dumbledore. Neville just hadn’t been as aware as Harry had been about the danger that surrounded him.

Harry figured they probably had enough to get Neville emancipation without showing their hand, and Harry’s hearing the next day would possibly be enough to take down Dumbledore as long as Harry’s physical attendance wasn’t required. The fact was though, that Harry Potter wasn’t going to be in the court room, and Neville deserved justice for himself too.

Neville looked between his barrister and Harry, a hard look on his face before he gave a sharp nod. With a little, proud smile at his friend, Harry looked back to Madam Parkinson and let loose a dangerous smirk. The woman met his smirk with one of her own before turning back to the gathered body, the entire interaction not noticed in the chaos of the chattering people, she took in a deep breath throw every last thing they had out there and watch where the chips may fall.

“Lords and Ladies of the Wizengamot!” Madam Parkinson loudly called out over the din of noise. “We have a witness to call before your revered body! Our witness has also agreed to being questioned under Veritaserum to dispel any doubts as to her credibility.”

Silence immediately fell as everyone suddenly focused back in. Harry almost crowed at the flash of concern that crossed the headmaster’s face. “I was not aware of an additional

witness,” Madam Bones shuffled through her notes before looking out into the courtroom to find this mystery person. “Is your witness not in attendance?”

“Ah, but she is,” Madam Parkinson held out her hand with a small smile over to Neville who fished the small portrait of Walburga Black out of his pocket and handed it over.

“As determined by case law in *Wizengamot v. Silenius Slavin* in 1793, portraits created by master blood mages can be called to testify in trials, and as determined in *Marline Nott v. Calliope Black* in 1902, one drop of Veritaserum on a blood portrait is the same as a human being given the standard dosage,” Madam Parkinson explained to the court while unclasping the casing and showing a scowling Walburga Black to the courtroom.

Dumbledore suddenly went deathly pale when he recognized the portrait of the woman hanging in the entrance hall at Grimmauld Place. Harry smirked at him and tried his best to hold in the unhinged cackle he wanted to let loose. One exasperated look from Percy though had Harry holding his tongue and at least attempting to look like an upstanding member of the governing body.

“Is that *Walburga Black*?” Madam Bones was squinting at the small portrait through her monocle with a disbelieving look on her face.

“Well, this just got interesting,” a grim man a couple seats over from Harry chuckled under his breath. Harry glanced over at the man and frowned. It was Theodore Nott’s grandfather... how had he escaped being rounded up with the Death Eaters? Had he not come to the battle at Lestranger Manor? Was the man *not* actually a Death Eater? Harry vowed to watch the stern and commanding man closely. He was either someone he needed to get rid of quickly or a possible ally...which one was going to be vital for Harry to determine quickly.

There were protests from Dumbledore, Fudge, many of the Light side because it was *Walburga* and everyone knew the harpy, but the case law was clear and the testimony could not be stopped. While the auror on duty, Tonks again since she returned from detaining Rita Skeeter, administered the one drop of potion to the small portrait, Madam Parkinson addressed Neville.

“Mr. Longbottom, we just need to determine the circumstances that led to Madam Black’s knowledge while we wait for the potion to take effect,” she kindly said to her client. “Could

you tell the court why and under what circumstances you had Madam Black's portrait on your person?"

"Er, yeah...I mean, yes," Neville tried to sit up straighter as everyone's attention snapped back to him. "Lord Black gave me Madam Black's portrait in case I needed help or to get in touch with him. The small portrait is linked to a larger portrait of Madam Black in Black Manor, and she can move between them."

Harry couldn't help the smirk at Dumbledore's ashen look at that information. Clearly the man knew how Hadrian was getting all his information and could see that he was screwed. Harry knew it wasn't going to be as easy as he would like. Dumbledore was clearly already trying to come up with some kind of defense, but this was just one nail in his coffin. It was Harry Potter's hearing that was going to be the death of him.

"She's ready," Tonks informed the court from where she had been closely studying the painted woman in Madam Parkinson's hand.

"Madam Parkinson, the witness is yours," Madam Bones nodded to the barrister.

With a nod, Madam Parkinson held the slightly dazed portrait up so that she could be more easily seen by all. "Madam Black," she began. "Were you a witness to a conversation held by Heir Longbottom and Albus Dumbledore in the headmaster's office at Hogwarts?"

"I was," Walburga answered in the most respectful tone Harry had ever heard her use in his life. Merlin, he hated that woman, but she *was* useful.

"Did Albus Dumbledore admit to prompting Algernon Longbottom to abuse his nephew over the course of years?" She asked next.

"He did," Walburga stated simply, still with the dazed look of Veritaserum.

"Objection!" Dumbledore called out. "It is still her *perception*, just as before!"

“Excuse me,” Madam Parkinson smirked, even before Madam Bones could call them to order once more. “I will rephrase my question. Madam Black...what did you hear *exactly* from where your portrait was opened and in Heir Longbottom’s pocket?”

Walburga was nodded dazedly along. “They had been talking about the uncle’s trial in the muggle courts and then the Longbottom boy asked outright ‘Headmaster...did you ask my uncle to kill me?’ And, well, I was paying a lot of attention then to the old goat who turned my boys against me...”

“Please refrain from editorializing,” Madam Bones stopped the woman before she could go off on the tangent she was clearly heading down.

Walburga grumbled but continued. “Fine, well the headmaster then said, and I quote, ‘Now why would I want him to do that? Why would I need him to kill you when making you afraid of your own magic was so very effective?’”

The uproar in the room was deafening. “Objection!” Dumbledore was crying out while he was being overruled by the entire Dark and neutral sides as well as Madam Bones.

“Excuse me!” Madam Parkinson once more brought the entire courtroom to order herself with a clearing of her throat. “Mr. Weasley, please make sure it is noted in the court transcripts that Madam Black said, while under Veritaserum, that she believed Headmaster Dumbledore had turned her sons against her...that will be important for the scheduled hearing for Harry Potter tomorrow.”

“It is included and marked,” Percy assured the barrister as he clearly underlined the section of notes with his quill.

“But *why*?!” Tiberius Ogden exclaimed, getting another procedural death glare from Madam Bones and a wince from Harry at where this was going. “Why did Dumbledore want Longbottom afraid of his magic?”

“Lord Ogden!” Madam Bones began, but the damage was already done, and Walburga had to answer since she was still compelled by Veritaserum.

“Well, Albus Dumbledore admitted to knowing that the Longbottom boy was Magic’s True Light Lord and didn’t want him to find out, and if he did, didn’t want him confident enough to challenge him since Dumbledore was either just ‘a’ Light Lord instead of ‘the’ Light Lord, or my own personal opinion that he isn’t even that and only a full on imposter all around,” Walburga ranted causing stunned silence all around and a shared grimace between Neville and Harry and even Madam Parkinson.

“Right, it is not my client’s intention currently to take on the mantle of Magic’s True Light Lord...” Madam Parkinson began.

“He must be tested!” a lady of the Wizengamot called out from the Light section.

“Lady Patel has a point,” Lord Nott called out from over by Harry and getting a sneer from the Dark Lord for his efforts. “If Heir Longbottom is Magic’s True Light Lord and not proclaimed yet, then logically Lord Voldemort could *not* be Magic’s True Dark Lord. If Lady Magic has deemed it necessary to step in and provide the Balance for our society at this moment in history, then it is up to us to honor that. The true Light and Dark Lords must take their places in our midst and right whatever wrong our Lady has seen.”

“But...who would be the Dark Lord then?” Lady Greengrass asked from the neutral party where Harry was sitting. “We need both for the test.”

“If the Dark Lord doesn’t step up to take on the mantle, then we may never know,” Lord Ogden said next, and Harry was suddenly questioning their burgeoning friendship.

Madam Bones’s eyes cut to Harry before she called the court to order once more. “If we cannot test this claim made by Madam Black, and even Heir Longbottom isn’t pressing the issue, then we will need to strike the motive provided from the court records.”

“W-what...” Neville cleared his throat tentatively, pulling everyone’s attention back to him. “Erm...what is the test? Is it like a potion or something?”

Harry grimaced. It was always going to be Neville's sense of justice or honor or something that would cause him to have to out himself in front of Dumbledore and the entire wixen governing body. Percy's smirk wasn't helping. Of course, his overly invested partner would be excited to see him made to step forward.

Madam Bones just kindly explained to Neville through all of this that the Light Lord and Dark Lord just had to walk up and touch the altar to Magic right there in front of everyone in the Wizengamot and swear on their magic that they were the true lords of Magic and that was it. So simple...so final in pushing them right out there into the stream of politics. It's not like Harry and Neville weren't both going to be in the middle of politics as Wizengamot lords anyway, but it was still a big step. Frankly, bigger for Neville than for Harry, so he just gave a little smile and shrug at the teen's surreptitious look over to him. It was up to Neville to decide what he wanted to do. Harry was never going to force his hand. It was Harry's job to protect Neville now, so he would do that in whatever way Neville wanted him to do it.

The hard, challenging look Neville turned on the headmaster had Harry sighing in resignation. It seemed that his friend cared more for proving the old man wrong about him not standing up for himself than he did about his own safety and anonymity. Merlin, Harry was a bad influence on Neville! Harry rolled his eyes over at Percy who just smirked knowingly at him. While the prophesy did heavily insinuate that Harry Potter would be the rightful Dark Lord, all prophesy was very much up to interpretation, and only Dumbledore knew the full thing outside of their little group. It was a gamble, whether they tipped their hand or not, but Harry didn't *think* Dumbledore could use it to out Hadrian Black as Harry Potter. Hopefully...

Well fine, it looked like it was inevitable now...Harry waited, he was going to give Neville the time and space to do this and prove that he could by himself before stepping in. Neville rose from the table he was seated behind and stepped forward, causing another uproar of whispers.

"Heir Longbottom, you need you to understand what you are doing...this is not necessary if you are not ready," Madam Bones leaned forward to look down at him from where she was seated, empathy in her eyes.

"Neville," Madam Parkinson leaned over beside him to whisper. "We'll get him tomorrow either way. It is perfectly fine to wait."

“I know it’s not necessary,” Neville said, staring at Dumbledore who definitely did not yet believe they could take him down.

“I’m doing this for me, to make a stand for *understanding and peace*,” he added with a look to Dumbledore, making sure the man knew he was quoting the prophesy verbatim at that.

Taking in a deep breath, Neville strode forward and placed a palm firmly on the altar to Magic that stood just under the seats where Fudge, Percy, Dumbledore, and Madam Bones were. “The Dark Lord must be with you, sonny,” Lord Ogden reminded him kindly while Dumbledore smirked, seeming confident in the absence of Neville’s counterpart.

Neville gave a little nervous chuckle at that, trying to cover over just how very terrified he was. “Well, if he’ll get his overly dramatic arse down here, we can get going. I’m hungry.”

Harry full on laughed at that while the Wizengamot members all looked at each other questioningly. “Merlin, and you call me dramatic,” Harry stood with a chuckle before carefully stepping on all his row-mates’ toes once again on his way out.

Dumbledore looked as pale as Binns and as angry as a blast-ended skrewt when Harry looked up at him while he felt all the eyes tracking his movements. “I think Kreacher is making pasta for dinner,” Harry conversationally informed Neville when he finally got to him and placed his palm on the altar as well. “You sure?” He asked in a concerned whisper.

“A bit late to turn back now,” Neville whispered back with an eyeroll and nervous laugh.

“Well then, as the elder I’ll go first, shall I?” Harry asked and looked out over the assembled body, catching the curious eyes of Lord Nott...maybe ally?

“I am reminded we are all hungry,” Madam Bones dryly remarked, with a little smirk down at the two.

Harry just smiled and pulled out the elder wand, smirking broadly at Dumbledore's incredulous look when he did. "I, Lord Hadrian Black, do swear on my magic that I am Magic's true Dark Lord tasked with bringing balance to our society and supporting the Light Lord in his endeavors."

The altar glowed dimly when he was finished and Neville shakily took out his own, new wand. "I, Heir Neville Longbottom, do swear on my magic that I'm Magic's true Light Lord..." he paused, clearly trying to remember Harry's words to mirror them. "I'm tasked with bringing balance to our society and supporting the Dark Lord in his goals."

Harry gave him a supportive smile to say that he'd done good just as the altar flared into a brilliant light and what felt like phoenix song chimed through to all their souls. They would learn later that evening that it wasn't only in the courtroom, but all wixen in Britain had felt the chime in their magic, confirming the authority of the Balance Magic had given them.

"Well...I'll be..." Ogden sighed into the silent room.

"Right, so...pasta?" Harry broke the moment to grin up at Amelia Bones.

The woman cleared her throat, affected to her core just as everyone else was. "Yes, I believe we have enough information to rule in favor of Heir Longbottom's emancipation. All other business will be added to the docket tomorrow to give time for a warrant to be cleared by the ICW for a Veritaserum trial for Albus Dumbledore."

Dumbledore sputtered indignantly. "Amy..."

"Until that time," Madam Bones interrupted him and motioned for Tonks to step forward. "Albus Dumbledore will be placed in holding."

"But..."

“It’s only one night, Albus,” Madam Bones firmly told him in exasperation. “If you are cleared, you will go on your merry way. I’ll contact Minerva to handle things at the school.”

Tonks was already placing magic dampening cuffs on the headmaster, way too much glee in her eyes. Remus must have really gotten to her about the man and explained what had been going on. Dumbledore was still complaining all the way out of the courtroom.

“Based on the testimony by Lady Magic and the witnesses here today, all in favor of Heir Longbottom’s immediate emancipation?” She asked the room. All hands raised, not a single person from any side wanted to go against Magic herself.

Madam Bones banged her gavel, startling Fudge who seemed to be lost in thought. “I hereby proclaim *Lord* Longbottom emancipated and with full rights as a Wizengamot lord and peer of our society. So shall it be! Dismissed!” She banged her gavel once more.

Harry immediately grabbed onto Neville’s elbow and steered him past Madam Parkinson. “Great job Hyacinth! You’re amazing! See you in the morning!” He called to the woman while he and Neville made their immediate escape from the room and the ministry as a whole before they could be swarmed.

“A chaser is the more noble player on the team! Seekers just sit there looking for a ball the entire game!” A frustrated man was complaining.

Neville rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and blinked dazedly at the scene that met him at the breakfast table in Grimmauld Place.

“The game doesn’t end without the seeker catching the snitch though! It’s the most important position!” A teen that Neville was absolutely certain was supposed to be dead argued with the unknown man.

“Actually, beaters...”

“Shut up,” both the unknown man and Cedric Diggory told Sirius Black who had a stupid grin on his face while trying to get into the argument.

“Don’t you tell my brother to shut up!” The man poked a finger into Cedric’s chest.

Snape stepped into the doorway beside Neville and ran a hand over his face tiredly. “Sir, do you see Cedric Diggory sitting at the breakfast table as well?” Neville asked his professor since he seemed to be hallucinating.

Snape gave an exasperated sigh. “Our resident necromancer has been busy...Regulus,” he nodded at the man Neville hadn’t known before walking over and kissing the top of Sirius’s head when the man handed his own cup of coffee to the potion master.

“Ew, I’m never going to get used to that,” Regulus grimaced. Neville blinked a couple more times at the newest member of the family who seemed just a few years older than them before he shrugged and went to steal a Danish before Professor Lupin woke up and ate them all.

“Morning!” Harry greeted all in an overly chipper tone before, similar to Snape, going to kiss the top of Kreacher’s head who handed him a cup of tea. Harry got a stinging hex to his bum from the elf in retaliation.

“Good night?” Sirius smirked at his godson.

“Very,” Harry just wagged his eyebrows at the man and making Neville blush at the insinuation around the cheese Danish he had stuffed in his mouth.

“Mr. Longbottom,” Snape addressed the teen once he had some eggs and toast on his plate. “You do not need to attend the Wizengamot today. I can return you to Hogwarts if you would prefer.”

Neville quickly chewed and swallowed so he could protest. "I'm a full lord now. I'm going," he glared challengingly at everyone.

"That's your right, Nev. No one's going to stop you," Percy breezed in and snagged a Danish for himself. "I'm off or I'll be late. Don't bite anyone," he glared and wagged a finger at Regulus before rushing right back out of the room.

Regulus huffed but also smirked. "Only if they really deserve it," he raised an eyebrow at his brother who seemed dazed by his continued presence.

"Spare Lord Ogden at least. I think I can get some free whiskey out of him," Harry added as he sat and threw an arm around Cedric's shoulders. "So...how's being alive treating you?"

"I don't know, you keep leaving me with that pompous git," Cedric glared at Regulus who sipped his tea unapologetically.

Neville put down his napkin and gave the undead teen a small smile, now so used to all the crazy in his life that he was already accepting whatever the hell this was. "So, Cedric...you plan to play for Hufflepuff next year?"

Cedric's grin widened exponentially while Regulus rolled his eyes and groaned. "No, we're *not* starting this again!"

There was quite a lot of confusion and chaos while all the Wizengamot members tried to corner Harry and Neville to talk to them. Madam Bones was busy trying to diffuse the situation and restore some order while Dumbledore was led into the waiting area instead of his Chief Warlock position this time. Neville adjusted the new robes he was wearing as part of the Wizengamot since they were surprisingly itchy. Harry leaned over and tapped his shoulder with his wand. Suddenly, he was much more comfortable.

“I know, right?” Harry smiled at him. “They have to add itching powder into the fabric or something.”

“Shouldn’t I be sitting with the Light side over there?” Neville asked, realizing he was sitting with the neutral party since he was beside Harry.

“Nah, we’re Balance remember. Neutral is our happy place,” Harry smirked, and Neville huffed a small laugh, much more relaxed since he wasn’t on trial this time.

The courtroom was a bit fuller this time around. It was still a closed hearing, but this time Regulus, Professor Lupin, an older woman Neville had only seen in passing at Grimmauld that morning, and a young woman in auror robes carrying a large box joined Professor Flitwick, Arthur Weasley, Moody, and Snape who were probably added to the witness list more as emotional support this time than actual witnesses. Honestly, they really weren’t really necessary to Neville’s hearing either, but the offer of their homes to stay in had been very kind and unexpected.

Once everything finally settled down, Madam Bones called the hearing to order the same as she had the day before. This time she explained that Harry James Potter would not be in attendance but that his legal representative, Madam Parkinson, would speak in his stead. “I believe it is our right to face our accuser,” Dumbledore spoke up petulantly.

“Not when he’s underage,” Madam Bones growled at the man. She seemed not to have gotten much sleep the night before and was in a foul mood this morning. Neville felt sorry for them all and made a mental note to follow Wizengamot procedure...which he didn’t know...which he probably shouldn’t trust Harry to know...he looked over at Lady Greengrass and decided she would be a reasonable person to just do whatever she did to stay out of trouble.

“In regards to the emancipation of Harry James Potter, we first call...”

“I’m sorry Madam Parkinson,” Amelia Bones interrupted the woman and tiredly put on her monocle and shuffled her papers.

“I’m sorry for interrupting Hyacinth,” she continued while the barrister raised a questioning eyebrow at the head of the DMLE.

“We have new information to add to this hearing. I sent aurors Clarity...” she motioned to the woman with the box. “and Richards to Mr. Potter’s former residence yesterday evening in preparation for this hearing. They were to do the customary home evaluation and questioning of the family which we did for Lord Longbottom as well. While we found Augusta Longbottom under compulsions in Lord Longbottom’s case, what we found at the Dursley residence was even more disturbing.”

“Huh...I doubt that went over well,” Harry mumbled beside him. “Clarity...I like her, she was the one that found Pettigrew dead at the manor. I wonder if Richards is her asshole partner...?” Harry trailed off while Neville tried to not be distracted and focus on Madam Bones.

“When questioned a Mr. Vernon Dursley pulled something called a...” Madam Bones checked her notes. “a shotgun which fires projectiles at a dangerous speed and which can be lethal.”

“Merlin, I thought he’d gotten rid of that thing after first year,” Harry grumbled, and Neville jabbed an elbow in his friend’s side to get him to keep quiet.

“Auror Richards was shot and is currently in St. Mongo’s and expected to make a full recovery...”

Neville rolled his eyes at Harry’s little laugh and whispered hope that it was the asshole partner. “Shut it,” he whispered back.

“Bite me,” Harry grinned at him unapologetically.

“With all this happening late this last evening, the court would like to hear from Auror Clarity first about her findings. I should note for the court that the Dursley parents have both been arrested based on the aurors’ findings and their interrogation. Their child is currently at boarding school, so his case has been handed to our muggle counterparts at Child Protective

Services to handle,” Madam Bones finished explaining, and Neville suddenly knew exactly why she was tired and irritated this morning.

“Auror Clarity...if you please...” Madam Bones called the auror to the front.

The red-robed woman removed several vials from her box which were shown to be memories used as projections for the court to see what she had encountered. Harry was suddenly exceptionally quiet beside Neville while the woman explained the derelict conditions of the spare room Harry had been imprisoned in with the locks on the door, the bars on the window, and the cat flap for food. By the time the auror got to explaining the tiny, dark, and spider infested cupboard under the stairs, Neville had Harry’s hand firmly clasped between his and was trying to offer as much comfort as he could.

Once the auror was seated once more, Neville held onto Harry’s hand and gave it a squeeze. His friend turned a little tired smile on him and gave a small, wry shrug. “Well, looks like the Dursleys are out as an option next summer,” he whispered with a chuckle. Neville rolled his eyes, knowing Harry had never planned to go back there anyway.

The entire court was stunned silent. You could hear bowtruckle sneeze if there had been one around. In the breathless quiet, Madam Parkinson stood and continued her case. “We would like to call Arabella Figg to the stand,” she tried once more.

The elderly woman beside Professor Lupin stood and shuffled to the front of the room, carrying what looked like a large photo album with her. She looked right up at Harry and gave him a little smile that had Neville raise an eyebrow. Apparently, she knew who Hadrian really was.

“Mrs. Figg, you are a squib who lives down the street from Mr. Potter, correct?” Madam Parkinson asked while pacing just slightly in the front of the room.

“I am...I’ve lived on Wisteria Lane since the week after Harry moved to Privet Drive,” the woman said proudly. “I babysat my boy many times over the years when the Dursleys wanted to pawn him off on someone too.”

“Why did you move to Wisteria Lane?” Madam Parkinson asked next.

“Albus Dumbledore asked me to,” she sniffed with a glare at the man who seemed to be trying to cause her a stroke with a look alone. “He wanted someone to look after Harry.”

“And did you do that?” The barrister asked, causing Harry to shuffle a little awkwardly beside Neville.

“I tried, but I was unsuccessful,” Mrs. Figg said with what sounded like an angry hiss in her tone.

“How did you try?”

Arabella Figg held out her photo album to the barrister who took it and started flipping through, already knowing the pictures she wanted to show and promptly tapping each one with her wand and flicking a projection up into the air for the entire courtroom to see. “When he was at my house, I tried to feed him and bandage any wounds he may have, and I documented everything as you can see. I sent all of these pictures and more to Albus Dumbledore,” she almost spat the name.

“I sent them, and no one came. I stopped even getting the customary ‘don’t worry about it’ letters after a few years,” she looked up at the court, but really looking at Harry there in the middle of the Wizengamot. “I didn’t know what to do then...you all don’t listen to squibs, you just refer us to the muggle courts. Should I have turned Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, over to the muggle authorities? You wouldn’t help me, Albus wouldn’t help me, and muggle foster care was the only other option...”

An uproar was heard from the Wizengamot at that. Harry mouthed a ‘thank you’ at the woman and squeezed Neville’s hand back. “What do you want to bet my squibs’ rights bill gets passed at the next session?” He leaned over to whisper to Neville. Neville gave a little stunned chuckle while he couldn’t tear his eyes away from the small boy holding an orange cat and with a painful-looking black eye in the picture floating just above them.

After that was a similar procession of Griphook from Gringotts to confirm that Harry Potter had enough money in his bank account to support himself through Hogwarts, then Hadrian, Arthur Weasley, and surprisingly Moody (Neville had a strong suspicion the former auror had been a Hufflepuff when he was in school with how he had latched onto them) once more offering their homes, then a short tangent into the possibility of guardianship passing to Hadrian or even Sirius Black after a trial scheduled in a few days which surprised the entire Wizengamot who hadn't been privy to the knowledge that Peter Pettigrew's body had been found.

Then Madam Parkinson switched tactics once more and levelled charges at Minister Fudge for disregarding normal procedure and doing absolutely no checks into the situation right before Harry's third year when he'd accidentally blown up his aunt and aurors were sent to his home. Then, last but not least, she brought forward charges against Dumbledore for three counts of child endangerment for Lord Longbottom, Harry Potter, and Ginevra Weasley.

Everyone was very confused until Filius Flitwick was called to the stand and explained what had been happening during Harry's second year from the perspective of the professors. The entire courtroom was left in confusion when the Charms professor sat back down and Auror Clarity was once more called to the stand.

Neville was confused himself. He'd never heard exactly what had happened in second year, just that it had been handled and that Harry and Professor Lockhart had somehow been involved. He was gasping in surprise with everyone else when Auror Clarity produced another projection, this one of Ginny being questioned. "There was a *basilisk*?!!" He hissed out lowly to Harry beside him.

Harry snorted. "Imagine how surprised I was when I learned no one knew about it."

"There was a class XXXXX creature in the school with my niece?!!" Madam Bones actually stood and almost shrieked at Dumbledore once the implications of Ginny's testimony finally sank in.

Harry raised his hand and Neville almost groaned. "And Voldemort...don't forget him."

"Yes, Lord Black, but if you haven't realized a class XXXXX creature is actually *more* dangerous than Lord Bloody Voldemort!!" The woman glowered now. "The school should

have been immediately shut down!”

“Just so I know...what class are acromantulas? There is a large colony in the forbidden forest,” Harry raised his hand once more and Neville almost face palmed beside him.

“I’m bloody done!” Madam Bones banged her gavel loudly. “All in favor of immediate emancipation of Harry James Potter?!”

About three-fourths of the hands were raised, the rest Neville was going to generously believe wanted Harry’s custody to go to Hadrian. Regardless, it was a majority though. “Granted!” Madam Bones banged the gavel again.

“Auror, please take our current Minister of Magic into custody and return Albus Dumbledore to his cell. I’m implementing a full and exhaustive investigation into everything either of them have touched since their birth and both will be interrogated under Veritaserum. I except to add many more charges in addition to child endangerment to the new case, at the very least we will be adding about two hundred more counts of child endangerment for not closing the bloody school! The new trial will be scheduled for one week’s time! Dismissed!”

It was a stunned and absolutely confused group who made their way out of the courtroom while Neville and Harry went over to Madam Parkinson. “Is this normal?” Neville asked their solicitor.

“Merlin, no!” She laughed and shook her head while packing away her papers. “Honestly, we would have won today. Fudge would be sanctioned and probably incapable of winning his next election, and Dumbledore probably would have lost his titles and position as headmaster...he might have been able to talk his way out of jail time if he could get out of a Veritaserum trial...which is entirely possible.”

“Oh,” Neville frowned deeply. He had thought they had a better case than that, but her point was strong, everything rested on the Veritaserum trial, and Dumbledore had a strong case for *not* being questioned with it because of his ICW position.

“What about now with this new investigation?” Harry voiced the question Neville was thinking.

“Now...Merlin, she’s doing a *full* investigation like Veritaserum handed out like water and an entire contingent of aurors just digging into things...and two bloody class XXXXX creatures?! Why didn’t you tell me that to begin with?!” Madam Parkinson glared at them both. “Pansy is at that school!”

Harry was just nodding at that point though. “Maybe we should tell Amelia about the detention in first year you had to serve in the forbidden forest at midnight when Dumbledore knew about the spiders then...I mean, that’s almost attempted murder, right?” he remarked to Neville.

“Merlin, I’d forgotten about that,” Neville blanched, remembering that terrible night.

Madam Parkinson sank down into her chair. “The whole coven is going to have fit!”

“Er...yeah, Draco was in that detention too,” Harry helpfully added.

Taking in a deep breath, Madam Parkinson stood. “We’ll be arguing for execution through the death veil or at least life in prison for Dumbledore,” she said firmly. “And we’ll bloody well get it too. All these people have kids and grandkids at the school,” she motioned towards the still emptying room.

“I doubt Fudge will escape prison time either after Sirius’s trial,” Professor Lupin had made his way over to them, trailed closely by Mrs. Figg. “He ordered that kiss on sight for Sirius without reviewing his case. That’s not legal.”

“You all are making my career,” the solicitor grumbled and seemed to already be making notes before she turned on her heel and started striding away from them. “I’m going to go write to Pansy and make sure she knows to stay in the fucking castle!”

“Every time a pureblood aristocrat swears an angel gets its wings,” Harry dramatically clutched his chest proudly before he turned and promptly hugged Mrs. Figg.

“I didn’t even get to testify!” Regulus Black huffed in irritation when he joined them. “Dumbledore is going to go down for his part in getting me killed by trying to get information out of me about the horcruxes and how he played with me, me brother, and Severus’s lives!”

Harry and Mrs. Figg seemed to be in their own cat-talking world now while their group grew to include Percy and Snape. “Don’t worry, Reg. A full investigation means there will be a month of trials for everything. You will have plenty of time to testify,” Percy assured him and pulled invisible hair into an invisible ponytail. “Besides, I’m sure your brother would like you to stay a little longer on this side of living anyway. There’s no need to rush off back to the afterlife unless you had a hot date or something waiting on you.”

Regulus glared at him and huffed. “Fine, but someone is lending me their broom then. I can’t let that Diggory brat go unchallenged at quidditch!”

“Oh crap! Has anyone seen Callista recently?!” Harry’s head jerked around from where he was talking to Mrs. Figg. “We should probably get Cedric home.”

Neville just smiled at the lot of them. There was still so much to do, but they’d won. There was no way Fudge or Dumbledore were walking away from this, not with the acromantulas clearly living in the forest, Ginny’s testimony, the goblins still needed to explain their suspicions about the Philosopher’s Stone, the dementors (or Nox rather) had agreed to testify about Fudge’s actions in regards to Sirius and Barty Crouch Jr., and that wasn’t even scratching the surface of the house elves. There was one pissed off head elf in the Hogwarts kitchen that saw all and knew all. And...Madam Bones hadn’t even started her investigation yet.

The ministry and Dumbledore had fallen, and in their place stood two of the least Gryffindor Gryffindors out there, one who was displaced in time and carried more scars than anyone ever should, and one who had never believed he would ever amount to anything and who would only ever stand in the shadows of all those around him. But no, they didn’t stand alone...there were squibs, goblins, banshees, necromancers, house elves, dementors, werewolves, centaurs, merpeople, and even the odd inferius standing beside them. It was scary, but honestly, Neville didn’t regret any of it. He hoped his future self who had helped

send Harry and Percy back in time somehow knew the good he had done. He knew it was impossible, but he really hoped he knew somehow.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Epilogue...

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for sticking with me through this (very short) story. Remember when I said it was going to be 10 chapters tops...yeah, I remember that ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I don’t want to have *tea* with the Dark Lord,” Amos Diggory grumbled for the hundredth time while his wife puttered around the kitchen cleaning and setting up the tea things on the pristine dining room table. “I’m a Light wizard for Merlin’s sake!”

“Well, I’m a Dark witch,” Callista glared at her husband, firmly shutting him up. “If you want to invite Lord Longbottom over for tea, then I’ll put out just as nice of a spread, but *I’m* a kind and understanding person...right Amos?”

“Yes dear,” he sighed, thoroughly chastised. “Did the man at least say what he wanted? We aren’t exactly the most influential or important people you know. He’s only been recognized by the ministry for less than a week. You’d think he’d be making the rounds of the Malfoys, the Notts, the Parkinsons, or even the Greengrasses before us Diggorys.”

“Oh love, don’t be nervous,” she smiled and patted her husband on his cheek, knowing where his bluster was really coming from. “He stopped by a coven meeting to help out Narcissa a while back. We chatted, and he probably just wants to talk about Cedric. He was very sad that we had lost him.”

Amos didn’t like the sound of that. He didn’t like to talk about his son...well, he did, but he was going to start crying if he did, and he absolutely didn’t want to start tearing up with the new Dark Lord sitting at this table. “Maybe I should just go check in at work. There was something about a chimera loose in Devon...”

“Amos Diggory, you sit down right now,” Callista glared him back down into his seat. “We’re going to be perfectly lovely hosts, eat some biscuits, and chat a little about how the

investigation into Dumbledore is going. It's not like he's going to be casting the cruciatus at you! That was the *other* dark lord, and this one murdered him!"

"I thought Harry Potter murdered You-Know-Who..." Amos started in confusion just as a loud knock sounded at their front door.

"Be nice," she warned him with a playful finger wag before promptly heading to the door.

Amos grumbled as he stole a biscuit and listened in while his wife opened the door.
"Hadrian... What?"

A loud thump sounded and Amos jumped up with his wand in his hand and rushed out to the door. "Callista!" He exclaimed seeing his wife crumpled on the floor with a young, tattooed man standing over her.

"Step away from my wife!" He ordered, holding his wand as steady as he could at the Dark Lord.

"Merlin, I'm sorry Mr. Diggory... I probably should have warned you before just springing it on her," the young man blushed and rubbed a hand across the back of his neck. "It was just a shock she's fine..."

"What did you do?!" Amos growled in anger.

"Hey Dad..." a tentative voice called from just outside the door. Amos knew that voice. It was impossible. It was just... impossible...

"Please don't you pass out too!" Hadrian Black stood with both arms out as if he was ready to catch the man if he did. "Er... your wife was a Greengrass, and they preserve their dead... and well, erm, my partner is a kickass necromancer, and I'm kind of the Master of Death, so I wanted to erm, well, help you all and Ced was just too young, and..." the man trailed off with a shrug while Cedric stepped into the room.

“Hey Dad...erm, I’m not going to eat anyone or anything. I’m actually quite normal, diet-wise and all...” Cedric gave his stunned father a little sheepish grin. “I’m quite a bit less magically powerful, so I don’t think I can be a healer like we planned, but the Weasley twins have this new joke shop they’re starting, and I’m magic resistant, so they’re going to hire me as a brewer and product tester after I finish my last year at Hogwarts...or maybe quidditch...erm, say something please...”

Amos couldn’t say anything though. There were no words... he stepped forward and pulled his son into his arms and held on with every ounce of his strength. “It’s really you...”

“Ngh,” Callista made the undignified sound as he pulled herself from the floor. “Did I see... Cedric!”

The three held onto each other tears flowing and lost in their own world. “I’m going to... go...” Hadrian skirted around them to shimmy out of the door before he got pulled into some kind of emotional mushy moment.

“Harry Potter! You stop right there and come back here!” Callista ordered him before pulling him into his own crushing hug. Harry squirmed for a minute before just resigning himself to the fact that this was happening.

“Wait...Harry Potter?” Amos pulled back just slightly from his son to ask.

“Dad, that’s the least of it. Didn’t you clock the whole Master of Death thing?” Cedric chuckled and just hugged his stunned father once more.

It was two weeks until the end of the term at Hogwarts. Minerva McGonagall was so very tired, emotionally and physically. She stood before the laughing and chatting group of students at dinner and let out a deep breath. “May I have your attention please?!” She called out, getting the assembled students and professors to all focus in on her. She hated that this responsibility fell on her, but someone had to do it.

“I’m sure you’ve all heard many rumors about the trials from the Daily Prophet or your families or whoever,” she began. “As of this afternoon, they have all finally concluded.”

There was a din of noise while everyone speculated. “Quiet please,” she pulled the attention back in to her. “Without Rita Skeeter, and the sanctions her actions brought onto the Daily Prophet, I’m sure you’ve realized the paper has had little to no actual access to the trials, so I will inform you of the outcomes.”

She glanced over the house tables. She was not going to say which of their parents had been sentenced to prison time. They already knew if it was their own parent, and if their friends didn’t know yet, she was not going to tell them. Everyone deserved to have as pleasant of a last two weeks of class as reasonably possible. However, there were some things they deserved to know.

“Former-Minister Fudge has been stripped of his titles and sentenced to ten years in Azkaban for unlawfully administering the dementors kiss and corruption, among other things,” she began seeing nods, so this news seemed to have already gotten around.

“I’m sure you’ve also been informed of Lord Longbottom and Lord Black’s acceptance as our new Light and Dark Lords respectively...” There was a whoop and some catcalls from the Weasley twins who were patting Neville on the back at the Gryffindor table. Merlin, she was glad those two were graduating!

“Also, as unexpected good news, it seems that Cedric Diggory was *not* hit with a killing curse last year, but a curse which mimics the effects of the Draught of Living Death,” she said with a bemused shake of her head while the students immediately started asking questions, Cho Chang even stood up at the Ravenclaw table. “I do not know much more about the matter, just that when You-Know-Who died, the spell broke, and Mr. Diggory woke up in his family’s crypt. I’m sure it was traumatic, so when he returns in the fall to finish his last year of schooling, please be respectful and do not pepper him with questions about it.”

It seems this news no one had known judging by all the conversations starting. It took a while, but she finally called everyone back to order. “Students...please just a few more moments. Next, it is important you know that Sirius Black had been declared innocent of all

charges, and you may see him in Diagon Alley or around. He was not responsible for any of the murders attributed to him; it was Peter Pettigrew...”

Chaos abounded while McGonagall turned her attention to the staff table and shared an exasperated look with Snape. Merlin, that man had been a godsend recently with helping her pick up the slack with her new responsibilities. He may not be the best teacher, but he was a brilliant administrator it turned out. She was about ready to beg him to become deputy headmaster, even going so far as to hiring another Potions professor if he required it.

“One last thing!” She stopped the conversations. “Headmaster Dumbledore...” her voice faltered, more in anger than anything else at all that had come to light.

That man...that monster had set up Harry Potter to face Voldemort so many times, had put the students in extreme danger, Merlin, all classes outside were currently cancelled until the acromantula colony could be cleared out by experts hired from the ICW. And that didn't even touch on the blatant ignoring of child abuse in cases going back to before he had become headmaster! Unfortunately, Hagrid had been demoted back to groundskeeper for his part in knowing about the creatures, so that was yet another professor she would need to hire, as well as DADA since Weasley had already turned in his resignation. Maybe she should retire too... that was looking like a solid plan...

“Headmaster Dumbledore has been sentenced to death,” she said, the silence following her words speaking more than shouts. “He has been found guilty of child abuse, many counts of child endangerment, aiding and abetting the return of Lord Voldemort, murder of his own sister, failure to uphold justice, willful disregard of his duties, and frankly, many more lesser crimes...” she trailed off into the silence. “He may appeal, but life in Azkaban is the best he could hope for...”

At that a wall of noise burst forth as everyone asked questions and talked to their neighbors. Some were claiming to have always known, some in denial, some flat-out refusing to believe it. Minerva gave them a moment before raising a hand for silence once more.

“There will be grief counselors provided by St. Mungo's over these last two weeks of school. Each of you will be expected to sit with them for at least one 30 minute session held in a private room in the infirmary. If you would like to schedule more, or if they recommend you schedule more, you will have the opportunity to book further appointments through the hospital. Madam Pomfrey will be coming to each common room with the schedule for you to

sign up for your time. Please reach out to your head of house if you need anything in the interim. Gryffindors, please feel free to reach out to Professor Weasley while I am unable to fulfill the head of house duties,” she said before leaving them all to their conversations and speculation.

Merlin, now she just had to deal with the healers removing compulsions from herself and most of the faculty. That was absolutely not something she would tell the students either. Hogwarts was going to be a very different school in the fall. It would be a difficult road ahead, but she hoped they could all rise to the occasion and make the old girl a better and much safer school for everyone.

“And Reg did this thing where he turned the broom upside down and flew under goals posts...” Cedric cut off his excited rant to shove Ron’s face farther from his own.

“Personal space, Weasley,” he grumbled.

“Sorry, it’s just so weird...” Ron was staring again, like he always did the few times they had been together over the summer.

It was strange to be back on the Hogwarts Express and heading to school but having none of his year-mates there with him. It was weird enough that all the professors were going to be making accommodations for his lower magic levels, but having classes with the students in the year below his original one was just wrong. “I swear Weasley, I’ll buy all your brothers’ prank products and turn them loose in your bed if you don’t stop staring at me. It’s not like I’m going to bite you,” Cedric glared at him. He really should have picked a different compartment, but he’d gotten close with Neville and Luna over the summer, and this is where they sat.

“But you *could* bite, couldn’t you?” Ron’s face pulled into a grin and Cedric rolled his eyes.

“He’s your problem, please...” he motioned to Hermione who put her book down with a fond eyeroll before pulling her boyfriend across to the other bench to sit beside her.

Luna quickly changed over to sit by Cedric and stared as well. Something about her staring just wasn't as disconcerting as Ron's was though. "It will be weird to be here without Harry, won't it? You will miss him at quidditch."

"Well, yeah, we hung out a lot over summer too...he liked to fly with Reg and me," Cedric smiled at her. "You ever stage that dramatic break-up you two had planned?"

"Oh yes, right in the middle of Diagon, it was beautiful," Luna gave him a wide, dazed grin.

"I honestly didn't know a person could scream that loud," Neville snorted over where he was pruning some odd plant Percy had given him in the window. Knowing Percy it was probably poisonous, so no one else would touch it.

"Yes, I believe his reputation as a cheating bastard will have preceded him to Ilvermorny at this rate," she chuckled fondly. "Not that he will show at the school of course, but the papers are absolutely loving it. Even Daddy put an editorial in the Quibbler about how wrackspurts can cause unfaithful tendencies in monogamous partners."

"I read that, it was actually really interesting," Ginny Weasley said before standing to retrieve her school robes. "Speaking of partners, I need to make an appearance in the Slytherin carriage before Draco gets too comfortable. Gotta keep him on his toes and all..."

"I still don't understand them," Ron jerked a thumb in his sister's direction once she left through the door.

"Were they together in the future? Did Harry say?" Cedric frowned after her.

"Nope, he doesn't understand it either," Ron shook his head in bemusement. "But Harry doesn't understand relationships on a core level. I'm really not sure how he and my brother got together, and I really don't want to know if he ever tells any of you," he warned them all quickly.

“Is Regulus staying around now that you’re heading back to school and he testified?” Hermione asked Cedric with a small smile.

Cedric shrugged, trying not to let on just how invested he had become in the other inferius staying on their side of living. They had a few arguments about it over the summer, and so far he was still there, Cedric just hoped he stayed...

“He and Sirius are bonding apparently,” he offered in response. “He said he’ll at least stay until after Yule, and he’s going to come visit when we get a Hogsmeade weekend. I think he’ll stay longer...” He really *wanted* the ornery git to stay at least. They hadn’t played near enough quidditch together yet.

“Hey, you think the curse is gone from the DADA job?” Ron changed the subject to ask with a frown. “I mean, my brother quit, but he wasn’t really employed by the school and wanted to do Unspeakable stuff full-time and do a bit of traveling with Harry and all. It wasn’t really the curse that got him.”

“We’ll see, I guess. This Auror Clarity seems reasonably sane anyway...but Harry likes her, so maybe not,” Neville shrugged and actually petted his plant...no not strange at all.

“Yeah, and he’s your problem now,” Cedric smirked at the Light Lord who grumbled and rolled his eyes.

“I’d say he’s Percy’s problem, but I seem to have inherited keeping an eye on your brother as well,” Neville kicked Ron’s leg with a glare.

“Hey, I didn’t birth him!” Ron protested. “I was dead before he even came back in time. That’s on you and Hermione.”

“Children, play nice,” Luna smirked at them all before opening her Quibbler to do the crossword puzzle.

Minister Remus Lupin walked in the doorway and glared at the similarly glaring portrait before he strode into the kitchen. His glare fell into a fond smile when he saw Dora already waiting on him with a tea service. “Hey luv, good day?” He kissed the pink-haired auror before accepting a teacup to fix himself a drink.

“It was fine. Moody cursed his dustbins again,” she rolled her eyes. “I told Harry to invite him over for dinner since he’s probably just lonely or something.”

“Probably true...you seen the cub around anywhere? Did he say why he asked to see us?” Remus looked around the kitchen, but Harry didn’t seem to be hiding in any dark corners.

“Oh, he’s here,” Tonks motioned vaguely to the house in general. “We were talking for a bit, and he got into this rant about vacation spots and rushed off to get some brochures he had or something. Maybe he and Percy are going on another trip.”

“Noony!” Sirius Black crowed with a grin when he walked into the room and plopped down at the table, already snagging a biscuit.

Tonks had her wand trained on him before he could blink. “You call us that again and even Snape won’t be able to get your hair back to normal.”

“Dormus?” Sirius offered but shut up when her wand tip lit up slightly.

“Right, so there’s this adorable little bed and breakfast Percy and I visited around Yule called Button House, very haunted, quite fun,” Harry entered, flipping through a handful of brochures that he fanned out on the table. “If that’s not your jam, then Paris is beautiful around this time of year, and the sea is always nice, ooh, Bath! Bath would be romantic!”

“What are we talking about?” Remus asked over his steaming teacup.

“Harry is booking you an all-expense paid romantic vacation,” Sirius answered with a smirk that communicated there was some ulterior motive behind all this.

“I’m really busy at the ministry right now, cub,” Remus started with a sigh.

“Nope, you’re not. I had your assistant clear your schedule for this week,” Harry proudly plopped down a calendar and jabbed his finger at a week on it, presumably when they would be taking this trip.

“Stop talking with my assistant...I knew I shouldn’t have hired your banshee friend,” Remus sighed, but pulled the brochure for a hotel in Bath closer to himself.

“So, how did we warrant a romantic getaway paid for by the Dark Lord?” Tonks asked, also thumbing through the brochure on Paris. “Is this some kind of political bribery, because I can tell you already, just convince Bipsy of whatever you want, and Remy will do it. He’s scared shitless of her.”

Remus turned slightly pink. “She’s terrifying, and Nox just stares down whoever she’s talking to,” he grumbled.

“Ooh, did you hear, the children are starting to develop their own personalities!” Harry excitedly told them. “Percy and I visited, and Nox thinks they might even want names soon instead of just being collectively called ‘the children.’”

“Yes, very interesting dementor gossip, but get to the good stuff pup...why do you want them to go away?” Sirius smirked knowingly at his godson/brother/son or whatever he was.

“So...what do you think about having children,” Harry leaned onto the table, steepling his hands under his chin.

Remus and Tonks frowned at each other before looking back at Harry. “Erm, Harry...I’m a werewolf. Dora and I have discussed this. We decided it’s not worth passing the curse along to a child.”

Harry was already waving his argument aside though. “What if I can promise you that you won’t pass it along though, or at least not fully?”

“I don’t know Harry,” Tonk sighed. “We aren’t even married. We’re both so busy right now too with the aurors and Minister Lupin over there and all...”

“Yeah, yeah, Siri and I will babysit,” Harry waved that off too.

“You need to go away for this week,” Harry jabbed his finger at the calendar again more insistently this time. “Have lots and lots of sexy times, because I want my godson back. I want my Teddy back, and I need you two to get with the program here.”

Remus and Tonks both look stunned, like jaws dropped, speechless stunned. “Yep, that was exactly the expression I predicted way back over a year ago when you told me what it was that you needed so desperately from our Moony,” Sirius smirked and sipped his tea.

“But...we’re not even married,” Remus protested again, weakly.

“That’s not my fault,” Harry firmly shook his head. “Granted, you were married by this point in the first timeline, but whatever I changed, that’s still on you. You could have gotten married at any point this past year. Besides, my Teddy will be a wonderful bastard anyway. It’ll just make him more interesting, edgier.”

“But...” Remus just trailed off looking at everyone around the table.

Tonks cleared her throat and picked up the Paris brochure again. “A honeymoon in Paris would be very romantic...” she smiled down at the brochure before sharing a little look with Harry.

“Great! Yes! Wedding first. That’s good too! It just has to be this week!!” Harry jabbed the calendar once more for emphasis. “It’s what all the Astronomy and tarot and everything says.”

Remus squeaked. “You’re not planning to watch, right?!!”

“Nah, I talked him out of that like six months ago,” Sirius promised, to no one’s comfort.

Harry crashed down, out of breath, at the table with Remus. Luna was still dancing the night away by herself, but Harry was getting way too old for this in his opinion. “Well, one couple I didn’t mess with their timeline somehow. I’ll calling that a win!” Harry grinned over at Remus who rolled his eyes and raised his glass for the hundredth toast someone had drunkenly called for Bill and Fleur, the happy couple.

Harry was smiling at where Tonks and Charlie seemed to be planning some kind of prank on Bill. “Stop smiling at my wife like you were the one to get her pregnant,” Remus swatted Harry’s arm.

“Ew, gross, and that wouldn’t have gotten me Teddy anyway,” Harry stole the werewolf’s glass of champagne.

“I think we’re going to name him John or something just to mess with you,” the man grinned at his cub who was adorably invested in his unborn baby.

Harry just shrugged though. Teddy by any other name would still be Teddy. “Whatever, but name another person his godfather, and I’ll tell Bipsy that you hate elf wine and think dementors should go back to Azkaban.”

“What, no! I take it all back! Ted loves that we named his grandkid after him anyway,” Remus looked terrified at that.

“That’s more like it,” Harry bumped his shoulder against his dogfather’s.

“What’s the drama recently at Grimmauld anyway? Snape was complaining that you were doing renovations?”

“Huh, well, I’m always fixing something up, but no, this time it’s a whole thing,” Harry grimaced and took a large sip of his stolen drink. “Kreacher asked if I could enlarge his room, which was awesome. I’ve been trying to get him out of the boiler room and into something nicer forever…”

“This sounded like a bigger project than magically enlarging the boiler room,” Remus asked with a suspicious raise of his eyebrow.

“I was doing such a good job of staying out of it,” Harry sighed dramatically. “I had to go and ask who was moving in though. I said that if it was Dobby, then enlarging the boiler room would probably be fine, but we’d need to add a closet for all his clothes. If it was Winky though, then we might just renovate one of the smaller guest rooms so that she had space for her sewing and crafts.”

“So…Winky?” The man laughed. He swore that Grimmauld Place was a living soap opera with all the odd personalities that lived there between Harry, Percy, Sirius, Snape, Hedwig, Hermes, an inferius crow and cat, and the elves, not to mention Neville and a phoenix over the school breaks when he wasn’t visiting his gran.

“Yeah…no, it’s both,” Harry grimaced before just giving up and laughing. “So now, I’m adding a closet to the small guest room and having to redo all the furniture to make it elf sized and have three elves with extremely different and very loud opinions. I also know way more about their personal lives than I ever wanted to know.”

“Life never is ever boring around you,” Remus laughed.

“I could stand a little boring every now and again,” he protested.

They watched Narcissa and Kingsley dance for a while since they were the only two who actually looked like they knew what they were doing on the dance floor. “Hey, I think there needs to be a Harry sighting soon,” Remus said, more seriously than before. “Ilvermorny is being great about everything, but people are starting to ask questions.”

“Luna got England in the break-up,” Harry deadpanned.

“Just walk through Diagon or something,” Remus shook his head. “You can’t afford people asking too many questions.”

Harry heaved a sigh but saw the reasoning. “Fine, I’ll throw on a glamour and get lunch with Ron and Hermione in Diagon or something.”

“That’s all I ask.”

“Hey, what do you think they’re talking about?” Harry shrugged over to where Percy and Xenophilius Lovegood were talking animatedly.

“Don’t know...was Xeno ever told that you and Luna were fake?” Remus frowned at the pair.

“Merlin, I hope so,” Harry shuddered. “Knowing Luna, it could go either way, so I’ve just been avoiding him. I should probably go save Perce though before he tries to make an inferius nargle or something.”

“Have fun!”

Percy was fondly watching his two inferi dancing with each other. It wasn't an outcome he'd predicted, but he thought it was sweet in an odd way. He shipped it anyway.

"This seat taken?" Xeno Lovegood motioned with his glass of sherry to the empty seat Harry had vacated beside Percy when he left to go dance with Luna.

"All yours," Percy grinned up at the man. He was almost glamour-free at this point, having worked hard to only peel back small bits of the glamour until his appearance wasn't shocking to anyone.

"Beautiful wedding, beautiful bride," Xeno conversationally commented with a motion to where Bill and Fleur were snuggled up and eating cake. "You going to make our Dark Lord an honest man one of these days?"

Percy laughed. "I don't know. Neither of us really care, but now that Bill's married, I have a feeling Mum's going to turn all her attention to us."

"Molly Weasley is a force to be reckoned with," Luna's father agreed.

"Pandora, Luna's mother, was too. She had the Sight, you know," he said as if Percy should have known that. "She saw her death, well, not how or when it happened, but that it was coming."

"I'm sorry," Percy really didn't know how to respond to that. Frankly, it was horrible. "That had to be so hard on you both."

Xeno was nodding. "It was. I couldn't see it either...we met at work you know. I was on loan to Hogwarts for a bit to fill in when the Divination professor left halfway through a term. When I returned to work, there was this new intern, the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen in my life."

“I thought you always ran the newspaper,” Percy frowned, not really seeing where this conversation was going.

“Nah, that’s more of a hobby. That and cryptozoology. It’s something Luna and I can do together,” the man shrugged and took a sip of his drink before reaching into the pocket of his very brightly colored robes.

Xeno pulled a stone out of his pocket, one that glowed with a bright, blue light...a very familiar stone. “Is that...?” Percy didn’t even know what he was asking since his brain had stopped working in surprise.

“Pandora, well she gave me her Seer’s stone before she died. They are very rare and costly,” Xeno smiled fondly at it.

“She told me...she said that one day everything would be lost. Life would no longer be worth living. When I was there, someone was going to steal time dust from the department. I needed to give that person this stone, that they needed it, and I needed them to have it. She said that was one option, she said that if a man displaced from time ever asked to see a prophesy, then all was as it should be. I should help him and find the opportunity when it was all finished to thank him and his partner...so thank you. Thank you for saving my Luna because that is the only reason I can see where life would no longer be worth living,” Xeno said thickly with tears in his eyes as he watched Luna dance by herself in the middle of the floor.

Percy watched where Harry skirted past Luna, joining her dance for a second before continuing in his path towards them. “Thank you, and you’re welcome, sir. I’m never going to tell you what happened though. You don’t want to know, but thank you.”

“No, I really don’t,” Xeno smiled at the approaching Dark Lord. “You coming to steal my young friend here away.”

“Just for a dance, sir,” Harry grinned at the blond man. “Oh, Luna invited you and her over to our place for dinner next weekend. She said you would bring wine.”

“That sounds like my Luna,” Xeno smiled and laughed as Percy stood.

“You ok, you look a bit shaken?” Harry spun Percy into his arms before frowning in concern.

“I’m all good...I’ll tell you later, ok?” He smiled. “Just had some serious talk with an old friend.”

Harry glanced over his shoulder at Xeno and shook his head. “Sure, no problem. Hey, wanna take Nev to Disney Paris before school starts back? He’s never been.”

“Neither have you,” Percy rolled his eyes fondly. “I have a feeling this trip is more for you than him.”

Harry pouted. “Dark Lording is sooo tedious. Nev and I deserve a fun day. Plus, he’s still doing school and all. He doubly deserves it.”

“You are spoiling him, and he’s already almost an adult. You are going to be insufferable with Teddy,” Percy laughed.

“I’m not the one who’s already bought a closet full of onesies,” Harry grinned.

“They were so cute!” He protested. “Fine one day though, so plan only the things you want to see the most. I can’t get off work for an extended time right now. Babs is expecting her first litter.”

Harry blinked a couple times. “How in Merlin’s saggy balls did you get an inferius rabbit to be able to have babies?!”

“Eh, she’s a rabbit, much easier than any other animal,” Percy gave him a proud grin.

Xeno was striding through the dance floor looking murderous. “What?” Harry stopped dancing in surprise.

“You will absolutely *not* go out of town and leave dead, fire-breathing rabbits in the department to infest the place again!” Xeno shoved a finger in Percy’s chest.

“Davids I presume?” Harry raised an eyebrow at the furious man.

“Yeah...so, maybe we go to Disney for Yule...” Percy gave them both a sheepish shrug.

Chapter End Notes

The End

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